

pre-existence, I do not wish to undervalue, nor to explain away. On the hypothesis that the actual commencing point of the world's history was subsequent to the occurrence of such things in the perfect ideal whole, these phenomena would appear precisely as if the facts themselves had been diachronic instead of prochronic, as was really the case.

But what about astronomical evidences for an old universe such as those cited by Sir William Herschel, the builder of large reflecting telescopes? In 1802 he stated that his instruments were capable of revealing objects at a distance of 12 million million million miles from earth, and that this distance was connected to vast periods of time. He wrote:

Hence it follows, that when we see an object of the calculated distance at which one of these very remote nebulae may still be perceived, the rays of light which convey its image to the eye must have been more than nineteen hundred and ten thousand, that is, almost two millions of years on their way; and that, consequently, so many years ago, this object must already have had an existence in the sidereal heavens, in order to send out those rays by which we now perceive it.

Gosse replied:

Beautiful, and at first sight unanswerable as this argument is, it falls to the ground before the spear-touch of our Ithuriel, the doctrine of prochronism. There is nothing more improbable in the notion that the sensible undulation was created at the observers eye, with all the prerequisite undulations prochronic, than in the notion that blood was created in the capillaries of the first human body. The latter we have seen to be a fact: is the former an impossibility?

Gosse summarized his argument as follows:

Finally, the acceptance of the principles presented in this volume, even in their fullest extent, would not in the least degree, affect the study of scientific geology. The character and order of the strata; their disruptions and displacements and injections; the successive floras and faunas; and all the other phenomena, would be facts still. They would be still, as now, legitimate objects of examination and inquiry. I do not know that a single conclusion now accepted, would need to be given up, except that of actual chronology. And even in respect of this, it would be rather a modification than relinquishment of what is at present held; we might still speak of the inconceivably long duration of the processes in question, provided we understand ideal instead of actual time; -- that the duration was projected in the mind of God, and not really existent.