

causes of great aqueous catastrophes. The tales and legends of calamitous floods preserved in Greece, Asia Minor, the southern shores of the Baltic, China, Peru, and Chili have, as we have seen, been all of them handed down to us by the inhabitants of regions in which the operation of natural causes in modern times, and the recurrence of a succession of disastrous floods, afford us data for interpreting the meaning of the obscure traditions of an illiterate age.*

In his learned treatise on ancient chronology, Dr. Hales has selected, from a much greater number, a list of no less than 120 authors, all of whom give a different period for the epoch of the creation of the world, the extreme range of difference between them amounting to no less than 3268 years. It appears that even amongst authorities, who in England are generally regarded as orthodox, there is a variance, not of years or of one or two centuries, but of upwards of a millennium, according as they have preferred to follow the Hebrew, or the Samaritan, or the Greek versions of the Mosaic writings. Can we then wonder that they who decipher the monuments of Egypt, or the geologist who interprets the earth's autobiography, should arrive at views respecting the date of an ancient empire, or the age of our planet, irreconcilable with every one of these numerous and conflicting chronologies? The want of agreement amongst the learned in regard to the probable date of the deluge of Noah is a source of far greater perplexity and confusion than our extreme uncertainty as to the epoch of the creation, — the deluge being a comparatively modern event, from which the re-peopling of the earth and the history of the present races of mankind is made to begin. Naturalists have long felt that to render probable the received opinion that all the leading varieties of the human family have originally sprung from a single pair, (a doctrine against which there appears to me to be no sound objection,) a much greater lapse of time is required for the slow and gradual formation of races, (such as the Caucasian, Mongolian, and Negro,) than is embraced in any of the popular systems of chronology. The existence of two of those marked varieties above mentioned can be traced back 3000 years before the present time, or to the painting of pictures, preserved in the tombs or on the walls of buried temples in Egypt. In these we behold the Negro and Caucasian physiognomies portrayed as faithfully and in as strong contrast as if the likenesses of those races had been taken yesterday. When we consider therefore the extreme slowness of the changes, which climate and other modifying causes have produced in modern times, we must allow for a vast series of antecedent ages, in the course of which the long-continued influence of similar external circumstances gave rise to peculiarities, probably increased in many successive generations, until they were fixed by hereditary transmission. The characteristic forms and features thus acquired by certain tribes, may have been afterwards diffused by migration from

* For Grecian and Asiatic deluges, Chinese, p. 9.; Peruvian, p. 483.; Chilian see above, p. 341.; Cimbrian, p. 318.; or Araucanian deluge, p. 481.