different from our usual custom. Yet writers in many other languages
frequently use various names for an individual and even oscillate back
and forth between them. The name of the patriarch Jacob was changed to
Israel, but both names continued to be used, even sometimes in the same
verse. Thus Gen. 46:2, which most critics assign to E, says: "And God
spake unto Israel in the visions of the night and said, Jacob, Jacob."
Similarly Gen. 49:2, which most critics assign to J, reads: "Gather
yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob: and hearken unto
Israel your father."

In English we rarely see this type of variation, but we often use
different names for an individual in different connections depending on
the particular relationship. Thus a woman may speak of her husband to
her close friends as "Henry," to her children as "Dad," and to strangers
as "Dr. Smith." Having begun with one usage it is natural to continue it
until there is reason to switch to another. In this way all the varia-
tion of divine names in Genesis can easily be explained. Sometimes one
name is more appropriate to a situation; sometimes variety is felt to be
a useful literary device.

There is obviously a difference between "Elohim," the general name
that indicates the powerful God of creation, and the name represented in
the KJV by "the LORD," which shows God in an intimate relation with His
people as the One who redeems them and who cares for them. In Gen. 1:1-2:4,
which tells of the creation of the universe, the general name of God is
most appropriate. The next few chapters give details of the creation of
man and describe God's dealings with him. Here the personal name is most
appropriate.