

and has a close connexion with our ultimate subject, I shall recite passages at some length.

The primary record, in the beginning of the Book of Genesis, will presently be the specific subject of attention. It is only needful now to say, that nothing is there affirmed, nor in any way implied, concerning the figure and situation of the earth. The mention which is made of the heavenly bodies evidently relates to their use to men, as luminaries and as measures of time; and it gives no hint of any other relations and uses.

“He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.”* The former part of this verse seems to contemplate the expanse of the starry heavens as seen by night, especially distinguishing the northern constellations, and presenting the appearance of a concave surface extended on all sides; or, as it is more fully expressed in the Book of Isaiah; “he stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in.”† By “the empty place” (תהוה, a word applied to any thing supposed to be *waste* and *deserted*) appears to be meant the whole space above the habitable ground, and which, by those who had no knowledge of the atmosphere or of any aëriform substance, was regarded as emptiness, a mere nothing. The “suspending of the earth upon nothing,” comes as the antithesis of the former member, and declares that the solid earth on which men and other creatures dwell, has no visible or known support, but remains in its place fixed by the decree and power of God. I cannot discover that the passage involves any sentiment, or warrants any conclusion whatever, as to the figure of the earth, or its connexion with other bodies: but it is perfectly conformable to the idea of the earth’s being an extended plane; which

* Job xxvi. 7.

† Is. xl. 22.