revelation. Nothing elſe indeed can account for the general prevalence of a doctrine ſo remote from human imagina­tion, and of which we find veſtiges in the ſacred books of almoſt every civilized people of antiquity. The corrupt ſtate in which it is viewed in the writings of Plato and others, is the natural conſequence of its deſcent through a long courſe of oral tradition ; and then falling into the hands of men who bent every opinion as much as poſſible to a conformity with their own ſpeculations. The Trinity of Platoniſm therefore, inſtead of being an objection, lends, in our opinion, no feeble ſupport to the Chriſtian doc­trine, ſince it affords almoſt a complete proof of that doc­trine’s having made part of the firſt revelations communica­ted to man.

Having thus diſcovered that the one God, to whom Mo­ſes gives the plural name *Elohim,* comprehends three per­ſons ; let us now inquire what power this Tri-une God ex­erted, when, as the ſame ſacred writer informs us, he crea­ted the heaven and the earth. That by the heaven and the earth is here meant the whole univerſe, viſible and inviſible, is known to every perſon acquainted with the phraſeology of Scripture ; and we need inform no man converrant with Engliſh writers, that by *creation,* in its proper ſenſe, is meant bringing into *being,* or making that to *exist* which exiſted not *before.* It muſt, however, be acknowledged, that the Hebrew word בדא does not always imply the produc­tion of ſubſtance, but very often the forming of particular organized bodies out of pre-exiſting matter. Thus when it is ſaid@@\* that “ God *created* great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abun­dantly after their kind,” and again, that " he *created* man male and female ;” though the word בדא is uſed on both occaſions, we are not to conceive that the bodies of the firſt human pair, and of theſe animals, were brought into being from nonentity, but only that they were formed by a pro­per organization being given to pre-exiſtent matter. But when Mores ſays, “ In the beginning God *created* the hea­ven and the earth,” he cannot be ſuppoſed to mean that “ in the beginning God only gave form to matter already exiſting of itſelf ;” for in the very next verſe we are aſſured that after this act of creation was over, “ the earth was ſtill *without form* and void,” or, in other words, in a chaotic ſtate.

That the Jews, before the coming of our Saviour, underſtood their lawgiver to teach a proper creation, is plain from that passage in the Second book of the Maccabees, in which a mother, to perſuade her ſon to ſuffer the cruelleſt tortures rather than forſake the law of his God, uſes the following argument : “ I beſeech thee, my son, look upon the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, and conſi­der that God made them or things that were not.” To the ſame purpoſe the inſpired author or the epiſtle to the Hebrews, when magnifying the excellence of faith, says, “ 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 ;” where, as biſhop Pearſon has ably proved@@\*, the phraſe μη εϰφαινόμενων equi­valent to ουϰ εξ ονlων, in the quotation from the Maccabees.

The very firſt verse, therefore, of the book of Geneſis in­forms us oſ a moſt important truth which all the uninſpired wiſdom or antiquity could not diſcover. It aſſures us, that as nothing exiſts by chance, ſo nothing is necessarily exiſting but the three divine persons in the one Godhead. Every thing else, whether material or immaterial, derives its ſubſtance, as well as its form or qualities,from the fiat of that ſelf-exiſtent Being, “ who was, and is, and is to come.”

It does not, however, follow from this verſe, or from any other passage in the sacred Scriptures, that the whole universe was called into exiſtence at the ſame inſtant ; neither is it by any means evident that the chaos of our world was brought into being on the firſt of thoſe ſix days during which it was gradually reduced into form. From a paſſage@@\* in the book of Job, in which we are told by God him­ſelf, that when the "foundation of the earth was laid the morning ſtars sang together, and all the sons of God ſhouted for joy, ’ it appears extremely probable that worlds had been created, formed, and inhabited, long before our earth had any exiſtence. Nor is this opinion at all contrary to what Moſes ſays of the creation of the ſtars ; for though they are mentioned in the ſame verſe with the ſun and moon, yet the manner in which, according to the original, they are introduced, by no means indicates that all the ſtars were formed at the ſame time with the luminaries of our ſyſtem. Moſt of them may have been created long before, and ſome of them ſince, our world was brought into being ; for that clauſe (verſe 16. ) “ he made the ſtars alſo,” is in the He­brew no more than “ and the ſtars ;” the words *he made* be­ing inſerted by the tranſlators. The whole verſe therefore ought to be rendered thus, “ and God made two great lights ; the greater light to rule the day, and the leſſer light with the ſtars to rule the night ;” where nothing is intima­ted with reſpect to the *time* when the ſtars were formed, any more than in that verſe of the Psalms@@\*, which exhorts us to give thanks to God who made the moon and ſtars to rule by night; for his mercy endureth “ for ever.” The firſt verſe of the book of Geneſis informs us, that all things ſpiritual and corporeal derive their exiſtence from God ; but it is nowhere said that all matter was created at the ſame time ; and the generations of men afford ſufficient evidence of a ſucceſſive and continual creation of ſpirits.

That the whole corporeal univerſe *may have been* created at once muſt be granted ; but if ſo, we have reason to be­lieve that this earth, with the ſun and all the planets of the ſyſtem, were ſuffered to remain for ages in a ſtate of chaos, “ without form and void becauſe it appears from other ſcriptures, that worlds of intelligent creatures exiſted, and even that ſome angels bad fallen from a ſtate of happineſs prior to the era of the Mosaic coſmogony. That the ſun and the other planets revolving round him were formed at the ſame time with the earth, cannot indeed be queſtioned ; for it is not only extremely probable in itſelf from the known laws oſ nature, but is expreſsly affirmed by the ſa­cred hiſtorian, who relates the formation of the ſun and moon in the order in which it took place. Into the par­ticulars of his narrative we have no occaſion to enter, as it is ſufficiently explained and vindicated in other articles of this work (ſee Creation and Earth); but there is one difficulty which, though we have given the common solutions of it elſewhere, we may again notice in this place, becauſe it has furniſhed infidel ignorance with ſomething like an objection to the divine legation of the Hebrew law­giver.

Moſes informs us, that on the first *day* after the produc­tion of the chaos, the el*ement of light* was created; and yet within a few sentences he declares, that the ſun, the foun­tain of light, was not made till the *fourth day.* How are theſe two passages to be reconciled ? We anſwer, That they may be reconciled many ways. Moſes wrote for the uſe of a whole people, and not for the amuſement or inſtruction of a few aſtronomers ; and in this view his language is sufficiently proper, even though we ſuppoſe the formation of the sun and the other planets to have been carried on at the ſame time, and in the ſame progreſſive manner, with the for­mation of this earth. The voice which called light into exiſtence would ſeparate the fiery and luminous particles of

@@@[m]\* Gen. i. 21, 27.

@@@[m]\* Exposition of the Creed.

@@@[m]\* xxxviii. 7.

@@@[m]\* Psalms cxxxvi. 9.