

over which it has travelled be a distance in space or a distance in time—that is, whether they whose observations it bears to us are the men of other countries, or of by-gone ages. History if not direct is at least derivative observation; and if rightly derived is only observation at a distance instead of observation on the spot. There is an end of all solid philosophy, if such evidence is set aside—and that, to make room for the mere wantonness of the human spirit, that would fain substitute its own creations in the place of all which observation distinctly points out, or which history audibly tells of the creation by God. At this rate the fair domain of science is again laid open, as in the days of the schoolmen, to the misrule, the wild vagaries of unchastened imagination.

12. Hence it is that in the exceeding dimness of reason or of nature's light, we do feel the utmost value for all those historical notices, which serve to indicate that the world had a beginning. Among the ambiguities of natural theism, and between the plausibilities which can be alleged on either side of this question—between an eternal universe whose laws and processes are now as they have ever been, and an eternal God who hath ordained these laws and still overrules these processes—there is no evidence that we should more desiderate than what may be called the observational. We should like the question to be rescued from the obscurity of *metaphysique*—and that the clear experimental light of authentic and credible history were shed over it. If from the documents and vestiges of other times, there could be collected even so much as the bare