

They are not like many hasty generalizations, which superficial examination has often brought from natural phenomena in proof of this same truth, but which, although beautiful at first view, must be abandoned upon careful research. But these, though repulsive at first, gain solidity and beauty by examination. And they are the more interesting because they come from an unexpected quarter. Men have been accustomed to search among the drift piled up by water and ice, among dislocated and rent strata of rocks, among mountains overturned and fields made desolate by volcanic eruptions, for the mementoes of penal inflictions; but they have not imagined that divine benevolence might be seen among these disturbances and desolations: and that simply because they confined their views to the immediate effect of geological agencies, and did not enlarge their views to take in their connection with the great system of the universe. But now that we find the stamp of benevolence even here, we learn an instructive lesson. Every reflecting mind is aware that the doctrine of divine benevolence lies at the foundation of all natural and revealed religion, and that until this be established we labour in vain to erect a superstructure. It is well known, also, that the existence of natural and moral evil has been considered a strong objection to this great truth. Now, geology furnishes us with many examples, in which agencies, often fraught with terrific evils, are nevertheless eminently beneficial when the whole extent of their operation is taken into account. Why is it not a fair inference that, in all other cases where evils stand out prominently, they are only incidental results of some wide system of operations, of which our limited vision embraces only a part, but whose tendencies as a whole are eminently salutary, and whose incidental evils do, in fact, increase the salutary effects? If so, what reason have we to believe that, when the light of eternity shall clarify our mental eye, and enlarge our knowledge of the present system of the universe, we shall find all "partial evil to be universal good," and that our narrow views alone threw obscurity and difficulty over this subject in this life? O, if even here so many rays of divine love find their way into our narrow prison-house, what will be their brightness when they pour in upon us from the unveiled glories of the heavenly world!