

LECTURE II.

THE EPOCH OF THE EARTH'S CREATION UNREVEALED.

THE Mosaic account of the creation of the universe has always been celebrated for its sublime simplicity. Though the subject be one of unparalleled grandeur, the writer makes not the slightest effort at rhetorical embellishment, but employs language which a mere child cannot misapprehend. How different, in this respect, is this inspired record from all uninspired efforts that have been made to describe the origin of the world!

But notwithstanding the great simplicity and clearness of this description, its precise meaning has occasioned as much discussion as almost any passage of Scripture. This results chiefly from its great brevity. Men with different views of inspiration, cosmogony, and philosophy, engage in its examination, not so much to ascertain its meaning, as to find out whether it teaches their favourite speculative views; and because it says nothing about them, they attempt to fasten those views upon it, and thus make it teach a great deal more than the mind of the Spirit. My simple object, at this time, is to ascertain whether the Bible fixes the time when the universe was created out of nothing.

The prevalent opinion, until recently, has been, that we are there taught that the world began to exist on the first of the six days of creation, or about six thousand years ago. Geologists, however, with one voice, declare that their science indicates the earth to have been of far higher antiquity. The question becomes, therefore, of deep interest, whether the common interpretation of the Mosaic record is correct.

Let us, in the first place, examine carefully the terms of that record, without reference to any of the conclusions of science.