

The people of these early times had many theories as to the origin of comets. Some astronomers considered them as accidental phenomena or atmospheric meteors, some thought that they were kindled in the region of fire, but many that they were the spirits of great men on their way to the region of endless reward. To many they were omens of misfortune, as the ones which appeared during the siege of Troy and before the last wars of Napoleon. In the reign of Louis XIV. a comet appeared in the sky. The King and his brother trembled. Some thoughtless free thinking courtiers laughed at their anxiety, at which the prince exclaimed, "Ah, you may well speak at your ease, you are not princes."

A Theological-astronomer who tried very hard to mix theology with astronomy, having been struck with the fancy that the comet of 1680 might have had a considerable influence upon our planet in its early stages, worked out a theory which he published in 1696 under the title of the "New Theory of the Earth." Struggling over the causes of the creation, deluge and final state of the world he saw great possibilities in this comet. This especially appealed to him when Halley explained that the same comet might return many times, and that it was possible these wandering bodies followed well defined paths. This man, whose name was Whiston, worked on adding and subtracting till he found out that one of the dates of appearance of the comet of 1680 (which Halley said had appeared and would return every 575 years) would correspond with the date of the Deluge. Happy thought! This was all