

every people who have attained to a philosophic system, the contrary belief has been prevalent. The existing order of Nature has been regarded as temporary, and the flow of terrestrial and even of cosmical events has been conceived as destined to be broken up by universal revolutions.

The Chaldeans, according to Berosus, held that the world is periodically destroyed by deluges and conflagrations. The deluges they believed to result from a great conjunction of the planets in the constellation Capricorn, and the conflagrations from a similar conjunction in the constellation Cancer. Some of the Christian fathers adopted these views. The Chaldeans also calculated the end of the world from the period occupied in the retrograde movement of the stars through one complete circumference—a phenomenon due to the precession of the equinoxes, and accomplished, as modern science has shown, in a period of 21,000 to 26,000 years.

The Chaldean philosophers had also their *Annus Magnus*, or Great Year, at the end of which the present terrestrial and cosmical order would be brought to a termination by an ordeal of fire, after which it would be again renewed.

The ancient Scythians, in their dispute with the Egyptians in reference to the relative antiquity of their respective nations, reminded them that the world undergoes revolutions both by fire and water.

The Egyptians, according to Plato, fancied that the heavens and earth originated in a promiscuous pulp. From this the elements separated of their own accord; fire sprang from the upper regions; the air began to move. The warmth of the sun bred living creatures innumerable in the plastic mud, and these, according to the predominance of the various elements, betook themselves to the air, the water, or the solid land. Man was generated from the slime of the river Nile. By a gradual improvement of the