

**THE DIVINE ORDER OF THE
UNIVERSE AS INTERPRETED BY
EMANUEL SWEDENBORG, WITH
ESPECIAL RELATION TO MODERN
ASTRONOMY**

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AUGUSTUS CLISSOLD

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BY

THE REV. AUGUSTUS CLISSOLD, M.A.

"Divine Truth is Order; and Divine Good the Essential of Order."
Arcana Cœlestia, an. 1728.



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P R E F A C E.

THE science of Astronomy in its relation to religion has been the source of two different influences upon the human mind. In the one case, it has led the Christian to a more devout adoration of the Creator, arising from the contemplation of the vastness of Creation; in the other case, it has disturbed his belief in regard to the truths of Christianity. It was in order to remove doubts and difficulties upon this subject, that Dr. Chalmers preached and published a series of Astronomical Discourses entitled *Christian Revelation viewed in connection with Modern Astronomy*, in which he maintains a Plurality of Worlds inhabited by rational beings, and adoring the same God as Christians upon our earth.

These *Discourses* found a scientific and decided opponent in Dr. Whewell, late Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, who published an *Essay on The Plurality of Worlds*, the object of which was to shew, that our earth alone is habitable and inhabited, and consequently that Christianity is a purely local economy.

This Essay of Dr. Whewell found in its turn a scien-

tific and resolute opponent in Sir David Brewster, who published a work entitled *More Worlds than One, the Creed of the Philosopher and the Hope of the Christian*. In this work, the author speaks of Dr. Whewell's Essay as tending "to ridicule and bring into contempt the grand discoveries in sidereal astronomy by which the last century has been distinguished." Accordingly, he defends the position taken up by Dr. Chalmers, and pleads the testimony not only of the greatest astronomers, but also that of Emanuel Swedenborg in a remarkable passage taken from his treatise *De Telluribus in Universo*.

This work of Sir David Brewster finds, in its turn, in the present day, an opponent in an Honorary Secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society, namely, Mr. Proctor—a popular and talented astronomer, who holds the Brewsterian theory to be untenable; and in an article in the *Belgravia Magazine* for September, 1876, entitled *Swedenborg's Visions of other Worlds*, reviews the treatise of Swedenborg in such a way that what Sir David Brewster said of Dr. Whewell's Essay may also be said of Mr. Proctor's article, namely, that "its tendency is to ridicule and bring into contempt" the writings of the author whom he criticises. Accordingly a leading Church of England periodical observes—"Mr. Proctor writes moderately but conclusively on *Swedenborg's Visions of other Worlds*, pointing out the absurdities of a great dreamer, to whose ravings some people nowadays attach too much importance."

A remark of this kind, assuming it to be just, would commit the readers of every religious periodical to a course of argument which would compel the Christian Evidence Society to create freethinkers faster than it confuted them. As, however, other periodicals have commended Mr. Proctor's article to the attention of the readers of Swedenborg, the Author of the present Tract has thought it his duty to accept the invitation, and in so doing he too hopes to write "moderately and conclusively."

One principal objection urged by Mr. Proctor seems to have been taken from a modern work entitled *The Unseen Universe*, which has attained to considerable repute, having arrived at a sixth edition. The objection urged in both cases being the same, the answer given in this respect to both is also the same; Mr. Proctor justly admitting with regard to Swedenborg, that "no more honest man ever lived," and the authors of *The Unseen Universe* that "he was a profound thinker."

The obvious cause of the discordances of astronomical writings in relation to the subject of revealed religion, is the lack of some great principle of unity calculated to harmonize the two, and co-extensive with the Divine order of the universe. This principle, as explained by Swedenborg, it is the object of the present Tract to point out; and to apply to the religious difficulties to which Astronomy has given rise. In so doing we are brought face to face with the analogies said to be derived from science; and with the fallacies of *Naturalism*, whose office is in the present day

what it has always been since the Fall of man, namely, to misinterpret and ridicule whatever it cannot degrade to its own level of thought.

In treating of the Divine order of the universe, it has been necessary to treat not of the Natural World only, but of the Spiritual; for, in its most comprehensive sense, both are included in the term *Universe*. Hence in the present Tract we are not treating of the Divine order of part of the universe, but of the whole, or otherwise the title would be misleading. Indeed the time has now come in which this must be done, or the whole subject be abandoned to the freethinker, as being too vast a theme for Christianity to deal with.

It is not a little remarkable that the Essay on *The Plurality of Worlds* by Dr. Whewell proceeded from the same College of which the Rev. John Clowes was a Fellow; and in his time not only a Senior Wrangler, but the first in this country to translate and circulate the very work *De Telluribus*, which the Honorary Secretary of the Royal Astronomical Society has now more than called into question. Dr. Whewell, when writing his Essay, could scarcely have been ignorant of this circumstance; and even if he was, the extract from that work, as given by Sir David Brewster in answer to the Essay, was amply sufficient to remind him of it.

It was impossible to treat fairly of this subject, without giving some general idea of the literature with which it is more immediately connected, and of the arguments

which it involves. It is only thus that the real place of Swedenborg's teaching upon this subject can be impartially presented to view, and rightly understood. This is of the more importance, when there are doctrines of *Evolution* abroad of which it has been said :*—

“The idea of a personal Creator of the Universe is proved, as an inevitable corollary of these doctrines, not only to be untenable and impossible, but to be so supremely irrational, that it can only have arisen in what represented the minds of men, during those inconceivably dark ages when they were slowly evolving themselves from their ancestral apes into something resembling humanity.”

Doubtless to such persons the truths of Christianity are “the absurdities of great dreamers;” to all of whom nevertheless we may reply in the language of the Apostle —“*Non insanio, optime Feste, sed veritatis et sobrietatis verba loquor.*”

February, 1877.

* *Winds of Doctrine.* By Charles Elam, M.D. Page 1.