

In the fourth place, the passage under consideration teaches us that whatever upon or within the earth is capable of combustion will undergo that change, and that the entire globe will be melted.

The language of Peter has always seemed to me extremely interesting. He says that "the heavens," or atmosphere, "will pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth, also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up; looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

This language approaches nearer to an anticipation of the scientific discoveries of modern times than any other part of Scripture. And yet, at the time it was written, it would not have enabled any one to understand the chemistry of the great changes which it describes. But now that their chemistry is understood, we perceive that the language is adapted to it, in a manner which no uninspired writer would have done. The atmosphere is represented as passing away with a great noise; an effect which the chemist would predict by the union of its oxygen with the hydrogen and other gases liberated by the intense heat. Yet what uninspired writer of the first century would have imagined such a result?

Again, when we consider the notions which then prevailed, and which are still widely diffused, why should the apostle add to the simple statement that the earth would be burned up, the declaration that its elements would be melted? For the impression was, that the combustion would entirely destroy the matter of the globe. But the chemist finds that the greater part of the earth has already been oxidized, or burned, and on this matter the only effect of the heat, unless intense enough to dissipate it, would be to melt it. If, therefore, the apostle had said only that the world would be burned up, the sceptical chemist would have inferred that he had made a mistake through ignorance of chemistry. But he cannot now draw such an inference; for the apostle's language clearly implies that only the combustible matter of the globe will be burned, while the elements, or first principles of things, will be melted; so that the final result will be an entire liquid, fiery globe. Such a wonderful adaptation of his description to modern