

LECTURE VII.

DIVINE BENEVOLENCE AS EXHIBITED IN A FALLEN WORLD.

THE geological proofs of the divine benevolence considered in the last lecture present only a partial view of that glorious characteristic of Jehovah. I am tempted, therefore, to exhibit it in its more general aspect and broader relations. This will necessarily bring into view other important religious truths respecting man's fallen condition and character, and, as a consequence, the modified aspect of the divine goodness in such a world.

To those destitute of a revelation this world has, indeed, ever seemed an inextricable maze, an enigma too dark for human wisdom to solve. Nor have those favoured with the Bible agreed in their modes of clearing up the mystery. Having endeavoured to explain all by following out some leading and favourite idea, their theories have varied as these predominant conceptions differed. One, for instance, fixes his gaze so intently upon the divine benevolence that he is blind to every manifestation of Jehovah's sterner attributes. Another deeply impressed with the story of man's original apostacy, sees only vindictive justice, and penal infliction, and disordered action, in all the movements of nature and the trials and sufferings of man. A third, captivated by the discoveries of modern geology, relative to the existence of suffering and death in the world before man's creation, and learning, moreover, from physiology, that death is a general law of all organized natures, vegetable as well as animal, is led to doubt whether the disorders of the world have any important connection with man's apostacy.

Now, it were easy to show that our views on these subjects have a most important bearing upon our entire system of theology; and, therefore, they deserve our most thorough and can-