

Having ascribed an increase of the waters to this source, he adopted Woodward's theory, supposing all stratified deposits to have resulted from the "chaotic sediment of the flood." Whiston was one of the first who ventured to propose that the text of Genesis should be interpreted differently from its ordinary acceptation, so that the doctrine of the earth having existed long previous to the creation of man might no longer be regarded as unorthodox. He had the art to throw an air of plausibility over the most improbable parts of his theory, and seemed to be proceeding in the most sober manner, and, by the aid of mathematical demonstration, to the establishment of his various propositions. Locke pronounced a panegyric on his theory, commending him for having explained so many wonderful and before inexplicable things. His book, as well as Burnet's, was attacked and refuted by Keill.* Like all who introduced purely hypothetical causes to account for natural phenomena, Whiston retarded the progress of truth, diverting men from the investigation of the laws of sublunary nature, and inducing them to waste time in speculations on the power of comets to drag the waters of the ocean over the land — on the condensation of the vapours of their tails into water, and other matters equally edifying.

Hutchinson, 1724. — John Hutchinson, who had been employed by Woodward in making his collection of fossils, published afterwards, in 1724, the first part of his "Moses's Principia," wherein he ridiculed Woodward's hypothesis. He and his numerous followers were accustomed to declaim loudly against human learning; and they maintained that the Hebrew Scriptures, when rightly translated, comprised a perfect system of natural philosophy, for which reason they objected to the Newtonian theory of gravitation.

Celsius. — Andrea Celsius, the Swedish astronomer, published about this time his remarks on the gradual diminution and sinking of the waters in the Baltic, to which I shall have occasion to advert more particularly in the sequel (ch. 30.).

Scheuchzer, 1708. — In Germany, in the mean time, Scheuchzer published his "Complaint and Vindication of the Fishes" (1708), "*Piscium Querelæ et Vindicia*," a work of zoological merit, in which he gave some good plates and descriptions of fossil fish. Among other conclusions he laboured to prove that the earth had been remodelled at the deluge. Pluche, also, in 1732, wrote to the same effect; while Holbach, in 1753, after considering the various attempts to refer all the ancient formations to the flood of Noah, exposed the inadequacy of this cause.

Italian Geologists — Vallisneri. — I return with pleasure to the geologists of Italy, who preceded, as has been already shown, the naturalists of other countries in their investigations into the ancient history of the earth, and who still maintained a decided pre-eminence. They refuted and ridiculed the physico-theological systems of Burnet,

* An Examination of Dr. Burnet's Theory, &c. 2d ed. 1734.