

fore, curious to meet with so many citations from the Christian fathers and prophets in his essays on physical science — to find him in one page proceeding, by the strict rules of induction, to explain the former changes of the globe, and in the next gravely entertaining the question, whether the sun and stars, and the whole heavens, shall be annihilated, together with the earth, at the era of the grand conflagration.

*Woodward*, 1695. — Among the contemporaries of Hooke and Ray, Woodward, a professor of medicine, had acquired the most extensive information respecting the geological structure of the crust of the earth. He had examined many parts of the British strata with minute attention; and his systematic collection of specimens, bequeathed to the University of Cambridge, and still preserved there as arranged by him, shows how far he had advanced in ascertaining the order of superposition. From the great number of facts collected by him, we might have expected his theoretical views to be more sound and enlarged than those of his contemporaries; but in his anxiety to accommodate all observed phenomena to the scriptural account of the Creation and Deluge, he arrived at most erroneous results. He conceived “the whole terrestrial globe to have been taken to pieces and dissolved at the flood, and the strata to have settled down from this promiscuous mass as any earthy sediment from a fluid.”\* In corroboration of these views he insisted upon the fact, that “marine bodies are lodged in the strata according to the order of their gravity, the heavier shells in stone, the lighter in chalk, and so of the rest.”† Ray immediately exposed the unfounded nature of this assertion, remarking truly that fossil bodies “are often mingled, heavy with light, in the same stratum;” and he even went so far as to say, that Woodward “must have invented the phenomena for the sake of confirming his bold and strange hypothesis”‡ — a strong expression from the pen of a contemporary.

*Burnet*, 1690. — At the same time Burnet published his “Theory of the Earth.”§ The title is most characteristic of the age, — “The Sacred Theory of the Earth; containing an Account of the Original of the Earth, and of all the general Changes which it hath already undergone, or is to undergo, till the Consummation of all Things.” Even Milton had scarcely ventured in his poem to indulge his imagination so freely in painting scenes of the Creation and Deluge, Paradise and Chaos. He explained why the primeval earth enjoyed a perpetual spring before the flood! showed how the crust of the globe was fissured by “the sun’s rays,” so that it burst, and thus the diluvial waters were let loose from a supposed central abyss. Not satisfied with these themes, he derived from the books of the inspired writers, and even from heathen authorities, prophetic views of the future revolutions of the globe, gave a most terrific description of the

\* Essay towards a Natural History of the Earth, 1695. Preface.

† Ibid.

‡ Consequences of the Deluge, p. 165.

§ First published in Latin between the years 1680 and 1690.