

of any kind, they involuntarily cry to God for help. When the vessel founders in the fury of the storm, the hardened sailor employs that breath in ardent prayer which just before had been poured out in blasphemies. And when the widowed mother hears the tempest howling around her dwelling at night, she cannot but pray for the protection of her child upon the treacherous sea. When violent disease racks the frame, and we feel ourselves rapidly sinking into the grave, it is scarcely in human nature to omit crying to God with a feeling that he can save us. In short, it is a dictate of nature to call upon God in times of trouble. Our reasoning about the constancy of nature, which appears to us while in safety so clearly to show prayer for the removal of natural evils to be useless, loses its power, and the feelings of the heart triumph. It now becomes therefore, an important practical question, which of these views of the providence of God is correct. Is it those which our reasoning derives from the constancy of nature, or those inspired by piety and the Bible? I have already said, that the subject of this lecture removes all presumption against the latter view; and I now proceed to show how God can exercise a special providence over the world, so as to meet the case of every individual, whether for blessing or punishment, and that, too, without miracles.

Whoever believes that geology discloses stupendous miracles of creation, at various epochs, will not doubt that all presumption against miraculous agency at any other time is thus removed. For we are thus shown that the law of miracles forms a part of the divine plan in the government of the world. But this does not prove the same to be the fact in respect to a law of special providence.

It is indeed true that geology gives us no distinct examples of special providence, in the sense which we have attached to that term in the present lecture. But it does furnish a multitude of instances in which changes of physical condition in the earth were met by most wisely adapted changes of organic nature. And even though these changes were the result of miraculous agency, they disclose this principle of the divine government, namely, that peculiarities of condition are to be met by special arrangements, so that every exigency shall be provided for in the manner infinite wisdom sees to be best. Now, this principle constitutes the essence of special providence;