SYMMES'S THEORY OF CONCENTRIC SPHERES

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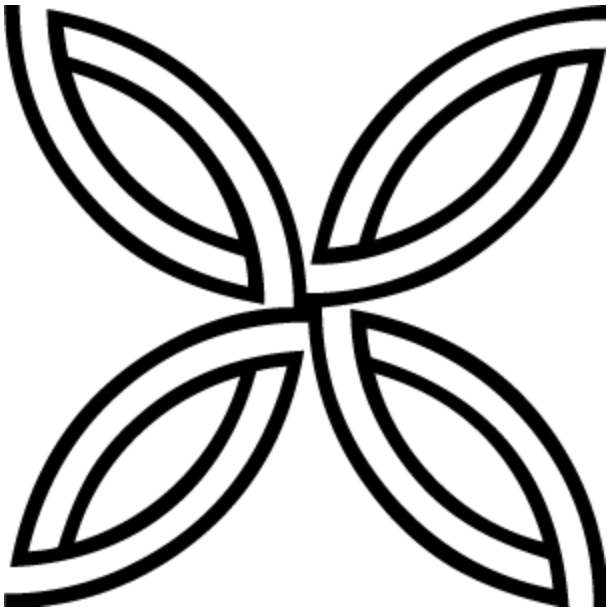

Preface.

The author of the following pages does not write because he is a learned man; he is conscious of the reverse; and that his merits give him no claim to that appellation; neither does he make this attempt because he is well acquainted with either the new, or the old theories of the earth; but, from having observed that the Theory of Concentric Spheres has been before the world for six or seven years, without attracting the attention of the scientific, except in a very few instances;—few besides the author himself having come forward to advocate its correctness. The newspaper scribblers, who have noticed the theory at all, have almost uniformly appeared to consider it as a fit subject on which to indulge their wit, the sallies of which, clothed in all the humour and satire their fancies could suggest, have in some degree had a tendency to throw around it an air of levity very unfavourable to serious investigation. But to deal in sarcasm is not always reasoning; and the truth is not to be ascertained by indulging in ridicule.

Considerations of this nature, first induced the author to devote a short time to the task of investigating a subject, to which he had paid but little attention, and to give the several papers, published by Captain Symmes, a cursory examination; in the course of which, he noted such of Symmes's principles and proofs as attracted his attention, as they occurred; and has since presumed to arrange them in such order as his own fancy suggested; supposing that, as they had struck forcibly on his mind, they might perhaps attract the attention of some other person, whose habits of thinking may be similar to his own. He has in a few instances inserted, in addition to those which he has seen advanced by Captain Symmes, such reasons and proofs in

support of the theory as occurred to him at the time. However, he has no claim to originality; as he has made a liberal use of the publications of Captain Symmes, as well as the remarks made on them by others, which came in his way.

The reader will not look for a complete analysis of the theory in this short treatise; it is not intended as such by the author, his object being merely to attract the attention of the learned, who are in the habit of indulging in more abstruse researches into the operation and effect of natural causes; and should it be found to merit the attention of such, it is hoped their enquiries may be so directed as to accelerate the march of scientific improvement, enlarge the field of philosophic speculation, and open to the world new objects of ambition and enterprise.

Should he therefore be fortunate enough to make any observations, or indulge in any reflections, in the course of the following chapters, that may merit the attention of the reader, he hopes they may in some degree atone for the many defects which will doubtless be discovered; with a sincere wish, that gentlemen of literature and science, who have made deeper researches than he pretends to, will have the goodness to correct them.

The author does not write for Fame: as anonymous compilers (and it is the author's wish to be considered in no other light) can never expect their true names to be inscribed on her records: neither do pecuniary considerations influence him, as he expects to reap no profit from the publication.

Should it attract public curiosity to such a degree, as to induce the sale of more copies than will be sufficient to meet the expense of printing, it is the author's desire, and he does hereby direct, and fully authorize the publishers, to pay over the nett profits to Captain Symmes, for the purpose of enabling him further to prosecute his studies; and to aid him in the accomplishment of his designs.

Whether Captain Symmes has hit upon an important truth in the economy of nature, as respects the organization of matter, it is not for the author to determine; to the more scientific we must look for a solution of the problem; to them it is submitted. The following pages are presented with no other intention, than as a hint to elicit the attention of others, who are qualified to investigate, and improve the subject. Should they, on examination, consider the matter worthy of their investigation, it will doubtless receive the attention which its importance so greatly demands. If it be erroneous, it is hoped they will detect, and expose its fallacy to the world; giving at the same time rational and satisfactory explanations of the many facts, and appearances which Captain Symmes adduces as proofs of his positions.
August, A. D. 1824.

Apology
TO
CAPTAIN SYMMES.

Sir—

To you I would apologize for the liberties I have taken with your Theory, and your publications in relation to it, which have made their appearance in the newspapers of the day. When I commenced this compilation, in support of your doctrine of Concentric Spheres, I had no view to its publication. I had collected all the papers on the subject, upon which I could lay my hands, with the intention of investigating the Theory for my own satisfaction: but the scattered and irregular order in which I found them, and in which they must necessarily appear in detached

Newspaper essays, published at different and distant times, induced me to attempt a methodical arrangement, for the purpose of facilitating my own enquiries. When I had completed this, the same reasons, added to the consideration, that you have not only invited, but solicited the investigation of your theory, declaring it "as free as air," to every person, to make such use of it as he may think proper, influenced me to conclude on publishing the result of my investigations. Having come to this determination, I have added a Preface, an Introductory chapter, and a few things in conclusion, to make it look more like a Book.

As I have not seen all your publications in the newspapers, if I have not fully understood, or if I have misrepresented your theory in any particular, I assure you it has been done unintentionally—it has arisen entirely from my want of adequate information; and I hope you will, in the spirit of candour and good nature, pardon and correct any errors into which I may have fallen. Had an opportunity offered, and could I have done it with propriety, I should certainly have submitted the manuscript to your revision, previous to its publication. However, as this sketch is only intended to elicit further investigation, and can only live until a formal and systematic treatise shall appear from your pen, I hope you will permit it to pass as the Pioneer to a more complete demonstration of your Theory of Concentric Spheres.

I am Sir,

One of the believers in that Theory ,—

THE AUTHOR.

1824.

CHAPTER I.

Containing an introductory glance at some of the different Theories and Opinions which have been advanced respecting the formation of the Earth, and the reception which those Theories met with from the world when first promulgated.

It often happens, that those who have been early taught to believe a certain set of principles and doctrines as true, whether in philosophy, religion, or politics, adhere to them with the utmost pertinacity during the remainder of their lives. Any new theory, or principle, is resisted with peculiar energy; and, however inconsistent or untrue their favorite systems may be, they are disposed to make principles and facts bend to them; and would sooner call in question the general and immutable laws of nature, than the correctness of their own opinions. Perhaps this pertinacious adherence to prevalent and received opinions has retarded the progress of philosophic improvement more than the want of bold, original, and enquiring genius.

In former times those who cultivated science, or rather those who were called learned, generally based their philosophy on the doctrines of Aristotle; which, as they had been taught to reverence them from their infancy, had become almost interwoven with their constitutions. Hence, though time has unfolded to us their errors, during several centuries, suspicion never hinted their fallibility. The doctrine of the revolutions of the earth, and other planets; of gravitation, magnetism, and other properties now known to belong to matter; have each in their turn met with a strong opposition from the most learned men living at the time of their discovery. But, notwithstanding this opposition, in all ages, a few bold, enquiring minds have had the firmness to dissent from the established doctrines

of the schoolmen, and to lay the foundation of new systems, the correctness of which subsequent improvements in science have more or less demonstrated to the world. Although nearly six thousand years have elapsed since man has been placed upon the earth, he yet knows but little of its formation. Notwithstanding all our enterprise, all our boasted acquirements, and discoveries, its true form yet remains uncertain; and although admitted that it is not quite eight thousand miles in diameter, we still have never explored its extent. A space of nearly forty degrees of latitude remains as little known to us, as if it were a part of the surface of Saturn, or an orb revolving round a star of the eighth magnitude. We know nothing of the inhabitants of those regions, or what kind of animate beings exist in them.

It was a prevailing opinion among the ancients, the correctness of which they for ages never called in question, that the temperate zones of our globe were alone habitable. —The torrid zone they imagined was composed of nothing but sandy deserts, scorched up by the vertical and insupportable beams of a burning sun. The frigid zones, they believed were begirt with eternal snows, and "thick ribbed ice," which rendered them inaccessible to man, and incapable of supporting animal or vegetable life. Hence none ventured to approach them.

Subsequent discoveries have, however, taught us the errors of the ancients. We now know that the torrid zone teems with organic life; and possesses, in many parts, a population more dense than the temperate, and is equally well adapted to its support: nay, we even find the temperature of that region to be such that it contains mountains capped with perpetual snows, which the beams of a July sun do not dissolve. It has also been ascertained that the frigid zones are partially inhabited: but it seems that a certain timid dread, perhaps in part attributable to the prejudices imbibed from our ancestors, has prevented

our exploring the extent of those regions. However, as far as civilized man has yet ventured to penetrate towards the poles, we find that plants grow, flowers bloom, and human beings make a permanent residence; nay, even the untutored savages who reside there tell us that other human beings reside yet further to the north; and animals are known to migrate in that direction. Reasoning then from analogy, and from what we know, we have no ground to conclude that such a vast extent of surface has been created by an all-wise Providence for no other purpose, than to be eternally clothed with mountains of ice. Such a conclusion comports not with the general economy *we do know* to exist throughout his works.

We are constrained to acknowledge, notwithstanding our improvements in science, that, comparatively, we know but little of the economy of nature. Within a few years past, almost an entire revolution has taken place in the world respecting the philosophy of light and heat—a change which affects the theory both of their nature, and of their causes:—They are now believed to be two distinct things, and that the sun communicates neither, but merely gives activity, in some manner not yet known, to the principles, or matter, of light and heat with which our elements abound. If this be the case, as I believe is now admitted by the learned world, we cannot undertake to say, that the intensity or the absence of either, is necessarily dependant alone on the altitude of the sun, under any particular latitude; or on our nearness to, or remoteness from, the centre of the system:—For aught we know, both may be connected with arrangements that require but few of the sun's rays to make them answer the purposes of organic life. For aught we can tell, the planet Georgium Sidus, which rolls eighteen hundred millions of miles distant from the orb of day, may, nevertheless, be favoured with as brilliant light, and as genial warmth as our little globe; and for aught we know the interior of this planet, in the

concavity of the spheres, under the equator, may enjoy the same light and heat that fructify and bless the equatorial climes on the convex surface.

During a period of several thousand years the ancients were of opinion that the earth was a perfect plane, at rest, and supported below by an unknown something; that it was bounded on all sides by an impassable barrier, and covered with the blue canopy of heaven, in which the sun, moon, and stars performed their diurnal revolutions for the sole use and service of a few frail mortals. They believed that the sun, every morning rose out of the Eastern sea; and in the evening plunged into the Western ocean; that the stars were lighted up in the evening by some kind deity, and extinguished before the appearance of the sun. For ages none doubted the correctness of such a theory. At length, however, from an attentive examination of the regular appearances and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, some of the Babylonians adopted the opinion that the earth was spherical; revolving at regular periods round the sun, as the centre of the universe. In this they were followed by Pythagoras and others. But those efforts of genius, for the most part, met no other reward than the execrations of the exasperated multitude. Such innovations were deemed an impious crime against the gods, and could only be atoned for by the sacrifice of their lives. In those times the people of every nation, like the untutored Indian of our North Western wilderness at this day, considered their own country to be situated in the centre of the world, and they, the most favoured people. Even in later times, when the system of the Babylonians, and that of Pythagoras, were revived by Copernicus; and, when new discoveries respecting the form and revolutions of the earth, and other parts of the universe, were made by Galileo, not more than two hundred years since, we find an ignorant and bigoted world alarmed at such opinions. We find Galileo, that incomparable philosopher, cited before the court of