

for the ruin of an old economy and the introduction of a new one. Geological agencies differ from astronomical in this, that the former must be allowed an irregular action within certain limits; whereas the latter act with unvarying uniformity in all circumstances. If the former had not some room for irregular action, they would not act at all; but if allowed too much liberty, they will destroy what they were intended to preserve. And God does restrain, and always has restrained them, just at the point where desolation would be the result of their more powerful operation. I do not, indeed, contend that it requires more power or wisdom to bind those mighty agencies within proper limits than to control the heavenly bodies. But to our limited faculties it certainly seems a more difficult work; and, therefore the geological history of the globe gives us a more impressive idea of the ordinary providence of God than we see in the calm and uniform movements of nature around us.

*In the second place, geology furnishes us with some very striking examples of miraculous providence.*

In disproving the eternity of the organic world, in a former lecture, I adduced and illustrated these examples so fully, that I shall do little more in this place than give a recapitulation of that argument.

If we suppose the earth originally to have been merely a diffused mass of vapour, like comets, or nebulæ, I can conceive how, by the operation of such natural laws as now exist, it might have been condensed into a solid globe; into a melted state, indeed, from the amount of heat extricated in the condensation. Those same laws might subsequently form over the molten mass a solid crust, which, at length, might be ridged and furrowed by the action of internal heat, so as to form the basis of continents and the beds of oceans. In due time, the vapours might condense, so as to fill those basins with water; and, by the mutual and alternate action of the waters above and the heat beneath, the rocks might be comminuted, so as to form the basis of soils. So far might the arrangements of the world have proceeded by natural laws; in other words, by the ordinary providence of God. But at this point we must bring in an extraordinary agency of the Deity, or the world would have remained, in the expressive language of revelation, *without form and void*; that is, invisible and unfurnished. You have, indeed the framework of a world; but