

of whom I inquired how long the land had been covered by the waters. 'Is this a question,' said they, 'for a man like you? This spot has always been what it is now.' I again returned five hundred years afterwards, and the sea had disappeared. I inquired of a man who stood alone upon the spot, how long ago this change had taken place; and he gave me the same answer as I had received before. Lastly, on coming back again, after an equal lapse of time, I found there a flourishing city, more populous and more rich in beautiful buildings than the city I had seen the first time; and when I would fain have informed myself concerning its origin, the inhabitants answered me, 'Its rise is lost in remote antiquity; we are ignorant how long it has existed, and our fathers were on this subject as ignorant as ourselves.'"

This allegory sets forth the nature of the modern scientific conception of changes in relative positions of land and sea. It must not, however, be understood that continents ever occupied the sites of the modern oceans; though these oceans once extended over all the lands.

Thus these strata of sandstone, limestone, and shale are real ancient sea-sediments, as we have already argued; and these forms of life imbedded in the strata are the relics of the animals which dwelt in the sea while the sediments were accumulating. If so long a time as we have concluded was required for the deposition of these materials, then, assuredly, the one hundred and fifty days of the Noachian inundation were egregiously inadequate.

Moreover, if we subject these relics to critical examination, we discover that their resemblance to living forms is in fundamental characters only. As to particular species, we find none, save in peculiar situations, which are identical with living species. We find them less like living species than the leopard is like the tiger, or the hen-hawk like the snowy owl. To maintain, as the old theologians did, that modern species are descended from species whose relics are fossilized in the rocks, is to advocate a theory of transformation which would have been startling, if they could have appreciated the facts.