

general conflagration, and proved that a new heaven and a new earth will rise out of a *second chaos* — after which will follow the blessed millennium.

The reader should be informed, that, according to the opinion of many respectable writers of that age, there was good scriptural ground for presuming that the garden bestowed upon our first parents was not on the earth itself, but above the clouds, in the middle region between our planet and the moon. Burnet approaches with becoming gravity the discussion of so important a topic. He was willing to concede that the geographical position of Paradise was not in Mesopotamia, yet he maintained that it was upon the earth, and in the southern hemisphere, near the equinoctial line. Butler selected this conceit as a fair mark for his satire, when, amongst the numerous accomplishments of Hudibras, he says, —

“He knew the seat of Paradise,
Could tell in what degree it lies;
And, as he was disposed, could prove it
Below the moon, or else above it.”

Yet the same monarch, who is said never to have slept without Butler's poem under his pillow, was so great an admirer and patron of Burnet's book, that he ordered it to be translated from the Latin into English. The style of the “Sacred Theory” was eloquent, and the book displayed powers of invention of no ordinary stamp. It was, in fact, a fine historical romance, as Buffon afterwards declared: but it was treated as a work of profound science in the time of its author, and was panegyricized by Addison in a Latin ode, while Steele praised it in the “Spectator.” Towards the end of the last century, Warton, in his “Essay on Pope,” discovered that Burnet united the faculty of *judgment* with powers of imagination.

Whiston, 1696. — Another production of the same school, and equally characteristic of the time, was that of Whiston, entitled, “A New Theory of the Earth; wherein the Creation of the World in Six Days, the Universal Deluge, and the General Conflagration, as laid down in the Holy Scriptures, are shown to be perfectly agreeable to Reason and Philosophy.” He was at first a follower of Burnet; but his faith in the infallibility of that writer was shaken by the declared opinion of Newton, that there was every presumption in astronomy against any former change in the inclination of the earth's axis. This was a leading dogma in Burnet's system, though not original, for it was borrowed from an Italian, Alessandro degli Alessandri, who had suggested it in the beginning of the fifteenth century, to account for the former occupation of the present continents by the sea. La Place has since strengthened the arguments of Newton, against the probability of any former revolution of this kind.

The remarkable comet of 1680 was fresh in the memory of every one when Whiston first began his cosmological studies; and the principal novelty of his speculations consisted in attributing the deluge to the near approach to the earth of one of these erratic bodies.