

a higher state. If fallen and depraved, they need to pass through such a discipline before they can be prepared for that higher condition. And surely no one can observe the scenes through which all pass, without being struck with their eminent adaptedness to train man to virtue and holiness. Until we have been pupils for a time in this school, we are not fit even for the successive states in this life into which we pass; much less for a higher condition. But there is a marvellous power in this discipline to prepare us for both, as vast multitudes have testified while they lived and when they died. Even death seems, so far as we can see, to be the only means by which a sinful being can be delivered from his stains; and the dread of this terrific evil is one of the most powerful restraints upon vice, and stimulants to virtue. There is, in fact, no condition in which man is placed, no good or evil that he meets, which is not eminently adapted, if rightly improved, to discipline and strengthen his virtue. Hence we cannot doubt that this is the grand object of the present arrangements of the world. True, if misimproved, the same means become only a discipline in vice. But this is only in conformity with a general principle of the divine government, that the things which rightly used are highly salutary, are proportionably injurious when perverted.

Fifthly. The subject shows us a reason why suffering and death prevailed in this world long before man's existence.

God foresaw, (I will not say foreordained, though he certainly permitted it,) that man would transgress; and, therefore, he made a world adapted to a sinful fallen being, rather than to one pure and holy. If he had adapted it to an unfallen being, and then changed it upon his apostacy, that change must have amounted to a new creation. For, as I have endeavoured to show in a previous lecture, (Lecture III,) the whole constitution of our world, and even its relation to other worlds, must have been altered to fit it for a being who had sinned. To have introduced such a one into a world fitted up for the perfectly holy, would have been a curse instead of a blessing. It was benevolence on the part of God to allow evil to abound in a world which was to be the residence of a sinful creature; for the discipline of such a state was the only chance of his being rescued from the power of sin, and restored the divine favour.