of Scripture, that the next change of the earth will be from solid to liquid. And in those stars which in past ages have suddenly broken forth with remarkable splendour, and then disappeared, may we not have examples of other worlds burned up; not annihilated, but deluged by fire, and either dissipated or again cooled? What changes, if any, will succeed the final conflagration of the globe, neither science nor revelation informs us.

Yet, if the laws of nature respecting heat are not entirely altered, other changes must follow; and we have seen, in a former lecture, that those changes are perfectly consistent with our ideas of heaven, and that they may, in fact, enhance the happiness of heaven. They may go on for ever; in which case, we can hardly doubt but they would form a cycle, though how wide the circuit we cannot conjecture; or they may, at least, reach an unchanging state. I confess, however, that the idea of perpetual change corresponds best with the analogies of the existing universe; and in eternity, as well as in time, it may form an essential element of happiness.

In this world, too, this unceasing change, though it presents at first view a strong tendency to ruin, is, in fact, the grand conservative principle of material things. In a world of life and motion like ours, it is impossible that bodies, especially organic bodies, should not be sometimes subject to violent disarrangements and destruction from the mechanical agencies which exist; and were no chemical changes possible, ultimate and irremediable ruin must be the result. But the chemical powers, inherent in matter, soon bring forth new forms of beauty from the ruins; and, in fact, throughout all nature, the process of renovation usually counterbalances that of destruction; and thus far, indeed, the former has done more than this; for every time nature has changed her dress in past ages, she has put on more lovely robes, and a fresher countenance. Can we doubt that this same principle of change, operating, as it does, on a stupendous scale through the universe, is one of the great means of its preservation? It seems, indeed, paradoxical to say that instability is the basis of stability. But I see not why it is not literally true; and I can hardly doubt but this principle is superior to the laws of gravity, superior to every other law, in fact, for giving permanence and security to the universe.