

posed until about the commencement of the present century, is not in accordance with fact. "The Allegorical" theory, as will be explained, dates from the early centuries. The impious Celsus, often called the Voltaire of the third century, in his controversies with Origen holds up to ridicule the idea of a Creator, who though almighty, works piecemeal, and creates confusion to afterwards introduce order. Origen, in his defence of the Bible, argues that the Mosaic days were not periods of twenty-four hours. "How could they have been," he says, "when on the first, the second and the third of these days, no sun, moon nor stars existed to regulate the divisions of time." What Origen's opinion was regarding the meaning of the word day in Genesis, is not clearly set forth in his writings; his views probably did not differ greatly from those of St. Augustine, who proposes the "Allegorical" theory in order to avoid the difficulties of reason inseparable from the old theory.

To these difficulties the defenders of the "Literal" theory oppose the scriptural maxim, that the ways of God are inscrutable. All theologians admit, indeed, that the greatness and perfection of God and His ways cannot be fathomed by our limited intelligence, but there is a certain *reason of fitness*, technically *ratio convenientiæ*, which will be found attributed to God in the demonstration of almost every thesis in philosophy and theology. The idea which we have of the perfection of God, often seems to render it highly improbable that He would take a certain way of bringing about an end. Whether or not, in preparing the earth as the abode of man, the method ascribed to God by the "Literal" theory is consistent with His nature and usual manner of bringing about results, is a disputed question; the negative has a very strong point in being upheld by Origen, St. Augustine, St. Thomas and, as far as diligent research shows, by all the great doctors who gave particular attention to this question.

As long, however, as the opposition to the "Literal" theory came only from reason, it held a proud and almost an unassailed position in the beliefs of men; though the great minds saw these objections, they did not judge it wise, nor perhaps possible to overthrow a traditional theory in accord with the scientific notions of the times. It was from historical geology and the new

astronomy, two sciences, which may be said to have begun and steadily advanced with our century, that were to come the difficulties destined to undermine the hitherto apparently solid foundation of the "Literal" theory. The new astronomy—that science which treats of the cosmogony of the universe, and the physical constitution of the heavenly bodies—has discovered in nature many extraordinary coincidences, which, for all but those unacquainted with them, prove worthy of serious consideration, the hypothesis of the earth having been evolved from an immense mass of matter by a series or regular succession of various causes, in accordance with certain well-established physical laws. Historical geology, by determining the order of the several strata of the earth's crust, and by a careful study of the organic remains contained in the rocks, proves as certainly as certainty exists, that a number of great ages can be made out in the history of the formation of the vegetable and animal life of the globe. To adduce the arguments upon which the modern theories are based—arguments based on facts, the fruits of long, patient and skilful researches—would require more time and space than can be given to the whole of this paper. Besides, it would scarcely be to the point to adduce them here, since, usually, the defenders of the "Literal" theory do not judge of them on their own merits, but as they choose to say, *a priori*. To be convinced by the arguments of some of the old-school defenders, one would have to believe that time, talent and fortunes are expended on natural science, in our time, only from a frenzied desire to overthrow divine revelation. Such an idea soon appears pitiable to the reader who makes even but a cursory study of the modern history of science.

Another objection frequently made is that modern scientific hypotheses are based on inconclusive data. True it is that, on certain scientific as well as on certain philosophical and theological points, more or less improbable, and even impossible theories have been advanced; but what sane mind can conclude from this that in the natural sciences, as well as in theology and philosophy the facts and principles commonly received are not beyond reasonable doubt? Serious investigation of the scientific hypotheses proposed from