

traditions of the Babylonians are recorded in the cuneiform inscriptions found in the ruins of Nineveh. Creation begins with Chaos. The gods arose before heaven and earth had taken shape, while the tumultuous floods of oceans were still intermingled in the universal chaos. The gods chose Marduk to be their champion against Tiamat, the disturbing, chaotic ocean-flood. Marduk armed himself with lightning flash and thunderbolt, and called the winds to his assistance. Marduk vanquished Tiamat, and divided his corpse into two parts; from the one part he created the heavens, and from the other the earth and the sea. Marduk peopled the heavens with stars, the dwellings of the great gods. Then followed the creation of plants and animals, and finally the creation of the two first human beings out of clay. The evident agreement of the Babylonian and Jewish conceptions becomes even more apparent in the account of the Deluge, which was at first only known to us from the epic of Berosus, but has now also been discovered in cuneiform inscriptions.

The Mosaic account of the Creation far excels the Babylonian in its noble simplicity and in the strength and beauty of the language. In it the origin of the world, of the earth and its inhabitants, is represented as the work of a personal Almighty God. The Jews were alone among the great nations of antiquity in realising the godhead as a unity—all-powerful, all-embracing. The Mosaic account was incorporated in the Bible of the Christian Church, and, unfortunately, became invested with a scientific value by the Church. This retarded the development of geology for many centuries, inasmuch as theologians regarded the Mosaic account as a divine revelation, an essential dogma of the Christian Church, and sought to suppress any investigations and writings of scientific interest which did not harmonise with it.

While certain natural events, such as earthquakes, floods, and sometimes volcanic eruptions, recur in the primitive traditions of the different nations, these cannot be regarded as affording a basis of geological facts; their interest is rather mythological and religious than scientific.

The Greeks were less inclined than the Oriental nations to interweave the ideas of mythology, religion, and science; they viewed natural events from a more critical standpoint, and treated them as subjects of philosophical speculation. Various hypotheses were formed to explain the beginning of the earth.