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"AND THE EARTH WAS WITHOUT FORM
AND VOID."

An Enquiry into the Exact Meaning of Genesis I, 2.

By F. F. BRUCE, M.A.

THE first three verses of Genesis run as follows in Hebrew :—

(1) *Be-reshith bara Elohim eth ha-shamayim we-eth ha-arets* : (2) *we-ha-arets hayethah tohu wa-bohu we-choshekh al-pnê tehôm we-rúach Elohim merachepheth al-pnê ha-mayim* : (3) *wayyômer Elohim "yehi ôr" wa-yehi ôr.*

The question before us is whether (a) "ver. 2 implies the occurrence of some change of catastrophic order subsequent to creation, and that the earth had become 'without form and void,'" or (b) "ver. 2 merely defines the condition of the earth at its creation." The terms of reference prescribe a strictly linguistic discussion, excluding all considerations of the relation between these verses and theological or natural science.

If, as the former alternative maintains, ver. 2 indicated an event subsequent to the creation of ver. 1, we might have expected a text differing from the actual one in two respects : (1) "waw consecutive" with the imperfect tense instead of "waw copulative" with the perfect (i.e., *wattehi ha-arets* instead of *we-ha-arets hayethah*), and (2) the preposition *le* before *tohu wa-bohu*, if the verb in this clause really has the meaning "became," as some hold. *Wattehi ha-arets le-tohu wa-bohu* would certainly mean that, after the creation of ver. 1, "the earth became waste and emptiness"; but the construction which we do find implies more naturally something quite different, namely, alternative (b).

The construction of ver. 1 must itself be examined. "The verse gives a summary of the description which follows, stating the broad general fact of the creation of the universe; the details of the process then form the subject of the rest of the chapter." So writes S. R. Driver in his volume on Genesis in the Westminster Commentaries, but he mentions in a footnote that many modern scholars, following the Jewish scholars Rashi (1040-1105) and Ibn Ezra (1092-1167), make ver. 1 a note of

time relating to what follows. Robert Young *, following Ibn Ezra and Grotius, makes ver. 1 subordinate to ver. 2, thus: "In the beginning of God's preparing the heavens and the earth, the earth then has existed waste and void . . ."; but Dillmann and most modern scholars who thus subordinate ver. 1, following Rashi, make ver. 2 a parenthesis and ver. 3 the principal clause, thus: "In the beginning of God's creating the heaven and the earth (now the earth was waste and emptiness, and darkness on the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovering on the face of the water), †God said 'Let there be light,' and there was light." This perfectly legitimate way of taking these verses is powerfully supported by the fact that the noun *reshith* ("beginning") is regularly in the construct state, i.e., the state which a noun assumes when it is followed by a genitive. The present writer is almost persuaded that this is the true construction here, after conversations on the matter with his colleague Dr. S. Rawidowicz, Lecturer in Hebrew in Leeds University and Editor of *Metsudah*. Rashi reads the verb in ver. 1 as *berô* (infinitive) instead of *bara* (perfect), but this is unnecessary, for there are several OT passages where a noun in the construct state is followed by a clause as its genitive (cf. A. B. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax* § 25, where some 35 instances are referred to). J. Skinner (International Critical Commentary, *ad loc.*) is favourable to Rashi's construction, though he does not reject the view that ver. 1 is an introductory statement summarizing the creative work described in fuller detail in the rest of the chapter: "a decision is difficult," he says, and "it is necessary to leave the alternative open." ‡

* *Concise Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 1; cf. his *Literal Translation of the Bible*, p. 1.

† The "waw consecutive" in *wayyômer* (and-said) after the time-note in ver. 1 is necessarily left untranslated in English; cf. Gen. xxii, 4, lit., "On the third day and Abraham lifted-up his eyes"; Isa. vi, 1, lit., "In the year of King Uzziah's death and I saw the Lord" (cf. Davidson, *Hebrew Syntax*, §50).

‡ Skinner adds in a footnote on p. 14: "The view that ver. 1. describes an earlier creation of heaven and earth, which were reduced to chaos and then re-fashioned, needs no refutation"—an excessively cavalier dismissal of a view which (improbable as it is in my view) has been supported by men of the calibre of E. B. Pusey (*Lectures on Daniel*, 3rd ed., pp. xviii-xxi), H. P. Liddon (*Explanatory Analysis of Romans*, p. 103), W. Kelly (*In the Beginning*, 1894, pp. 5-23), and G. H. Pember (*Earth's Earliest Ages*, 15th ed., pp. 27-33). It received more fitting respect from Franz Delitzsch, whose arguments against it are given in his *New Commentary on Genesis*, Eng. tr., pp. 79 f.

Ver. 2 is what is called a “circumstantial clause,” expressing the circumstances concomitant to the principal statement. As for the particular kind of circumstantial clause which we have here, “the noun-clause connected by *waw copulative* to a verbal-clause, or its equivalent, always describes a state *contemporaneous* with the principal action” (Gesenius-Kautzsch, *Hebrew Grammar*, Eng. tr., §141 e). Such a clause need not have the verb “to be” expressed, but sometimes it has, as here (*hayethah*); another instance is Jonah iii, 3b: *we-Ninweh hayethah ir gedolah l’Elohim* (lit., “and Nineveh was a city great to God”). This clause is obviously not one of a succession of incidents; it describes the circumstances under which the principal action—Jonah’s rising and going to Nineveh—took place. It is grammatically on all fours with Gen. i, 2, and if Gen. i, 2, means that the earth *became* waste and emptiness *after* God created it, then Jonah iii, 3b, should mean that Nineveh *became* an exceeding great city *after* Jonah went to it.

The words *tohu wa-bohu* require further consideration. From the occurrence of *tohu* in Isa. xlv, 18, it is frequently inferred that if God did not create the earth *tohu*, then its appearance in this condition in Gen. i, 2 must be later than its creation in Gen. i, 1. This would follow only if *tohu* had the same meaning in both places. But the context in Isa. xlv, 18 shows that here *tohu* is an adverbial accusative (“in vain”, “for nothing”); it was not to no purpose (*tohu*) that God created the earth, but with a definite aim in view—namely, to be inhabited. The same adverbial force of *tohu* re-appears in the next verse: “I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye Me *in vain*.” The meaning of *tohu* in Gen. i, 2 does not fit the context of these two verses in Isa. xlv. More relevant to Gen. i, 2 are the two other places in OT where *tohu* and *bohu* occur together, Isa. xxxiv, 11, and Jer. iv, 23. The former passage predicts the desolation of the land of Edom, a desolation comparable with the state of the earth described in Gen. i, 2; while in the latter Jeremiah has a vision of the earth reverting to its pristine condition of waste and emptiness. So Skinner (*loc. cit.*) speaks of “Jeremiah’s vision of Chaos-come-again . . . , which is simply that of a darkened and devastated earth, from which life and order have fled” (this last clause, of course, is intended by Skinner to apply only to Jeremiah’s Chaos-come-again, and not to Gen. i, 2). The idea in Gen. i, 2, he continues, “is probably similar, with this

difference, that the distinction of land and sea is effaced, and the earth, which is the subject of the sentence, must be understood as the amorphous water mass in which the elements of the future land and sea were commingled" (p. 17).

In fine, whether we regard ver. 1 as an independent statement or as a subordinate clause of time, the meaning of ver. 2 is that when God began to make the universe, the world was in an unorganized state. In other words, the raw material was first brought into being, and the rest of the chapter tells how the raw material was organized into the ordered world so aptly denoted by the Greek word *kosmos*. The reference thus far is only to the universe of matter; for the later production of living beings to populate the earth fresh acts of creation were necessary (*cf.* Gen. i, 21, 27).

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS.

Mr. E. H. BETTS wrote: It is with extreme diffidence that I, having no qualifications beyond a rooted interest in the subject, submit the following points for consideration by the authors of the two papers.

The verb might have been omitted altogether in Gen. i, 2a (as it actually is omitted in 2b). *That* would have made the verse contemporaneous with v. 1. *Waw* consecutive followed by the imperfect would, undeniably, have made v. 2 subsequent to but also linked in continuous narrative with v. 1. The writer of Genesis avoided both these constructions. The form of verb chosen, *viz.*, the perfect, preceded by its subject with *waw* copulative, indicates past time *not linked in continuous narrative with the perfect of v. 1*, and we are free, therefore, to understand of it any past time, and so, if required from external considerations, past time far subsequent to that of v. 1.

We can admit that v. 2 is a "circumstantial clause," but not that it is necessarily circumstantial to v. 1. Indeed Delitzsch says, in dealing with v. 2, "The perfect thus preceded by its subject is the usual way of stating the circumstances under which a following narrative takes place, iii, 1; iv, 1; xviii, 17-20; Num. xxxii, 1; Judg. xi, 1, vi, 33; 1 Kings i, 1 sqq.; Prov. iv, 3 sq.; Zech.

iii, 3 sq.” (*New Com. Gen. Eng. Tr.*, Vol. I, p. 77.) A following narrative, be it noted. And such a construction we have in Jonah iii, 3b. I submit that here 3b is much more closely linked with 4 and 5 *et seq.* than with 3a. It describes, not the circumstances of Jonah’s rising and *going to* Nineveh, but the circumstances, *viz.*, a city of “three days’ journey,” under which an entry of “one day’s journey,” with preaching, was effective in producing repentance. Further to be noted as to Jonah iii, 3b, is the fact that the rendering “became” for *hayethah* is forbidden *by the context* and not by the grammar. In Gen. i, 2, it is not thus forbidden by the context and some such translation remains allowable. “Became” needs guarding however. It must be understood to mean simply “was (at a subsequent time),” and the verse must not be taken to imply, though it may allow, process of decay, or action, but only condition in the past time of v. 2, circumstancing Elohim’s speaking of v. 3.

As to the various translations which subordinate v. 1, in addition to obvious objections, we have Delitzsch’s damaging confession: “We must admit that the language proceeds paratactically. The sole ground for the periodizing construction is that *bereshith* requires a nearer genitive definition, and that without such it must rather have been, instead of *bereshith*, *bareshith*, as it is transcribed in Greek *bareseth* (Lagarde, etc.), although even then the *a* may be but a disguised sheva.” (*New Com. Gen. Eng. Tr.*, Vol. I, p. 75.)

The only other passages in which *tohu* and *bohu* occur together (Is. xxxiv, 11 and Jer. iv, 23) strongly indicate that *tohu wa-bohu* connotes a descent to ruin from former order. Mr. Bruce observes the closeness of the analogy as drawn by Skinner, between Jer. iv and Gen. i. If order, once reigning, had fled in Jeremiah’s vision, it may equally well have done so in Gen. i, 2.

Air Commodore WISEMAN wrote: After carefully considering both these papers I find that I cannot but agree with Mr. Bruce (and the translators of the A.V., the R.V. as well as with the overwhelming majority of Hebrew scholars) that the word “was” accurately expresses the meaning of the Hebrew.

In regard to the use of the Hebrew word translated “and”,

it is the simple Hebrew conjunction and it cannot be used as the equivalent of "in contrast to." Can it therefore possibly be correct to emphasize as Mr. Heward does, its use in this instance as a separating word ?

The assumption that v. 1 is a statement of a completed creation all finished prior to verses 3 to 31 involves the further supposition—and this is its weakest point—that v. 2 refers to a destruction of an ordered and tenanted earth, that is the opposites of "*tohu wa bohu*." Scripture says nothing of such a destruction, neither does the Bible in all its references to creation, ever suggest that there were two separate and distinct creations, a creation and a recreation.

Is it not strange that the advocates of this theory suggest that while the interval was an immensely long period, an age, yet on page 19 there should be a reference by Mr. Heward to the "second half of the week" ? The word week is not an expression used in Gen. i.

Does not Mr. Heward imply that the word "darkness" means a condition created by some power opposed to God ? (Incidentally is not this the theosophic and pagan view ?) I suggest that Psalm civ, 20, "Thou makest darkness and it is night" negatives this idea (see also Deut. v, 23 and Is. xlv, 3). In all these verses the same Hebrew word for darkness is used as is employed in Gen. i, 2. There is a further reference in Psalm civ to Gen. i, 2, not touched upon in the penultimate paragraph of Mr. Heward's paper. And does not the use of the same Hebrew word for "deep" in v. 6, as a creative work of God, imply that the condition described in v. 2 is also a part of God's work ?

Do I understand Mr. Heward rightly that he intends to refer to Heb. x, 5, xi, 3 and xiii, 21, as if they were all equivalent to "mending" ? Can this possibly be the meaning in regard to the body of the Lord ?

Mr. Heward says of v. 2 "This verse unveils an age before." This is very difficult to understand seeing that elsewhere in his paper he endeavours to explain why Scripture never in any other passage unveils any such thing. Is it right to build up a theory of a tremendous "happening" such as this having been deliberately left out of the account, yet the knowledge of which is (according

to paper number one) vitally necessary to the understanding of Gen. i, 2 ?

I agree with Mr. Heward in his remark that many have assumed that the word “make” in Exod. xx, 2, is the equivalent of “create.” I submit that it is here that the mistake has been made by commentators, and it is I believe, the key to the solution of the difficulties of the “days” of Gen. i, but this is too lengthy a subject to discuss here, I have already written at length on it, and intend to publish it elsewhere.

Mr. DOUGLAS DEWAR wrote: I am glad that the VICTORIA INSTITUTE has arranged this discussion and I hope it will be published as a brochure immediately after it is completed, because I know of no document in which are set forth fully the views of those who accept and those who reject what is commonly called the “gap theory”. I feel that there is a great need for such a document.

It seems to me that Mr. Heward’s interpretation of the second verse of Genesis is the correct one. A point against the other interpretation is that it necessitates a noun being turned into an adverb (Is. xlv, 18.) The whole structure of the first chapter appears to support Mr. Heward’s belief. If the narrative refers to a single continuous series of events, it is difficult to account for the great difference between the phraseology of vv. 1 and 2 on the one hand, and the rest of the chapter on the other. Why does v. 3 not run: “And God created light and divided the light from the darkness”? or conversely why does not the first verse contain the command: “Let there be heaven”? The answer which suggests itself is that the creative acts recorded in Gen. i, do not form an unbroken series, but that in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth out of nothing; that later the earth became waste and all life on it was destroyed, and that the remainder of the chapter describes how God utilized the materials He had already created to recondition the earth and to bring into being new living organisms.

Not only does v. 1 contain no command, but v. 2 does not say that the heaven and the earth were “good”: on the contrary

it says that the earth was "without form and void and darkness was on the face of the deep." These words seem to describe a scene of desolation.

Dr. A. L. Higley gives, in his *Science and Truth*, published in 1940 by the Fleming H. Revell Company, New York, what seem to me to be good reasons for the view that v. 2 records destruction. This he believes was the consequence of the wickedness of those, whether angels or other responsible beings, to whom was given dominion over the rest of creation. In support of the view that vv. 3 and onwards describe a process of restoration and re-creation, he points out, *inter alia*, that the command "Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the tree yielding fruit" strongly suggests that plants of these kinds formed part of a creation that was destroyed.

Thus there seems to be nothing in Genesis opposed to the view that the earth has been in existence during an immense stretch of time, or to the theory that there was at least one creation of living organisms before that of those now inhabiting the earth.

Lt.-Col. L. M. DAVIES wrote: As Skinner says, the words *tohu* and *bohu* are NOUNS (*Crit. Exeget. Comm. Gen.*, p. 16); and since our English noun "worthlessness" fits all the contexts of *tohu* fairly well, it may be a passable equivalent for *tohu*. I see that Mr. Bruce, like myself, renders *bohu* by our noun "emptiness."

I question Mr. Bruce's idea that Jonah iii, 3b supports his rendering of Gen. i, 2. He himself admits that Nineveh's greatness was not due to Jonah's visit; so any grammatical parallelism actually indicates that the state of the earth in Gen. i, 2 was no more produced by the creation in the preceding verse, than the state of Nineveh was produced by Jonah's visit. Thus:

Gen. i, 2: "And/Now the earth was/had* become (as) worthlessness and emptiness";

Jonah iii, 3b: "And/Now Nineveh was/had become (as) a city great to God."

* The Rev. J. I. Munro uses the Pluperfect here (*Trans. Vict. Inst.*, Vol. XLVI, 1914, pp. 151-2).

I emphatically deny that the context of Is. xlv, 18, justifies treating a noun as an adverb. The passage can surely be rendered: “ He created it not (as) worthlessness; He formed it to be inhabited ”; and the later words could equally be rendered: v. 19: “ I said not . . . Seek ye Me (as) worthlessness.”*

Skinner’s (also Driver’s and Delitzsch’s) talk of “ reverting ” to a “ primitive state ” itself invites doubt whether that state was ever really primitive. The picture of a ruined earth once inhabited by man is hardly “ primitive.” Yet *tohu va-bohu* expressly suits it; while *tohu* habitually appears as a term of extreme disparagement.†

Mr. Bruce frankly admits that good judges like Pusey, Liddon, Kelly and Pember supported the restoration view. Even Driver called it “ exegetically admissible ” (*Book of Genesis*, p. 22); and Professor T. Jollie Smith, who also disliked that view, wrote to me saying “ I think that vv. 1 and 2 in Gen. i may legitimately be separated. . . . *Hayah* does generally mean “ became ” or “ came to pass ” . . . Its use as a mere copulative is most extraordinary ” (letter of August 23rd, 1923).

Mr. THOMAS FITZGERALD wrote: I would suggest that there need be no objection to retaining the translation “ was,” so long as the Hebrew idiom is understood. This applies to English and Hebrew. We might write “ W. E. Gladstone was an Englishman.” His friend Harcourt might write “ When I called on Gladstone, he was ill.” A stranger to English might be perplexed as to the meaning of “ was ” in these statements, unless he understood the different uses of the verb and the English idiom. Gladstone was born an Englishman and was always an Englishman, but he was not always ill. He became ill, and consequently he was ill when Harcourt called.

* Cf. Driver’s rendering: “ I said not, Seek ye me as a *tohu* ” (*Book of Genesis*, p. 4). “ In vain ” is a gloss, obscuring the more significant wording.

† Cf. Job, xxxviii, 4-7. Did the Sons of God shout for joy over chaos? Or the morning stars sing together—without spoiling the darkness by shining before their own creation?

Major R. B. WITHERS wrote that after the clear objective words of v. 1, the vague—indeed meaningless—“without form” is most unsatisfactory and demands revision.

Mr. W. M. POWELL wrote: The idea in 2 Cor. iv, 6, like all other metaphors must not be pressed too far or made to show what was not intended. That Man's heart had become a place of “darkness” through Sin, or through God's presence and light being withdrawn, into which darkness God shines when the Sinner repents and turns to Him can by no possibility be made to show that this material earth, without volition or will power, other than God's, to move it, had fallen into chaos, or that God had reversed His creative work and destroyed it. I entirely agree with Mr. Bruce in all his conclusions.

Mr. W. A. NUNN wrote: The subject has been well covered linguistically by both papers, and the two opposite views ably presented.

In the few passages such as Is. xlv, 18, 19, the Hebrew words dealt with are very rare, and apparently caused the translators considerable difficulty, and should not be pressed as interpreting Gen. i, 2.

There seems very little can be added to the arguments already stated. I would, however, submit the following citations.

Thomas Newberry, in the Introduction to his Bible, dealing with the Hebrew tenses, says of this verse:

“And the Earth was without form.”

“‘was’ is also the short tense.”

“It was at that precise time.”

Rev. Stanley Leathes, D.D., Professor of Hebrew, King's College, in his Grammatical Analysis of Gen. i (p. 191) (v. 2) “And the earth ‘was’—from root ‘He was’:—‘was’, verb third person singular, past tense.”

Then (p. 147), on Construction of Sentences:—“If the subject is emphatic, the noun will precede the verb. Hence also the position of the nominative in Gen. i, 2.” “And the ‘earth,’ it

‘ was ’ waste and desolate.” The emphasis then must be on the earth.

I understand that *Hayah* translated “ was ” correctly in Gen. i, 2, with the Accusative Case takes the force of “ became,” as in Gen. xix, 26 : “ She ‘ became ’ a pillar of salt.”

Mr. TITTERINGTON wrote : The Institute is to be congratulated on originating this symposium ; and its restriction to the linguistic aspect of the problem should be most valuable, whatever the resultant outcome of the discussion. Perhaps at some future date it may be possible to follow with a further symposium dealing with the scientific aspect.

The quotation from Genesis on page 23 of Mr. Bruce’s paper is a hard nut to crack and it would be interesting to know if there is any answer to it. If not it would seem to settle the question once for all.

I find it very difficult however to accept Mr. Bruce’s reading of the two verses Gen. i, 1-2. My objection is not based so much on the grammar, on which I am not competent to speak (though I do not know why *reshith* should be regarded as being in the construct state), as on consideration of style. The construction suggested would seem to be altogether out of harmony with the direct narrative style of the context, and I cannot believe that even a secular writer of any literary feeling would have allowed himself to begin a work with a sentence like this. The point does not appear to me at all necessary to Mr. Bruce’s argument, which I think it does much to weaken.

AUTHOR’S REPLY.

Mr. P. W. HEWARD : Welcoming the helpful criticisms, may I summarize and annotate ?

1. “ And.” (a) Why not “ *waw* ” consecutive ? Not expected when there is a *fresh*, distinct statement or section, e.g., Jud. vi, 33, 1 Kings xiv, 30, xv, 6.

(b) The quotation from Genesis (*waw* copulative contemporaneous) is only a half-truth: it *assumes* a certain dependence in the added clause. But this is not always the case; *waw* may also introduce a new paragraph, as 1 Kings i, 1, at the very beginning of a book, not contemporaneous with or dependent on 2 Sam. xxiv, 25. We may also notice the other references given from Delitzsch, and 1 Kings x, 1, xx, 1; 2 Kings iv, 1, v, 1.

(c) "It cannot be used as the equivalent of 'in contrast to'." *But it is*: Gen. ii, 17, vi, 8, xlii, 10b; Eccles. vii, 29; Is. lxiii, 10 (and even *waw* conversive, Deut. xxxii, 15). The *context* surely indicates the meaning. Generalizing almost always hinders true accuracy.

(d) Regarding Jon. iii, 3b, is it parallel?

(i) The association with the *succeeding* context has been helpfully demonstrated.

(ii) Only if the preceding sentence had spoken of one building Nineveh would there be a similarity of subject.

2. *Le* with *Hayah* for "become" is not necessary in the Hebrew of Scripture; Gen. xix, 26, Ex. vii, 19 may suffice to illustrate.

3. *Reshith*—a proposal of *construct*.

(a) The construct *cannot* be viewed as *constant* in view of Lev. ii, 12, Deut. xxxiii, 21, Is. xlvi, 10.

(b) There is *no* case of *reshith* followed by a clause as its genitive.

(c) Is there not a danger in assuming the unusual if the straightforward grammatical sequence is suitable?

4. The claim that Scripture says "nothing of such a destruction."

(a) This claim is questionable: The omission of *details* is quite different.

(b) Limited information is in full accord with the standpoint, and object, of Holy Scripture, namely, to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. iii, 15): many things are not yet revealed.

(c) May we not compare Satan’s fall, implied in Gen. iii, 1, but not detailed ?

(d) The new heavens and new earth are mentioned in Is. lxy, 17, xlvi, 22, Rev. xxi, 1, but most conditions therein are designedly omitted (likewise “ the ages to come ” for God’s redeemed, in Eph. ii, 7, are not explained).

(e) God is “ from everlasting ” but how little is said of His glory in the past, apart from the preparation for His dealings with men (Eph. i, 4, 2 Tim. i, 9).

5. My reference to an “ age ” respecting Gen. i, 2, and a “ week ” in Gen. i, 3 to ii, 4, has been questioned.

We have seven days in the latter and they *are* a week, and the Holy Spirit’s language in Heb. xi, 3, implies a previous “ *age*.”

6. “ Darkness.” I am deeply grateful for criticism calling attention to a very possible misunderstanding of one sentence (“ nor is it said to be made by God ”). I had *no* thought of “ a condition created by some power opposed to God,” but of *God’s* judgment, and in *this* sense certainly made by Him—the reverse of the pagan view, which I abhor, as utterly unscriptural. The passages cited too are helpful but seem to confirm the thought of judgment—for Deut. v, 23 illustrates Ps. xcvi, 2, and God’s veiling of Himself from sinful men ; Ps. civ, 20, 21, implies “ death ” (prey), and Is. xlv, 3, a victory over foes, laid low by God. None deal with pristine glory. All remind of God’s holy dealings after sin has involved separation from Him, death and conflict.

7. Ps. civ, 6. Is not the “ deep ” viewed as subsequent to the foundation of the earth (5), and are not the waters removed by “ rebuke ” (7) suggestive of judgment ?

8. “ Fitting together ” and Heb. xi, 3. Is not “ mending ” only mentioned as *one* mode in one case ? The body prepared for the Lord Jesus is by no means linked with this word : but surely it was “ fitted together.” That is the point, so there must have been a prior “ age ” to cause fitting together of “ ages.”

9. Is. xlv, 18, 19. Nothing said would invalidate the suggestion that *tohu* (in both verses) seems contrasted with that which has God's approval, and that other references to *tohu* (and *bohu*) confirm this.

10. Is. 2 Cor. iv, 6 overstressed? It seems to me we can hardly be pressing too far to emphasize that the parallel which God Himself has indicated is most suitable if the darkness is in both cases one of judgment. Would it be so appropriate if in one case it were a primitive appointment? The reference to the Spirit of God removing the veil in the context (iii, 15-18) seems corroborative and spiritually helpful. God's unailing of the *Way of Salvation* in the very opening page of Holy Scripture, illustrates, even as the type of Adam and his wife, His full prophetic inspiration of the Old Testament with a view to the New, and His purpose of grace and redemption as the central theme of the one complete Book.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

MR. F. F. BRUCE: The correspondence on the interpretation of Gen. i, 2, has been interesting and helpful.

Of the relation between Natural Science and the narrative of Gen. i, I am, to my loss, quite incompetent to say anything; but this relation is, by the terms of reference, excluded from the present discussion. So also is the theological bearing of this scripture, but (as the correspondence makes very plain) it is difficult to keep the Queen of Sciences out of any discussion, especially one conducted under the auspices of the VICTORIA INSTITUTE!

I am fully conscious of the *theological* attractiveness of the gap theory. It fits in so well with the viewpoint expressed in our day by Stephen Hobbouse and Arthur Hopkinson—a viewpoint going back through William Law and Jacob Boehme to the Early Fathers, especially Origen—which postulates a Creation and Fall (the Fall of the Angels) anterior to the Creation and Fall of Gen. i-iii. This "myth" (in the strictly technical sense of the word) of a prior Creation and Fall contains features of instructiveness and value, and can be suggestively correlated with the doctrine of a cosmic fall as propounded by N. P. Williams and Peter Green; but we

must not read it into the second verse of Genesis unless we find that the plain grammatical sense of that verse implies it. We must not interpret Scripture so as to make it fit in with our *theologoumena*, but base our *theologoumena* in the grammatico-historical exegesis of Scripture. Incidentally, many of our commonest *theologoumena* with regard to the Creation and Fall are unconsciously, but potently, influenced by Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and in thinking about these subjects we must make allowance for this influence, the effects of which have not been uniformly happy.

Whatever be the truth in the views referred to, we must make an effort (as, indeed, I myself have found it necessary to do) to lay aside theological preferences and examine the grammatical sense of our Hebrew text. As a philologist, I see no reason, after reading the contributions to our discussion, to modify my earlier statement. What the Germans call *Sprachgefühl* is an important consideration in an argument of this kind; and I am encouraged in my opinion by my colleague already referred to, probably the greatest living Hebrew stylist, who assures me that the interpretation which I have undertaken to support accords with the natural sense of the wording, as it appeals to the ear of a native Hebrew speaker, even when one makes allowance for the differences between Biblical and Modern Hebrew.

But, to particularize, I may be permitted to add the following notes:—

(1) I do not press the interpretation of *reshith* as construct. This is not essential to the main argument. But as some 45 out of the 50 occurrences of *reshith* in the Old Testament govern a genitive, its use in the absolute state is the exception rather than the rule.

(2) To be sure, the preposition *le* may be omitted after the verb *hayah* when the sense “become” is obviously demanded by the context, in Gen. xix, 26, Ex. vii, 19. But this sense is not obviously demanded in Gen. i, 2, so that here we should expect the addition of *le* if the meaning of *hayethah* were indeed “became.”

(3) As the Greek verb “to be” (*eimi*) has no aorist of its own, the defect is frequently supplied by the use of the aorist of *ginomai*,

which accordingly we sometimes find in the Septuagint and New Testament in the sense "was" rather than "became."

(4) It is no argument against the interpretation I have suggested for Is. xlv, 18, to say that it necessitates taking a noun in an adverbial sense. Most adverbs in Hebrew (and in Greek, Latin, and some other languages as well) are primarily nouns. We may, if we please, translate *tohu* in this verse by the one adverbial phrase "as worthlessness" instead of by the other adverbial phrase "in vain"; but the following words "He formed it to be inhabited," show in what sense we are to understand either the one adverbial phrase or the other, whichever we prefer as a rendering of *tohu* here.

(5) That the quotation from Gesenius-Kautzsch cannot apply where an entirely new section is introduced by *waw* copulative (as in 1 Kings i, 1, x, 1, xx, 1, etc.) should go without saying. The quotation is no half-truth; the words, "connected by *waw* copulative to a verbal-clause, or its equivalent," cannot apply to the first clause in a section, but they apply most appropriately when the noun-clause in question is the second clause in a section, as is the case with the clause we are considering.

(6) This brings us to the parallel in Jonah iii, 3b. That this clause is linked in subject-matter with what follows is as obvious as that Gen. i, 2a is linked in subject-matter with what follows. But this is not the point. *Grammatically* Jonah iii, 3b, bears the same relation to what precedes as Gen. i, 2a bears to what precedes. I said nothing about Nineveh's greatness being or not being *due* to Jonah's visit, just as I said nothing about *tohu wa-bohu* being or not being *due* to the event of Gen. i, 1. My question was one of *post hoc*, not of *propter hoc*. Jonah iii, 3b, let me repeat, "is grammatically on all fours with Gen. i, 2, and if Gen. i, 2, means that the earth *became* waste and emptiness *after* God created it then Jonah iii, 3b should mean that Nineveh *became* an exceeding great city *after* Jonah went to it."

(7) The grammatical structure of Gen. i, 2, is independent of the interpretation of Job xxxviii, 4-7. The latter is in the grand poetic

style, and highly metaphorical; the former (I judge) is prose, even if it be stately, schematic and pictographic prose. The morning stars, we may infer from the parallelism with “sons of God,” were not the material stars but their angels, who discerned in the raw material of creation the shape of things to come. If we wish to take the words literally, however, the morning stars may well have shone while the earth had not yet emerged from the condition described in Gen. i, 2. Gen. i, 16-18 need not relate the *creation* of the stars. There is the further consideration that, in the Septuagint, Job. xxxviii, 7, reads: “When the stars came into being, all my angels praised me with a loud voice.” But I do not think that this has much bearing on the subject of our discussion.

(8) As Heb. xi, 3 has been mentioned in the course of the discussion, I may say that I take the plural of *aion* in this verse and in Heb. i, 2, to denote comprehensively the universe of space and time, so that these verses give but little guidance in interpreting the *details* of Gen. i, 2 ff.

In conclusion, I wish to express my personal gratitude to the contributors to the discussion, and not least to the protagonist for the other view. I trust I shall not be considered lacking in modesty for hoping that he and his supporters have learned as much from the case which I have been invited to conduct as I have learned from theirs. And it is certain that readers of the discussion will derive more help from the juxtaposition of the two cases than they would from the uncontested exposition of the one or the other alone.