

all the purposes of religion. Up to this point, infinite benevolence pours its radiance upon the path, and we see good reasons for the evils incident to this life; nay, we see that they are the result of that same benevolence which strews the way with blessings; that, in fact, they are only necessary means of the greatest blessings. I am aware that there is a question lying farther back, in the outskirts of metaphysical theology, which still remains unanswered, and probably never can be settled in this world, because some of its elements are beyond our reach. The inquisitive mind asks why it was necessary for infinite wisdom and power to introduce evil, or allow it to be introduced, into any system of created things. Could not such natures have been bestowed upon creatures, that good only might have been their portion? A plausible answer is, that evil exists because it can ultimately be made subservient of greater good, taking the whole universe into account, than another system. Certainly to fallen man we have reason to believe natural evils are the grand means of his highest good; and hence we derive an argument for the same conclusion in respect to the whole system of evil. Indeed, such are the divine attributes, that it is absurd to suppose God would create any system which was not the best possible in existing circumstances. But even though we cannot solve these questions in their abstract form, and as applied to the whole creation, it is sufficient for every practical purpose of religion if we can show, as we have endeavoured to do in this lecture, how the present system of the world for a fallen being illustrates, instead of disproving, the divine benevolence.

Here, then, is the resolution of some of the darkest enigmas of human existence, which philosophy, unaided by revelation, has never solved. Here we get hold of the thread that conducts us through the most crooked labyrinths of life, and enables us to let into the deepest dungeons of despondency and doubt, the light of hope and of heaven.

Here, too, we find the powerful glass by which we can pierce the clouds that have so long obscured the full-orbed splendours of the divine benevolence. To some, indeed, (and they sagacious philosophers,) that cloud has seemed surcharged only with vengeance. And even to those who have caught occasional glimpses of the noble orb behind, the cloud over its face