

LECTURE XIII.

THE VAST PLANS OF JEHOVAH.

It is interesting and instructive to trace the history of man's progress in the knowledge of the existence, character, and plans of Jehovah. We shall find that progress to have been marked by epochs, rather than continuous advancement. Some new revelation from heaven, or some new discovery in science, has given a sudden expansion to his views of the Deity, which have then remained in a good degree stationary for a long period. My chief object in this lecture is to show what accessions to our knowledge of the divine plans have been derived from science, especially from geology. But it will give greater distinctness and impressiveness to the subject to take a review of the principal steps by which the human mind has reached its present accurate spiritual and enlarged views of the Deity.

We will first look at man in the rudest condition in society, in which he has any idea of the existence of beings superior to himself.

For there is a state of his being in which no such ideas exist in his mind; tribes of men, and especially individuals, who have lived in a wild state, away from all human intercourse, have been found with no idea of a superior being of any sort. Other tribes have existed a little more elevated above the irrational animals, and these have an impression, derived perhaps from their moral sense, or growing out of their superstitious fears, that some power exists in the universe greater than themselves. But having never entertained an abstract idea on any other subject, and depending alone upon their senses for their knowledge, they identify God with the most remarkable objects of nature. They listen to his voice in the wind and the thunder, in the ocean's roar, and the volcano's bellowing; and they see him in the sun, moon, and