

**A SERIES OF SEVEN
ESSAYS ON UNIVERSAL
SCIENCE; PP. 1-207**

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A Series of Seven Essays on Universal Science; pp. 1-207 by Thomas Clark Westfield

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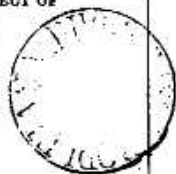
THOMAS CLARK WESTFIELD

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A SERIES
OF
SEVEN ESSAYS
ON
UNIVERSAL SCIENCE,

EMBRACING SOME

INVESTIGATIONS OF THE MOSAIC COSMOGONY, AND THE INTER-
PRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES, WITH THE OBJECT OF
PROVING THEIR SCIENTIFIC EXACTNESS.



BY
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~~180. a. 135.~~
198. a. 38.

INTRODUCTION.

THE study of science in connection with revelation and the expounding of Divine truth, is certainly the noblest and most absorbing occupation of the human mind ; and as it is the same beneficent Creator who formed the world and instituted the physical laws which are the foundation of all science, that also caused by the inspiration of His word the Scriptures to be written, we must expect to find that both, *being properly understood*, must agree even to the minutest particular ; any other supposition would do violence to human reason and understanding. Nevertheless, we find those who are constantly arming themselves with science to assault truth, as it is revealed to us in the Scripture. For this there must be some palpable cause or reason, and what is it ? To our minds this question is readily answered. First, from an incompetency to judge by an insufficient knowledge of the subject—which knowledge future revela-

tions and discoveries in science may supply— or, what is less likely, misconceptions arising from errors in translation.

We know that the inspiration of the Scriptures is looked upon in a great many different lights, and while many admit of the inspiration of the truths concerning theology, the gospel, and our salvation, allow themselves to be deluded into the idea that errors may make their appearance when the same writers, under the same inspiration, are treating on physical truths. God is equally the Author of both; and if we allow ourselves to believe that errors occur on the one hand, we must also admit of them on the other. In such a case, the Bible would cease to be of the immense importance it is, and would be reduced, for the most part, to a simple historical account of the Jews, and even that an imperfect one. But recognising in every page of it the inspired Word of God, we can admit of no error, whether treating on physical truths or truths concerning theology and religion. It is, indeed, a melancholy fact that so many scientific men have been sceptics, and wrongly applied the interpretation of science; but this is by no means a necessary result from its study. On the contrary, its tendency has been proved in the highest degree favourable to religious devotion,

and therefore some more potent cause must have influenced certain eminent scientific men to the adoption of views antagonistic to religion and piety.

We have repeatedly found that when men employ their scientific knowledge to the detriment and injury of the Scriptures, the knowledge possessed has neither been very deep or profound; in fact, the very limited knowledge which they possess causes a confusion and antagonism of their ideas which they imagine clash with religious truth, and without troubling themselves to study the subject more deeply, give publicity to their views, to the injury, often, of many simple and unscientific readers. Happily it ends there, for their works generally get into the hands of those who are able, from their deeper knowledge, to dissuade the public mind from their abstruse and untenable arguments.

There are, indeed, hundreds of sceptics, and inveterate ones, too, who have never turned their attention in the slightest degree to science; how much more likely is it, then, that there may be those who, being already sceptical, direct their study to science for no other purpose than laying hold of the most salient points for the gratification of manifesting to the world their impious principles? However,

there are many writers of the present day who, without laying themselves open to this charge, have erred, and widely, in their dealings with Scripture and science.

The "Mosaic Cosmogony" in the "Essays and Reviews" is compounded of arguments as futile, short-sighted, and untenable as any we have heard; and although anything like an investigation of them, as an answer to that essay, cannot be attempted by us here, still we shall note a few, simply for the purpose of exposing their weakness and unplausibility.

The writer, commencing with some remarks respecting Galileo and the introduction of the Copernican system of astronomy, touching the immobility of the earth, says:—"The solution of the difficulty offered by Galileo and others was, that the object of a revelation, or divine unveiling of mysteries, must be to teach man things which he is unable and must ever remain unable to find out for himself; but not physical truths, for the discovery of which he has faculties specially provided by his Creator. Hence it was not unreasonable, that, in regard to matters of fact merely, the sacred writers should use the common language and assume the common belief of mankind, without purporting to correct errors upon points morally indifferent. So, in regard to such a text as

'The world is established, it cannot be moved,' though it might imply the sacred penman's ignorance of the fact that the earth does move, yet it does not put forth this opinion as an indispensable point of faith. And this remark is applicable to a number of texts which present a similar difficulty." Could, we ask, any reasoning be more unphilosophical in its application, or more damaging to religion? In the first place it supposes the inspired writers to be, somehow or other, half inspired, revealing important *truths* which men cannot find out for themselves; but when the same writers touch on those things which men's faculties enable them to judge the truth of, then their inspiration is mixed with error. The idea is positively ridiculous. With regard to the text spoken of, "The world is established, it cannot be moved," the writer speaks of the ignorance of the "sacred penman" of the fact that the earth *does* move. We by no means see the necessity of this assumed ignorance. Truly the world is established—established in its course round the sun, and from which course it cannot be moved or turned. The text may with equal propriety be rendered thus, or we have altogether mistaken the use and application of words. In fact, it is the splitting of such straws as these

that make up the chief of the arguments used by this class of writers.

The writer, speaking of the first chapter of Genesis, says, "It can scarcely be said that this chapter is not intended, in part, to teach and convey at least some physical truth (we should think so); and taking its words in their plain sense," the writer continues, "it manifestly gives a view of the universe adverse to that of modern science." It will be seen from our essay "On the Six Days of Creation," to which we refer our readers, how far we feel inclined to admit the *latter* part of the writer's statement.

The essayist, after a few introductory remarks on geology, &c., and briefly touching on the Hebrew word (*bara*.) which, as he affirms, may not simply mean created from nothing, but may also mean to shape from pre-existing matter, commences his criticism with the introduction of light on the first day,* which he

* We do not believe, with several eminent writers, that the light on the first day emanated from the sun, but that it had a distinct and separate existence. To suppose that the light arose from the partial clearing away of mists which hung thickly round the earth, is to our mind very repugnant, and does great injury not only to the simple words, "And God saw the light that it was good," but also to the fourth day's creation, which, although the body of the sun may not have been created then, the light certainly was.