

this opinion with his magnetic doctrines; and especially endeavors by that means to account for the precession of the equinoxes. But he does not seem to have been equally confident of its annual motion. In a posthumous work, published in 1651 (*De Mundo Nostro Sublunari Philosophia Nova*), he appears to hesitate between the systems of Tycho and Copernicus.⁸ Indeed, it is probable that at this period many persons were in a state of doubt on such subjects. Milton, at a period somewhat later, appears to have been still undecided. In the opening of the eighth book of the *Paradise Lost*, he makes Adam state the difficulties of the Ptolemaic hypothesis, to which the archangel Raphael opposes the usual answers; but afterwards suggests to his pupil the newer system :

. . . . What if seventh to these
The planet earth, so steadfast though she seem,
Insensibly three different motions move ?

Par. Lost, b. viii.

Milton's leaning, however, seems to have been for the new system; we can hardly believe that he would otherwise have conceived so distinctly, and described with such obvious pleasure, the motion of the earth :

Or she from west her silent course advance
With inoffensive pace, that spinning sleeps
On her soft axle, while she paces even,
And bears thee soft with the smooth air along.

Par. Lost, b. viii.

Perhaps the works of the celebrated Bishop Wilkins tended more than any others to the diffusion of the Copernican system in England, since even their extravagances drew a stronger attention to them. In 1638, when he was only twenty-four years old, he published a book entitled *The Discovery of a New World; or, a Discourse tending to prove that it is probable there may be another habitable World in the Moon; with a Discourse concerning the possibility of a passage thither*. The latter part of his subject was, of course, an obvious mark for the sneers and witticisms of critics. Two years afterwards, in 1640, appeared his *Discourse concerning a new Planet; tending to prove that it is probable our Earth is one of the Planets*: in which he urged the reasons in favor of the heliocentric system; and explained away the opposite arguments, especially those drawn from the sup-

⁸ Lib. ii. cap. 20.