

be consumed, and the entire mass, the elements, without the loss of one particle of the matter now existing, will be melted; and then, that the world, thus purified from the contamination of sin, and surrounded by a new atmosphere, or heavens, and adapted in all respects to the nature and wants of spiritual and sinless beings, will become the residence of the righteous. Of the precise nature of that new dispensation, and of the mode of existence there, the Scriptures are indeed silent. But that like the present world, it will be material, that there will be a solid globe, and a transparent expanse around it, seems most clearly indicated in the sacred record.

The wide-spread opinion that heaven will be a sort of airy Elysium, where the present laws of nature will be unknown, and where matter, if it exist, can exist only in its most attenuated form, is a notion to which the Bible is a stranger.

The resurrection of the body, as well as the language of Peter, most clearly show us that the future world will be a solid, material world, purified indeed, and beautified, but retaining its materialism.

Let us now see whether, in coming to these conclusions from Scripture language, we are influenced by scientific considerations, or whether many discerning minds have not, in all ages, attached a similar meaning to the inspired record.

Among all nations, the history of whose opinions have come down to us, and especially among the Greeks, the belief has prevailed that a catastrophe by fire awaited the earth, corresponding to, or rather the counterpart of, a previous destruction by water. These catastrophes they denominated the *cataclysm*, or destruction by water, and the *ecpyrosis*, or destruction by fire. The ruin was supposed to be followed, in each case, by the regeneration of the earth in an improved form, which gradually deteriorated; the first age after the catastrophe, constituting the golden age; the next, the silver age; and so on to the iron age, which preceded another cataclysm, or ecpyrosis. The intervals between these convulsions were regarded as of various lengths, but all of them of great duration.

These opinions the Greeks derived from the Egyptians.

The belief in the future conflagration of the world also prevailed among the ancient Jews. Philo says that "the earth, after this purification, shall appear new again, even as it was