

mark, to prevent misunderstanding. We assume, as the basis of much of our reasoning, those views, now almost universal among geologists, and very common among theologians, which teach that this world existed through a vast and indefinite period before man was placed upon it. Such an opinion we think perfectly reconcilable with a fair interpretation of Scripture, though this is not the place to go into the proof. But let no one imagine, when we take such views for granted, that we mean to cast the slightest doubt upon the inspiration and literal truth of revelation. Let us be believed rather, when we express the conviction that, if admitted, they afford a strong corroboration and illustration of some most important doctrines of revelation.

We proceed now to affix a definite meaning to the phrase *Special Divine Interpositions*.

It requires but a few years' experience in this world to satisfy any observing mind, that natural operations are carried on in a settled order; that the same causes, in the same circumstances, are invariably followed by the same effects. We call this uniformity of operation the course of nature; and the invariable connection between antecedent and consequent we call the laws of nature. If we should see a new force coming in to disturb this settled order, we should call it a miracle. It might do this by a direct counteraction of nature's laws; and this is the common idea of a miracle. But if an unwonted force were added to those laws, the result would be a miracle; and so would a diminution or suspension of their action; for in either case, the effect would be out of the ordinary course of nature, and this we take to be the essential idea in a miracle. Perhaps the best and briefest definition of a miracle is, an event that cannot be explained by the laws of nature. It may, and usually does, contravene those laws;