

# Biblical Accounts of Creation

Philology  
Literary Genre  
*Fr. Bruce*

# Introduction

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## Aim of Lectures

- To Ease Tension between Main Line Science's Accounts of Origin of the Universe (i.e., "The "Big Bang") and of Origin of Species (i.e., Evolution) and between Genesis Accounts of their Creation
- To Interpret Genesis, not to Critique Science
  - Philology (Hebrew Words and Grammar)
  - Literary Genre
- Emphasis on Genesis 1:1—31, especially 1:1—2f

# Introduction: Foundation of a Culture



Institutions:  
Schools, Legislatures

Values: Good and Bad

Model: God, Man, Cosmos  
Origin

# Introduction

## Christian Attitudes toward Bible

- Liberal: *Above* Bible with Human Reason Supreme
- Neo-Orthodox: *Before* Bible with Hope to Hear Word
- Orthodox: *Alongside of* Bible with Tradition
- Fundamentalist: *Upon* Bible with Confidence in Its Historical and Scientific Inerrancy
- “Evangelical”: *Under* Bible with Openness and Faith
  - Inerrant as to Source
  - Infallible as to Substance of Faith and Authority

# Introduction:

## Two Accounts of Creation

- I. Creation of the Heavens and the Earth, and Their Fullness: 1:1—2:3

Emphasis on God's Transcendence:

Outside the universe calling it into existence

- II. Creation of Adam and His Family: 2:4—2:25

Emphasis on God's Immanence:

On the earth forming man and woman

# Philology of Genesis 1:1—2:3

# Genesis 1:1—2:3 at a Glance

- I. Summary Statement of Creation by God's Word: 1:1
- II. Negative State of Earth Prior to God's Word: 1:2
- III. Creation of Universe by God's Word: 1:3-31
- IV. Summary Statement of Creation by God's Word:  
2:1
- V. Epilogue: Sabbath Rest: 2:2--3



## I. SUMMARY STATEMENT

**“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (1:1)**

# I. Summary Statement

## Genesis 1:1

The notion that verse 1 is a summary statement of the account of creation in 1:2—2:1 is based on sense, referents, implication, and logic of the whole text.

Cf. Summary: “Asa did what was right....”

Particulars: “And he put away the male cult ....”  
(1 Kings 15:11—15).

# I. Summary Statement

## *Bērē'sîth*

“In the beginning” or “In the beginning of”

“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And/Now the earth was desolate.... And [=Then] God said” (Most English Versions)

or

“When God began to create the heavens the earth -- the earth being unformed ... – God said... (NJPS, cf. NRS, NAB)

- Unambiguously entails the earth/land already existed before God created the heavens and the earth.

# I. Summary Statement

## *'Ēlōhîm* “God”

- God’s Aseity Assumed
- Name Signifies Transcendence
  - “For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-- **his eternal power and divine nature**-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.” (Rom. 1:20)
- Plural Noun/Singular Verb
  - Plural of Composition (cf. “wheat” versus “oats”)
  - Plural of Majesty/Intensification (quintessential transcendence)

# I. Summary Statement

## *Haššāmayim wəhā'eāreṣ*

### ("The Heavens and the Earth")

- Referents: Sky and Land Created on Second and Third Days (Gen. 1:6—10)
- A Collocation (Combination of Words with Its Own Unique Meaning)
- A Merism (Combination of Contrasting Words Belonging to the Same Semantic Domain to Signify the Totality of the Semantic Domain)

# I. Summary Statement Heavens and Earth

- Referents: Sky and Land

And God said, "Let there be an expanse [firmament] in the midst of the waters .... And God called the expanse [firmament] *šāmayim* [Heaven or Sky].... The second day."

And God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." ... God called the dry land '*ereš* [Earth], and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas.... The third day."

# I. Summary Statement

## Heavens and Earth

- No Other Referents for Merism
- A Collocation
  - Compound word: “broadcast,” “pineapple”
  - Merism: “near and far” (of semantic domain of space = everywhere)
    - “body and soul” (of a person = the whole being)
    - “summer and winter” (of seasons = all year)
    - “heaven and earth” (of realm of human life = whole realm of space where people have their being, does not include the sea or where God exists)

# I. Summary Statement

## Heavens and Earth

- Sometimes Distinguished from the Sea/s (Exod. 20:11)

**For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them,**

- Never unambiguously includes the sea.

-- *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. VIII, s.v. שָׁמַיִם, <COLLOCATION>

שָׁמַיִם || אֶרֶץ (“heavens” || “earth” occurs at least 69 times).



# I. Summary Statement

## Heavens and Earth: Conclusion

“ ‘Heavens’ refers specifically to the sky, created on the second day..., while ‘earth’ refers specifically to the dry land, created on the third day.... Both are distinct from the sea/seas (see v. 10 and Exod. 20:11).”

*--New English Translation [NET] Bible, Full Notes Edition, p. 1, note D [on Gen. 1:1]*

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth Verse 2

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth *Wěhā'āreṣ* (“And/Now the Earth [Was]”) Circumstantial Clause

- **Traditional** (KJV; ASV, Calvin): A Circumstance of Verse 1

“In the beginning... the earth. And the earth was... And God said”

“There is no doubt that Moses gives the name of heaven and earth [verse 1] to that confused mass which he, shortly afterwards, denominates *waters*.” --Calvin, *Genesis* (1554; Baker, 2003), 70

- The 69 uses of “heaven and earth” never refer to a confused mass and never include the water!
- No modern translation clearly expresses this common interpretation.

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth Circumstantial Clause

- **Modern** (NET, NIV, NJB; cf. NAB, NJPS, NRS): A Circumstance of Verse 3

<sup>1</sup>“In the beginning... the earth. <sup>2</sup> **Now** the earth was....

<sup>3</sup> Then (*wayy-*)“

- **Wě Not Translated** (CJB, ESV, NKJ, NLT): Ambiguous

<sup>1</sup>“In the beginning, God created... the earth. <sup>2</sup>The earth was....

<sup>3</sup> And (*wayy-*)

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth Circumstantial Clause to Verse 3

- Identical Syntax to Second Creation Account
  - **Summary Statement: 2:4**

“This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created....”
  - **Negative State before Creation: 2:5--6**

“Now (*wě*) no shrub had yet appeared....”
  - **Particulars of Creation: 2:7**

“Then (*wayy-*) the LORD God formed....”

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth *Hā'āreṣ* (“The Earth” / “The Land”)

- Referent: Proto-Earth before Its Appearance from Gathered Waters
- Not by Word of God (contrast 2 Esdras 6:38—40)  
“And I said, O Lord, you spoke from the beginning of the creation, even the first day, and said: ‘Let heaven and earth be made’.... Then you commanded a fair light to come forth of your treasures, that your work might appear.”

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth Circumstance: *tōhû wābōhû*

- “Desolate and Empty” (= “waste and void” ASV)
  - David Toshio Tsumura, *Creation and Destruction* (2005), 22
- Not evaluated as “Good”
- Associated with Natural Evil (Physical Hostilities to Life; Jer. 4:23; Isa. 43:11)
- Natural Evil Existed Before the Fall. God Uses Natural Evil In Judgment After the Fall.

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth “Desolation and Emptiness”

- Associated with Natural Evil

“I looked at **the earth** [hā’āreṣ,] and it was ***tōhû wābōhû***; and at **the heavens**, and their light was gone. I looked at the mountains, and they were quaking.... I looked, and there were no people; every bird in the sky had flown away.... This is what the LORD says: ‘The whole **land** [hā’āreṣ ] will be ruined....’” (Jer. 4:23—27)



## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth: “Desolation and Emptiness”

- Associated with Natural Evil

“The desert owl and screech owl will possess Edom; the great owl and the raven will nest there. God will stretch out over Edom the measuring line of desolation (*tôhû*) and the plumb line of emptiness (*bôhû*).” (Isa. 34:11)

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth: *Hōšek* (“Darkness”)

- Associated with Natural Evil

“If light symbolizes God, darkness evokes everything that is anti-God: the wicked (Prov 2:13), judgment (Exod 10:21; [1 Sam 2:9; Psa 35:6; 105:28; Isa 13:10; 47:5]; Amos 5:18, 20), death ([Job 3:4—5]; Psa 88:13). Salvation is described as bringing light to those in darkness (Isa 9:2).”

-- Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1—15* (1987), 16

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth *Têhôm* (“The Deep”)

- “The Deep”: Primeval Ocean from which the Dry Land Emerged To Become “Sea[s]”
- Associated with Natural Evil

# II. Negative State of Proto-Earth

## “The Deep”

- Associated with Natural Evil
  - Not by God’s Word or Ever Connected Directly with God
  - An Agent of Destruction: Gen 7:11
  - “[The sea] symbolizes the continued threat that the forces of chaos pose against God and his creation.”

-- *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, eds. Ryken, Wiloite, Longman (1998), 765, s.v. “sea”

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth “The Deep”

The LORD reigns; he is robed in majesty;  
the LORD is robed; he has put on strength as his belt.  
Yes, the world\* is established; it shall never be moved.  
Your throne is established from of old;  
you are from everlasting.

The floods [ocean currents] have lifted up, O LORD,  
the floods have lifted up their voice;  
the floods lift up their roaring.

Mightier than the thunders of many waters,  
mightier than the waves of the sea,  
the LORD on high is mighty!” (Psalm 93:1--4)

\**Tēbēl* : the earth-disc in midst of waters  
Creation manifested God’s Kingship

# II. Negative State of Proto-Earth

## “The Deep”

- Associated with Natural Evil (cf. Pss. 42:7; 69:2; 91:5; etc.)  
When the sea burst out of the womb God used “swaddling bands and darkness to tame the violent infant,” while likening the land to a city wall with locks and bars to protect it from the monster.

Or who shut in the sea with doors  
when it burst out from the womb,  
when I made clouds its garment  
and thick darkness its swaddling band,  
and prescribed limits for it and set bars and doors,  
and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther,  
and here shall your proud waves be stayed'? (Job 38:8—11)

-- M. Pope, *Job* (1973), 293

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth “The Deep”

Several texts attribute the *fashioned* seas, not the Primeval Deep, as made by God: Ps. 146:6; Jonah 1:9; Neh. 9:6

- “The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land.” (Ps. 95:5)
- “He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them.” (Ps. 146:6)

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth Contrast to New Heaven and Earth

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth ... there was **no** longer any **sea**” (Rev. 21:1)

“On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be **no night** there.” (Rev. 21:25; 22:5)

“Sea and darkness symbolic of what mankind fears.”

-- C. John Collins, *Genesis 1—4*, p. 54, n. 55



## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth Contrast to New Heaven and Earth

We live between Proto-Time (all darkness and sea) and End-Time (no darkness or sea.) In our “In-Between Time” the sea and darkness are restrained to become part of the rhythm of creation and as such are evaluated as “good” (i.e., they serve God’s purpose).

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth *Rûah 'ĕlôhîm* (“Spirit/Wind of God”)

Hovering “Spirit of God” Signifies Living God’s Sovereignty

“I was there when ... he gave the sea its boundary so the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth.” (Prov. 8:27—29)

The *תְּחֹם* *têhôm* does God’s bidding (Gen 7:11; 8:2; 49:25); he puts the *תְּחֹמֹת* *têhômôth* into storehouses (Ps. 33:7), covered the mountains with them in the Noah’s flood (104:6); does with them as he pleases.” (135:6)

Only the Creator has comprehensive sovereignty.

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth Only God is Eternal

“When there were no watery depths [*těhōmôth*], I [Wisdom] was given birth.” (Prov. 8:24)

“Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and world [*tëbël*, ‘earth disk’], from everlasting to everlasting you are God” (Psa. 90:2; cf. Deut. 32:40; 33:27).

“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” (John 1:3)

# II. Negative State of Proto-Earth

## Only God is Eternal

“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” (Heb. 11:3)

“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.” (Rev. 4:11)

- God’s eternal nature in contrast to his creation entails *creatio ex nihilo*.

# II. Negative State of Proto-Earth

## A Theological Antinomy

- Proto-Earth: Indeterminate as to Age.  
A straightforward reading of Genesis 1 does not contradict “the Big Bang.”
- Proto-Earth: Inexplicable as to Origin of Natural Evil
- Antinomy: “A contradiction between two beliefs or conclusions that are in themselves reasonable; a paradox.”

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth A

### Theological Antinomy

- Origin of Satan (moral evil) also indeterminate and inexplicable

“Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Gen. 3:1)

Inexplicable why the Serpent and Adam tilted toward evil. (Eve was deceived.)

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth

### A Theological Antinomy

- **Origin** of natural and moral evil with a God who is uniquely eternal, comprehensively sovereign, pure goodness, and perfect love is a theological antinomy.
  - Purpose of evil not a mystery (cf. Rom 5:3—5; 11:32)

## II. Negative State of Proto-Earth A Theological Antinomy

LORD, my heart is not proud;  
my eyes are not haughty.

I don't concern myself with matters too great  
or too awesome for me to grasp.

Instead, I have calmed and quieted myself,  
like a weaned child who no longer cries for its  
mother's milk.

Yes, like a weaned child is my soul within me.

(Psa 131:1--2; NLT)