

period ; that, after a time it suffered a partial destruction and change by some great catastrophe ; and that, ultimately, *it will be totally destroyed*, after it has ceased to be needed as the theatre of moral probation for the human race." (Page 115.) Of these three positions, the first is the question under our actual consideration : and the middle one is expressed in terms not discrepant from the views concerning the Deluge which are supported in these lectures. With respect to the third, I cannot but feel astonishment, that any serious and intelligent man should have his mind fettered with the common, I might call it the vulgar, notion of a proper destruction of the earth ; and some seem to extend the notion to the whole solar system, and even the entire material universe ; applying the idea of an extinction of being, a reducing to nothingness. This notion has indeed been often used to aid impassioned description in sermons and poetry ; and thus it has gained so strong a hold upon the feelings of many pious persons that they have made it an article of their faith. But, I confess myself unable to find any evidence for it, in nature, reason, or Scripture. We can discover nothing like destruction in the matter of the universe as subjected to our senses. Masses are disintegrated, forms are changed, compounds are decomposed ; but not an atom is annihilated. Neither have we the shadow of reason to assert that mind, the seat of intelligence, ever was or ever will be, in a single instance, destroyed. Should any man ask me, What I presume to think concerning the principle of intelligence in the inferior animals ? What becomes of it, when they die ? Does the soul of an elephant or of a sparrow, of a bee, of an ant, or an animalculum, retain its consciousness after death ? Or, into what state does it pass ? Or, does it absolutely cease to exist ?—I reply, that I pretend not to know, nor do I presume to conjecture ; that an impene-