

a moment. But that would not be a destruction : it would be a mere change of form, and, no doubt, would be subservient to the most glorious results. "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth ; wherein dwelleth righteousness."* Upon the whole, Mr.

* 2 Pet. iii. 7, 10. Many critics and expositors, probably the majority, understand this passage of a literal conflagration of our planet, to take place immediately after the universal resurrection and the final judgment. But it would be wrong to withhold the observation, that some of the most eminent Bible-scholars have entertained a different opinion : in particular, John Prideaux, Bishop of Worcester in the time of Charles I., a man never to be thought of without affection for his learning, magnanimous humility, piety, and sufferings as a conscientious royalist ; (Fascicul. Controv. Theol. cap. vii.) Dr. Lightfoot ; (Works, ed. 1684, vol. II. pp. 626, 1073—6.) Dr. John Owen ; (Θεολογοούμενα, ed. Bremen, 1684, p. 147.)

I will attempt a summary of Owen's disquisition. "The apostle treats upon three worlds, or states of the world ; the ancient one, which had perished by water ; the one *then present*, which was to be consumed by fire ; and a third, the *new heavens and earth*, the abode of righteousness. He is not referring to the visible heaven or earth, considered with respect to its substance. For the destruction of the ancient world by water did not take away the material frame of the heavens and the terrene globe. The term *world* is used to signify *the human inhabitants* of the world. They were extirpated by the flood ; and another world of men was to be established, for maintaining true religion and the right worship of God. Of this *world* he laid the foundations in the family of Noah ; and its fabric was completed by the erection of the Church of Israel. That was the world whose immediately impending dissolution by fire St. Peter here predicts ; but we must observe that he uses the *prophetic style*" [of emblematical imagery ;] "corresponding with Isa. li. 15, 16 ;" [lxv. 15, 17, 18 ; lxvi. 14—16.] "When God *divided the sea* and brought his people out of Egypt, he intrusted them with his law and the solemn institutions of his worship, and formed them into a Church for himself : that was establishing and completing *this new world, the heaven and the earth*. But, when Peter wrote, this world, the Jewish Church, had become apostate, and was hastening to the destruction of *fire* ; just as the ancient world plunged itself into the destruction of *the deluge*. By the burning of the temple and city of Jerusalem, the frame of that world was dissolved. The apostle directs believers to another world, as a matter of expectation *to be looked for* ; because *ἡ συντέλεια τοῦ αἰῶνος* [the completion of the period, Matt. xxviii. 20.] was not yet accomplished ; and which would be *new*