

a modern ear. And yet that term may be very proper to use in modern times, if understood to express only apparent, and not real truth. The Jew understood it to mean the latter; and it would seem as if we might employ modern scientific discovery to enable us to decide in which sense the Bible did use the term. For if we admit the Jew to have been correct in his interpretation, then we bring revelation into direct collision with the demonstrations of physics.

But facts are vastly more satisfactory in deciding this question than reasoning, and I shall now proceed to adduce some examples in which modern scientific discovery has thrown light upon the meaning of the Bible.

For one or two examples I appeal to chemistry. In the book of Proverbs, (chap. 25, v. 20,) we find it said, that "as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart!" We should expect from this statement that when we put vinegar upon what we call nitre, it would produce some commotion analogous to the excitement of song-singing. But we should try the experiment in vain; for no effect whatever would be produced. Again, it is said by the prophet Jeremiah, (chap. 2, v. 22,) "Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the Lord." Here, too we should expect that the use of the nitre would increase the purifying power of the soap; but the experiment would prove rather the reverse. The chemist, however, informs us that there is a substance, namely, the *carbonate of soda*, which, if substituted for the nitre, would effervesce with vinegar, and aid the purifying power of soap, and thus strikingly illustrate the thought both of Solomon and Jeremiah. And on recurring to the original, we find that נֹדָד (nether, *nitrum*, *natrum*) does not necessarily mean the salt which we call nitre, but rather a fossil alkali, the *natron* of the ancients, and the carbonate of soda of the moderns.

It is probably the prevailing opinion among intelligent Christians at this time, and has been the opinion of many commentators, that when Peter describes the future destruction of the world, he means that its solid substance, and indeed that of the whole material universe, will be utterly consumed or annihilated by fire. This opinion rests upon the common belief that such is the effect of combustion. But chemistry informs us, that no case of combustion, how fiercely soever the