

and earthquakes without the attendant evils. The same question meets us at almost every step of our examination of the present system of the world. For we every where meet with evil, incidentally connected with agencies whose predominant effects are beneficial. I incline to the opinion, that the true answer to this question is, that the evil is permitted that thereby greater good may be secured to the universe. Still the subject of the origin of evil is one whose full solution can hardly be expected in the present world, because we cannot here master all its elements. When it can be solved, we can tell why so much desolation and suffering are permitted to accompany the earthquake and the volcano. But if we can show that benefits far outweighing the evil are the result of this terrific agency, we gather from it decided evidence of the divine benevolence: the same evidence which we gain from any other operations of nature; for in them all there is only a preponderance of good, not unmixed good. The desolation of this fair world by volcanic agency, and especially the destruction of life, do, indeed, teach us that this present system of nature is adapted to a state of probation and death, instead of a state of rewards and immortal life. It is adapted to sinful and fallen beings, rather than to those who are perfect in holiness and in happiness. In short, it is earth, not heaven. It is not such a world as heaven must be, to secure unalloyed and eternal happiness. Nevertheless, benevolence decidedly predominates in the arrangements of the present system, even in the desolating agency under consideration. I do not deny that God may sometimes employ this agency, as he may every other in nature, for the punishment of the guilty. But before we infer that this is the general use and design of volcanoes and earthquakes, we should ponder well the questions put by our Saviour "to some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. Suppose ye," answered the Saviour, "that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay." Let us follow the example of Jesus Christ, and take a more enlarged view of these startling and distressing events. Let us inquire whether they are not the incidental effects of agencies essential to the per-