

THE REASON FOR OUR HOPE

by

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CHAPTER TEN

SCIENCE AND SCRIPTURE (II)

DR. GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER of Tuskegee, Alabama, was undoubtedly the greatest Negro scientist who has ever lived. It has been estimated that more than three freight cars would be required to carry samples of his many different discoveries, including some 300 from peanuts, nearly 200 from sweet potatoes, about 100 from pecans, and a large number from cotton, to say nothing of the synthetic products which he created out of waste materials. But Dr. Carver was not only a great scientist; he was also a great Christian.

Once, when appearing before a Committee of the United States Senate to explain his experiments with the peanut, he was asked, "How did you learn all these things?"

"From an old Book," he replied.

"What book?" the Chairman inquired curiously.

"The Bible," was Dr. Carver's answer. Indeed, that ancient Book was to him, as he frequently testified, an unfailing source of spiritual and scientific inspiration alike.

If a contemporary scientist were to sketch the stages by which our earth came to be as it now is, he would explain that originally there was only a watery mass and that out of this swirling sea the continents gradually emerged and were clothed with grass and trees, after which fish came into existence, then birds, next animals, and finally men. And, surprisingly enough, the Book of Genesis gives precisely the same sketch.

"Modern science may supplement, it is astonishing how little it requires us to reverse of, the ideas we derive from this narrative of the succession of steps in creation . . . The dark watery waste over which the Spirit broods with vivifying power, the advent of light, the formation of an atmosphere or sky capable of sustaining the clouds above it, the settling of the great outlines of the continents and seas, the clothing of the dry land with abundant vegetation, the adjustment of the earth's relation to sun and moon as the visible rulers of its day and night, the production of the great sea monsters and reptile-like creatures (for these may well be included in "sheratzim") and birds, the peopling of the earth with four-footed beasts and cattle—last of all, the advent of Man—is there so much of all this which science requires us to cancel?"

— James Orr

Back in 1885 the noted prime minister of Great Britain, William Gladstone, who was a staunch believer in the full trustworthiness of the Bible, published a series of articles on the accuracy of Genesis which was attacked by Professor Thomas Huxley, the most brilliant scientist of that day.

Gladstone suggested that they refer their debate to a distinguished American scientist and let him be the judge. “There is no one,” Mr Huxley answered, “to whose authority I am more readily disposed to bow than that of my eminent friend Professor Dana.” And the decision of Professor James Dwight Dana was this: “I agree in all essential points with Mr. Gladstone, and I believe that the first chapter of Genesis and science are in accord.”

Nor was that the end of it. Six years later Sir Robert Anderson, the head of Scotland Yard, challenged Mr. Huxley on the same subject and the challenge was refused. So, as Sir Robert Anderson says in his book, *A Doubter's Doubts About Science and Religion*:

“The fact remains that Mr. Gladstone’s position stands unshaken. The fact remains that one who has had no equal in this age as a scientific controversialist entered the lists to attack it, and retired discomfited and discredited. Mr. Gladstone’s thesis, therefore, holds the field. ‘The order of creation as recorded in Genesis has been so affirmed in our time by natural science that it may be taken as a demonstrated conclusion and established fact.’ Are we then to conclude that when Genesis was written biological science was as enlightened and as far advanced as it is today? Or shall we adopt the more reasonable alternative, that “the Mosaic narrative” is a Divine revelation?”

Modern physicists and astronomers have come to the conclusion that the heavens above and around us are an infinite expanse without any boundaries. A few centuries ago scientists held that the universe had definite limits and its measurements could be carefully figured out. Entirely in harmony with twentieth-century scientists, the Bible affirms that the heavens are an infinite expanse of space which cannot possibly be measured.

“Thus saith the Lord; if heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 31:7).

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9).

The infinite height of the heaven above the earth becomes the symbol of the infinite wisdom.

Once more in Psalms we read:

“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12).

As Dr. A. T. Pierson comments:

“The writer of the 103rd Psalm himself had no conception of what is known by us — that go as far as you will to the east there is still an east, and as far as you will go west, there is still a west; but God who spoke through him knew that only when you can measure the distance between the remotest east and west you can measure how far away from the forgiven sinner God has removed his sins — astronomical infinities are brought in to illustrate the infinity of the love and grace of God! There is no accident about that! It is manifestly intelligent design.”

The invention of the telescope proved conclusively, as Sir James Jeans has put it, that, “It is no good trying to count the stars.” Yet the astrologers of old thought that with patience and diligence such a census could be taken. In fact, they did count all the stars they were able to see, with the result that Hipparchus tallied 1022 and Ptolemy 1026. But the writers of the Bible, minus a telescope, were no less sure than Sir James Jeans with his telescope that “It is no good trying to count the stars.”

“As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me” (Jeremiah 33:22).

And what is the promise which God made to Abraham?

“And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be” (Genesis 15:5).

“And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed also be numbered” (Genesis 13:16).

Can anybody number the particles of dust in the world? No more can we number the twinkling lights in the sky above.

The surprising grasp of scientific truth such as the Bible writers had, led E. W. Maunder in his book, *The Astronomy of the Bible*, to declare that

“by no process of research could man find for himself facts that are stated here. They must have been revealed.”

In the Book of Job this rather casual challenge is flung out.

“Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades?” (Job 38:31a).

On the surface that seems to be a bit of poetry and nothing more. But in actuality it has amazing implications. No wonder Sidney Collett writes:

“Pleiades is the name given by the ancient Greeks to what is known as ‘*the seven stars*.’ It comes from the Greek word *Pleein*—“to sail,” and the appearance of this group indicated a favorable time for sailors to start on their voyage; it is also supposed to usher in the spring. But apparently little beyond this was known until recent years.

“The original Chaldaic word translated “*Pleiades*” is *Chimah* and means *hinge or pivot*, and the astronomer Bradley, in 1748, and more recently M. Madler of Dorpat and others, discovered, after much elaborate calculations, that Alcyone, the brightest of these seven stars, is actually, so far as is known, the center of our whole solar system — the hinge or pivot around which our sun, with all its attendant planets, is believed to revolve. Now when we remember that the sun is more than three thousand billion miles away from Alcyone, we get some idea of how marvellous must be the “influence” of the Pleiades, which swings these planets — the earth included — around it at the rate of more than one hundred and fifty million miles a year, in an orbit so vast that one circuit would occupy thousands of years to complete.

“Who can contemplate without an overwhelming sense of solemn awe the mighty power of God referred to in this remote verse in what is probably one of the oldest books in the Bible, and which recent astronomical discoveries enable us but dimly to appreciate?

“As the ages roll on the heavenly bodies are ever in motion — the moon revolving around the earth; the earth with other planets revolving around the sun; the sun with all the solar system revolving around Alcyone: Alcyone with its myriad attendants revolving around some other unknown center; all these, and countless other creations, all unknown to man, revolving in awful grandeur around the center of all centers —the throne of the Almighty.

“Moreover, it is worthy of notice that this “**influence**” is said to be “**sweet**,” a word which in this connection is full of significance, as we think that our vast solar system with all its untold myriads of stars is ever moving at such an amazing pace, like some complex and mighty machinery, yet with a regularity and evenness that can only be described as “**sweet**”— *the very word which engineers use today to describe perfectly smooth working.*”

— *The Scripture of Truth*

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