

It may be worthy of notice, that astronomers in every age, for the convenience of reference and description, have thought it desirable to divide the fixed stars into groups or constellations, to which different names have been given. These divisions, though arbitrary, have been generally acknowledged and used by modern astronomers, and some new ones have been introduced. It has not, however, always happened, that the figures proposed by the ancients have been accurately retained, and in some instances they have been actually reversed. The position of the stars frequently bears little or no resemblance to the drawings which are supposed to represent them, but they are of much advantage to the student, and serve him as an artificial memory. Who, for instance, can have attentively examined the representations usually given of the constellations Orion and Ursa Major, and then have sought for them in the heavens without finding them? Some attempts have been made to change the names of the constellations, and to introduce a new division of the celestial sphere. The venerable Bede proposed to name the twelve signs of the zodiac after the twelve apostles, and Judas Ichillierius gave Scripture names to the other constellations. It is, however, quite evident, that any innovation upon the established order would introduce many practical inconveniences, and increase the difficulties and errors of a comparison of ancient and modern observation.

THE PLANETS.

WE have hitherto considered all the stars to be fixed at relative distances from each other, without any individual motion; but an observer who has paid sufficient attention to determine the facts already mentioned, cannot have failed to discover, that some of the celestial bodies, and these the most conspicuous, are constantly changing their positions, and wander abroad among the multitude of less restless worlds. The moon has ever been among poets the emblem of fickleness, not only for the ceaseless variation in the size and form of her illuminated disk, but for her varying motions over the broad face of the heavens. These erratic bodies are called planets, and perform, in various times, their independent circuit of the heavens. The fixed stars also have a change of place, but it is so unimportant that no material