

earth, *do not belong to one violent and transitory period.* It was indeed a most unwarranted conclusion, when we assumed the contemporaneity of all the superficial gravel on the earth. We saw the clearest traces of diluvial action, and we had, in our sacred histories, the record of a general deluge. On this double testimony it was, that we gave a unity to a vast succession of phenomena, not one of which we perfectly comprehended, and under the name diluvium, classed them all together.

“ To seek the light of physical truth by reasoning of this kind, is, in the language of Bacon, to seek the living among the dead, and will ever end in erroneous induction. Our errors were, however, natural, and of the same kind which led many excellent observers of a former century to refer all the secondary formations of geology to the Noachian deluge. Having been myself a believer, and, to the best of my power, a propagator of what I now regard as a philosophic heresy, and having more than once been quoted for opinions which I do not now maintain, I think it right, [as one of my last acts before I quit this chair,] thus publicly to read my recantation.

“ We ought, indeed, to have paused before we first adopted the diluvian theory, and referred all our old superficial gravel to the action of the Mosaic flood. For of man, and the works of his hands, we have not yet found a single trace among the remnants of a former world entombed in these ancient deposits. In classing together distant unknown formations under one name; in giving them a simultaneous origin, and in determining their date, not by the organic remains we had discovered, but by those we expected hypothetically hereafter to discover, in them; we have given one more example of the passion with which the mind fastens upon general conclusions, and of the readiness with which it leaves the consideration of unconnected truths.

“ Are then the facts of our science opposed to the sacred records? and do we deny the reality of a historic deluge? I utterly reject such an inference. Moral and physical truth may partake of a common essence, but as far as we are concerned, their foundations are independent, and have not one common element. And in the narrations of a great fatal catastrophe, handed down to us, not in our sacred books only, but in the traditions of all nations, there is not a word to justify us in looking to any mere physical monuments as the intelligible records of that event: such monuments, at least, have not yet been found, and it is not perhaps intended that they ever should be found. If, however, we should hereafter discover the skeletons of ancient tribes, and the works of ancient art buried in the superficial det-