

SCIENCE AND REVELATION:

OR,

THE BEARING OF

MODERN SCIENTIFIC DEVELOPMENTS

UPON THE INTERPRETATION OF

THE FIRST ELEVEN CHAPTERS OF GENESIS.

BY

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PREFATORY NOTE.

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THE following pages have been suggested mainly by the appearance of President Hitchcock's late work, *The Religion of Geology*. The original design was a brief review of certain portions of that book; but as the discussion has since been continued by a number of other writers, in leading periodicals as well as separate volumes, and the subject seems to have come fairly before the public as one of general inquiry, it has been thought best to extend the remarks somewhat further, and to put them into the form in which they now appear.

STEREOTYPED AT THE
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SCIENCE AND REVELATION.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY.

THE relation which philosophy bears to religion is a subject that has attracted, in different ages, no small share of attention from thoughtful and devout minds. In its widest scope it covers a vast extent of debatable ground, and enters more or less into every important question that arises either in the field of theology or of philosophy. It is not surprising, therefore, that the intellectual labors expended upon its various branches should have been very great, and the controversies growing out of their discussion often protracted and bitter.

But men are rapidly learning to bear wide differences of opinion on fundamental principles with greater equanimity of spirit than formerly; and discussions in regard to the most vital subjects are beginning to be carried on in a tone, and with a temper, better calculated to enable men to see the truth they all pretend to be seeking. Earnest minds have a perception that it is more important for them

to be led forward to the discovery of some higher truth than they now possess than merely to exhibit an ability to maintain with apparent success the salient points of an ancient position. And although works are still written and circulated having for their aim the specious advocacy of merely preconceived dogmatical opinions, with little observable reference to their inherent truth or falsity, and hence only present themselves as curious specimens of adroit logical fence, yet it must be affirmed, we presume, that the predominant attitude of the genius of thought is at present one of inquiry rather than of war.

There is one specific department of investigation, at this time, of especial interest to the friends of religion, which has been prolific of research, discussion, and variety of opinion — we mean the bearings of modern science upon the interpretation of the sacred Scriptures. Not only is there great discrepancy of views manifested in respect to the adjustment of the numerous details which necessarily grow out of those relations, but opposing and irreconcilable differences of opinion exist in regard to the fundamental principles upon which it is proper to proceed in comparing the words of revelation with the observations of science. Writers are not agreed in regard to the extent of those limits within which the province of the sciences is legitimately confined, nor the degree in which scientific deductions are to be received as reliable conclusions. They are not agreed as to the kind of inspiration of which the Scriptures are the subject, the general rules according to which they should be interpreted, nor the extent to which it is allowable to modify our present understanding of them, or, as it is called,

their obvious import, to satisfy the apparent demands of scientific development.

The modern challenges which have been made upon the popular readings of the sacred text do not originate from a single source, but have been thrown in upon the church from almost every field of scientific inquiry into which the mind of man has run, and are regarded, both by the foes and the friends of revelation, as imperatively demanding patient consideration and serious reply. Though differing very greatly from each other in their respective degrees of relative importance, and, in detail, often presenting considerations of comparatively trivial import, yet, when taken together as a whole, they present an array which no system, pretending to base itself on the rational convictions of men, can afford to overlook. Astronomy, geology, comparative anatomy, natural history, meteorology, archaeology, chronology, chemistry, and physiology have each successively and repeatedly preferred their claims to contradict or to modify the interpretation of certain passages of Scripture which are supposed to impinge upon facts in their respective departments. The literal Mosaic accounts of the time, method, and order of creation, the age of the world, the antiquity of the human race, the parental unity of its origin, the creation of woman, the sudden fall of man, the great ages of the antediluvian patriarchs, the universal deluge, the building of Babel, the confusion of tongues, and the received scriptural chronology, are each supposed by many to meet with insuperable difficulties in the disclosures of modern investigation.

There are those who, planting themselves on the presumed certainty and completeness of the scien-