

admission would be far more favourable to the cause of truth than to rely, as theologians have done, on metaphysical subtilties to prove that matter had a beginning. For the sceptical mind will not merely remain unconvinced by such arguments, but be very apt to draw the sweeping inference that all the doctrines of natural and revealed religion rest on similar dreamy abstractions.

But is natural theology in fact destitute of all satisfactory proof that the matter of the universe had a beginning? Such proof, it seems to me, she will seek in vain in the wide fields of physical and mathematical science; and the solution of the question which metaphysics offers, as we have seen, does not satisfy. But there are sources of evidence on this point which seem to me of the most satisfactory kind.

In the first place, we may derive from science some presumptive proof of a commencement of the matter of the universe. The fact that the organic races on the globe had a beginning affords such proof. For matter could not have originated itself; nor is there any proof of its eternal existence; and to assume that it did eternally exist, without proof, is far more unphilosophical than to admit its origination in the divine will. For since God has complete control over matter, it is probable that he created it with such properties as he wished it to possess. And furthermore, to the power and wisdom that could set in motion the heavenly bodies, and create and adapt existing organisms out of pre-existent matter, we can assign no limits, and hence conclude them to be infinite. Therefore they are sufficient to the production of matter, which could not have demanded more than infinite wisdom and power.

Now, in confirmation of these presumptions, we may appeal to the Bible. It is true that writers have been accustomed to consider it contrary to sound logic to draw from revelation any support or illustrations of natural religion. But why should an historical fact possess less value, if transmitted to us through the channel of sacred, rather than profane, writers? Now, it would be regarded as perfectly good reasoning to seize upon any facts stated by heathen philosophers and historians, illustrative of natural religion. But the Scriptures carry with them, to say the least, quite as strong evidence of their authenticity and claims to be credited, as any ancient uninspired writer. We place them on the same ground as any other