

as it now is, at any specified point of time, throughout the millions of ages that are past, than that it should so exist at this moment? Does what we suppose might have been then, imply any greater absurdity, than what we actually see to be at present? Now, might not the same question be carried back to any point or period of duration, however remote? or, in other words, might we not dispense with a beginning for the world altogether?" "For aught we can know *a priori*," says Hume, "matter may contain the source or spring of order originally within itself as well as mind does; and there is no more difficulty in conceiving that the several elements, from an internal, unknown cause, may fall into the most exquisite arrangement, than to conceive that their ideas, in the great universal mind, from a like internal cause, fall into that arrangement. If this material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other, and so on without end. It were better, therefore, never to look beyond the present material world. By supposing it to contain the principle of its order within itself, we really assert it to be God; and the sooner we arrive at that divine Being, so much the better."

Now, in what manner have these ingenious arguments been met? Until quite recently, no one has supposed that any light on this subject could be derived from geology. Indeed, even now, by many, that science is regarded as favouring the idea of the world's eternity. Neither has it been thought that, on a question of natural theology, like this, it was proper to appeal to the Bible. Philosophers and divines, however, have attempted to reply to these arguments, irrespective of geology and revelation; and they have generally convinced themselves that they have been successful. But to my mind, I must confess, this has always appeared the weakest spot in natural religion. Some of the arguments to prove the world not eternal do, indeed, appear, at first statement, very profound; but they rather silence than convince; and the longer we reflect upon them, the more apt are we to doubt their force.

And here I am constrained to bear testimony to the masterly manner in which this subject has been treated by Dr. Chalmers. Perceiving that the defences of natural religion on this subject were weak, in spite of much show of strength,