

CHAPTER I¹.

OF GOD'S ETERNAL INTENTION IN RESPECT OF THE CREATION OF THE UNIVERSE.

IT is well for us to take the materials for our discourse from the divine Scriptures, that we may not stray from the straight paths of the way of truth. The blessed David saith, 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations, before the mountains were conceived².' David, the harpist of the Spirit, makes known thereby, that although there was a beginning of the framing of Adam and the other creatures when they were made, yet in the mind of God it had no beginning; that it might not be thought that God has a new thought in respect of anything that is renewed day by day, or that the construction of Creation was newly planned in the mind of God: but everything that He has created and is about to create, even the marvellous construction of the world to come, has been planned from everlasting in the immutable mind of God. As the natural child in the womb of his mother knows not her who bears him, nor is conscious of his father, who, after God, is the cause of his formation; so also Adam, being in the mind of the Creator, knew Him not. And when he was created, and recognised himself as being created, he remained with this knowledge six hours only³, and there came over him a change, from knowledge to ignorance and from good to evil. Hence, when Divine Providence wished to create the world, the framing of Adam was first designed and conceived in the mind of God, and then that of the (other) creatures; as David saith, 'Before the mountains were conceived.' Consequently, Adam is older than the (other) creatures in respect of his conception, and the (other) creatures are older

than Adam in respect of their birth and their being made. And whereas God created all creatures in silence and by a word, He brought forth Adam out of His thoughts, and formed him with His holy hands, and breathed the breath of life into him from His Spirit, and Adam became a living soul⁴, and God gave him the knowledge of the difference between good and evil. When he perceived his Creator, then was God formed and conceived within the mind of man; and man became a temple to God his maker, as it is written, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you⁵?' And again, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them⁶.'

Footnotes

¹ Chap. ii in the Oxford MS.

² Ps. xc. 1, 2.

³ See Bezold, *Die Schatzhöhle*, p. 7; Brit. Mus. Add. 25,875, fol. 7 a, col. 2: 'At the third hour they entered Paradise, for three hours they enjoyed the good things, for three hours they were ashamed, and at the ninth hour their expulsion from Paradise took place.'

⁴ Gen. ii. 7.

⁵ 1 Cor. iii. 16.

⁶ 2 Cor. vi. 16; Ex. xxix. 45; Lev. xxvi. 12.

CHAPTER II¹.

OF THE CREATION OF THE SEVEN NATURES (SUBSTANCES) IN SILENCE.

WHEN God in His mercy wished to make known all His power and His wisdom, in the beginning, on the evening of the first day, which is Sunday, He created seven natures (substances) in silence, without voice. And because there was as yet none to hear a sound, He did well to create them in silence, that He might not make anything uselessly; but He willed, and heaven, earth, water, air, fire, and the angels and darkness, came into being from nothing.

Footnotes

¹ Chap. iii in the Oxford MS.

CHAPTER III¹.

OF EARTH, WATER, AIR, AND FIRE.

THE earth was *tôh we-bôh*², that is to say, it was unarranged and unadorned, but plunged in the midst of the waters. The waters were above it, and above the waters was air, and above the air was fire. The earth is by nature cold and dry. Dry land appeared on the third day, when the trees and plants were created; and the waters were separated therefrom on the second day, when the firmament was made from them. Water is by nature cold and moist. As touching the 'Spirit which was brooding upon the face of the waters³,' some men have ignorantly imagined it to have been the Holy Spirit⁴, while others have more correctly thought it to have been this air (of ours). Air is by nature hot and moist. Fire was operating in the upper ether, above the atmosphere; it possessed heat only, and was without luminosity until the fourth day, when the luminaries were created: we shall mention it in the chapter on the luminaries (chap. x). Fire is by nature hot and dry.

Footnotes

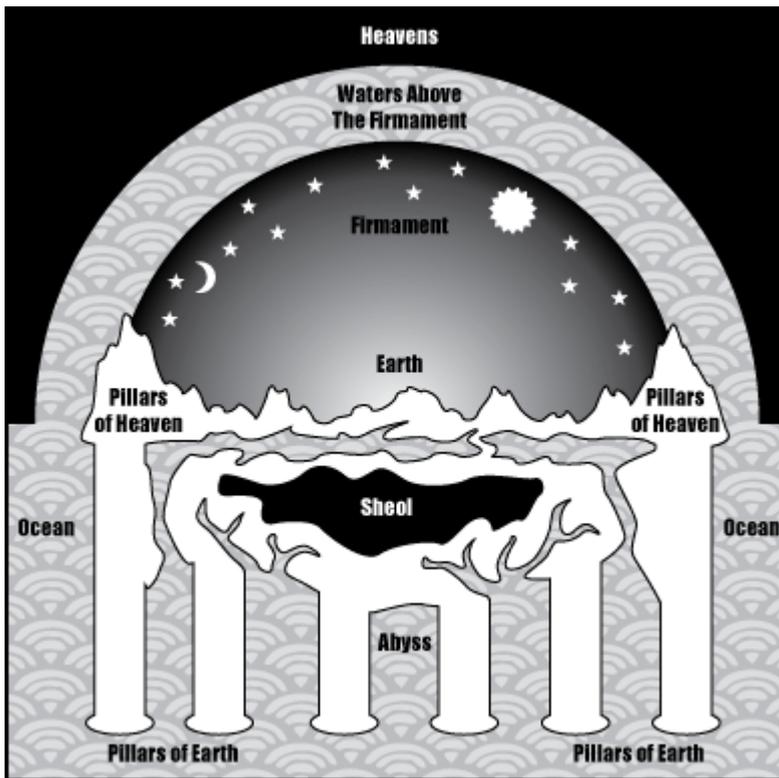
¹ Chap. iv in the Oxford MS.

² Gen. i. 2, a chaotic waste.

³ Gen. i. 2.

⁴ This view is maintained in the 'Cave of Treasures,' Brit. Mus. Add. 25,875, fol. 3**b**, col. 1: 'And on the first day of the week the Holy Spirit, one of the Persons of the Trinity, brooded upon the waters: and through His brooding upon the face of the waters they were blessed that they might be bringers forth.' See Bezold's translation, *Die Schatzhöhle*, p. 1; and Schoenfelder's note 26, on p. 9 of his

translation of *The Bee*.





Canto 31 : Paradiso (Heaven). - Gustave Dore

CHAPTER IV¹.

OF HEAVEN.

HEAVEN is like a roof to the material world, and will serve as the floor of the new world. It is by nature shining and glorious, and is the dwelling-place of the invisible hosts. When God spread out this firmament, He brought up above it a third part of the waters, and above these is the heaven of light and of the luminaries. Hence people say 'the heaven, and the heaven of heavens²'; for we call both the firmament and the waters which are above it 'heaven.' Some consider that the verse 'Let the waters which are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord³' refers to the holy angels and to our Lord's humanity; but neither the Church nor the orthodox teachers accept this.

Footnotes

¹ Chap. v in the Oxford MS.

² 1 Kings viii. 27.

³ Ps. cxlviii. 4.