

antagonist agencies, which will confine their wild war to a narrow field, and soon bring them again into peaceful submission. For such has always been the case, and the limits of their irregularities are no wider now than six thousand years ago. In other words, the repressing agency has always been superior to the destroying force, when the latter has risen to a certain limit; and I doubt not but the profounder mathematics of angelic minds might as easily calculate the anomalies and perturbations of winds and waves as the formulas of La Place can determine those of the solar system. And if such constancy has existed for six thousand years in meteorological changes, of all others in nature apparently the most irregular, why, the atheist will ask, may not that constancy have been eternal? And with equal reason may he ask the same in respect to all changes resulting from mechanical, chemical, and organic laws, which we witness in nature, except those which come within the province of geology, and even concerning some of those; and what changes in the material world do not result, directly or remotely, from one, or two, or all of these laws? Yet, in regard to all these changes, there is no inconsistency in supposing them to have gone on in an eternal series; and hence they furnish no proof of the non-eternity of the world.

In the seventh and last place, the recent origin of society, as shown by historical monuments, is regarded as evidence of the recent origin of the world. This argument was well understood as long ago as the days of Lucretius, who states it very clearly in the oft-quoted lines:

“ Si nulla fuit genitilis origo,
Terrarum et cœli, semperque eterna fuit,
Cur, supra bellum Thebanum et funera Trojæ,
Non alias alii quoque res cecinere pœtæ?”

This argument, though it has been met by a plausible reply, is certainly of great importance in its bearing upon the recent origin of the human race, which, as we shall shortly see, is a point of much interest. But it is obvious that it proves nothing respecting the origin of matter, since this might have had an eternal existence before man was placed upon it. We need not, therefore, be delayed by its discussion.

Such is a fair summary, as I believe, of the arguments usually