

Facts & Fancy About the Bible - 2

Voltaire, who has been considered “one of the greatest of all French writers,” undertook a personal campaign against the tyranny, bigotry, and cruelty which had pervaded Europe during the previous thousand years into his own times. He saw a large source of these in the Church of the day, which had wandered a long way from the teaching and practice of the early church. Even though Voltaire was aware of this fact, as his writings show, he still blamed the Bible for being part of the problem.

This being the case, he also attacked the Scriptures, questioning its veracity in many ways. We are now experiencing the result of that effort in widespread skepticism and incredulity in these, but a careful review of his remarks will show that his arguments were based on a great deal of ignorance.

Take, for example, in his work, *On the Interpretation of the Old Testament*, Voltaire raises a number of objections to the narrative of the flood in the book of Genesis. First, he opined that “seven pairs of clean animals and two pairs of unclean could not have been put into twenty arks.” Incidentally, he was not reading carefully because Genesis 7:2 actually says, “You shall take with you ... two each of animals that are unclean, a male and his female.”

Isaac Newton was Voltaire’s senior by over 50 years, which means that “doing the math” ought to have occurred while he was criticizing the Genesis account of the flood. Newton’s math opened up the science of optics, the three laws of motion, and the law of universal gravitation. Voltaire seems to have made no attempt to test the words of Genesis in the same way. Some more recent calculations have shown that Voltaire’s opinion on the capacity of the ark was not based on fact.

Taking the dimensions of the ark given in Genesis 6:15, its capacity has been calculated to be equivalent to 522 railway stock cars, having space capable of accommodating more than 125,000 live sheep. There are less than 18,000 species of mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians now existing. This may be doubled for animals gone extinct since Noah’s time - $18,000 \times 2 = 36,000$ species = 72,000 animals + another 3,000 animals for the “clean” ones = 75,000 animals.

These 75,000, probably averaging considerably smaller than a sheep, would take up approximately 60% of the available space in the ark, with the rest for the people and food. While this shows that the declared capacity of the ark was in fact adequate for its designed use, others have, based on the dimensions, vouched for the seaworthiness of the ark.

This author, being a deist, does not allow for the Creator to take a necessary “hands on” approach to this event. The conditions were extraordinary - with these six people and representatives of all land animals which must be housed for a year and ten days. In this way they must be preserved while the irretrievably evil generation of mankind perishes in the flood - very much as the agriculturist might take the axe to an orchard of unproductive trees - Matthew 3:10.

For practical purposes the ordinary cycles in animal life must be suspended during their rescue in the ark. Otherwise, many more animals might have ended up in the ark than there was space for. The Hebrew word for “rooms” in Genesis 6:14 means nests, where the animals would be caused to sleep for long periods of the voyage. This is only one extraordinary arrangement in this extraordinary event.