

Let us notice this feature. The only reference that can be found in Genesis 2 to creation of vegetation is the statement that "the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he placed the man whom he had formed." (Gen. 2:8). Verse 9 specifically mentions the trees in the garden. There is no mention of grass or of herbs. Actually the account says nothing about creation of vegetation; it simply speaks of the planting of some trees in a garden. To say that the statement that God planted a garden and placed man there is an account of the creation of vegetation, is as if one were to say that the account of a man building a wooden house for his bride is an account of the creation. Genesis 2:8-9 is really only an account of the preparation of a place for Adam, and most critical writers recognize this fact and omit it from their list of alleged discrepancies.

As a matter of fact, if the writer is credited with normal intelligence, even the planting of the garden should not be thought of as following the creation of man. It is rare indeed that a man will take a wife, and only thereafter begin to look for a place where she could live. God can be expected to have as much intelligence in planning as a normal human being. We are not told that God caused a garden of great trees suddenly to come into existence. We are told that he planted it. The account pictures a long slow process of preparing the garden to be a fit place for Adam and Eve to live. Are we to think of God as such a poor and clumsy worker, that having first created man out of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, he would then lay him aside to dry while he would plant a garden and wait 50 or 100 years for the trees to grow to reasonable size and for things to get into proper condition to receive the man whom he had created. When it says, "and God planted a garden," the meaning of the verb "planted" is clearly that of our English pluperfect. God had planted a garden in preparation for His creating of man and had given the garden time to grow to the proper size before he created man and put him in it.

It would be possible to translate the Hebrew: "and God had planted." However, this is not necessary, for even the word "planted," as commonly used in English, would not necessarily indicate that what is described came later than the previous events. It is a mention of the preparation that God had made for the proper place for Adam to live. Though chronologically it comes earlier, it is altogether logical to mention it later.

So we do not have here a contradiction in the order of the creation of vegetation. We have no mention of the creation of vegetation but merely of the planting of a garden. But even this planting of a garden does not occur, as the critics allege, after the creation of man. Perhaps we should say, it does not so occur unless we presuppose that we have here an extremely primitive document containing the ideas of very primitive and naive individuals, unable to use normal intelligence in interpreting conditions of the world which they are describing. If one approaches the Bible with such a presupposition as this, naturally he will find it full of contradictions and confusion. If, however, he approaches it on the assumption merely that the writer has normal intelligence, and that the courtesy which is extended to all other writers should be given to him, to interpret his words as fitting together rather than to seek to import unnecessary contradictions, this problem is eliminated.

There remains, however, the alleged contradiction in the order of the creation of animals. Most critical writers maintain that Genesis 2 has man created, then animals, and then woman, in contradiction to the order of Genesis 1 which represents the animals as being created first.

Now it is true that in verse 19 we find the statement that "out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field," and that this statement occurs after the account of the creation of man. Yet, if we give the writer credit for normal intelli-