

encloses the earth, in which the clouds float at different altitudes at different times. Are we, then, to suppose that the sacred writers meant to teach as certain truth, the fiction of a solid firmament? or that on this subject they conformed their language to the prevailing belief, because it was not their object to teach philosophy, meaning neither to assert nor to deny the existence of a solid firmament, but using language that was optically, although not physically, correct, and which, therefore, conformed to the general belief? It is doubtful whether any thing but scientific discovery could enable us to decide this question. But since it is certain that the solid firmament does not exist, we must admit that the Bible did not intend to teach its existence, or allow it to teach a falsehood; and since we know that it does often speak, in natural things, according to apparent, and not real truth, it is most reasonable to give such a construction to its language in the present instance.

But the most decisive example I have to give on this subject is derived from astronomy. Until the time of Copernicus, no opinion respecting natural phenomena was thought more firmly established, than that the earth is fixed immoveably in the centre of the universe, and that the heavenly bodies move diurnally around it. To sustain this view, the most decided language of Scripture could be quoted. God is there said to have *established the foundations of the earth, so that they could not be removed for ever*; and the sacred writers expressly declare that the sun and other heavenly bodies *arise and set*, and no where allude to any proper motion in the earth. And those statements corresponded exactly to the testimony of the senses. Men felt the earth to be immoveably firm under their feet, and when they looked up, they saw the heavenly bodies in motion. What bold impiety, therefore, did it seem, even to men of liberal and enlightened minds, for any one to rise up and assert that all this testimony of the Bible and of the senses was to be set aside! It is easy to conceive with what strong jealousy the friends of the Bible would look upon the new science which was thus arraying itself in bold defiance of inspiration, and how its votaries would be branded as infidels in disguise. We need not resort to Papal intolerance to explain how it was, that the new doctrine of the earth's motion should be denounced as the most fatal heresy, as alike contrary to Scrip-