

BIBLE ASTRONOMY.

A SMALL tract entitled "Bible Astronomy" was recently sent to us by some of our readers, with the request that we help them to see whether or not the theories it aims to support are a part of the gospel, as its author and circulators evidently believe. As the special mission of ZION'S WATCH TOWER is "the edifying of the body of Christ and the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry," and as the question, What constitutes the gospel? is a most important one, we take pleasure in reviewing it here from a Bible standpoint; and from that standpoint only, for two reasons, – (1) because only from the Bible standpoint can we determine whether the theories proposed are a part of the *gospel*; and (2) because the editor of the TOWER is not an astronomer, and if the subject were to be discussed from a scientific standpoint we should want the most accurate information, from the most advanced astronomers of our day, and from all other reliable sources.

Astronomy is an abstruse science, and one which has commanded some of the ablest minds in all ages; and those engaged in it to any purpose have usually devoted to it the best energies of their lives. Its development has been a very gradual one, through much painstaking study and research, and through many centuries, and it has had its apostles in almost every nation. While much of interest attaches to the discoveries and deductions of those early days, comparatively little progress was made until, in more recent times, the invention and numerous improvements of the telescope brought the starry heavens into closer range of observation, and the advancements in mathematical sciences rendered many astronomical calculations possible which previously could not be obtained. These, together with the accumulated discoveries, deductions and suggestions of all past time, have undoubtedly greatly advanced the science, and placed it on a footing which not only commends its teachings to human reason, but as well honors the great Creator of all things, whose wonderful work in the

material universe is seen to be commensurate with his great "plan of the ages" revealed in the Scriptures. The seal of divinity seems to be stamped upon both. Nor should it be a matter of surprise that, while God has been disclosing the wonders of his grace to his people, he has also been paving the way, through scientific research and modern invention, for a more correct idea of his no less wonderful creation.

While it is true that gross error with reference to spiritual things has marked the presumably advance steps of the great ecclesiastics and their followers, we are not to presume that the same is probably true in science, art and mechanics. On the contrary, quite the reverse is true; and for manifest reasons. It is because spiritual things are spiritually discerned and cannot be received by the natural man, and because "with *the heart* (as well as with the head) man believeth unto righteousness," that the efforts to probe spiritual things with the natural mind and the uncircumcised heart are so fruitful only in errors and absurdities. But the great truths of nature are not so learned. Nature yields her secrets to the mind of the natural man, who, with candor and simplicity, by diligent and persistent research, inquires for them. Therefore progress in science and discovery, and development in art are to be expected as the results of diligent and earnest study on the part of the natural man who has the intellectual ability and the favorable opportunities for such occupation. To deny such progress in the world is only to deny the evidence of our senses. Who has not noted the real, practical and beneficial advancement **[R1811 : page 116]** along all the lines of human attainment, – law, medicine, architecture, mechanics, etc., etc. And all this advancement, let us bear in mind, is part of God's plan in this day of his preparation for the setting up of his Kingdom.

The tract before us presents a number of scriptures in support of a theory which regards the earth as occupying a most important place in the material creation, and the sun, moon and stars merely as inferior accessories, the only object in whose creation was to minister to the earth, which is supposed to be a plane floating upon the water; – which

in turn must be supported by something tangible, and that in turn by something else, *ad infinitum*.

The theory, in the main, is a very ancient one, antedating all modern discovery and invention. It, however, has no claim to the name "Bible Astronomy," for it did not have its rise in Moses or the Jews, but was promulgated by the Egyptian astronomer, Ptolemy, who flourished at Alexandria about A.D. 130, but whose system has long since given place to that now universally accepted by all the learned scientists, known as the Copernican system, because the revolution was due chiefly to the labors of Copernicus.

The theory to which the writer of this tract has given the dignified name, Bible Astronomy, is more generally known as "the flat earth theory." What we now propose to show is that the scriptures cited to prove that the earth is what it terms a circular plane, and not a globe, do not prove it. When we shall have done this, the subject will still be open for discussion from the scientific standpoint, to the extent of present scientific development, by those who have the time and talent to devote to it; but it will be seen to be entirely separate from the "gospel of the Kingdom," which all of the saints are called to preach, and to which they have consecrated their all of time and energy. Our observation of those consecrated ones who have permitted other themes than "this gospel" to engross time and attention leads us to advise such to be very jealous in husbanding time and talent for the ministry of the gospel, leaving all other subjects, however interesting, to others now, and to the future life for ourselves, when all knowledge shall be ours. Those who for any avoidable cause turn aside from the ministry of the true and only gospel we have invariably observed are quickly turned out of the way or greatly hindered in their course toward "the prize of our high calling." The Apostle Paul's decision on this point is worthy of the adoption of all the saints; viz., "I determined not to know [talk of or discuss] anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (1 Cor. 2:2.) Many questions, indeed, might be asked, even by those very ignorant of the subject in general, which we could not answer, not being

astronomers; but let no baits of curiosity allure us from the narrow way. We *sacrifice* these pleasures of the pursuit of scientific knowledge to the great ends for which, as new creatures in Christ, we are striving. By and by it will be our delightful privilege to know all things, and to enjoy ourselves to the full in beholding the glory of the Lord, when we shall be like him, and see him as he is, and know as we are known.

Those who think that the Bible teaches that the earth is flat, except for its mountains and valleys (a circular plane), do not claim that any texts of Scripture describe the earth's shape in these terms; but they draw the inference that such is its shape from eight classes of texts, which we will indicate and examine. From them they gather (1) that the sky or firmament is substantial, firm, not ethereal, and a water reservoir; (2) that the firmament or sky is a substantial vault, supporting the throne of God and indeed all heaven; (3) that the terms, "up," "down," "sunrise" and "sunset," frequently used in the Bible, are proofs that the earth is the center of the universe; (4) that the account in Genesis teaches that the sun and stars were created merely for ornaments and conveniences to the earth; (5) that the Bible phrase, "waters under the earth," and similar expressions, teach that the earth rests upon the sea; (6) that the expression, "pillars of the earth," indicates a solid foundation; (7) that the record that on one occasion the sun and moon stood still proves that the earth is not a globe; and (8) that the earth is so founded as to be immovable. (9) We will examine a text which they singularly overlook.

Let us now consider these proof texts: – **[R1812 : page 116]**

(1) THE SKY SUBSTANTIAL AND A WATER RESERVOIR.

Those scriptures which speak of a *firmament* above the earth they construe to mean something substantial, or *firm – not ethereal – as follows: –*

"God made the *firmament*, and divided the waters ...which were above the firmament." – Gen. 1:7.

"The windows [margin, 'flood-gates'] of heaven were opened" (Gen. 7:11), so that the waters from above the firmament poured forth at the time of the flood.

Reply. – The idea of firmness comes to the English translation from the Latin, and not from the original Hebrew. The Hebrew word from which "firmament" is translated is *raqi*, which does not contain the thought of *firmness*. Its true signification is *expanse*. – See *Young's Analytical Concordance*.

The *air*, a gaseous substance, composed chiefly of oxygen and nitrogen, envelops the earth to a distance of about fifty miles from its surface. The above texts tell us that God separated the cloudy vapors from the waters upon the earth, thus creating the *expanse* ("firmament") or aerial heavens. (See "the fowl of *heaven*," that "fly in the midst of *heaven*," many times referred to in the Scriptures.) The word *expanse* ("firmament") or heavens is also given a wider application at times and made to embrace the infinitude of space. It has been suggested, and apparently with good evidence, that before the deluge the volume of water above the firmament or aerial heavens was much [R1812 : page 117] greater than now, and that the waters below the firmament were correspondingly less: that the earth at that time probably had a ring of water, similar to the several rings of Saturn. The theory is that precipitation of the waters of that "ring" produced the deluge, and that the increased weight of the waters upon the ocean caused the upheaval of additional mountain ranges, especially in America.

(2) THE SKY A SUBSTANTIAL VAULT.

It is claimed that certain texts imply the flatness of the earth by referring to the sky as a *vault* and as a *curtain*, and that God's dwelling, the "*chambers*" where he "*sitteth*," is just beyond the sky curtain, which is spangled with stars and emblazoned with our sun. To prove this, the following texts are cited: –

"He buildeth his *chambers* in the heaven, and hath founded his *vault* upon the earth." – Amos 9:6. *Revised Version*.

"Canst thou with him *spread forth* the sky, which is strong as a molten mirror?" – Job 37:18. *R. V.*

"He that created the heavens and stretched them forth." – Isa. 42:5. *R. V.*

"He that *sitteth* upon the circle of the earth,... that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." – Isa. 40:22.

Then the question is asked, "Do not these verses describe the firmament, not as unlimited space, but as a *firm, solid structure* resting upon foundations? – a lofty dome or vault of marvelous workmanship, stretched out over the *circular plane* of the earth, and enclosing it 'as a tent to dwell in?'"

We think not. The language is highly figurative and poetic, such as abounds in the prophets, as well as in the poetry of Job and the Psalms. It is similar to what can be found in the poetry of to-day, in which such expressions as the *vaulted* sky, the blue *dome* of heaven, the canopy of heaven, etc., are of frequent occurrence and are never misunderstood. And every Hebrew scholar can testify that each of these texts was written in poetic form – as indeed is nearly all that the prophets wrote respecting God and his mighty works. Those who are not Hebrew scholars can, if they doubt it, confirm our statement that these passages are poetic, by a glance at *Young's Bible translation*.

In evidence that such language is in common use by the poets of our day, who apparently do not question the testimony of modern astronomy, we quote as follows, italicising the corresponding words: –

"This moveless scene, heaven's ebon *vault*,
Studded with stars unutterably bright,

Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a *canopy* which love has spread
To *curtain* her sleeping world."
– *Shelley*.

"Mysterious Night! when the first man but knew
Thee by report, unseen, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely *Frame* –
This glorious *canopy* of Light and Blue?
Yet 'neath a curtain," etc.

– *J. Blanco White*.

"Thou dost not strive, O Sun, nor dost thou cry
Amid thy *cloud-built streets*."
– *Faber*.

"This majestical *roof*, fretted with golden fire."
– *Shakespeare*.

"And they were *canopied* by the blue sky."
– *Byron*.

"Clouds on clouds, in volumes driven,
Curtain round the *vault* of heaven."
– *T. L. Peacock*.

(3) UP, DOWN, SUNRISE, SUNSET.

It is claimed that the terms, "under the sun," "under heaven," "up," "down," "sunrise," and "sunset," used frequently in the Bible, are proofs that the earth is the center of the universe, around which heaven and the sun, moon and stars revolve.

We reply that this is an unwarranted claim. It is admitted by all that the sun seems to rise *up* in the East, and to go *down* in the West; and by common consent all, even astronomers and almanac-makers, speak of the matter in such terms.

But, be it noticed, these terms of general usage do not favor the "flat earth" theory. Those who contend that the earth is *a circular plane*, and who bring forward these texts, do not believe that the sun, moon and stars go *up* and *down*: their contention is that they go *around above* the earth in a circle, merely passing for a time out of view, because the earth, they say, is so large, and the sun, moon, etc., are so small. The use of such an argument and the quoting of such scriptures therefore is directly in opposition to their theory.

Similarly, the expression, "four *corners* of the earth," is sometimes used to prove that the earth is not a globe; but, we ask, Would this expression prove that the earth is a *circular* plane? A circle no more has corners than has a globe. The fact is that this expression of the Scriptures is in exact harmony with our modern usage, of speaking of the four "*points*" – North, South, East and West. No sensible person would look for a "point" or a "corner" in those directions any more than he would look for literal North and South "*poles*." Language is a vehicle for *carrying thoughts*; the thoughts must not be jolted out and the empty vehicle alone have consideration.

(4) SUN AND STARS EARTH'S ORNAMENTS AND CONVENIENCES.

It is claimed that the statement of Gen. 1:16-18 proves that the sun, moon and stars were made merely for the convenience of the earth and that all reference to other worlds being omitted proves that this is the only world and that the sun, stars, etc., are merely its useful and ornamental appendages. "And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night; the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven *to give light upon the earth*, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness."

"To him that made great *lights*,...the sun to rule by day,...the moon and stars to rule by night." – Psa. 136:7-9. **[R1812 : page 118]**

"In them [the heavens] hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run his course. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it." – Psa. 19:4-6, **R.V.**

Reply. – We agree most heartily to the statements of these scriptures. The sun is beautifully and poetically described by David, but he says nothing about the earth being "flat," nor that the *circle* was around a plane, and not around a globe. In fact, he is not giving a lesson in astronomy, but a flash of poesy. There is no more excuse for misunderstanding the poetry of the Psalms than for misunderstanding such poetry as follows: –

"Thou who gazest ever true and tender
On the sun's revolving splendor."
– *Shelley*.

"Her two blue windows faintly she upheaveth,
Like the fair sun, when, in his fresh array,
He cheers the morn, and all the earth relieveth."
– *Shakespeare*.

As for the account in Genesis, it is true that the sun and stars were caused to give light to the earth, and were intended so to do; but there is nothing to indicate that they could not lighten other planets, or that in this they entirely fulfilled the ends of their creation. It is true also that the sun does rule the day, and the moon the night, and that they are so set as to mark times and seasons; but there is no intimation that this is the limit of their usefulness. Only that which specially pertains to man and to the earth, his home, is mentioned. God was not attempting to teach astronomy: he was, we believe, leaving such things for mankind to investigate. The fields of science, art, discovery and invention are all open for man's pleasant and profitable exploration, and will and do reward the patient and persistent exercise of his powers, as God

intended. This we believe is God's method of dealing: he makes known to man gradually the riches of his grace. Thus, too, it is with spiritual things, as our Lord intimated to his disciples, saying, "I have many things to tell you, but ye [R1813 : page 118] cannot bear them now." In due time, and in the best manner, the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of the divine creation and plan are being made known.

(5) THE WATERS UNDER THE EARTH.

It is also claimed that the earth rests upon the sea, and not the sea upon the earth, notwithstanding the fact that deep-sea soundings have very generally been able to touch the solid earth with measuring lines. It is claimed that this is taught by the following Scriptures, –

"Him that stretched [spread] out the earth *above* the waters." – Psa. 136:6.

"Heaven *above*,...earth *beneath*,...waters *beneath* the earth."
– Deut. 5:8.

These passages merely refer to the dry land, *higher* than, or *above*, sea level. The former passage in the *Douay version* is rendered with equal propriety, "established the earth above the waters." To appreciate this passage turn to Gen. 1:9,10, and learn *how* God stretched forth the dry land and established it as dry land – by gathering together the waters into seas, by convulsions of earth casting up mountain ranges and depressing other parts for the gathering of the waters, seas.

The same explanation suits the second passage. The waters are not above, but *below, beneath*, the level of the "dry land," called the earth. (Gen. 1:10.) And if further evidence be desired a reading of the connections of the passage will remove every vestige of doubt as to what waters are meant. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image of any thing in heaven on high, or in earth that is lower, or in the sea that is still lower. Israel was commanded to make no images of God or angels, heavenly beings, nor of men and beasts, earthly creatures next

in order, nor of fish or sea monsters, still lower. Can any one suppose that in thus forbidding image-making and image-worship, the Lord ignored the waters seen, which constitute two-thirds of the earth's surface, and specified waters *underneath the dry land*, which (if there at all) could not be more than one-half the quantity not underneath it, and of whose living creatures men could know nothing? Surely any one can see that the meaning is, the waters under or lower than the level of the earth. "God called the *dry* land earth." – Gen. 1:10.

(6) THE PILLARS OF THE EARTH.

"The *pillars* of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath *set the world upon them.*" – 1 Sam. 2:8.

"Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble." – Job 9:6.

The first of these proof-texts is from the prayer of Hannah at the presentation of Samuel to the Lord's service. (Verses 1-10.) It is a poem or psalm, and seems to have been inspired and prophetic. Compare its language and sentiment with the poetic-prayer-prophecy of Mary, our Lord's mother. – Luke 1:46-55.

The passage from Job is also poetic, and prophetically refers to the *shaking* of the coming time of trouble. That Job refers to the shaking of the "pillars" of the present social structure, and Hannah to the establishment of the saints as the "pillars" of the new order of things called the "new heavens and new earth," will be clear to all who read their contexts, *after* noting the significance of the word "pillar" in Scripture usage. – Gal. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:15; Rev. 3:12.

(7) SUN AND MOON STOOD STILL.

In proof that the earth is not a globe, the account of Joshua 10:12-14 is cited, and also Hab. 3:11, – "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation."

Reply. – In our issue of March 15, '92, following our return from the scene of Joshua's battle and miracle, we offered a suggestion respecting it, to the effect that *daylight* was unusually and miraculously prolonged by the rays [R1813 : page 119] of the sun being refracted upon the earth by a special arrangement of clouds for the purpose, so that its light, supplemented by that of the moon, similarly prolonged, practically turned that night into day. In no other view can we find use for the moon. Certainly if the sun shone at noonday brightness, the light of the moon would be useless and would not have been invoked. But, even if the earth was slowed up in her diurnal motion so as to actually lengthen out the day, it would be equally proper, as in speaking of any other *sunset*, to say that the sun "hasted not to go down."

As for the passage from Habakkuk, it is totally different: it is an item in his prophetic poem, which is full of symbols and figures of speech. It undoubtedly refers to a *future* even when "the sun and the moon shall be confounded," when "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light," etc. No one can read this chapter from the third verse onward without recognizing this. *Young's Literal Translation* renders verses 10-12 thus, –

"Seen thee – pained are the mountains [kingdoms],
An inundation of waters hath passed over [Isa. 28:15,17],
Given forth hath the deep its voice [Luke 21:25],
High its hands hath it lifted up.
Sun – moon – hath stood – a habitation,
At the light thine arrows go on,
At the brightness the glittering of thy spear.
In indignation Thou dost tread the earth,
In anger Thou dost thresh the nations.
Thou hast gone forth for the salvation of Thy people."

Surely if Joshua's battle, etc., has anything at all to do with the matters here represented, it was only as a type.

(8) EARTH FOUNDED AND IMMOVABLE.

It is claimed that the Bible mentions the *foundations* of the earth and *pillars* of the earth in such a way as would preclude the idea that the earth is a globe hanging in space; and in such a way as to prove that it is an immovable structure resting upon strong pillars. In this they seem to forget their other claim that it is *founded* upon the *seas* and rises and sinks with the tides. Pillars would surely be a poor arrangement, architecturally speaking, for resting upon the water. Would not a "flat earth" rest more solidly on the waters without the pillars? Besides, upon what would the pillars rest? and what would support the waters? Then again, If the earth floated in the seas, and rose and sank at "tide times," how would that agree with the text they quote so freely – The earth "is established that it *cannot be moved?*"

Let us look carefully at the texts offered to prove this final point, – that the earth is so firmly founded, and on pillars, that it could not be rolled through space as a globe.

(a) "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Whereupon are the foundations [margin, 'sockets'] thereof fastened?" – Job 38:4,6.

(b) "Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth." – Psa. 102:25.

(c) "Who laid the foundations of the earth that it should not be *removed* forever." – Psa. 104:5.

(d) "The world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved." – Psa. 93:1.

(e) "He hath *founded* it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." – Psa. 24:2.

Reply. – The intelligent and thoughtful need only to be reminded that stone foundations are not the only ones, – that *principles*, as well

as *things*, can have foundations; as, for instance, "Justice is the foundation of God's throne [government]." Some men lay the foundations of schools and colleges by gifts of money, regardless of where the school buildings may be, if any, and they more truly lay the foundations than do the men who handle stones and tools for foundations for the buildings.

For our interpretation of the text marked (a) see MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. III., page 312. We believe the reference to be to the Great Pyramid, whose measurements, "lines," passages and general arrangement have made it world-renowned as a sign or symbol, in whose construction God has laid down scientific lessons in astronomy and geometry, as well as relating to his great plan of salvation. Into *what* would our "flat-earth" friends say the socket-stones of their flat earth were made to sink so as to make a *firm foundation?* – into the seas, as per the last text (e) cited?

The next four texts, as we will show, have no reference whatever to the literal earth, but to the symbolic earth, – society.

As already shown,* not only lions, bears, trees, etc., are used as symbols, but so also the earth is a symbol of social order – society, its mountains representing its kingdoms, its heavens representing its highest or religious powers, its rivers representing its purifying truths which come from its heavens, and its seas representing the restless, unrestrainable, discontented and anarchistic classes. In illustration of these symbols see Psalm 46.

See MILLENNIAL DAWN, VOL. I., page 316.

With reference to this symbolic earth, society, the Lord's Word shows us that in its present form, it is to be "dissolved," "melted," "moved," "shaken," "turned upside down," "removed as a cottage," that it is to "reel as a drunkard," etc. (Psa. 75:3-10; Isa. 24:1-4,17-20; 2 Pet. 3:10-12.) Not the literal, physical earth, but the symbolic earth – society as at present organized – will "reel," "melt" and be "dissolved." The

Scriptures clearly show that these are figures of speech, descriptive of the awful social trouble now impending – "a time of trouble such as was not since there was a nation" (Dan. 12:1); that the *fire* is symbolic, "the fire of God's jealousy" or [R1814 : page 119] anger, and that after the "earth" (society) has been devoured with this fire, the earth with the people on it will still be here, and God will then "turn unto the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent." – Zeph. 3:8,9.

But that will be in the "*new* earth" symbolically, although upon the same earth literally. The "*new* earth" [R1814 : page 120] will be the new organization of society, with its "*new* heavens" or new religious system; – the Church or government of righteousness for which we pray, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven." Under that Kingdom there will be no more *sea* – no longer a restless, law-opposing, anarchistic class, because the former things, the evils of the present social order, will have given place to the perfection of righteous government, long promised in God's Word.

It is this *new* earth, or reconstructed social order, that the Psalmist, in the Scriptures above (c, d, e), declares shall never be moved; while (b) shows that the present order was well founded by the Lord though by the *fall* it became "the present *evil* world" (Gal. 1:4), so that it must give place to "the world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (Heb. 6:5; 2 Pet. 3:5-7,13), but that the time will come when it must be *changed*, supplanted by the new arrangement of Christ's Kingdom – the new heavens and new earth. Read the connections, and see that this is the case. "Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thine hands: they shall perish, but thou remainest; they all shall wax old as doth a garment, and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be *changed*." (Heb. 1:10-12.) Turning to 2 Pet. 3:10,11,13, note that the symbolic heavens, as well as the symbolic earth, is to pass away – to give place to a new order, social and religious. Then turn to Heb. 12:26,27 and note the same teaching of the dissolution of present

arrangements, and in verse 28 read about the *unmovable* Kingdom which must be established before that new heavens and earth is established which the Prophet David declares "*cannot be moved.*" Then turn to Isa. 34:2-5 and Rev. 6:14-17, and see the symbolic representations of the way in which the change of dispensation will be effected – from "this present evil world," ruled by "the prince of this world," to "the world to come, wherein dwelleth righteousness." Then read in Rev. 20:1-5 of the blessings of that new "world" or order of things when it shall have come.

After studying the subject thus far, you will readily see the force of the above quotation (e), in which the Lord declares that the new earth will be founded upon the seas and established upon the floods, – *i.e.*, the new earth will be established *where* the sea now is: the class once symbolized by the "sea" shall be no more – "There shall be no more sea."

A careful investigation of the Psalms in which these proof texts (b, c, d, e) are found gives convincing proof, in harmony with our exposition here given, that they are prophecies descriptive of Messiah's Millennial Kingdom.

AN IMPORTANT PASSAGE OVERLOOKED.

But the advocates of the flat earth idea seem to overlook the only text of Scripture which *really* has to do with the subject. It is found in that book of the Bible which contains more reference to the stars than any other, mentioning Orion and the Pleiades by their present names, and referring to their "influences" – the Book of Job. The text to which we refer is brief, but full of significance. It reads: *Common Version*, Job 26:7, –

"He...hangeth the earth upon nothing." *Revised Version*, –

"Hanging the earth upon [*margin*, over] nothing." *Leeser's Translation*, –

"He suspended the earth on nothing." *Douay (Roman Catholic) Version*, –

"He...hangeth the earth upon nothing." *Young's Translation*, –

"Hanging the earth upon nothing."

The harmony of these translations is good evidence as to the correctness of the expression; but if any one is curious further, let him refer, in *Young's Analytical Concordance*, to the various words – "nothing," "earth," and "hangeth." He will find, for instance, that the same Hebrew word here translated "*hangeth*" is defined by Prof. Young to signify "To hang up." He will find, also, that the same word is used thirteen times in referring to the hanging of men upon gallows.

So far as the scriptures go, therefore, this one irrefutable, and not otherwise interpretable, text stands *against* the "flat earth" theory; and the texts supposed to favor that view, it has been shown, do not favor it.

**"GREAT AND MARVELOUS ARE THY WORKS LORD GOD
ALMIGHTY."**

While the revelations of divine wisdom and grace concerning the intelligent creation of God command our deepest reverence, no less should his mighty works in the physical creation inspire us with reverence and awe. No doubt the successful pursuit of the knowledge of all God's works and ways will be a part of the delightful employment of men as they progress toward perfection, and come to realize their privilege of eternal life and all the advantages of leisure, facility and opportunity which the future will afford. While such pleasures, we believe, are not the present privilege of the consecrated children of God, whose talents are all engaged for the great harvest work, we note with pleasure the great delight which the learned and able scientists find in probing the wonderful secrets of nature, especially in the domain of Astronomy, and in observing, too, its elevating and ennobling influence upon them. They give to the subject the most painstaking labor,

profound thought and careful investigation, and the devotion of their lives.

We are glad that there have been and still are such men: and from the results of their labors we catch a measure of their enthusiasm and inspiration, and would also that they might catch a measure at least of ours, gathered from the "plan of the ages" revealed by the same great Author.

The history of Astronomy dates back to very ancient times. It reached some degree of advancement among the Chaldeans and Egyptians, and later among the Greeks and Romans; but Thales, one of the seven wise men of Greece, who lived six hundred years before Christ, was the first great teacher of the science. Pythagoras, another Greek [R1814 : page 121] astronomer, taught it shortly after. Hipparchus of Egypt, about three centuries before the Christian Era, and Ptolemy, of the same nation, about one hundred and seventy years later, were also justly celebrated teachers.

Prior to the invention of the telescope and the advancement of mathematical science and other advantages of more modern times, the whole subject was involved in great obscurity; and various theories were propounded and studied to account, if possible, for the motions of the planets and the varied phenomena of the heavens. Judged from very limited knowledge and observation, it was for many centuries believed that our little earth was the chief factor in all God's universe, the center of importance and interest, to which the sun, moon and stars ministered as the sole end of their existence. But the labors of Galileo, Copernicus, Kepler and Sir Isaac Newton, in the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries of the Christian era, developed the telescope, discovered the laws of gravitation and of centripetal and centrifugal forces and suggested an order in nature which science and telescopic observation have proven to the satisfaction of all the learned scientists. These fully comport with our highest conceptions of the infinite power and wisdom of our God, beautifully harmonize with his mighty works of grace in the plan of the

ages, and show us that our earth, although comparatively an insignificant portion of God's great empire, has been wonderfully cared for by him.

With humbler ideas of earth and humanity, we gain correspondingly enlarged ideas of God and of his mighty works. These discoveries and scientific deductions are, we believe, in keeping with the general purpose of God, to bring men by various paths to a more correct knowledge of himself through his works and ways. That the men whose names we have mentioned were not superficial enthusiasts, but careful, candid and diligent students of nature, is manifest from the laborious methods by which they have arrived at and sought to prove their conclusions.

In the light of scientific research, the sun is seen to be the center of a great system of worlds revolving around him in definite and invariable orbits and with a precision of time that never varies, some singly and some accompanied by revolving satellites, and others with peculiar rings whose substance is not yet clearly discerned, but is presumed to be liquid. In this system of worlds our earth is one of the smaller planets.

Our solar system of planets is also found to be revolving together around some other great center; and far beyond the farthest limits of our system, by the aid of the telescope, other suns and systems are discerned, all presumably revolving with ours around some common center, – the group *Pleiades*. And the reasonable suggestion has been made that that center may be the heaven of heavens, the highest heaven, the throne of God.

God has established laws so governing the motions of all the heavenly bodies that no clash or discord occurs among them. Each world has its appointed pathway and its regulated time, and the most exact calculations of **[R1815 : page 121]** astronomers find them always true to time and order. How wonderful is our God! Truly in this view "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth

knowledge. There is no speech, there are no words, their voice is not heard; but their melody extendeth through all the earth, and to the end of the world their words." (Psa. 19:1-4. – Leeser.) The magnificent pageantry of the heavens daily and nightly should elicit our praise and adoration, and should inspire in our hearts holy and reverent devotion. Let the noiseless activity, the perfect obedience to divine law, and the blessed shining of the heavenly hosts, impress their wholesome lessons upon us – of zealous activity without commotion or ostentation; of perfect obedience to the will of him who doeth all things well, who is too wise to err and too good to be unkind; and of letting the glory of the Lord which has illuminated us shine from us in turn upon every beholder. Indeed, to those who have been brought into close fellowship with the Lord through a knowledge of his plan of the ages, all his works should be viewed with a keener sense of appreciation – from the tiniest organism seen through the microscope, to the worlds revealed by the telescope.

With the Psalmist our hearts exclaim, "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens;" – for, however grand and glorious are the wonders of creation, they proclaim only the superior grandeur and greatness of their Creator. Do we admire intellectual vigor, nobility of conception and skill in execution, comprehensive scope and minute particularity? We see it there! And while recognizing that even we ourselves are his workmanship – "fearfully and wonderfully made," and not beneath his notice and Fatherly care, we feel humbled as we recognize our Father's majesty, and in our hearts we say with the Psalmist, again, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him? for thou hast made him [but] a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the [earthly] works of thy hands." (Psa. 8.) High indeed was the honor conferred upon man and the glory of his dominion (lost in Adam, redeemed in Christ) over the earth which God made "not in vain," but for human habitation. And

while, as Job tells us, he "hanged the earth upon nothing," but launched it out in the abyss of space subject to those fixed laws which his wisdom established, we rejoice to know that "The Lord hath prepared his throne [power, dominion, control] in the heavens, and his Kingdom ruleth over all." (Psa. 103:19.) Surely no confusion or mishap can befall the remotest fragment of his vast empire, the Universe. Yea, Lord, we rejoice to realize that, –

"The whole creation is thy charge,
But saints are thy peculiar care."

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"HAVE FERVENT CHARITY AMONG YOURSELVES."

On leaving the above subject we desire to impress upon all a few thoughts upon which all of God's people who possess his spirit and are guided by his Word can, we believe, fully agree.

(1) Christian unity is not established upon harmonious views of astronomy. Each has the right to the use of his own intellect upon the subject of astronomy, or any other subject *not* a part of the divine revelation; and we trust that we have clearly shown that astronomy is not a part of that divine revelation.

(2) If, aside from the Bible, a Brother or a Sister reaches a conclusion that another Brother or Sister considers wholly illogical and unreasonable, neither should think or speak of the other as a fool; but each should remember that all present knowledge is more or less incomplete, and that all of our reasoning faculties are at present imperfect. Now we know in part, but when that which is perfect is come, we shall know even as we are known. "Have fervent charity [love] among yourselves." This will enable each to treat kindly what may appear to him most absurd views on non-essential subjects, so that when we know that another holds such views we may avoid, if possible,

wounding the feelings of even the very least of the Lord's "little ones."
– Matt. 5:22; James 5:9, *margin*.

(3) Remember always that astronomy and such other subjects as are not identified with God's plan, and not taught in his Word, are not of those for which we should *contend*. The Apostle declares that we should "*contend* earnestly for *the faith* once delivered to the saints;" but astronomy is no part of that faith. Neither is it a subject which we should feel it our duty to search or prove: we are to search the Scriptures upon the subjects relating to eternal life, and to prove all suggestions respecting the same by examining and comparing the Scriptures. Astronomy, therefore, is not one of the subjects upon which every man should be fully persuaded in his own mind. On the contrary, a man may be a *saint* and an overcomer, and believe the earth flat, square, round, or any other shape; or he may be all the more likely to run the race to glory successfully while confessing that he does not know positively, and is so intent on following after Christ's example, – feeding the sheep and the lambs upon the bread of eternal life – that he has not the time needful to study and prove and teach any other gospel. The Apostle's resolve is a good one to follow. He says, – "I determined to know [teach] nothing among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

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TAKE TIME TO BE HOLY!

Take time to be holy! speak oft with the Lord;
Abide in him always, and feed on his Word;
Make friends of God's children, help those who are weak;
Forgetting in nothing his blessing to seek.

Take time to be holy! the world rushes on;
Spend much time in secret with Jesus alone;
By looking to Jesus, like him thou shalt be;
Thy friends in thy conduct his likeness shall see.

Take time to be holy! let him be thy guide,
And run not before him, whatever betide;
In joy or in sorrow, still *follow* the Lord,
And, looking to Jesus, still trust in his Word!

Take time to be holy! be calm in thy soul,
Each thought and each motive beneath his control.
Thus, led by his spirit to fountains of love,
Thou soon shalt be fitted for service above.

– W. D. LONGSTAFF.
