

Facts and Fancy about the Bible - 10

Voltaire, in his work, *Genesis*, quoted the opening words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." His comment was, "Thus has the original passage been translated, but the translation is not correct. There is no one, however slightly informed upon the subject, who is not aware that the real meaning of the word is, "In the beginning the gods made (fired or fit) the heaven and the earth."

Not that the translation is incorrect, for his Latin Vulgate has *creavit* (created) here, while it has *fecit* (made) in verse 7. He is rather expressing his skeptical attitude towards the Scriptures by rendering verse 1 to agree with his discovery of what mankind has always imagined -

"There is not a single author of antiquity who ever represented something to have been produced from nothing... On the question of the eternity of the world, mankind has always been divided, but never on that of the eternity of matter" - which Aristotle held. "From nothing, nothing can proceed, nor into nothing can aught existent return. 'De nihilo nihil, in nihilum nil posse reverti'. (Persius; Sat. iii.) Such was the opinion of all antiquity." And so Voltaire directly contradicts the Genesis record in two ways, by claiming (1) that "the heavens and earth" - the universe - had no beginning, and (2) that creation means producing something from nothing.

According to the Scriptures it is not matter, but God who is eternal - "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting*, You are God" - Psalm 90:2. *Everlasting = Hebrew, 'owlam - "While the word may be used in a restricted sense, it is inherently capable of expressing the idea of unlimited time both backward and forward" - the Creator has always existed, but the universe has not.

Scientists observed in the spectral lines of light coming from stars, a shift towards longer wavelengths or the red end of the spectrum, called redshift. They have attributed the shift to a Doppler effect, similar to a bystander hearing a car or train horn decreasing in pitch or frequency while the horn is moving further away. They noted that the further away the stars were, the greater the redshift, indicating an expanding universe. Calculating the process in reverse indicates that the universe did have a "beginning" in accordance with Genesis 1:1.

Although called the Big Bang, it is not regarded as an explosion, but an ongoing expansion of space constituting the universe. This accords with the fact that an explosion cannot result in any highly organized arrangement such as has been discovered in the "cosmic web" of stars, galaxies, galaxy groups, galaxy clusters, superclusters, other large-scale structures in the universe - all separated by immense voids.

Such organization points to design which is defined as a plan or scheme conceived in the mind - in this case, the mind of the Creator, of whom it is declared, "who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light" - which speaks of untold energy- 1 Timothy 6:16. It is now understood from Einstein's special theory of relativity, that matter (as mass) and energy are equivalent. This means that matter can be converted into energy (which occurs during nuclear fission) and energy into matter. Transforming some of that Divine energy into the mass which makes up the universe cannot be said to be "producing something from nothing" -

"The Lord ...made the earth by his power ... established the world by his wisdom, and by his understanding stretched out the heavens" - Jeremiah 10:10.