

with scientists, and no small part of the scepticism with which it was received was due to the supposed teaching of the Bible on the subject. The church denounced it with all possible vigor. The Inquisition prosecuted Galileo and compelled him formally to retract the theory in order to escape the penalty of heresy. As everybody now admits, Galileo was right and the churchmen were wrong. But though the changes have been rung on the incident until the world is weary of hearing it, the real victory has remained with the Bible and not with its assailants. Almost before the new theory was universally accepted by the scientific world, all difficulty about its reconciliation with the Bible had disappeared. No sceptic, at the present time, thinks it worth while to urge that the Scriptures are discredited by astronomy. He knows that he would urge it in vain. It is altogether a dead issue without a particle of interest for anybody. For its own sake it would not be worth discussing. But it is instructive to inquire how the apparent conflict has been reconciled.

The method is a very simple one. It is by recognizing that the Bible has no authoritative doctrine on astronomy at all, and that the conflict was all of our own making. It all arose from mistaken methods of interpretation, which made the Bible say what it never intended to say; and the moment the erroneous interpretation was disposed of, the whole difficulty resolved itself into thin air. It came to be perceived that the allusions to astronomical matters were all incidental and expressed in the popular language of the day, so that we were not justified in basing any theory whatever on them. The Bible was given for religious purposes and not to teach science. As an old writer quaintly puts it: "It teaches us how to go to heaven, and not how the heavens go." When it speaks of the sun rising and setting, it does only what any astronomer, who was not also a pedant, would do to-day when addressing a popular audience. He would think it very absurd, if he were taken to task for such language and declared a false teacher because of it. How much more, if the speaker were address-