## The Creation

[Genesis 1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1&t=DBY), [2](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2&t=DBY).

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There are truths which concern external nature, for which we are indebted to the revelation of God. Creation is one of these. That we are warranted in treating this truth as one which man could only guess after, without a divine revelation, we cannot but infer from the fact that mankind in general doubted about it — nay, even those who had the reputation of being the wisest and greatest of men denying it. There was no country where philosophy had such brilliant names and such extensive cultivation as in Greece; yet perhaps nowhere else was unbelief of creation more prevalent, especially among the philosophers. Aristotle denied it; Plato never understood it. To say who did comprehend, or even so much as conceive it, would be difficult. I deny not that there were those who spoke of it, but with singular darkness, and with evident confusion of mind. And yet it is a truth which, when once it is revealed, man's mind feels that so it must have been, if he really weighs the facts, and submits to their force.

The reason why man, without a revelation, cannot reach up to creation as a certainty, I suppose to be this, — that man, as such — apart from a higher being — cannot rise above that which he is himself. He is but a creature. He may reason as to the effects of creation around him; he may arrive at inferences and convictions — and so he has, as the Apostle Paul shows us — of God's eternal power and Godhead. At the same time, as creation is clearly out of the sphere of sense and demonstration, so there can be no certainty of it unless God reveal it. When revealed, it at once accounts for and explains that which is before the eyes of all.

Men have raised many difficulties about creation. There is nothing so easy, even for a child, as to put questions hard to solve; but, after all, the difficulties and objections of speculation are generally trifling, when looked into with candour, and fairly confronted with the light of divine truth.

Thus men have asked why creation should be at a certain point of time, why not always. I answer that to say *always is*to deny creation. You assume by your doubt the denial of that which God's word asserts, and which even your reason can find the only key that really unlocks the universe. More than this, creation necessarily implies an exertion of the power of God; for it means that God was pleased to put forth His energy, and to give being to that which had no previous existence. And clearly it belongs to a personal being, as God is, to have a will — consequently, to create when He pleases, how He pleases, and as much or as little as He pleases.

Creation, therefore, is the action of sovereign will to call into being whatever seemed fit to His wisdom. If one used "time" of this, it must be in a large sense; for, strictly speaking, what we call time ordinarily is duration measured by created objects, after they have been caused to exist by God's power. In ancient times the philosophizing Jews found considerable difficulty in bringing in measures of time into their thoughts of creation. Their difficulty was precisely the opposite of that which the Gentile philosophers feel now. The modern schools of science demand enormous tracts of time; but they themselves must admit they have made profound mistakes — their own books prove it. They differ not only from their predecessors, but from one another; not only from one another, but from themselves. Give them only a few years, and we find the most confident statements made — by geologists more particularly — refuted, not merely by other writers, but by their own subsequent investigations.

Again, in general it is not a question of disputing their observations, or well-attested facts. These may be interesting and important, as well as solid; the use made of them is another thing. We are entitled to judge their conclusions: they assuredly have done so themselves, with no little freedom; we are entitled on incomparably better grounds, if we have confidence in the word of God, which they have not. Only let us take care, lest we bring, by our own haste or unskilfulness, unmerited blame on that word which we seek to expound. If they have let it slip, if they have dared to despise it, so much the worse for them both now and evermore.

The truth is that Scripture is infinitely larger than the systems of men. I shall hope to prove, this afternoon, two things: — that after the beginning there is room for the longest successive lapses of duration; next, that the ordinary divisions of time are expressly introduced, and this precisely when it suits the character of God's revelation, and His dealings with men. Consequently the word of God leaves ample space for all that is true in the systems both of the ancients and of the moderns. Here, then, as ordinarily, and I dare to say always, it is only ignorance of Scripture, and inattention to it, which have created the difficulty, as they are apt to do.

In short, the portion that has been read gives two great facts: creation at first, apart from those measures of time which belong to the present condition of the heavens and earth; secondly, the introduction of the common course of time, when God is undertaking to prepare an immediate abode for man on the earth. Thus, then, is met the Alexandrian theory, as of Philo, who thought it derogatory to God to suppose literal time in creation.\* His conception of the divine energy was an instantaneous result. The moderns have reduced God to a being rather more like themselves. For man undoubtedly would be a long time making such a world as this, and so is ready to imagine that God must have been a long time too. I do not say that there is much to boast of, either in ancients or in moderns; but the fact is that there seems to be a true element in both these suppositions. The mischief is that neither has been rightly understood, and that one has been set against another; whereas both, duly applied, have a solid existence in fact, and in the revelation of God's word. But we must distinguish and not confound them.

\* Philo, in his treatise on the Mosaic account of the creation, does not go farther than saying that the six days were said for the sake of arrangement, to which number is allied, of which he curiously thinks " six " is perfection. But in his first book of Allegories, he will have it that Moses wrote[Gen. 2:4](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Gen.+2.4&t=DBY) to leave the time undefined, and so to exclude the idea that the universe came into being in six days.

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." If God had been bound to create at any moment before that in which He was pleased to call into being the heavens and the earth, His character must have been denied; He would not thus be the Absolute after all. For absolute means that He is not tied to conditions. That He was pleased, therefore, to exert His own divine energy at the particular time when He chose flows from the very fact that He is God. Even a man has a will. Is God to be deprived of His will? What sort of a God would that be?

"In the beginning," then, "God created the heaven and the earth." Observe the careful abstinence here from measures of time that belong to man. It is now well known, that not the heavens only but the earth had an existence and suited condition when man was not upon it — when it might be utterly impossible, according to the facts that we know about its circumstances, for man to be there, or for any animated nature to subsist — followed by vast and gradual changes, as well as sudden convulsions destructive of such living things as did afterwards exist. For such crises and changes there were, if there be anything ascertained in the "uncertain science," as one called it who was himself one of the chief contributors to the riches of physical knowledge. And an uncertain science it truly is. Humboldt, we may be sure, did not mean to slight any real fruit of man's mind. If there be, then, anything certain in the uncertain science of geology, it is this, that there were immense tracts of duration when man did not exist upon the earth. God's word leaves ample space for them. "In the beginning " fixes the commencement of the universe indeed, but admits of eras of indefinite extent, and this before the confusion described in the following verse, still more of course before the six days, whose course begins with verse 3.

To what use He applied them — what were the particular constitution, phase, and denizens of the earth during one space or another, God has not seen fit to lay before us in His word. This is no defect in Scripture: that it lies open to such a charge flows from one of its excellences. The word of God was never meant to be a book of human science. Nevertheless, when science ceases to be uncertain, when it is no longer a heap of hypotheses, one displacing and destroying another, in the measure in which it becomes really entitled to the rank of science, and attains any degree of consistency as a branch of knowledge, it never fails to pay homage to the word of God. I do not speak of every individual who cultivates it. Far from that. But it seems to me true of science itself. And unquestionably men who have largely advanced its domains in all directions have not been the least loud in their acknowledgment of God's word, when it speaks of that which they are generally considered to know best. There are none in this room who would dispute the place of a Newton or a Cuvier. They were not backward in owning the value of Scriptural truths. Remember, I do not bring in the names of these great men as if it could be any triumph for the cause of God. It was their gain to bow to His word, which really cast lustre on them, not they on it.

So always it is. There is no man but what derives all his blessing, if he be wise, through God's word from God Himself. Sir Isaac Newton, for instance, did not degrade the science of which he was one of the most illustrious ornaments by denying God or dishonouring His word. Not that the prince of natural philosophers understood the word of God well — I do not think he did. It was not given to him to sound the depths of Scripture to any remarkable extent. He can scarcely be deemed correct as to his views of creation; for his idea was that God in the first place created crude masses of matter.\* Very likely such is the notion among many to this day; if so, it is a serious error, which derives no countenance from the word of God. What Scripture says is that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Do these latter terms mean masses of matter? Heaven is not masses of matter, nor earth either. When Scripture says God created the heaven and the earth, it means what it says. God did *not* create a mass of undigested materials. We may presume Sir Isaac got this from Ovid, certainly not from the Bible. Most school-boys have imbibed the same idea; for even the greatest of men may sometimes be affected by that which influences the child at school. Few of us sift our sources of thought enough to discern how much we are tinctured, especially by heathen poets and philosophers. There is no man necessarily above such an influence. It would be only flattering ourselves to fancy that any man here could pretend to such an immunity. I should be sorry, indeed, to give the slightest ground to suppose it to be a question of man against man. My present task is to vindicate God's word, no matter who the person is that ventures to oppose it. Let his reputation be what it may, God is above him, and His word is infinitely wiser than that which any man has written without inspiration. Scripture never knows what it is to correct itself; it corrects all others and their words, let them be the greatest philosophers or who they may.

\* "It seems probable to me that God, in the beginning, formed matter in solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, moveable particles, of such sizes and figures, and with such other properties, and in such proportions to space, as most conduced to the end for which He formed them.

"By the help of this principle all material things seem to have been composed of the hard and solid particles above mentioned, variously associated in the first creation by the counsel of an intelligent Agent; for it became Him who created them to set them in order. And if He did so, it is unphilosophical to seek for any other origin of the world, or to pretend that it might have arisen out of chaos by the mere laws of nature; though being once formed it may continue by these laws for many ages.

"Space being infinitely divisible, and matter not being necessary in all places, it may be also allowed that God is able to create particles of matter of several sizes and figures, and in several proportions to space, and perhaps of different densities and forces, and thereby to vary the laws of nature, and make worlds of several sorts in several parts of the universe. At least I see nothing of contradiction in all this." — *Horsley's Newton,*vol. iv., p. 260, etc.

God's word then asserts, that in the beginning He created the heaven and the earth. I admit that it was not the heavens in the sense in which we afterwards read of them, in the course of the second day (verses 6-8). It was not the earth in the state in which, when the waters were finally gathered into seas, man was to live on the dry land. Nor is there any reference to man or even to any other animal in this primary mention of the earth (verse 1). All is left strikingly open. If science has made discoveries here, let her humbly seek to prove them. Let her remember the cosmogonies of olden time and not be too hasty. Above all, let her not be in a hurry to contradict the Bible. She will be wiser if she curbs her spirit and seeks a docile mind; otherwise she will find out her humiliating mistake before long. When things get settled down into their places, and the various discoveries acquire shape, and are generalized into laws that carry conviction everywhere, like the principle of gravitation; when geology arrives (if ever it should) at such a place as its far more exact sister, astronomy, I do not doubt that her obeisance to the Bible will be more complete than it is now. Not that I expect such progress; yet it is not for any one to predict what may be in reserve. But this is certain, that Scripture asserts the grand truth that God gave being to the heaven and the earth, without connecting this with time as measured by man, still less of course by history.

Consequently the common idea of putting the creation of the world some six thousand years ago is a mere blunder. The Bible is in no way responsible for it. Where does Scripture say so, or anything approaching to it? It is only the annotator at the beginning of the Authorised Version who joins B.C. 4004 with [Genesis 1:1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1&t=DBY). I do not doubt that the margin was thus supplied by men, excellent, learned, and with pious intentions. But it is only man, not God, who dates creation from Tisri or September 1st. And this is the blessedness of the Bible, that we have in itself that which corrects the best of men who laboured on it with the best means and desires.\* Is this a loss? To my mind an immense boon, especially to those who boast of no wisdom except that which the Bible gives them. The Bible — and this is its boast and ours — is the book for all, be they the simplest or the most ignorant. The Bible — and where is there the appearance of such another book — can correct the best wisdom that man has ever laid up, not merely outside, but from the Bible itself. The Bible, then, nowhere puts creation in connection with Adam — expressly not; nor is it in connection with animated being, with beasts, or birds, or fishes, or reptiles, nor even with the grass and fruits of the earth. It simply affirms what man never knew as a certainty without the Bible, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

\* Thus even Bishop Horsley writes, in his *Biblical Criticism*, i. III: "The creation of the world, as it is described in the first chapter of Genesis, was not a single instantaneous act, but a work performed by gradual stages in the time of six successive days or entire revolutions of the globe of the earth upon its axis."

Then the second verse puts us in presence of another great fact, which has been, no doubt, illustrated by geologists, but in no way are we indebted to them for ascertaining it. Here it is in the Bible without them and before geology was heard of: "And the earth was without form, and void." It is clearly a condition totally different from the first verse. Not a word about the *heaven*being without form, and void; the *earth*alone was so. Some, no doubt, have found a difficulty because of the word "*and*" (!) being introduced, as if it linked the second verse with the first in point of time; but this is all a mistake. If the word "*and*" had not been here, the first verse might have been taken for a sort of summary of all the rest of the chapter; and thus hasty readers, and preachers, and commentators have been too disposed to treat it in expounding the chapter. They imagined that God's creating in the beginning was set out in detail under the various days that afterwards follow; but that little conjunction precludes such an interpretation. Compare such statements elsewhere, as for instance, in [Genesis 5](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+5&t=DBY): "This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made be him.'' There we have the absence of the conjunction. The reason is that the first words are an abstract of that which the rest of the chapter brings before us. Had there been no "*and*" at the beginning of the second verse of the first chapter, the common (or at least what used to be the common) construction might plead some show of reason for itself, as far as the language of Moses is concerned. There might have then been an impeachment of the accuracy of the divine record. As it stands, there is thorough and manifest correctness. The only persons that have made mistakes are either Christians with upright wishes, who have merely attached their own erroneous notion to the scripture, or men of science who similarly mis-reading it have forthwith sought to malign it. There was no just ground for either; the fault was in both, not in God's word.\*

\* If the LXX. meant "and" in an adversative sense, as many have done since, I believe them mistaken, and that the conjunction is simply a particle of connection. The true interpretation is confirmed by the substantive verb which in Hebrew is never, as often in English and other tongues, a mere copula. The *facts,*therefore, of verses I and 2 are connected; the *times*are kept expressly separate. In the beginning (let it be ever so far back) was the creation; subsequently — but how long after is not said — was the chaotic confusion of the earth. Here Dr. Kennedy *(Donnellan Lectures, ii. 12, etc.)*seems to be in evident error.

"And the earth was without form, and void." This is a second fact. There is no limitation of the space that intervened between the original creation of heaven and earth in verse 1, and the dreary ruin depicted in the earlier clause of verse 2. We are not told what were the grounds on which God dissolved the fabric of the earth He had created, and brought it into the chaotic condition so strikingly set forth. But I repeat my assertion that the creation of a chaos, or the existence of a chaos as a primeval state, is a heathen and not a biblical thought. What the Bible says is quite inconsistent with such an idea. "Heaven and earth," we have seen, does not mean chaos, but a state of things with an order necessarily distinguishing them. What use God may have made of the earth as it originally came from His fiat is another question, and our curiosity is not indulged by the Bible. The fact, however, is certain; and it is a fact of the utmost moment, and of very great interest in its place. All the facts that have been discovered of the earliest conditions of the earth fall in with it; that is to say, they point to a time when the animal, or even vegetable kingdom, when life in its lowest forms as yet had no existence on the globe. Is there no difficulty then? I grant you that man has the utmost possible difficulty in arriving at anything more than a First Cause. What the nature of that First Cause is, how can he tell? The very same principle that leads him to feel there must be a First Cause forbids his understanding it. The reason of this too it is not hard to see. Man himself infers a first cause, but he, a caused being, never can *per se*understand a first cause that is not caused. It is outside and above the sphere and nature of his own being. There man feels, and, alas! would hide, his own ignorance. But here in Scripture all is plain. We are told that all things above and below had a First Cause, and that He who caused them to be was God, who by the absolute act of His own will was pleased so to create (verse 1). Then (verse 2) follows another fact — all the earthly part of the creation completely dissolved, and in hopeless confusion. I shall prove that Scripture refers to the same words elsewhere; never as the original state, but a state to which God was pleased to reduce the object in question. The importance of this cannot be over-estimated in such a theme as the present.

Thus in [Isaiah 34:11](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+34.11&t=DBY) we have these same expressions once more. In describing the judgment upon the land of Edom, we read, "The cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it; and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion *(tohu),*and the stones of emptiness" *(bohu).* No man can say that this is a description of the original state of the land of Edom; it is a condition to which God's judgment brought it down. This, then, confirms the interpretation already given of [Genesis 1:2](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2&t=DBY). The second verse is brought in as an additional statement to the first (not an exhibition of the state which was before us in the first verse). But, further, the use made of the terms elsewhere (as [Isaiah 34](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+34&t=DBY)) shows that they suit there a condition to which God consigned what He had made, and certainly do not describe that in which He made or created it.

Again [Jeremiah 4:23](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Jeremiah+4.23&t=DBY) refers to these same terms, and clearly in allusion to Genesis. There the prophet writes in view of the land of Israel and the judgments impending — "I beheld the earth" (it was a prophetic vision), "and, lo, it was *without form,*and *void;*and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled." That is, it is not at all a vision looking back to a primeval condition, but one that looks onward to the utter desolation with which God would visit a particular land, the terms being pointedly chosen from the second verse of[Genesis 1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1&t=DBY). What I gather is very simple; that there is an analogy in the use to which the Spirit of God applies His own words; that [Genesis 1:2](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2&t=DBY) is a description of the state, not in which God made the earth, but to which He was pleased subsequently to reduce it.

I may be met by the objection that this represents God as capricious. Far be the thought! Was not, is not, He that made the heavens and the earth all-wise? Ah! it would have been a poor thing for man, as he is now, if God had not broken up the earth; an imperfect provision, if He had not convulsed it, and many a time too. I am not prepared to endorse, still less to oppose, what men of science, who had, as far as I am aware, no thought of illustrating the Bible, have affirmed as to the number and character of the pre-Adamite convulsions. There is one that I could name among the most exact and comprehensive of modern writers on palaeontology, and he, if I recollect aright, affirms that some nine and twenty times the crust of this earth was broken up, before man was made to dwell here below; that nine and twenty times there have been successive acts of God's power, in bringing in what was new on the basis of the breach of the old. And suppose you that all this was arbitrary? Certainly I am not going in anywise to bind my faith or yours to that which M. D'Orbigny says, however competent he may have been to give a grave and ripe judgment. Convulsions may have happened nineteen times, or nine and twenty, or thirty-nine.

To my mind it is rather a precarious affirmation, the exact number on a point so delicate and difficult to ascertain with precision. Nevertheless, the general outline I cannot but hold to be as sure a series of facts as any other in geological science, that God was pleased to form successive deposits, and after each, or at any rate at intervals, violently to break up the surface that He formed. And so far from this being without a worthy purpose, it was the evidently wise course of things, if He destined the earth, after these vast geological eras, to become the home of man, or at least the sphere for man's activity and responsibility in such a world as this. How else would man have reached what lay in the bowels of the earth? How else could he have availed himself, for instance, of the buried coal measures? How else could he have turned to account the minerals deposited in its depths? How else could he have quarried the lime, the marbles, and other stones concealed there? On the one hand, all this chain of successive convulsions was requisite for man, when formed on the earth; but, on the other hand, it was entirely incompatible with man, or indeed any other being, when living on the face of the earth; because these violent disruptions, of course, would have been fatal, as they were when various genera and species of living creatures did exist at each epoch when the crash took place; and consequently the tale is told by the vast beds of fossilized objects, as we all know — when God laid down not merely unstratified formations, but strata with an ascending scale of organic being, before the Adamic earth.

But all this was not without a beneficent design marked with the utmost wisdom and goodness too, as all that God does and says must be. So that although He was pleased here to pass over these geologic eras silently, leaving it to man who was about to avail himself of means to discover such facts by his observation, and by that mind with which God had endowed him, yet He has left ample verge for all in verse 2. It was natural that man should survey that world on which he was made, and of which he was constituted the lord. One can understand that man goes forth and enters with interest into the conditions of the world that was put under him; for things here below were his proper domain. Naturally, therefore, man seeks to understand the world which has been set in his heart ([Eccles. 3:11](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Eccles.+3.11&t=DBY)), where he finds himself now an inhabitant. It is perfectly certain that all the previous states differed more or less from each other, as they were totally different from the conditions in which man was made and tested in Eden.

Let me here state another patent fact. It is after all this that the days come in. It is quite a mistake to count them long periods. They are nothing of the sort. I see no reason to doubt that they are simple cycles of twenty-four hours. If long periods had been meant, do you think that God would have spoken about "the evening and the morning"? Such a phrase would be an extraordinary formula for introducing any other than a natural day. That there were long periods may be quite true; but then they are left room for, and not described. They would come in before if not after the state described in verse 2 — once certainly, and perhaps twice. There might be suites of long periods for aught we know. It does not appear, as far as my reading goes, that there is anything of real trustworthiness as to these periods except the general fact, which is a matter of fair inference from what has been turned up here below. But here it is, and here only, in my opinion, that you must insert these long eras. Grant that there may have been forty thousand years for one period, what is there to alarm in that? Be it so: I care not how many millions of years you claim. Supposing that scheme true, there is room for the geologic ages; Scripture says nothing to the contrary, but leaves abundant space for all, and so much the more remarkably because at first sight such interstices might be easily passed over.

It is not the part of wisdom for a Christian to deny facts. Why reject the phenomena which indicate states not only of the earth, but of living creatures there before Adam was made, that is, before the six days? Otherwise, how can we escape the supposition, that God was pleased to make vast quantities of fossilized objects, giving the appearance of having lived on the earth, which never did? Are you prepared to accept the notion that God studiously gave a semblance of that which was not true? There are remains of animals, and animals too that were evidently made with distinct objects and with characteristics altogether different from those of any animals to be found now, and supposing a correspondent state of things (as for instance, when the world was a vast marsh and enormous heat prevailed). There is no ground whatever to doubt these facts. I do not see that a Christian shows his wisdom, or his faith either, by denying anything of the sort. Granted that being unrevealed it is not a point for faith; it is a thing that man must ascertain and prove if he can, and thus it is a question of knowledge or ignorance. One cannot talk correctly about faith in science. Faith has nothing to do with science, nor again has science with faith. What the scientific men have to do is to collect and marshal their facts; then let them and others judge their conclusions. This does not appear to me at all arrogant — but what every soul who can ought to do — every one who takes the trouble of making himself master of the facts they present. It does not follow that the most diligent and successful collectors of facts are the best deducers from them. This may or may not be. A wise man has not a word to say against science itself or known facts. I do complain of the precipitancy and evident animus with which many men have chosen to use what they could in an unformed and crude state of science to contradict the word of God. Neither wisdom nor reverence appears in such ways.

Thus, we have now had the two grand facts with which the chapter opens — the original creation, and secondly, another separate fact, but the next that is stated, — the chaotic condition into which the earth was reduced, and, as far as the analogy of Scripture shows by God's act — by His judgment — for wise reasons.

But there is more evidence still. There is a passage in Isaiah which seems to me formally to contradict the notion that God created the earth in a state of chaos. As to heaven it is not pretended; it is only a question of the earth. We shall best see the importance of this by-and-by. Now, in a well-known passage of Isaiah (45:18), the Spirit of God is explicit that God did not make the earth in the chaotic condition which is familiar to all the readers of ancient mythology. It is a statement which made a considerable impression on my own mind, because in it the Spirit of God seems distinctly to contradict the idea that the earth was created in emptiness or confusion. "For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it; he *created it not in vain:*he formed it to be inhabited." Our translators in using the expression "in vain " evidently turned *tohu*aside from the literal import. The fact is, it is very much more forcible when taken in connection with the passage in [Genesis 1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1&t=DBY), [2](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.2&t=DBY). One of the terms Moses employed in verse 2 is used by Isaiah, who declares that Jehovah did *not create*the earth *so.*What conclusion can one draw but that Moses described an after state, and not the primary result of God's creation! The traditional interpretation sets the legislator at variance with the prophet, and must be abandoned for the view already given, which maintains their perfect harmony. When created, God did not create the earth a waste; when it became such, it was a subsequent state.

There is another fact also on which I would just desire to say a word — the remarkable precision of the terms that the Spirit of God has used on this subject. Hebrew is not by any means a copious language, but is comparatively poor. It is not at all equal to our own in possessing shades of synonym; but for all that it is worthy of note that, as to the matter now in hand, which was to be conveyed by revelation to man, the language that the Holy Ghost first employed has materials which, for precision, as far as I know, are found in none other. Consider how the terms which we translate "creating" "making" "forming" or "fashioning," here and elsewhere, are used — with what force and appropriateness — in the word of God.

It may help to put this in a clear light before those ignorant of it if we turn to [Exodus 20](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Exodus+20&t=DBY), which, perhaps, may be in the minds of some as bearing out the common notion that the earth was created in six days. In the eleventh verse of that chapter it is written, "In six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day." No doubt a great many people, in the habit of hearing this, have confounded it with the opening words of [Genesis 1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1&t=DBY). But there is a marked difference, instead of any such confusion. If Scripture said that Jehovah*created*heaven and earth in six days, there would be reasonable ground for the thought. Nowhere is such an assertion to be found in the word of God. What we do find is the *creation*of heaven and earth in the beginning; but when you come to the six days, it is the *making*of heaven and earth. So manifest is the difference at once. "Create" *(bara),*if we are to distinguish the words, refers to the efficient cause; "make" *(asah)*points to the formal cause; and they have another word *(yatsar),*which brings in the material.

It is very evident, therefore, that Hebrew — poor a language as it may be in some respects — is exquisitely precise in these very particulars. No doubt the reason is obvious. It was God's pleasure to reveal His mind as to the outward creation in the Hebrew tongue. And what makes it the more striking is, that Greek — which is such a finely expressive language in most other respects — seems to fail not a little in this. They had no words at all competent to express these shades of meaning. They were driven to other ways of putting the idea. There is always a possibility in every tongue of expressing thought; but this may, in some cases, require a circuitous method. In [John 1:3](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+1.3&t=DBY) we have creation alluded to. In the first verse we read: "In the beginning was the Word" — clearly this ascends, as often noticed, before [Genesis 1:1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.1&t=DBY). In the one beginning God *acted;*in the other the Word *was,*the uncreated expresser of God, before His power was put forth to call anything or one into being — the Word that was with God, and that was God. "The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him." There is a beautiful exactness in the Greek expression, that is not found in the English. *Egeneto*is not adequately answered either by the Hebrew or the English "made." Properly speaking, it does not mean anything of the sort, but "caused to be." The Word gave to all things existence. This seems to be the best Greek method of expressing creation, if it can be expressed in that tongue by one word. "All things were brought into being by him; they began" — or, rather, "were *caused to be" —*"by him." Such is the force of the term. But this does not at all match the admirable excellence of the Hebrew tongue, where we have God's own absolute act referred to. Such is the essence of the word "create" and consequently it is invariably attributed to God. We never read of any created being of whom it is predicated, unless in a figure or evident accommodation. It could not be applied to the act of a creature. Not that it always means created out of nothing. It is the word for this, but not for this only. Hence it is applied to the fifth day's work — the first production of animal life for the Adamic world (verse 21), and still more emphatically to the latest task of the sixth day, when God gave being to the chief of this lower creation (verse 27). We ought always to gather the value of a word from its usage; to the use that Scripture makes of it we may wisely, and must implicitly, bow.

Thus, without going farther, this very chapter of Genesis shows that, while the word here translated "create" is proper to describe God's origination of being where there was none before, at the same time it may express a particular act of God's will where there existed materials of which God made use. For instance, where He created the sea-animals, and where He created man in the image of God, it is evident that in neither case does it mean without pre-existent materials. Here we know from the account that such there were. The statements of Scripture are inconsistent, therefore, with the notion that the word *create*invariably means creating out of nothing. At the same time, while this modification of the word's meaning is allowed, it remains true that, if God would express creation in its full import where there was nothing before, this is the word and none other. Where is the word beside so admirably suited to convey it?

If some suppose it a defect that the same word is used with such shades of difference, let me tell them that their objection makes a demand on Hebrew which is not met by any other language — which, if it could be met, would involve mere barbarism even if practicable to be remembered and used; in fact, there is no language where words do not express varieties of meaning. If the most precise of tongues did not admit of some modification in the use of its terms, such a catalogue would be an intolerable burden. If one were bound to use a new word for every new thought, how cumbrous would human speech become! Man would sink under the weight of that which he had to carry in his mind, and utter in its proper time and place. But enough of this, which I merely notice to guard the unreflecting from a common misapprehension.

When God, then, expresses not the first origination of the universe, but the constituting of the earth an abode for man, we find the plain fact, that in the six days Jehovah, the God of Israel, is said to have made all things (according to the fourth commandment, which views the whole scene as we have it now, not as primarily created). Accordingly, after the Spirit of God has been brought in as moving upon the face of the waters, we are shown in the six days' work the making of the earth for man as formed by the hand of God here below.

Let us briefly trace their course. "And God said, Let there be light." Here, again, it is well to direct your attention to the words. A well known critic of antiquity singled out the sentence as a fine instance of the sublime. But there is far more in it. Probably many of my hearers are aware that there have been conflicting theories about light, and that the men of science have not quite settled the question yet among themselves (that is to say, whether it depend on emission from a certain point which you may call the fountain, or whether light be caused to act by vibrations). There is thus a wide discordance between the corpuscular theory and the idea of an undulating ether. Further, it is known that most scientific moderns have been disposed to give up the Newtonian theory of corpuscles in favour of the vibration theory of a later date. It may be remarked here that the manner in which God's word introduces the action of light suits the more refined view. For certainly there is a careful abstinence from making an entity of light. It is not put forward as some material thing created, but in such a way as to express a power, whatever its seat might be. Thus the peculiarity of its mention makes it perfectly consistent with the supposition that it is merely produced by undulations of ether.

This is the more remarkable, because no one can pretend that the theory was known. I am aware how scholars have permitted themselves to look down on the sons of Israel. I am aware that to your Tacituses and Gibbons they were the most contemptible of mankind. I am aware that poets cannot conceal their bitter scorn. Nevertheless, how comes to pass the startling fact, that there have been heaps of philosophers before and since these scornful poets and historians, ancient or modern, but the only account of creation which survives is found in the simple yet sublime words of the Hebrew Moses? Many of them, if not all, wrote of the universe since Moses; but where will you put Cl. Ptolemy — one of the greatest names — now? Here shines day by day the same majestic statement in the word of God. The more you seek to degrade the Hebrews, the more you really, though unwittingly, exalt the God who employed them to be the vehicles of communicating what none else knew. Where is any other document of the kind that stands its ground like [Genesis 1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1&t=DBY)? If there be, show me it or the man that wrote it. Where is the theory of the earth, up to this year of grace, which has yet given such a graphic, comprehensive, or exact statement? And this is the more admirable, because it is given in a book meant for men, women, and children; in a book expressly designed to cast the light of God on a world involved in moral darkness; in a book capable of being understood from the first day it was written, yet at the same time so written that nothing shall ever be found to contradict it up to the last day.

This is what I claim for the Bible. That anything has ever really contradicted it, on grounds that will bear investigation, I have yet to learn. It has not been for want of will or effort; it has not been for want of learning or science. I do not pretend to be so ignorant as not to have looked into what men have written against the Bible. I have examined what has been said in ancient as well as modern times. But I have not seen — and I challenge any other person to show me — an account of creation that carries on its own face such an admirable combination. There is a statement of facts that does not go beyond what men in olden time could profit by and understand; and yet not only does it survive all the changing thought of mankind, but it gathers fresh illustration of its truth from the advance of science, wherever the later becomes so mature and fixed as to carry general conviction along with itself.

That a man living at so very early a day (as Moses unquestionably did) has written in the same brief sentence that which one of the greatest wits of antiquity, and finest critics of style, cites as challenging universal admiration for its simple sublimity; and that he has at the same time given his account with an exactness that surpasses what the illustrious Newton displayed, only within a comparatively short remove from our own time — to me is the more gratifying, because it came from the remote history of a very little people in an obscure corner of the earth. It is no use to tell me that Moses was learned in the wisdom of the Egyptians. The wisdom of the Egyptians in these matters would have only misled him. Produce me such a testimony of their wisdom, show me from their hieroglyphics, or from any other source you like, that they understood the course of creation as Moses did. There may have been some points common; but they were points common to many others besides Egyptians. They were relics of current tradition, in some way or other generally received. But were the special salient points of Moses ever endorsed by the philosophers of Greece, Rome, or Egypt? The Egyptians held eternal matter, primeval night, and the origin of their gods from earth and heaven, not the God who in the beginning created them and all things.

It seems to me, then, that the scorn of incredulity is, as usual, exceedingly misplaced; and that Moses must not be viewed as a genius who had by depth of intellect penetrated into nature's secrets. They are not to be rifled thus. Genius may develop itself in poetry; it may happily blossom and bear fruit in a waste of seemingly barren facts. But the facts of creation are an impossibility for mind to conceive and calmly state without exposing itself to successful attacks from all sorts of shafts of a hostile world. Not so! There is One above all the geniuses, scholars, and men of science, who gave them life and breath and all things; He it was who wrote by His servant Moses.

We must take note of another fact also. Why is it that light is introduced here? It is no use to say that it is all according to phenomena. It is not natural to have spoken of it here, unless the allegation were the simple truth. Moses surely had done otherwise had he been writing according to observation. And you know that this is the boasted but really base philosophy of the hour; you are aware that men are now making experience everything, and that what Hume put forth in his scepticism of a former day is now the fashionable empiricism of this day. They call it positivism. No more degrading system ever dragged down men's minds since the world began; nothing will more thoroughly corrupt the hearts. Such was the fate of the early positivists in heathen times. It will be more deadly now.

But however this may be judged, here we have a fact not discernible by experience at all. And if it be a truth, how was it learnt? Who, that merely gathered his thoughts from the world around and above, would have brought in light before the sun, moon, and stars? Why then did Moses burden his account of creation by that which was not at all a fact derivable from observation, but rather a difficulty? It is a strange statement at first sight. If it really set forth the truth, it is easily accounted for. Nor am I in the least denying that light may have been caused to act at previous states of the world. It is vain, therefore, to object to Scripture, that there were animals before man which had eyes, and consequently saw; that even those little animals (I need hardly say I mean the Trilobites) that have been discovered soon after the first traces of animal life, noticed in the formations of the Silurian epoch, are remarkable for their singular and powerful structure of vision. There is no doubt of the facts, and I would not weaken their force in the least. Their ocular provision indicates fulness and power. Some of these must have been able to look round about in a way beyond most beings now on the earth. At the same time, all this is not at all inconsistent with the statement of Moses. It is evident that a state of chaos might cause totally different conditions from what had existed before, and might forbid that vibration that was necessary to call out light. But here we find that, after this utter confusion, light is caused to be. If animals existed before those described for the Adamic earth, there may have been light before also. What is said under the six days is about the earth as it was to be placed under man.

Another thing may be observed. A certain analogy may well have been in part, if not wholly, between the great geological periods, and these six days. You are aware, of course, that Hugh Miller is the popular advocate of this idea, carried out so far as to identify them by making the days mean these vast successive eras. Now it is not for me to speak slightingly of such a man; at the same time, I believe he was mistaken. Do I deny the long periods? Not at all. Do I reject the analogy between them and these days? In no wise. Can we not understand vast periods characterized by God's building up this globe gradually and in successive exertions of His power, and that the six days should go over the work again after the last great catastrophe, before man, only on a circumscribed and very brief scale, for our race to dwell on the earth — yet similar, in certain grand outlines, to that which had occupied God in the immense tracts of duration which preceded Adam? There appears to me not the slightest ground for setting the one thought against the other. Both may be perfectly true, and in point of fact I believe that so it was.

Doubtless you are aware of a comparatively new set of philosophers, more daring in their speculations than the old heathen.\* They assert that everything has grown up from a nebula; but what the nebula grew out of no man can tell — not even these experts. Of this only they are sure, that they owe their origin not to God but to a nebula, unless this be their God. I hope to show, before I have done with this chapter, that the scheme is as false as the facts of science are true; that God's word makes all plain, and, in point of fact, falls in with the most thorough and comprehensive observation, as well as with conscience; for conscience has a good deal to do with these matters, though it may not appear so at first sight. There is a will in all this restless speculation. There is a willing ignorance of that which does not suit. There is a desire to get rid of God, and consequently of creation.

\*See Appendix.

As to the notion of development, let me tell you that God has taken pains, both above and below, to expose the falsity. As a general fact, it is quite clear that from the lower classes of being there is an ascending scale. But the moment you make it absolute and exclusive, you contradict facts. I deny the assumption first from this, that God made angels before He made man. I suppose you will not dispute the fact that angels are a superior class of beings. Now we know for certain, that when the foundations of the earth were laid, "the morning stars sang together," as Job says, "and all the sons of God shouted for joy." God has taken pains, therefore, to guard against such a system.

This, by-the-bye, illustrates the remarkable ways of God in the Bible. It is not arranged as a mere book of geometry, where one proposition depends on a preceding one, and all form, so to speak, a regularly connected chain. The Bible must be read, and read again and again as a whole; and one grand reason why many make so poor a use of it is, that they cherish favouritism so much as to neglect the greater part of Holy Writ. And those who teach are apt to have their favourite texts, so that it fares ill with the Bible among both teachers and taught. I do not say that God does not bless the most partial use of His book; but I am sure that it will most amply repay every Christian who reads it as a whole. And let me assure you that the best recipe against infidelity is thus to read the Bible. How many of those who disbelieve it have so read it? That they have read parts of it I can suppose, as well as those who have feebly endeavoured to upset their statements. But it is a rare thing to meet with souls that read all the Bible with a spirit of faith. Many read it as a duty or religious task. Can such a study thus expect to enter in and enjoy? There is a numerous class of persons who get through the Bible in a year, or something of that kind; but this is far short of what I am now urging. Seek to understand the Bible: it is only possible by faith. There is no other way. Not by understanding do we believe, but by faith we understand as well as set to our seal that God is true.

Again, for the dissipation of the dismal idea of development, take the fact of the superiority of the early remains of the Saurian order above existing objects of the same kind. Can they gainsay this? They know it is true. They are perfectly aware that the idea of development in the Saurian order is a fiction, that the superior objects of that family are not those that in point of time followed as the theory would require. A single, positive, and well-defined fact of the kind suffices. No doubt there are others. Without pretending to any minute acquaintance with the subject, I know this much at least, and on their own authority, or rather on facts which cannot be disputed. Will they say that we should not bow to facts? I do not dispute them, whether it be facts of criticism as to the text of Scripture, or ascertained facts in the outward world of science. I do not question that facts have a meaning; but the hypothesis some seek to build upon those facts ought not to be too readily accepted.

We may now pass on to look briefly at the following days. "And God said, Let there he a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament heaven."

How comes this? It is another difficulty at first sight. Did we not hear of heaven in the first verse? To be sure we did; and here we are told of heaven again. What then — contradiction? Not in the least degree; only another heaven — that is all. And is this, then, not true? Why this other heaven? Because man was about to be made. The circumambient atmosphere, extending upwards too, was essential not only to man's existence here below, but to vegetable life, to the due activity of light and heat, as well as to all forms of animated existence.

We find under the second day, then, the lower heaven. And that this is not a merely Jewish idea, but of God, is perfectly certain from the New Testament; for there we read how Paul was caught up (at any rate "a man in Christ," who, I have no doubt, was Paul) into the third heaven. We can easily understand, therefore, that at the beginning God made two heavens, and that in this case He made the lowest one. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Here we find He made another, man being about to be made. And this is called heaven too. They are all called the heavens. There is the heaven of His presence; the heaven of the stars, planets, and other astronomical objects; and the atmospheric heaven necessary for man and living things here below.

Again we find, as that which occupies the third day, that the waters under the heaven are gathered together to one place, and the dry land appears. "And God called the dry land Earth, and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas." And then the earth is made to bring forth grass — that lovely array, as it were, for the earth — full of beauty as well as beneficence. "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind."

I grant you that modern science denies genera and species everywhere. Development is in effect a denial of this. The Lamarckian notion, of which we have a representative in a rather celebrated living Englishman, sets it all aside. Do they realty gain much by it? I do not see that the blotting out of kinds in fruit-trees or herbs is a great acquisition of science. To me it seems to be a blotting out of the landmarks, not of science only, but of distinctions that date from the workmanship of God. It seems to be thoroughly spurious — merely one of those dark clouds that for a season flit across the horizon of science as over other worlds. It may be fashionable, but this does not make it the better. Here we are told, for God has written, that the different herbs had their kinds. And this is one of the great facts of the vegetable kingdom. The simplest gardener, that thinks as well as labours, knows this. Since man observed facts on the earth, when was it seen or heard that an apple-tree brought forth pears, or that a pear-tree bore apples? They can prove nothing but the liveliness of their own imagination. These dreamers contradict not only Scripture and science, but the facts gathered by observation in every land.

Again, on the fourth day we hear of the luminaries. And here mark the consistency and propriety of the language. It is not said that God then created them, but simply, "Let there be lights in the firmament." It is not light now, but "lights," or light-bearers, "in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night (the stars also)." These last are just referred to, and it was the more important because, as is generally known, many of those that had the greatest weight in the ancient world adored the stars. Even Plato, although a western, was sufficiently tinctured by orientalism to yield to the monstrous figment that the earth is a sort of living creature. As the philosophy of Aristotle directly tended to atheism (for it was low-minded empiricism), so the philosophy of Plato led into, if it was not downright, pantheism. Such was the difference between them. Pantheism, though in sound opposed, is really near akin to atheism.

God here cuts off the ground of all these delusions, as well as the objection of moderns, who too hastily assumed that the stars are said to be created at this time. It is not so. No matter how long the space required for the light from more distant stars to reach the earth, it is evident that room is left for all by what is said, and not said, in verses 1, 14, 16. Had Moses written that they were*created*on the fourth day, it would have contradicted the facts; but as it is expressed, not only is there no contradiction, but obviously the Bible is wiser than either the friends or the foes of revelation. Compare what Moses wrote with any philosopher you please in the ancient world. Whose writings have failed to contradict the facts of modern science? How comes it that Moses did not? Whose care was it that preserved him from here implying — as many divines have been too hasty to say for him — the *creation*of the lights?\* A Scotch university professor not long since insisted to me that Moses affirmed it. He was so ready to believe that Scripture contradicts science, that he had not even weighed these few words with care. Had Plato or Aristotle written as Moses did, how loud the boasting, and how close the scrutiny, not to "hint a fault," but to set forth the excellence of their philosophy! Scripture needs no apology. All I ask is a more exact attention to the word of God on the part of those who venture to assail it. It would be wiser at least to read it first.

\*Thus Horsley (*Biblical Crit. i.*4) says, "Neither the sun nor any of the celestial luminaries were in being when light was produced. For light was the work of the first day; the luminaries of the fourth." Also (p. 5), "The celestial bodies were set in the firmament in their respective places, when they were first created; and they were at the same time appointed to be for lights, to give light upon the earth; and to be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and for years."

You see where those are that speak about the enormous length of time necessary for light to be transmitted — though this again is more than they ought to assume — at any rate for the action of light by means of the heavenly orbs. But there is no difficulty whatever. When God created the heavens, did He make them empty? Did He not create also the host of heaven? What about the sun, and moon, and stars? He created them some time. That they were made we find elsewhere in this chapter; not, I presume, the absolute moment of their creation, but of their being made to serve for the use of man on the earth. What other uses they served we are not there informed. That they were God's handiwork, and for man's use, as creatures of God here below — not objects of worship, as in heathenism, He does explain. Surely there was wisdom in saying this and no more. There was considerate goodness in what He said, and in what He withheld.

On the fifth day the waters were to "bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven." Here, too, a contradiction, I must tell you has been discovered by certain critics. Chapter 2 shows that fowl were made out of the earth; but [Genesis 1:20](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1.20&t=DBY), they say, intimates that fowl were made out of the waters. Superficial cavillers! [Genesis 1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+1&t=DBY) says nothing of the sort, but is perfectly consistent with [Genesis 2:19](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.19&t=DBY). Look at the margin, not the text, of 1:20 in your common English Bible. The objection is exceedingly illustrative of the danger of reasoning not from Scripture, but from a mistake that has crept into a translation of it. The first thing we have always to do is to ascertain the word of God and its meaning as accurately as possible. What this verse teaches is not that the waters were to bring forth fowl, as it appears to do in our English version; but "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature, and let fowl fly about the earth in the open firmament of heaven." The flying of the fowl in that sphere is the point, and not the statement that the waters gave birth to them. There is no such intimation in Scripture. What men have reasoned on, therefore, is merely their own misconception, and nothing more.

On the next and sixth day we have the land animals produced, and finally, man made in the image of God, after His likeness, with dominion over the lower creation assigned to them, and God blessing them. But mark the difference. It is only when man is thus about to be made that God says, "*Let us*." Oh, can you not appreciate the spirit of such a word as this? Can you not admire the way in which God, as it were, sits in counsel on the creation of man? Can you not judge between the physiologist that would make an ape his progenitor, and the Bible that reveals God thus creating man in His own image? Which is the more noble? Which is the more degrading? Of no other creature is it said, "Let us make," when it was a question of the earth, the sea, nay, of light itself — nothing of the sort. "Light be," said Elohim, "and light was." But as to the others, He wrought, but with no such preface as "Let us make." Here it is for the first and only time, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion." What can be farther from development? Such an idea is altogether foreign; and, indeed, the existence of different races and kinds has been engraved by God most legibly on the world of nature; for although man by his wicked ingenuity may cross the breed, as for example, of the animals that were put under his dominion, the result is always to induce sterility — the standing witness, on the one hand, against man's meddling, and, on the other, for the order in which God meant His creation to proceed. Thus is set before us succinctly, but plainly, the general course of creation.

A few remarks I would make on chapter 2 before I close.

The Sabbath-day is introduced at the beginning, though in truth the first three verses of chapter 2 belong properly to chapter 1; that is, they form a part of the great week of God's work and its rest. And there is a very beautiful connection with this which meets an objection of modern times on which a word may be well bestowed. You are aware that German authors have insisted loudly (whether the idea was originated by them is more than I would say) that we are indebted to different writers for the first book of Moses (just as it used to be the fashion of the Wolffians to divide Homer among I know not how many rhapsodists, though, in point of fact, this created far greater difficulties than it was supposed to remove; for it is far harder to imagine half a dozen Homers than one). One thing is very certain, that Moses, according to these sages, must have been a weak, foolish man, who adopted at least two different accounts, without a suspicion of what to them is obvious, that the one writer contradicted the other. Such is the discovery of modern criticism. Let me say what I am sure is the truth on this: I dare not venture to put it forward as an opinion. It seems to me a sin to state anything that rests on the clear testimony of God's word as open to a doubt. If it is a mere question of your judgment of this fact or that, or your individual estimate of the person putting it forward, or your comparative view of the circumstances passing around, it is an opinion; and of what value can it be? You are yourself the measure of it — your ability, with your special opportunities, or general experience, and nothing more. But when we come to the word of God we should pass from the region of human opinions. What distinguishes it is that therein God speaks, and His people, yea, every soul, is bound to hear. For my own part I am convinced, and I trust you are no less than myself, that God has written His word intelligibly. By this I do not mean that any part of it is according to the measure of man; but that it is all written for man to God's glory, and in His wisdom. Thus, what God has been pleased to put in the plainest possible language may be beyond our fathoming; but at the same time it is not beyond our understanding and enjoying, according to our measure of faith, though we may also find out that it is unfathomable. But ever so deep as it is, and infinitely exceeding man's plummet to reach the bottom, it is as clear as it is profound, and not the mud or shallows of the creature.

I am persuaded, then, that these erudite writers have never gone below the surface of the wonderful introduction of Genesis, and that their speculations are not only idle, but ignorant. They tell us that the author of chapter 1 was a man that knew, and only knew, Elohim; and consequently they call this the Elohistic document. Then, from chapter 2:3, because Jehovah-Elohim occurs, they will have this to be the Jehovistic portion, or a sort of mingling of the two — the Elohistic-Jehovistic. The fact is, that up to [Genesis 2:3](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.3&t=DBY) we have God (Elohim), and from verse 4 we have the LORD God (Jehovah-Elohim). But that there were two different and inconsistent writers is gratuitous and false. It was one and the same writer throughout; and, so far from inconsistency, each feature is perfection for its own object. Why, then, the difference? The reason is plain, sure, and instructive. When God presents Himself in contrast with man, or the creature, as the originator of all, the invariable term is God (Elohim). It is the proper word, and always so used throughout the Scripture. Consequently, if the term "Elohim" had *not*been used by Moses in the first chapter of Genesis, it would have gone to prove that Moses could not be inspired. Exactness of thought requires that the Creator should be presented thus in the broadest form of contrast with the creature. On the other hand, besides being the self-existing originator, the Mighty One that caused to be what was not, God is pleased to enter into relationship with man, and indeed with creation. Now the special term in the Old Testament for relationship is Jehovah.

Besides, there was something peculiar in the manner in which God was pleased to enter into relationship then with man and creation, because all was unfallen. The consequence is that it is neither Elohim alone nor Jehovah alone in [Genesis 2](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2&t=DBY) and [3](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+2.3&t=DBY), but Jehovah-Elohim. Proofs will appear presently (and they might be increased) that this is precisely what it ought to be, and that any other form of presentation would not so exactly have suited the context. If we suppose (what the chapters themselves assert) that the God of creation was pleased to enter into relationship with man, and this at first in an exceptional way before sin entered the world, the writer ought to have adopted one title in chapter 1 (and none other than Elohim), and another in chapter 2 (and none other than Jehovah-Elohim). No doubt a revolution is stated to have come soon afterwards, when God accordingly changes His name in order to suit that altered state. After the Fall He simply calls Himself Jehovah. Thus the writer, being inspired (and probably far beyond his own measure of understanding the force of all he wrote), does not present the combined form in the way that is found in chapters 2 and 3 where we have first the relationship and then the test and Fall.

Consequently it is evident that the true key to the use of these terms is not the supposition of two or three different writers or documents, followed by a stupid compiler who did not perceive their mutual inconsistency. The very reverse is the truth; Moses — wise as he was — had an infinitely higher than human or Egyptian wisdom to guide him in all he wrote. None but God could have so furnished and so guided him. With all the advantages of observed facts on every side, with the incomparably greater privilege of the fullest subsequent revelation, we are but learning better in our own age the unspeakable value of what Moses wrote in that early day. I do not believe that this is because Moses rose in stature so highly above all men, from his day to ours, but because the only true God inspired Moses and all the other writers of the Bible.

The truth then is, that in this chapter 2 you will find everything savours of, or chimes in with, the establishment of relationships. "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens." Observe that there is creation, and also making. This is precisely right, creation having the first rank, and making the subsequent place. "And every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb of the field before it grew: for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Why is this introduced in chapter 2 rather than in chapter 1? For I affirm that you could not transplant this into the first chapter, and that the true cause depends, not upon a different writer, but upon quite another object and line of truth. The design here is not to show man made a creature, though at the head of creation. This is the subject-matter of the first chapter; and there his dominion is fixed by God, and pointed out by the sacred historian. But in the second chapter the aim is not merely to bring out that God made man, as He made every other creature, out of the dust of the ground (reminding him of the humility of his origin), but that he had that which came direct from God in a way no other animal had.

Into whose nostrils did Jehovah-Elohim breathe the breath of life? Into man's, and man's alone. We have no reason to think it was so with angels even. The man who was made out of the dust of the ground was not in full proper relationship with God until God breathed the breath of life into him. On this depends the immortality of the soul; and all who dispute or doubt this truth\* fritter away its singular weight. Nor is it confined to such errorists. Those who have read Bp. Jos. Butler's works know that the great moralist failed to solve the difficulty of man's partaking in the resurrection, while other animals do not. There lies the secret. God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and thus it was he became a living soul. Every other animal became a living soul materially and without this. Man alone of all that live on the earth stands in immediate relationship to God. He may sin against Him, and he, consequently alone of all on earth, will be lost for ever. Thus the very fact that he has the breath of the Lord God in his nostrils will be the ground of his misery consequent on eternal exclusion from God. That God breathed into man, and he thus became a living soul, constitutes man's capacity for blessedness through belief of the truth, and for being so brought into the presence of God; as it is his misery when banished from Him for the rejection of Christ into the blackness of darkness for ever.

\* Their arguments are for the most part the unintelligent misapplication of Old Testament texts that treat of the present life, or death, to that which is outside the world and everlasting. Thus, "Thou shalt surely die," and "The soul that sinneth, it shall die," are applied by them to deny the soul's unceasing existence; whereas they speak solely of God's government in this life. The New Testament has brought to light not only life and incorruptibility, but the second death and eternal judgment. The wages of sin is death, but not death only; for after death comes the judgment.

Thus when we are informed simply about creation, we hear of Elohim; when it is not Elohim, but Jehovah-Elohim, we have moral relationship; for Jehovah, I repeat, is the characteristic name of relationship in the Old Testament, as Father is in the New. In the New Testament, indeed, it is not only a God who has a people, but a Father who has a family. That His Son became a man to die and rise again has made it possible for God, by redeeming grace, to bring us into the place of children and sons; and consequently our proper term of relationship to God is children, as His relationship to us is that of Father. But in the Old Testament Jehovah was the term revealed in due time.

Mark how all the chapter carries out the leading idea. First, we have his relationship to God in the matter of the garden, which was to be kept; but, besides, there was a moral test — he must not eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and. evil. Why (let me ask) was not this given in the first chapter? Because that chapter does not enter into moral relations; the second has it, because it does. Here we are in the presence of the solemn truth that God is Jehovah-God; that He is not merely a Creator, but establishes the creature, man, in relationship with Himself. Thus it is not only the Absolute, but He who is absolute chooses to form relationships between the creature and Himself. Not in the first chapter, but in the second, is this spread out before us livingly. The whole chapter proceeds on this ground.

Next we have here, and here alone, the animals brought for Adam to name. Thus is shown his relationship to those inferior to himself. He was the one to whom they belonged. There is nothing like this in the first chapter — no bringing of animals to receive their names from Adam; yet we see how consistent it is with the grant of dominion from Elohim recounted in that chapter.

To my mind this, as far as it goes, is just perfection as the word of God must be, instead of the hotch-potch of blunderers who strung together the inconsistent traditions of their own dark days. Such is what self-complacent unbelief has made of it. It appears to me that these critics are alike objects of horror and of compassion, and that what the Christian would desire for them is forgiveness from Him whose word they defame, because their incredulity has rendered them incapable of comprehending it. There is another, and only another, relationship that I will speak of, and this is the one that is last brought before us in this chapter. Relationship to God we have seen tested by the tree. Adam was to till the garden, and keep it, using all freely, but with his obedience tested by a single restriction. Then relationship to the creature is seen, where the various animals were brought before him to be named. But there was a help-meet wanted. How did God meet this need? In a way admirably wise, not by an absolutely fresh creation, but by forming a portion of the man into a woman, thus reminding him what the woman was and should be towards him — that she was part of himself.

Who, beforehand, could ever have thought of such a way? Who does not feel the beauty and appropriateness of the work and the word of God? How vain and unworthy the notions of the heathen as to all this! Alas! I know that some have sunk so low as to mock at this very fact, and the record of it. Perhaps they may never have known their duty toward the woman dependent on them (and if so, sure to be degraded by them). But the word of God puts everything in its place, and reminds the man, and the woman too, of that special relationship; for there was but the man and the woman — not one man and two women, but only one man and one woman. From the beginning it was so; to the end it ought not to have been otherwise. Thus it was God made them; and this the Son of God cited to vindicate His Father, putting guilty selfish man to shame. But He also made the woman out of man, and man discerned the fact at once. Though he had been in a sleep, he had an instinctive sense how matters stood.

Thus everything was in chapter 2 put in its proper place — the relationship of man with woman, as before with the inferior creation, and with God Himself.

May the Lord bless all His word, and give us unfeigned confidence in all that He has written, without losing the sense of being learners! If God has given us power to teach in our little measure, may this never take us out of the place of discipleship! It is only "in part" that any of us know; and I am sure that we ought to abound in forbearance — forbearance in everything short of dishonour to Christ, yea, even this where it may be done ignorantly, provided it be not deliberate persistent rejection of the testimony of God. May that which has been just brought before you contribute, however little, to the help of the children of God; and may it win the confidence of those that are not children of God, exposing foolish speculation under the garb of wisdom, but a wisdom that is as hollow as man himself is without God!

APPENDIX.

I ought perhaps to except the Phoenician theology of Sanchoniatho. Is it not striking that he who is considered to be the earliest writer of the heathen world should be approached so closely by the most recent form of the apostate philosophy of Christendom? that at least modern geology shows such strong tendency to relapse into ancient cosmogony — philosophy in general into naturalism? It need hardly be said that the original we have not, but only some fragments of the Greek translation executed by Philo Byblius, for which we are indebted to the citation of Eusebius. (*Praep. Evang*. i. 10.) "He supposes the beginning of the universe was a dark and windy air, or a breeze of dark air, and a turbid Erebus-like chaos; and that these things were infinite, and for a time had no bound. But when it fell in love with its own principles, and a mixture took place, that embrace was called longing. And this was the beginning of the creation of all things. But it knew not its own creation. And from its embrace with this wind came Mot. This some call mud; others the rotting of a watery mixture; and from this came all the seed of creation, and the generation of the universe." Wagenfeld gives us just the same in his edition of *Sanchun. Hist. Phoen.* 1. i. p. 9. It is unnecessary to quote the still wilder details that follow on the animals without sense, out of which come intelligent ones called Zophasemin (i.e., spectators of heaven), moulded in the shape of an egg, when Mot shone out, and sun and moon, and stars small or great.

If the Hermetic creed, transcribed by Jamblichus, and popularly known in I. P. Cory's *Ancient Fragments*, could be depended on as the theology of Egypt in days as early as those of Moses, the contrast between Genesis and what we can gather of Egyptian lore would be less striking than it is. But there is strong reason to infer that this, like other productions attributed to Hermes, is due to the Neo-Platonists, who garnished the reveries of the heathens with ideas borrowed from the apostolic writings, in order the more effectually to oppose Christianity. The writings which reflect the real opinions of the ethnic world have but a negative and melancholy interest for the believer. They illustrate and confirm the truth of St. Paul's account in [Romans 1](http://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Romans+1&t=DBY). But they have as little solid value as the assaults of our own day on the word of God.