

TITUS 11: 14.

"Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

WHO

The Prince of Peace, the spotless one, God's only, well-loved Son.
The King of Glory, Lord of all.
Before whose presence angels fall.

GAVE

Precious news of wondrous love.
Theme of angel-songs above:
Wonderful gift, no price to pay,
Only believe—this is the way.

HIMSELF

When the Father's call was heard
For a Saviour, He spoke the word;
"Lo! I come to do Thy will,
All thy purpose to fulfill."

FOR US.

"Whoever will." It was for you
That his agony was passed through.
All are included in his call—
He tasted death and rose for all.

THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US

Every debt he fully paid.
Full atonement the hath made:
From the law's demand set free.
Given the captive liberty.

FROM AEL INIQUITY.

Wonderful is his saving power,
Cleansing and keeping us hour by hour,
Perfect redemption from all sin
He himself enthroned within.

AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF.

Purified and then joined to him,
This he suffered and died to win;
Bought with a price—his precious blood—
We are the heritage of God.

A PECULIAR PEOPLE.

A peculiar people, bearing God's mark,
Wholly light, no part dark:
Separated, of all men known
As those who worship the Lord alone.

ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS.

Entered into rest, but not at ease,
Ever anxious the Lord to please;
"Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,"
Not only hearing but doing the Word.

Visitor Pulpit.

THE NATURAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE BIBLE.

An address delivered by Rev. W. T. Cheney, pastor of Curtis Baptist church, Augusta, Ga., upon the anniversary occasion of the Augusta Bible Society, May 8th, 1881.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is customary in addresses of this kind, to begin with a few introductory remarks; but on account of very limited time, I shall be guilty of a breach of form, and pulpit etiquette, and commence "in medias res."

I must steal time to say, however, that I am thankful to God that He has seen fit to establish the Augusta Bible Society, and that through so many years He has blessed and maintained it. And I pray Him that He may more abundantly pour out His blessings upon it in the future, and that he may cause each and every member of it to realize, more than ever before, its grand and glorious purpose, and labor for it accordingly.

And I am fully persuaded, according to my knowledge at present, that anniversary occasions are valuable for promotion of Biblical truth and influence, inasmuch as they encourage Biblical discussion, study and research.

The Christian world holds that the Bible is the Word of God, containing His revealed will; that when minus all interpolations and properly translated, it is the truth to the letter, plenary inspired. It is true some men differ as to the amount or degree of inspiration. They differ from orthodox Christians, as to whether the Bible, in all of its parts, word for word, is the very "Word of God," or whether the "Word of God" is in the Bible. Yet, it is true that Christians universally accept the Bible as containing God's revealed will.

On the other hand, numbers contend that the Bible is not God's production but man's; that it lisps the "shibboleth" of man's fallibility; fallibility in moral precepts and examples; fallibility in moral and philosophical principles; fallibility in statements.

Now, if the Bible is the Word of God indeed, it is infallible in all these respects, when interpreted according to the design of the purposes and objects of revelation. It is a fortress of truth impregnable. It is a mountain of inspiration immovable. It is as steadfast and unchangeable as Him who spoke it. This all Christians believe. Then, since this is true, should Biblical devotees fear attack? Should they attempt to evade scrutinizing investigation? Should they not rather invite the onslaughts of infidelity, and court the mental scapels of critics, knowing that they are coming at those "things that can never be moved?"

I sometimes feel constrained to thank God for Comtes and Humes and Ingersolls, because their tremendous splash and flounder in the waters of inspiration will only augment the receding and incoming tidal waves that will wash from its rocky bound shore the stranded wrecks of

unbelief and hypocritical belief.

Since many of the attacks of infidelity have been against the scientific statement (or revelation) and allusions of the Bible, I propose briefly to consider a few of these under the subject, "The Natural Philosophy of the Bible," and I sincerely trust that I may advance a few thoughts upon this important subject that will be profitable for your instruction.

By "philosophy" is meant literally, the love of, or search after, truth; it then comes to mean the knowledge of truth, either revealed or discovered, and then systems of truth, either natural or moral. When the truths of a system refer to, and have to do mainly with the realm of Nature and her laws, the system under which they are compendized is termed "Physics," or "Natural Philosophy." When we speak of "Natural Philosophy" as a system which is as the result of the investigation of man, we mean his compendium of the facts, principles and laws of matter and of natural phenomena, which have been discovered, proved and classified by him; and by the "Natural Philosophy of the Bible," we mean the facts, principles and laws of Physics revealed in the Bible; or alluded to in it, whether the allusion be true or untrue; just so the purpose of the allusion be effected; but the revelation, so far as it goes, must be true; it is a revelation. Revelation teaches truths previously unknown. Allusion is reference, for some purpose, to what is received there as true, without teaching that what is alluded to is true or not. This is an important distinction that must be borne in mind.

Judging from the purpose for which inspiration was given, it is evident that the main primary objects of the Bible is to teach "Moral Philosophy." And if any reference is made to Physical Science, it is for a relative and secondary purpose. That man does not study the Bible with a rational nor holy intent who goes to it mainly for the scientific truth which it may secondarily, relatively, and, I might say, accidentally set forth. Any man who wishes to study the Bible profitably, must bear in mind throughout the entire volume, that the object is not to teach systems of Political, nor Physical, nor Medicinal Philosophy, but Religion, Moral Philosophy. The Bible is the tutor of the soul,—the governor of the conscience,—and that man undervalues it, and misconstrues its heavenly, holy and exalted mission and purpose, who goes to it expecting to find a thorough treatise on Geology, or a perfect system of Astronomy. He who goes there with such intention, will be certainly and wofully disappointed.

God has ordained, for man's profit and pleasure, that he shall engage his mind in discovering, so far as he can, the facts, the laws, the principles, the grandeur and the wonders of God's footstool, and of his outstretching handiwork. Man is a creature of activity, and it seems now that the power of this activity is indefinite. He cannot be stationary. The law of his nature forbids it. He must increase, or he will decrease. He must move forward, or he will go backward. Hence, we see the love and wisdom of God in revealing but little of natural truth, and in leaving immensity to engage for eternity the activity of man.

In all scientific revelation and allusion in the Bible, there are certain principles that govern their interpretation and acceptance, and in all study of the Bible, these must be understood and kept in view.

The first and all-important principle that must be borne in mind is, first, That the Bible is not intended to teach Science, but Religion.

The second principle is this: That the Bible reveals, and alludes to, only so much "Natural Philosophy" as is necessary for the establishment and vindication of the claims of Religion, and for the conveyance of moral truth.

Let us illustrate this important principle, and apply it in the revelation of creation.

God commands men to fear, love and worship Him. Now, the question arises, What right has God to do this? How is man placed under obligation to obey God. Suppose God had not revealed himself as the great Creator, but as some unknown, unknowable being, had thundered His command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve," would men have felt under obligation to obey him any more than he would obey the fabled gods of Olympus? In order for God to enforce and establish the right of their claim of worship upon man, it is absolutely necessary that he should reveal himself as the Creator of man and all things. There must be the revelation of creation, and especially of Him who created.

This establishes the claim of religion; and it is not so necessary that there should be an exact revelation of the "modus operandi" of creation, as of the simple fact that God did create; and, therefore, that He has a reasonable, authoritative and moral

claim upon all His moral creatures.

Modern scientists may, and do, shake the faith of some as to the time, "modus operandi," etc., of the creation, as detailed in simple style in the Bible, but they can never, by any show of proof, or trickery of rhetoric, or sophistry of logic, change any rational man's convictions as to the fact that there has been a creation, that this creation is an effect, and not an eternal, self-existent thing; and that, therefore, there must be a Creator.

And the goodness, the love, the wisdom, the government and the power exhibited in creation, as we realize the facts and the phenomena of creation, fully establish the Creator's claims on all His moral creatures. This fact the Bible purposely reveals fully, clearly, simply, in such style and phraseology that the most illiterate and untutored of God's moral creatures can understand and comprehend it.

Suppose God had made this revelation in some such style (abstract, abstruse, scientific, or whatever you may term it,) as Spencer's definition of "Evolution," how many men would have known that there had been such an event as the creation, or such a being as the Creator?

I fearlessly make the statement that if modern scientists should prove that the Biblical details of the creation were not true scientifically, that would not at all invalidate the value of revelation on that question, so far as the purpose of revelation, and the end to be attained, are concerned. If God intentionally, and with a good and gracious purpose reveals a fact in a figure instead of a literal scientific category, does that, in the least, depreciate its intrinsic value as a fact.

The third principle of the revelation of "Natural Philosophy," and of allusion to it is that, in divine revelation, God addresses men according as they are mentally capable of reception.

The period of revelation extends over about three thousand years. During this time the notions of men concerning Physical Science, the system in which they lived, its laws and environments, were very limited and crude, and when any natural phenomenal allusion or statement was necessary for the purpose of conveying moral truth, they were made according to the views and notions of the age and people in and to which the moral truth was taught. Otherwise they would have understood nothing that was meant, and besides God would have debased the Bible into a work on Science.

Growing out of the third, the fourth and last principle follows. That the scientific revelation and allusions of the Bible, in the manner of their presentation, are more largely figurative and apparent than real.

Now, let us illustrate and apply these principles in a hasty investigation of the Biblical revelation concerning the creation, and also in a few scientific allusions.

The Mosaic account of the creation is a scientific revelation, and, if I am not mistaken, it is the only one in the Bible, other so-called scientific teaching being simply allusion or inference. The fact of creation, and the object of its revelation, we have already noticed. We will now examine, in the light of the principles of interpretation that have been laid down, the "modus operandi," the order of time, etc., of this event as given in the Bible, and also institute a comparison with modern scientific teaching on this subject.

The Bible divides the creation into six divisions or periods of time. The power of God, as directed by His will and wisdom, is the creative agency. The divisions of time are called "days." "The evening and the morning were the first, second, etc., day." In each of these days certain orders of things were created. It begins with matter already existing in a formless, chaotic state, having been previously created "in the beginning." When this "beginning" was when God created the heavens and the earth, we know not. Neither are we informed how long after this "beginning" it was when "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." The "days" or periods of time, began with the creation of light; then the firmament is formed; then the dry land is caused to rise out of its watery grave. God then begins creating the flora and fauna, commencing with the lower orders of life, and concluding in the last "day" by creating man, making man the last and highest form of creation.

Now, it is to me a strange and striking fact or coincidence that the modern scientists, while professing that their investigations have been pursued, and their conclusions reached independently of the Bible, yet they follow, in the main its order of the account of creation.

They begin in the Archean era, the first and lowest known, with matter and force and heat, or the voidless chaotic earth enveloped in water, already in existence. The existence of matter is assumed. I know the Evolutions go farther back and begin

at the beginning, as they say, with the protoplasmic atom, but their starting-point is the same, they must, and do, acknowledge the previous existence of matter. They teach that in the primitive state of the earth, it was enveloped in water, and that some internal force, caused by unequal secular heating and cooling, and acting radially, expands the earth in certain parts, causing it to rise out of the water, and the water to be collected in other depressed portions. In this way gradually throughout ages, the dry land and seas were formed. After this, forms of life come into existence. First the simple protoplasmic life, as the Protozoa, the lowest primordial form.

The Physiologist then traces, in the Paleozoic, and Mesozoic, and Neozoic eras, the gradual merging into existence, which he calls Evolution, of the higher and more perfect and complex organisms of life. This evolution of all the terms of life, from the highest to the lowest, takes place during multiplied ages. He reaches, lastly, the Psychozoic era, or the era of man, of mind; this era includes the present time. Scientists of the school of Evolution are quite generally agreed as to this order of development.

And here, as I remarked before, the striking fact presents itself to us, that so far as the order of the creation of life is concerned, modern scientific and Biblical teaching agree, which inclines me to accept the teaching of the former on this point. This is a fact worthy of special note. The only difference between them is that the Biblical account is ultimate, while the scientific is penultimate. The Bible goes back to the final cause, God, Science stops this side of a final cause with matter and force, etc., as effects already in existence and in activity. But in so far as the orders of the creation of life, the revealed "Natural Philosophy," and modern "Natural Philosophy" agree. So plain is the case that we are almost forced to conclude that there must have been some recent plagiarism from Moses. Hence, it seems that on this point, if modern science be true or not, it corroborates the Bible. And if it be true, then Moses must have been inspired.

There may be apparent conflict between the theory of literal Evolution and the Biblical declaration "that each brought forth after its kind;" but scientists have not proved, nor can they ever from the nature of the case, that by any inconceivable something (or nothing) called "differentiation," one order of life was evolved from another inferior and entirely different order. Scientists can never reason away the impassibility of the gradations of physical, vital and mental existence.

They find, in the rock structure of different eras the fossils of different orders of life, and that is all they know. And this does not, in the least, conflict with the declaration of Scripture that "each brought forth after its kind." The theory of so called evolution is a base, groundless and undemonstrable assumption. We know that certain orders die, and others come into existence, but who can prove the living came from the dead? Could not God at any time extinguish a certain species or genus of life, and produce another of superior order in its stead and carry on the work by natural laws? But what right has any man to base upon these facts the assumption of evolution?

Now, as to the time taken in creation. Apparently here is a conflict between the inspired and the scientific accounts—the former putting the time at six "days," the latter an inconceivable length. Just here it is to the point to state that geologists differ immensely among themselves in the estimates they give of the length of time required in the gradual evolution, or creation, or formation of the earth and its forms of life. They are not, and apparently never can be, so far as we now know, agreed on this point. The Bible gives the time from the creation of Adam, of man, to the present, as six thousand years; scientists reckon it as vastly more. Their computation is based upon such data as the "stone age," the "bronze age," etc., terms familiar to students of this subject. But many facts are known which render such data wholly untrustworthy. For instance, relics have been found in Canada, along the St. Lawrence, which would reckon the time of the tribes who used them in the geologic "Stone Age," and the tribes who used them would be labeled as of an ancient universal savagery; but it is known that these tribes were comparatively civilized, busily engaged in fishing and hunting and husbandry, and that these relics could not have been, at the time of discovery, over three hundred and fifty years old. I have many facts of similar character at hand but, for want of time, cannot mention them. (See "The Unity of Nature," by Duke of Argyll, No. VII, in "The Eclectic Magazine" for June.)

But, granting that scientists could prove their almost interminable ages

in creation, still this would not at all invalidate the statements of the Bible. Anyone who reads carefully the Biblical account of the creation of the different orders of life, can see that in respect to time, the language is figurative. My space forbids me to go into the full proof of this fact here. It is plain, yea, I might say evident, from the phraseology of the Biblical account of the creation of the various orders of life, man excepted, that their creation was according to the natural laws of formation and growth. After the account of the creation, in Gen. 1, we have the following in the 2d chapter, 4th and 5th verses: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth, when they were created, in the day that the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and every plant of the field before it grew, and every herb of the field before it was in the earth." Judging from this passage and others, I think that the revelation teaches that God formed the floral life in germ, in seed, so many and of such kinds, and in such time as He saw fit, and then the earth brought them forth, and they grew, according to the natural laws of germination and growth. Gen. 1:11. "And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth: and it was so.'"

The same is true of all the animal forms of life except man.

Gen. 1:20 24: "And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, the fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.' " "And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping things, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.' " And in verse 21 and 25, we are told: "And God created," etc. "And God made the beast of the earth," etc.; which teaches that He "created," "made" them, all the same, although they were generated from the germ of life in the sea or earth, which God had caused to be there, and all according to established laws of nature, which hold now. All this creation and growth could be, and was, according to natural laws, and yet it could be truly said that God "created."

This is true of all life except that of man. It was said of all beasts and fishes and fowls: "Let the earth and the sea bring forth;" but of man it is said that God made man out of the dust of the ground, and made him in His own image, and breathed into him the breath of life, and man became a living soul. The animal man was made in God's own hand as the mould, and he was made a perfect man, full-formed at once; other animals, etc., were "brought forth." They are from the earth, having no principle of life but that derived from the elements of the soil of earth; they return to the earth from whence they came and that is all of them.

Man is of God, from God, and returns to God.

But I must not diverge from the point in hand, viz., the time taken in creating according to natural law, these orders of life. If the Bible teaches that all this was done according to natural law, and the different orders at different times, as would be necessary in the economy of nature, then, most assuredly, the divisions of time, called "days," in which these protracted processes took place, are not intended to mean literal "days." The term "day" must be received as figurative, and it means simply a division of time. And God showed wisdom in using figurative language thus in reference to the time employed. Just here the principles of interpretation which we laid down apply, and are illustrated.

Suppose God had seen fit, as it appears that he did, to create according to natural law, and this gradual process had consumed millenniums, and He wished to convey the facts and order and sequence of creation in such a manner that the then infantile mind of man could best receive them, could this not have been accomplished most effectively by revealing these things to him as having taken place in their order, in those natural divisions of time with which his young, untutored, inexperienced mind was most familiar, which divisions are known as "days?"

Man had not then been accustomed to deal with, or think of, long periods of time; God wished to make revelations according as man was "mentally capable of receptions," and hence he termed the divisions of time in which he had created, or caused to be brought into existence, the different forms of life, simply "days."

So that man's mind was not bewildered with the maze of piled-up ages, and facts were not obscured by the mists of useless detail.

Although Moses was inspired, yet no doubt he wrote the account of the creation from tradition which had come down from Adam; and we must bear in mind that the art of writing was then unknown, and for so long a period from Adam to Moses, men could not have remembered and

transmitted an immense comprehensive and itemized account of so tremendous an event. We have the facts, we have the principles, we have the phraseology and we must form our own conclusions as to other minor points from them. And I hold that if science proves its interminable ages in creation, the true Biblical account of the same event will not be in the least depreciated.

In conclusion, I will notice briefly some scientific allusions made in the Bible which wicked men are wont to scoff at.

In some of its appeals and commands, the Bible alludes to the "corners of the earth," "the ends of the world," etc. From such passages as these men assert that the Bible teaches that the earth is flat, and upon this they attack its truth and inspirations. Now, let us apply our principles of Bible scientific interpretation.

There is no doubt but at the time these statements were made in the Bible, men believed that the earth was flat, and had "corners" and "ends," etc. In making his appeal, or giving his command, by inspiration, God addressed them, and conveyed moral truth to them, in the way that they were then "mentally capable of reception." God taught them nothing concerning the true form of the earth. He simply made allusions, which may be true or untrue. He adapted his truth to their minds. The language used, is, of course, figurative. He left it for man to find out the form of the earth. What would the people have thought if God had said, "Look unto me all ye poles of the earth," or, "Come unto me all ye meridians of the earth."

Again, many take the allusions of the Bible to the "rising" and "going down" of the sun, and such like phrases, to be inspired that the sun moves about it as the center. They say that the prayer of Joshua, for the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, is the inspired system of astronomy. In these instances, and at the time of their record, of course, the people believed that the earth stood still, and that the sun and moon and stars moved about it as a center; Joshua believed it, and he prayed God accordingly, and, in so far as it appeared to them, God literally answered Joshua's prayer. God addressed the people, He dealt with them, He conveyed moral truth to them, He answered their prayers, all in their own mental phraseology. But inspiration never did make any categorical statement concerning astronomy. It simply alluded to existent belief on the subject without teaching that it was true or untrue. It taught no system of astronomy. Such a thing would have been entirely contrary to the spirit and intent of inspiration. The same thing is true concerning the geology of the earth. God did not intend to teach geology, but only what was necessary, viz.: that this is His creation, and all things the creatures of His hand. To search after minor truths was to be man's employment through out the ages. And this absence of scientific teaching proves to my mind that the Bible is an inspired book. Contrast the scientific teaching of Buddhism with the Bible, and you will see the divine halo of the latter. Buddha took great pains to teach that the earth was flat and stationary, and that the sun moved about it, that night was caused by the sun sinking behind a high mountain reaching to the sky. The result is that modern philosophy is destroying Buddhism. It has taught false natural philosophy, and must die in consequence, unless Buddhists succeed, as they are trying to do, in keeping modern science out of their schools and colleges.

I might notice other instances of similar character in the Bible to those that have been adduced, but it is useless. I have examined a sufficient number to prove that the "Natural Philosophy" of the Bible is infallible, either as revelation or allusion, for the purpose designed, if interpreted according to the plain, evident and common-sense principles that have been laid down.

I have not made this address for the purpose of reconciling the Bible with modern science, for, to my mind, there is no conflict between the Bible and true science, but to show you that we hold to "those things that cannot be moved." Wherefore, if we would be wise, let us study those things which are true. Thy Word, O God, is truth! We must go to the Bible for all grand ultimate truths and facts. It alone can satisfy the searching inquiries of man. Aggregate all purely human systems of philosophy, and all together do not teach an ultimate fact. They deal entirely with facts which are consequences—with causes which are effects. I wish to know the whence, the why, and the whither of all things. These are the ultimate facts of nature, and I must go to that Inspired Philosophy to learn them. Take it away from me and the very light that remains is darkness incomprehensible. Remove that Book of books and, as Sir William Hamilton says, "All is but a dream of a dream!"