

less decisive. After the famous demonstration of the eternity of the universe by La Grange, provided the present laws of gravity alone control it, we could hardly expect that, so soon, even astronomy would furnish proof of a disturbing cause, which must ultimately and inevitably bring ruin among the heavenly bodies, if some counteracting agency be not exerted. Yet such a source of derangement exists in the supposed medium extending through all space, which has already shown its retarding influence upon Encke's, Biela's, and Halley's comets. And who can say that some of the vast periods which geology discloses may not have been commensurate with those intervening between catastrophes among the heavenly bodies as the result of the universal resisting ether? At present, however, we can say only that we know such long periods have existed in geology, and probably in astronomy. And their mere existence is fatal to the idea of the eternity of the world in its present state.

If, then, geology can clearly demonstrate the present state of the globe to have had a beginning; if she can show us the period, by fair induction, when one liquid, fiery ocean enveloped the whole earth; if she can show us five or six economies of organic life successively flourishing and passing away; if she can trace man back to his origin at a comparatively recent date; if, in fact, she can show us that the most important operations on the globe, and the most complicated and exalted organic races, had a beginning; and if astronomy affords glimpses of similar changes: then why may we not safely leave the subject of the world's eternity an undecided question, consistently with the most perfect Theism? If we can prove that the power, the wisdom, and the benevolence of the Deity have again and again interfered with the regular sequence of nature's operations, and introduced new conditions and new and more perfect beings, by using the matter already in existence, what though we cannot, by the light of science, run back to the first production of matter itself? What though the atheist should here be allowed to maintain his favourite theory that matter never had a beginning? What doctrine of natural religion is thereby unfavourably affected, if we can only show the interposition of the Deity in all of matter's important modifications? Such an admission would not prove matter to be eternal, but only that science has not yet placed within the reach of man the means of proving its non-eteruity. And really, such an