

*Sect. 4.—The Copernican System opposed on Theological Grounds.*

THE doctrine of the Earth's motion round the Sun, when it was asserted and promulgated by Copernicus, soon after 1500, excited no visible alarm among the theologians of his own time. Indeed, it was received with favor by the most intelligent ecclesiastics; and lectures in support of the heliocentric doctrine were delivered in the ecclesiastical colleges. But the assertion and confirmation of this doctrine by Galileo, about a century later, excited a storm of controversy, and was visited with severe condemnation. Galileo's own behavior appears to have provoked the interference of the ecclesiastical authorities; but there must have been a great change in the temper of the times to make it possible for his adversaries to bring down the sentence of the Inquisition upon opinions which had been so long current without giving any serious offence.

[2d Ed.] [It appears to me that the different degree of toleration accorded to the heliocentric theory in the time of Copernicus and of Galileo, must be ascribed in a great measure to the controversies and alarms which had in the mean time arisen out of the Reformation in religion, and which had rendered the Romish Church more jealous of innovations in received opinions than it had previously been. It appears too that the discussion of such novel doctrines was, at that time at least, less freely tolerated in Italy than in other countries. In 1597, Kepler writes to Galileo thus: "Confide Galilæe et progredere. Si bene conjecto, pauci de præcipuis Europæ Mathematicis a nobis secedere volent; tanta vis est veritatis. Si tibi Italia minus est idonea ad publicationem et si aliqua habitures es impedimenta, forsan Germania nobis hanc libertatem concedet."—Venturi, *Mem. di Galileo*, vol. i. p. 19.

I would not however be understood to assert the condemnation of new doctrines in science to be either a general or a characteristic practice of the Romish Church. Certainly the intelligent and cultivated minds of Italy, and many of the most eminent of her ecclesiastics among them, have always been the foremost in promoting and welcoming the progress of science: and, as I have stated, there were found among the Italian ecclesiastics of Galileo's time many of the earliest and most enlightened adherents of the Copernican system. The condemnation of the doctrine of the earth's motion, is, so far as I am aware, the only instance in which the Papal authority has pronounced a decree upon a point of science. And the most candid of the adhe-