

PREFACE

TO THE SIXTH EDITION.

IN the third, fourth and fifth editions of this work, I have been enabled to shew sanctions of our theory of the sun's formation from two as eminent men of science as the present fertile age has produced, Sir David Brewster and the celebrated M. Arago, the French Astronomer. In the present edition I have the honour of adding what I consider a great sanction of our theory of the earth, by the late surprising discovery effected by the Earl of Rosse's six foot diameter telescope. And here I beg leave to say, I consider his Lordship as an honour to the nobility of the land, inasmuch as, with a mind superior to the common employment of wealth, he has soared above its ordinary gratifications, and given a high sanction to the pursuits of the sciences in general, and it is probable his telescope will extend the most sublime of them, that of Astronomy.

In my theory of the formation of the earth and planets, I started from the account we have of their formation in the waters of Genesis. By the modern discovery of the elementary composition of water, I shewed how the waters of Genesis must have been formed by the combustion of their elementary gases; and, reflecting on the stupendous quantity of light and heat which must have been evolved by that combustion, I founded my theory of the sun's formation on the belief that the most prominent and needful purpose to which that heat and light could be applied, was to form the suns of the planetary systems.

The author of the theory of Formation of the Nebular Hypothesis did not deign to derive its origin from Scriptural sources: it proceeded from the discovery of the nebulae in the regions of space by Sir Wm. Herschell. Then Laplace, the French Astronomer, grounded his theory of the Formation of the Earth and Planets upon that nebular discovery.