



BOOK I.

ON THE SITUATION OF THE TERRESTRIAL GLOBE IN SPACE.

CHAPTER I.

SITUATION OF THE EARTH IN THE UNIVERSE AND IN THE SOLAR WORLD—RELATIONS OF THE EARTH TO THE OTHER PLANETS AND TO THE SUN—SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF THE PRINCIPAL THEORIES PUT FORWARD IN EXPLANATION OF THE MOVEMENTS OF THE CELESTIAL BODIES—THEORY OF PTOLEMÆUS; EGYPTIAN THEORY—COPERNICUS, KEPLER, AND SIR ISAAC NEWTON DISCOVER THE TRUE MECHANISM OF THE SOLAR SYSTEM—GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

THE Earth is a grain of *seed* which the Divine Sower has flung forth on the field of space, to germinate, as it were, in the solar light, to flourish, and to fructify.

Human pride has long exaggerated the importance of the part which our Earth plays in the grand economy of the universe ; and has persisted in representing it as the centre of the world. For man both sun and moon, the planets and the stars, were but secondary bodies, constrained by a divine law to pass in eternal procession before the throne of the immovable Earth, as if their only mission were to charm the eyes of its inhabitants, to exercise a vigilant watch and ward over their fortunes, to inspire their songs and pæans, to illuminate their days, and brighten their nights with inextinguishable splendour. Nothing was ever more false than this wild romance of human vanity. Earth, in the great whole of the solar world, occupies but an inferior place ; it is only one, and not the most glorious, of the numerous