

lower creatures, and a gradual perfection of the globe, the world became what the Egyptian found it, and was destined to flourish through an interval of time expressed by their *Annus Magnus*, or great year—a cycle composed (as with the Chaldeans) of the revolutions of the sun, moon, and planets, and terminating when these return together to the same sign whence they were supposed to have set out. The duration of this great cycle, according to Orpheus, was one hundred and twenty thousand years; according to others it was three hundred thousand; and by Cassander it was taken at three hundred and sixty thousand years. At the end of each great year or cycle the world was supposed to be subjected to the destructive ordeal of fire or water, by which it was renovated, to become the abode of a regenerated race of men.

The Hindoo cosmogony, which was perhaps the germ of all that was taught by the Western nations, gives prominence to the doctrine of secular catastrophes and renovations. “The First Sole Cause,” say the Institutes of Menu, “thinks within himself, ‘I will create worlds.’” Water is then brought into being, over the surface of which moves Brahma, the Creator. Brahma first effects the emergence of the land from the waters, and the creation of the firmament. He then vivifies the earth, in succession, with plants, animals, celestial creatures, and man. The sun springs from his eye, the air from his ear, the fire from his mouth. From his mouth, his arm, his thigh, his foot, proceed the founders of the chief Hindoo castes. Brahma, having accomplished his task, “changes the time of energy for the hour of repose.” He sleeps during 4320 millions of years—a day of Brahma—at the end of which time the world is destroyed by fire. The flames are at length quenched by the fall of incessant rains for a hundred years, and the waters, overspreading the earth, fill the middle region and