

Among all heathen nations of antiquity, the belief in a primeval chaos was almost universal; and from the heathen philosophers it was transmitted to the Christian world, and incorporated with the Mosaic cosmogony. It is not, indeed, easy to ascertain what is the precise idea which has been attached to a chaos. It is generally described, however, as "a confused assemblage of elements," "an unformed and undigested mass of heterogeneous matter;" not, of course, subject to those laws which now govern it, and which have arranged it all in beautiful order, even if we leave out of the account vegetable and animal organization. Now, I have attempted to show that there never was a period on the globe when these laws, with the exception of the organic, did not operate as they now do. Nay, the geologist, when he examines the oldest rocks, finds the results of these laws at the supposed period when chaos reigned; that is, in the earliest times of our planet. And what are these results? The most splendid crystallizations which nature furnishes. The emerald, the topaz, the sapphire, and other kindred gems, were elaborated, during the supposed chaotic state of the globe; for no earlier products have yet been discovered than these most perfect illustrations of crystallographical, chemical, and electrical laws. If, indeed, any should say, that by a chaos they mean only that state of the world when no animals or plants existed, in other words, when no organic laws had been established, to such a chaos I have no objection. And this is the chaos described in the Bible, where it is said that, before the creation of animals and plants, the earth was *without form and void*. The *tohu van bohu* of Moses, which is thus translated in our English Bible, means, simply and literally, *invisible and unfurnished*; *invisible*, both because the ocean covered the present land, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and *unfurnished*, because as yet no organic natures had been called into existence. This is the meaning which the old Jewish writers, as Philo and Josephus, attached to these words; and they have been followed by some of the ablest modern commentators. "It is wonderful," says Rosenmuller the elder, "that so many interpreters could have persuaded themselves that it was possible to detect a chaos in the words תהו ובוהו. That notion unquestionably derived its origin from the fictions of the Greek and Latin poets, which were transferred by those interpreters to Moses. If we follow