

ruled the affairs of mankind, will also believe that a Providence has governed the material world. But any language in which the narrative of this government of the material world can be conveyed, must necessarily be very imperfect and inappropriate; being expressed in terms of those ideas which have been selected by men, in order to describe appearances and relations of created things as they affect one another. In all cases, therefore, where we have to attempt to interpret such a narrative, we must feel that we are extremely liable to err; and most of all, when our interpretation refers to those material objects and operations which are most foreign to the main purpose of a history of providence. If we have to consider a communication containing a view of such a government of the world, imparted to us, as we may suppose, in order to point out the right direction for our feelings of trust, and reverence, and hope, towards the Governor of the world, we may expect that we shall be in no danger of collecting from our authority erroneous notions with regard to the power, and wisdom, and goodness of His government; or with respect to our own place, duties, and prospects, and the history of our race so far as our duties and prospects are concerned. But that we shall rightly understand the detail of all events in the history of man, or of the skies, or of the earth, which are narrated for the purpose of thus giving a right direction to our minds, is by no means equally certain; and I do not think it would be too much to say, that an immunity from perplexity and error, in such matters, is, on general grounds, very improbable. It cannot then surprise us to find, that parts of such narrations which seem to refer to occurrences like those of which astronomers and geologists have attempted to determine the laws, have given rise to many interpretations, all inconsistent with one another, and most of them at variance with the best established principles of astronomy and geology.

It may be urged, that all truths must be consistent with all other truths, and that therefore the results of true geology or astronomy cannot be irreconcilable with the statements of true theology. And this universal consistency of truth with itself must be assented to; but it by no means follows that we must be able to obtain a full insight into the nature and manner of such a consistency. Such an insight would only be possible if we could obtain a clear view of that central body of truth, the source of the principles which appear in the separate lines of speculation. To expect that we should see clearly how the providential government of the world is consistent with the unvarying laws