

been smitten into life by the action of electricity upon a portion of gelatinous matter." We have striking illustrations of the manner in which the progress of science proves fatal to the devices of infidelity, in the exposure of this theory by recent discoveries in geology. It is true, that the researches of geologists prove a progress in creation from the crawling reptile up to man. But if this theory of development were correct, we ought to find the successive classes of creatures first in an embryo state, then gradually advancing till they passed into the higher orders. Whereas, on examination, precisely the reverse appears. Up to a certain point no trace of the existence of a class of animals is found, then all at once that class is found full grown and mature. For instance the earliest fishes that appear rank not with sprats and minnows, but with sharks and sturgeons. From a collection of observations, Mr. Miller shows that the tendency has been not to development, but to degradation; that the most perfect type of its class is found at the earliest stage, and that afterwards there is a degradation, both in size and organization. "There was a time" he says, "in which the ichthyic form constituted the highest example of life, but the seas did not then swarm with fish of the degraded type. There was in like manner a time when all the carnivorous and herbivorous quadrupeds were represented by reptiles, but there are no such magnificent reptiles on the earth now as reigned over it then. There was an aftertime when birds seem to have been the sole representatives of the warm blooded animals, but we find from the prints of their feet in sandstone, that the tallest men might "walked under their huge legs." Further, there was a time when the quadrupedal mammalia were the magnates of creation, but it was an age in which the gigantic elephant was the inhabitant of every country in the old world, and when vast herds of a closely allied and equally colossal genus occupied its place in the new."

The conclusion is irresistible, that in the successive stages of advancement, through which the earth and its inhabitants have passed, there has been an interposition of the creative power, distinct and direct, as is represented in the Mosiac account, when on the first day God said, "Let there be light;" when on the second day God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters;"—when on the third day God said, "Let the earth bring forth grass," and so on until, man's home being prepared, God said, "Let us make man in our image." At each successive stage, when the earth was prepared for any of the series of its inhabitants, the creative fiat brought forth that class perfect in its kind. Throughout its peculiar period it became degraded, perhaps by the very influences which were preparing for another and a higher class of occupants. Then when the ends of that age were served, by a silent and sudden destruction, "the world that then was, perished." Again the Creator comes forth, and over the graves of the former establishes new orders of beings, which in like manner passing through their reign become in turn subordinate to a higher. There is in all this a manifest design pressing on towards perfection. For under the divine admin-

istration, change is the proof of defect, and that which is perfect must be permanent.

It becomes a most interesting question to us, has the perfection aimed at been reached, and is this world now in its ultimate condition? We do not need to come to nature for the answer. But if we leave out the answer of revelation, nature itself replies in the negative with no ambiguous voice. It is true that responsible man occupies a proud pre-eminence over the mere brute natures which ruled the globe before him, but it cannot be thought that the attributes either of the individual or the race, indicate perfection. It is true that we find a wise and wonderful adaptation of the earth for its inhabitants, but we should have found the same at any previous period of its geological history. When fish and reptiles were its only tenants, it would have seemed a world formed expressly for their reception. Whether we look at man or his circumstances, the very opposite of perfection and permanence is their most fragrant characteristic. Everything in man seems to stretch after a condition which he never attains. And common language speaks of nature's great law in his present circumstances as change. Decay, if there were no other indication of the approaching end, speaks every where with irresistible emphasis. If decay is the highway to dissolution,—if that which is decaying and growing old is ready to vanish away, we have but to open our eyes to read the doom of the existing constitution of things.

The geological history of our planet, as well as the natural and moral history of our race, discountenance the infidel dream of a quiet development of the present imperfection into that perfection of the future, to which every thing points, whilst all that we know of God, and his works, forbid the idea that the present system will merely be cut off, and the world be abolished. It is true that sin has entered, and that man's home has been cursed for man's sake; but we are not to entertain the thought that the Creator was taken by surprise by that catastrophe, and his ultimate plan thwarted. The continuance of the terrestrial state, under a mediatorial administration, was no "happy after thought," but most clearly intimates that the great design of progressive perfection is not abandoned. Geology, then, would lead us to the inference that when the present cycle is fulfilled, a sudden and complete overthrow will be the precursor or accompaniment of a new manifestation of creative power, carrying forward the design, and bringing upon the stage a higher manifestation of creature life. Science, of course, cannot tell us whether the end is at hand, or still remote. It cannot tell us whether the next change will be final, or only one step in advance. It cannot tell us whether the soil on which man now acts his part, will be the sepulchre of the race, as the strata beneath us have proved to be of preceding dynasties, or whether man shall participate in the advancement of his abode, and be raised in glory and honour, to rule in the new order of things. There are, indeed, some things in the nature and history of man which favours the latter supposition. There is this evident distinction between him and the extinct or subordinate

dynasties which preceded him: they served the purpose of their existence, and their destiny came up to their desires and capabilities; but it is otherwise with him. And if the present state of being bounds either his action or his enjoyment, it is an anomaly in the works of his Creator, as marked as if a world had been left unfinished, or abandoned when only half made.

To the above questions, however, geology gives no positive answers, but its conclusions admirably graduate with what the more sure word of prophecy reveals. In the gospel we learn that just such a change as we have anticipated will occur—a change sudden and complete, and bringing into the field once more THE WORD, "without whom was not anything made that was made." It tells us of the subtle, but efficient agency of fire, by which the destruction of the existing system will be accomplished. It tells us of a new creation—a re-creation—new heavens and a new earth. It points us to this as the consummation and perfection of the plan. "Yet once more," saith God, "I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." "And this world, *Yet once more*, significth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." There is but one more revolution in which the imperfect shall be swept away. The purifying agency of fire will remove the wood, hay, and stubble; and after this the perfect shall be permanent. It teaches us, moreover, that the ransomed of our race, brought forth in incorruption, will be the occupants of that perfected world. The individuals in actual and conscious identity, but advanced just as far above their present frailty as responsible man now is above the lowest of dynasties which preceded him. By piercing the two records together—that revealed in Scripture and that revealed in rocks—records which, however widely geologists may mistake the one, or commentators misunderstand the other, have emanated from the same great Author, we learn that in slow and solemn majesty has period succeeded period, each in succession ushering in a higher and yet higher scene of existence; that fish, reptiles, mammiferous quadrupeds, have reigned in turn; that responsible man, formed in the image of God, and with dominion over all the creatures, ultimately entered into a world prepared for his reception. But farther, we learn that this passing scene, in which he forms a prominent figure, is not the final one in the long series, but merely the last of the preliminary scenes; and that period to which the by-gone ages, incalculable in amount, with all their well-proportioned productions of being, form the imposing vestibule, shall have perfection for its occupant, and eternity for its duration.

We have but in brief hints pointed the way to a great and solemn study. Viewed in such connections, science becomes invested with an awful majesty, which is not its own, and the every day scenes of life become as portals of the tabernacle of God, which is about to dwell with men,

We should take care we do not make our profession of Religion a receipt in full for all other obligations.—*Newton*.