

from its present condition; probably more perfect, but still the same earth and surrounding heavens.

There are, indeed, some difficulties in the way of such a meaning to this passage, and objections to a material heaven; and these I shall notice in the proper place. But I have given what seems to me the natural and obvious meaning of the passage.

Such, as I conceive, are the fair inferences from the apostle's description of the end of the world. Let us now inquire whether any other passages of Scripture require us to modify this meaning.

The idea of a future destruction of the world by fire is recognized in various places, both in the Old and New Testaments. Christ speaks more than once of heaven and earth as passing away. Paul speaks of Christ as descending, at the end of the world, in flaming fire. And the Psalmist describes the destruction of the heavens and the earth as a renovation. "They shall perish," says he, "but thou," God, "shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." In Revelation, after the apostle had given a vivid description of the final judgment and its retributions, he says, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea." He then proceeds to give a minute and glowing description of what he calls the New Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven. It is scarcely possible to understand the whole of this description as literally true. We must rather regard it as a figurative representation of the heavenly state. And hence the first verse, which speaks of the new heavens and the new earth, in almost the same language which Peter uses, may be also figurative, indicating merely a more exalted condition than the present world. Hence, I would not use this passage to sustain the interpretation given of the literal description by Peter. And yet it is by no means improbable that the figurative language of John may have for its basis the same truths which are taught by Peter. Nor ought we to infer, because a figure is built upon that basis in the apocalyptic vision, that the simple statements of Peter are metaphorical.

In the passage quoted from Peter, it is said, "Nevertheless,