with George Bernard Shaw that human beings may one day grow as old as Methusalem, we do not share his belief that, "disentangling their life from the matter that has always mocked it", they will ever come to be immortal and omnipotent. Yet, immortality and pure, bodiless intellectuality would be the qualities indispensable for the elevation of man above the universe. As long, however, as he remains a part of it, he will have to share the fate of all partial existence, namely, to perish so that the whole may live. The forces of the universe which have created man will in time reduce him to some simpler level of existence. It is only for a few seconds of cosmic time that his culture triumphs over nature. In the end, man, too, will return to matter.

The tragedy of human limitation is climaxed by the realization that history's destination remains enigmatic. Although much is now known about the historic - or better prehistoric - beginnings of human development, and increased knowledge is being accumulated regarding the immediate future, the ultimate destiny of the race remains doubtful. Nobody can yet foretell whether "man and beast can at the best look forward to a diversified agony of twenty million years"[7] only to perish with the globe, or whether "for many scores, if not for hundreds of millions of years to come, the earth will continue to be a comfortable habitable abode for creatures like ourselves"[8] and man will succeed in moving to other stars in time, thus escaping the destruction of the planet[9]. To these alternatives, as they presented themselves in the pre-atomic age, must today be added the possibility that man armed with atomic energy may destroy the globe within the next decades. The historical process in its entirety is thus beyond our ken. How then dare we call it a theodicy?

It is in the nature of human affairs that the optimistic prophets of the millenium should have their pessimistic antagonists. Since the dawn of civilization bitter cries could be heard denouncing mankind's degeneration and regression from a Golden Age or a Lost Paradise. There have also been periods during which the recurring cycle of growth and decay was felt to be the paramount law of biological organisms as well as of socio-cultural systems. Change, if acknowledged at all, was minimized because it was thought to be temporary and superficial. "Dust thou art, to dust returneth" became the watchword applying not only to man and beast, but to city and nation, class and Historic Civilization.

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7) Henry Adams, The Degradation of the Democratic Dogma, 1919, p.185.
8) K.F. Mather, "The Future of Man as an Inhabitant of the Earth", A Treasury of Science, ed. Shapley, Rapport, and Wright, 1943, p.686.
9) J.B.S. Haldane, "The Last Judgment: A Scientist's Vision of the Future of Man", ibid., pp. 703 ff.