

reason, and hardly deserve the opinion of the Poet, as men who

"Stick up their inch of wisdom on the point
Of philosophic wit, called argument:
And then, exulting in the paper, cry,
Behold the Sun!—and Indus-like adore."

These extracts may serve to expose the awkward attempts of infidelity, to evade the authority of Revelation; but there is an evident want of probability of proof, and of moral certainty,—and the exhibition of a basis on which such views could rest, is as far from possibility, as man's wildest theories of the philosophers' stone of transmutation, and perpetual motion.

In endeavouring to obtain a precise idea of Creation itself, the mind of the intelligent and christian enquirer is naturally, as to a true source, led to the account offered to us in the sacred volume. It is there said, with emphasis, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"; yet, even here, in the extreme simplicity of the expression, the majestic simplicity of truth—there appears to be a vacuum in the answer to the enquiry, inasmuch, as to the terms themselves, there is no precision of meaning affixed. To the Greek term, *κρίσις*, is generally applied the meaning, "to make something out of nothing"; and perhaps this may assist us somewhat in introducing the subject under consideration.

The heathen Philosophers believed in the eternity of matter; or, that the universe was created out of pre-existent materials; and that this confused mass or chaos of disorganized matter, awaited but the forming hand and arranging skill of the Divine Power; but even this appears incompatible with the scriptural account, "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God;—so that things which are seen, were not made of things which do appear. (Heb. xi. 3.)

Here they are distinctly stated, not to have been made out of pre-existent matter,—because, if they were, *that matter*, however extended and modified, must be so far tangible and apparent, as to be seen in that in which it was compounded or modified; and it consequently could not be said, that the things which are seen were *not* made of things *which do appear*. We are therefore hereby instructed, that the present mundane fabric was *not* formed or reformed, from one anterior—but that it was in fact, created by the power of God from nothing.

The eye of every observer discovers in the world which we inhabit, the existence of organized matter, divided into sections: animate and inanimate, in motion or inert. The earth and the sea are confined to the separate bounds of their habitation, guarded by decrees, and impassable beyond certain limits; herbs and vegetables, trees, shrubs and flowers, studding the vegetable world;—while the animal world comprises the various orders of nonsentient and irresponsible, but animate and instinct existence;—above which, and holding subordinate government over which, is placed Man—an accountable and sentient being;—while over all is hung a canopy of bright cerulean expanse—itsself spangled with worlds travelling through illimitable space, and lighted up with orbs which, by their brilliancy, obscure the vision, and control the research of man.

The question before us, then, is—how the rude mass of matter was first created, and by what means it was brought into the beautiful assemblage of parts, by which it is characterized, and which arrests the admiration or strikes the attention, of every beholder—what time was occupied in that formation and arrangement—and what was the design and intention of the whole.

The principal features in the argument respecting the eternity of matter, ought, perhaps, to precede other observations on this part of our subject. The arguments, objections and answers, may be classed as follows:—

The world, or the universe, is eternal—or the material of which it is made, existed from all eternity.

To this we may answer—If we suppose that the world existed from all eternity, it argues that it must be self-existent; if self-existent, necessarily existent; if necessarily existent, matter must have filled all space, must have existed every where, either in motion or at rest,—and thus we are at once launched into the midst of a palpable absurdity.

Again: We argue against the eternity of matter from the nature of Time. Time is a succession of moments, as matter is an aggregate of atoms. Time cannot be reckoned ab infinito—it cannot be positively infinite because it is composed of finite parts; and if so, these finite parts must have had a beginning, therefore, the sum total both of time and matter, by a parity of reasoning, must have had a beginning likewise.

A third reply is, the absence of all data prior to the Mosaic account of the Creation.

It is true that Plato, in his *Critias*, mentions Atlantis as having been buried in the ocean about 9000 years, before the age in which he wrote. He asserts this to have been well known to the Egyptian priests, and to the contemporary inhabitants of Attica. But where is the historical record of the fact? Even the learned now generally agree in pronouncing his account, not only to be fictitious, but never intended by him to be regarded otherwise.

It has been said, that the Chinese regard the world as some hundreds of thousands of years older than the Mosaic account; that the Chaldeans carried back the origin of society 473,000 years; that the Egyptian priests reckoned between Menes and Sothou 341 generations—but with the latter, the accounts are so discordant and so slenderly supported by evidence, that we cannot hesitate in pronouncing them fictitious and false; and with respect to the former, the researches of a late traveller, the Rev. W. H. Medhurst, of the Church Missionary Society, go to prove the falsity of the assertion, by shewing that the Chinese traditions, and their books of record, go far to confirm the chronological data of Moses, both with regard to the deluge, and to the Creation itself. A late Review of this work, enables us to place within a very small compass, his remarks on this subject.

* Commencing with the early history of China, we may be allowed to correct an error into which many have fallen, relative to the assumption of an extravagant chronology by the Chinese. It has been generally supposed that the Chinese nation maintain an antiquity of myriads of years, and that their historical records, stretching far back into the vista of more than a thousand ages, are at such variance with the comparatively recent account of Moses, as to oblige us either to question the one or the other. This was, at one time, gladly caught at by the sceptics of Europe; and they