

The subject of deluges, and especially that of Noah, will next claim our attention. For though it is now generally agreed that geology cannot detect traces of such a deluge as the Scriptures describe, yet upon some other bearings of that subject it does cast light; and so remarkable is the history of opinions concerning the Noachian deluge, that it could not on that account alone be properly passed in silence.

It is well known that the philosophy of antiquity, almost without exception, regarded matter as eternal; and in modern times, metaphysical theology has done its utmost to refute the supposed dangerous dogma. Geology affords us some new views of the subject; and although it does not directly refute the doctrine, it brings before us facts of such a nature as to show, that, so far as religion is concerned, such a refutation is of little importance. This will furnish another theme of discussion.

It may be thought extravagant, but I hazard the assertion, that no science is so prolific of direct testimony to the benevolence of the Deity as geology; and some of its facts bear strongly upon the objections to this doctrine. So important a subject will, therefore, occupy at least one or two lectures.

In all ages, philosophers have, in one form or another, endeavoured to explain the origin and the phenomena of creation by a power inherent in nature, independent of a personal Deity, usually denominated *natural law*. And in modern times this hypothesis has assumed a popular form and a plausible dress. Not less than one lecture is demanded for its examination, especially as its advocates appeal with special confidence to geology for its support.

In existing nature, no one fact stands out more prominently than unity of design; and it is an interesting inquiry, whether the same general system prevailed through the vast periods of geological history as that which now adorns our globe. This question I shall endeavour to answer in the affirmative, by appealing to a multitude of facts.

Another question of deep interest in theology is, whether the Deity exercises over the world any special providence; whether he ever interferes with the usual order of things by introducing change; or whether he has committed nature to the control of unalterable laws, without any direct efficiency. Light is thrown on these points by the researches of geology, if I mistake not; and I shall not fail to attempt its development.