

that differ more or less from an exact circle; but still in curves nearly circular. Now these bodies might have been made to revolve in ovals of larger or smaller degree, or in exact circles. They have, however, been placed in such positions, and compelled to take such paths, as must prevent them from interfering with each other's motions, either by positive contact, or by the powerful disturbing force they might have exerted upon each other. There are, therefore, proofs, in the very arrangement of the solar system, of design, and strong evidence of a foreknowing mind.

It may also be observed, that the present arrangement of the members of the solar system, as far as investigation has carried us, is the only one by which the stability of the whole can be secured. But, in contemplating the stability of the system, it must be borne in mind, that the planets exert an attractive power on each other, though they are all under the still more powerful influence of the sun. The earth, for instance, is retained in its orbit by the sun, but it is proportionably affected by Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, and the other planets, according to their masses and distances. But all these bodies are constantly changing their positions in relation to the earth and to each other, and upon the discovery of this fact we are naturally led to inquire what will be the ultimate result of these combined attractions. The question is not whether they will produce an immediate effect injurious to the stability of the system, but whether they will not do so in ages to come. In a single revolution their influence must be small, for the combined attraction of all the planets, by which the disturbances are produced, is insignificant when compared with the force of the sun. But if these slight influences continue to act upon the body, revolution after revolution, they may, in process of time, remove the planet from its present orbit.

To give an individuality to the inquiry, it may be asked, if it be not possible that the attractions of the planets may, in process of time, draw the earth from its orbit, and thus produce all the evils which would result from a change of season? or is it not possible that it may be brought so near to another body as to interfere with equable motion, or produce a second deluge? There are perturbations, and if they can be carried on without limit, there is no possibility of calculating, or even of imagining, the wretched condition to which