

an equal and light crust which covered the abyss of waters, and which burst to produce the deluge; its relics formed the mountains. According to another,(1) the deluge was occasioned by a momentaneous suspension of the cohesion in minerals; the whole mass of the globe was dissolved, and the paste of it was penetrated by shells. According to a third,(2) God lifted up the mountains to allow the waters, which produced the deluge, to escape; and removed them to the places where there were more stones, because otherwise they could not have been supported. A fourth(3) created the earth with the atmosphere of one comet, and deluged it through the tail of another; the heat which remained to it from its first origin excited all mankind to sin; thus they were all drowned except the fishes, which had apparently passions less unruly.

We see, that, even in confining ourselves to the limits fixed by Genesis, naturalists have a wide field before them: they soon found themselves in difficulties, and when they had succeeded in attributing to the six days of creation indefinite periods, ages costing them nothing, their systems took a flight proportioned to the intervals which they could dispose of.

The great Leibnitz amused himself, like Descartes, in making the earth a quenched sun,(4) a vitrified globe, on which vapours having fallen at the time of its extinction, seas were formed, which in their turn deposited calcareous formations.

(1) Woodward's Essay towards the Natural History of the Earth. 1702.

(2) Scheuchzer, Mem. de l'Acad. 1708.

(3) Whiston. A New Theory of the Earth. Lond. 1708.

(4) Leibnitz, Protogæa. Act. Leips. 1683. Gott. 1749.