

prose, and allegory interpreted as formally as if it were a legal statute or blue-book. No mistake could be acknowledged. Various readings were viewed with alarm, and every discrepancy, even between historical documents, compiled centuries apart, and from different standpoints, like those of Kings and Chronicles—had to be explained away by fair means or foul. When scientific discoveries threatened old interpretations, the men of science and their disciples were held up to popular ridicule and punished as severely as the public opinion of the time permitted. This went on until there was no longer possibility of denying the new truth, then room was made for new interpretations, but none the less, the same method of treatment was extended to those who pointed out the falsity of the traditional conception with regard to some other passages. All this was bad enough centuries ago when it was easy to silence investigation, and when, one man being silenced, general peace followed. It is a thousand times worse to-day.

Look at some of the consequences that have flowed from this false conception of Inspiration in different ages. The scripture writers believed with the world of their time that the earth was a great plain. It would have been very strange if they had believed otherwise. Their language, in so far as it bore on the subject, was of course in accordance with their belief. This erroneous view of the earth's shape was, however, considered to be divine truth, and therefore, when men discovered that the earth was round, there was nothing for it but to denounce them as heretics, and as everyone acknowledged that the prison, the torture-chamber, and the stake were the rightful doom of heretics, the unfortunate discoverer had to take the consequences, if he clung to what he knew to be truth with theologians telling him that it was contrary to the plain teachings of the Bible. Very probably not having a copy of the Bible, or if he had, not being as capable of reading it as men who knew the original, or not being presumptuous enough to think that he was, he was forced to believe that the Bible taught falsehoods, forced to choose between truth and the Bible. For one man who had to make the dismal choice openly, hundreds, as the light gradually dawned, made it secretly. They could not believe a lie, and they were told, by men who said they knew, that the lie was consecrated by Scripture.

Next, let us say, came the discoveries that the earth revolved on its axis, and went round the sun. Clean contrary, not only to the evidence of every man's senses, but also to Holy Scripture, the world was again assured by