

Let me not be thought to be an advocate in any sense for the unsupported notion of an infinite series of organic beings. But the question is, whether those who, in spite of common sense, have maintained this opinion, have been fairly refuted by such metaphysical evasions as I have quoted. The truth is, that, in order to end this dispute, the Theist needs to bring forward at least one example in which the commencement of some race of animals can be fairly pointed out; and I know not where such an example can be found, save in the Bible and geology.

In the fifth place, the changing state of the world has been regarded as incompatible with the world's eternity. This argument is thus stated by Bishop Sumner: "If the universe itself is the first eternal being, its existence is necessary, as metaphysicians speak; and it must be possessed of all those qualities which are inseparable from necessary existence. Of this nature are immutability and perfection. For change is the attribute of imperfection, and imperfection is incompatible with that Being, which is, as the hypothesis affirms, independent, and, therefore, can have no source of imperfection. To suppose, therefore, of the first independent Being, that it could have existed otherwise than it is, is no less contrary to the idea of necessity, with which we set out, than to suppose it not to exist at all."

This reasoning is not destitute of plausibility. For there is scarcely any lesson more forcibly impressed on short-lived man than the mutability of the world. And it is indeed true that change is its most striking attribute. But when we look at the subject philosophically, we find that all this mutability is consistent with the most perfect ultimate stability; nay, that the change is essential to secure the stability. Apart from what revelation and geology teach, these changes in nature form cycles, which, like those in astronomy, are perfectly consistent with the eternal permanence of the general system to which they belong. In the motions of the heavenly bodies, a considerable amount of irregularity and oscillation about a mean state does not tend to the ruin, but rather to the preservation, of the system, provided the anomalies do not extend beyond certain limits. It is just so with other changes that are going on around us. All of them are, in fact, as much regulated by mathematical laws as the perturbations of