

to their children and descendants, together with everything of significance and worth that they had experienced and discovered for themselves. This tradition was kept in faithful remembrance by the family of the godly; and even in the confusion of tongues it was not changed in its substance, but simply transferred into the new form of the language spoken by the Semitic tribes, and thus handed down from generation to generation along with the knowledge and worship of the true God, until it became through Abraham the spiritual inheritance of the chosen race. Nothing certain can be decided as to the period when it was committed to writing; probably some time before Moses, who inserted it as a written record in the Torah of Israel.

Chap. i. 1. "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*"—Heaven and earth have not existed from all eternity, but had a beginning; nor did they arise by emanation from an absolute substance, but were created by God. This sentence, which stands at the head of the records of revelation, is not a mere heading, nor a summary of the history of the creation, but a declaration of the primeval act of God, by which the universe was called into being. That this verse is not a heading merely, is evident from the fact that the following account of the course of the creation commences with ו (and), which connects the different acts of creation with the fact expressed in ver. 1, as the primary foundation upon which they rest. בְּרֵאשִׁית (in the beginning) is used absolutely, like *ἐν ἀρχῇ* in John i. 1, and מֵרֵאשִׁית in Isa. xlvi. 10. The following clause cannot be treated as subordinate, either by rendering it, "in the beginning when God created . . . , the earth was," etc., or "in the beginning when God created . . . (but the earth was then a chaos, etc.), God said, Let there be light" (*Ewald and Bunsen*). The first is opposed to the grammar of the language, which would require ver. 2 to commence with וַתְּהִי הָאָרֶץ; the second to the simplicity of style which pervades the whole chapter, and to which so involved a sentence would be intolerable, apart altogether from the fact that this construction is invented for the simple purpose of getting rid of the doctrine of a *creatio ex nihilo*, which is so repulsive to modern Pantheism. רֵאשִׁית in itself is a relative notion, indicating the commencement of a series of things or events; but here the context gives it the meaning of the very