

## TRYING TO LOCATE HEAVEN.

It has been understood for some time by astronomers and other scientific men that the plan of the universe is duplicated on a smaller scale by every part of it; that our moon revolving regularly about us is controlled by the same law and describes the same plan as does our earth and moon together and all the other planets with their satellites in their majestic sweep about the sun; that the sun and his retinue of planets are moving about some other central source, which may in turn be an auxiliary in some other great procession, each having its own motion and joining in that of the others in an indescribably grand march about the center of infinity. Some years ago the German astronomer Madler located (theoretically) that central point, the bright star Alcyone in the Pleiades group being such location. The group to the naked eye is arranged in this form:



With even a small telescope, however, there are at least fifty more observable in the constellation, and the spectacle is a very beautiful one. The larger star to the left is Alcyone, and as no discoverable movement has been made by it and all others have a mention of some kind, that star is fixed upon as the center of the universal universe.

Rev. L. L. Read, pastor of the first Baptist church of Hackensack, L. I., recently lectured on the location of heaven and showed the audience, as far as could be done by scientific demonstration and argument, that it and Alcyone under different names were the same thing. Without at this time subscribing to such a doctrine or denouncing it as a senseless vagary, it is enough to say that his remarks, as reported by the *New York World*, were in places quite entertaining. The subject is a fascinating one, and in the hands of an educated and enthusiastic theorist possess a certain degree of interest which they would not under other circumstances. The pastor is described as a man who looks as if he did a great deal of thinking and is also a thorough and studious reader, being quite familiar with the works of La Place, Proctor, Struve, Newcomb, Herschel and other great astronomers and men of letters and science generally. His theory is developed in the following extract from his lecture:

Alcyone is the grand center of the universe. About it our solar system is speeding in an orbit requiring about 20,000,000 years for one revolution. The astronomer Madler has shown that the proper motions of all the stars are around this great central sun, and that Alcyone is the center of the material universe. Eighteen million suns belong to our firmament, and there are more than 4000 such firmaments known to astronomers.

Figures are bewildering. Suns and systems of suns wheel about this great central sun.

What, then, could be more fitting than that here, at the center of gravity and motion, should be the throne of the King, the eternal, invisible and only one God? According to the teaching of the Scriptures, in Ephesians iv., 8, it is said that Christ ascended far above all the heavens, referring to the three heavens recognized by the Hebrews. To the uppermost of these, Paul declares, Christ went, and this statement would point that Christ ascended to this central orb, which is far above all.

Alcyone is shown to be a sun of much greater intensity of heat and light than our own, the surface being so hot that not even the gaseous state can exist, the solar material being of the consistency of pitch, and of course nothing human or of the "earth, earthy" could exist upon it for an instant; but Mr. Read found a way out of this difficulty. "Although," he said in explanation, "it is probable that those who attain this material heaven shall be as the outward appearance of human beings—for we are taught that we shall be like Christ in this respect—it is not necessary that we should be composed of the same elements as we are on earth. The change of conditions and environment will cause also a change in construction. For instance, look at the great difference between the earth grub and the dragon fly, into which it eventually evolves. This great difference is due to the change of environment. In one state the animal lives in the ground. In the other it lives in the air."

This is all very beautiful theorizing and might be styled an intellectual pastime which neither helps nor hurts the auditor. Beyond that pale no man of merely mortal attainments and inspirations can go. But much that puzzles the religionist and the scientist is made plain by the revelations of God, who, Mr. Read to the contrary notwithstanding, has shown himself to be neither "invisible" nor dumb. Learned research is bound to result in more or less floundering, until men learn to respect the inspiration that alone flows from the source of all true knowledge.

## THE "GOSPEL OF PETER."

Some time ago great interest was created among Biblical scholars by the announcement that fragments of the books known as the Gospel and the Apocalypse of Peter had been found in the city of Akhmim, Egypt. The manuscript is, according to Dr. Bradke, in an article published in *Theol. Literaturblatt*, Leipzig, written on parchment and contains thirty-three pages in leather binding. It was found in an old Christian cemetery and brought to the museum at Gizeh. From the orthography and style of writing, scholars think it dates as far back as some time between the eighth and twelfth century of our era.

The following from the *Buffalo Express* gives an idea of the contents of the precious manuscript.

The fragment of the Gospel happens to begin with the words:

But of the Jews no one washed his hands, neither Herod, nor any of the judges, nor of the senate washed their hands. Pilate arose, and Herod, the

king, commanded that the Lord should be brought.

The fragment covers nine pages of the manuscript, and breaks off in the middle of a sentence; and after stating that the women had come to the grave and found it empty, concludes with these words:

But I, Simon Peter, and Andrew, my brother, taking with us our nets, returned to the sea, and there was with us Levi, the son of Alphaeus, whom the Lord

The leading variants between the statements of the pseudo-Gospel fragment and the canonical Gospels are chiefly the following. At the request of Joseph, here declared to be a friend of Pilate and of the Lord, the former asked Herod for the body of Christ. The request is granted with the statement that if no one had asked for the body, then Herod and the Jews would have buried the Lord, because the Sabbath was approaching and it was a mandate of the Jews that the body of one who had been killed should not remain unburied at the setting of the sun, before the feast of unleavened bread; then follows a description of the sufferings of Christ, but in a more vivid manner than that found in the Gospels. Then we are told:

And they had two malefactors and crucified the Lord between them. He himself said nothing and had no suffering.

When one of the malefactors petitioned Christ for help, he threatened by the multitude with still greater tortures. When at noon it becomes so dark that many lamps were lighted, the Jews began to be afraid. The Lord, however, cries out:

My strength, my strength, thou hast deserted me; and when he had said this, He was taken away.

The nails are drawn out of the hands of the Lord and He is laid upon the ground, which violently trembles. The elders and priests are filled with sorrow, and they cry out:

Woe over our sins; near unto us have come the judgments and the end of Jerusalem. I, Peter, however, lamented together with my friends and were cast down in our minds, and we hid ourselves, and were hunted as malefactors, and as those who would set fire to the temple. But over all this we fasted and sat sad and fasted and lamented day and night unto the Sabbath."

The resurrection is graphically described. While those present at the tomb deliberate whether they should send word to Pilate on account of what they saw and heard, the heavens are opened and a man descends and enters the grave. Thereupon the watchers flee in dismay, and, in the presence of Pilate, confess their faith in Christ as the Son of God. The leaders of the Jews, indeed, see their great wrong, but because of the fear of the wrath of the Jews, ask that the fact of the resurrection be kept a secret. The youth sitting at the grave says:

"Whom have ye come to seek save the One who was crucified? He has arisen and has gone away. But if this is not believed, bend down and see the place where He had been laid, for He is no longer here. For He is risen and departed whence He was sent."

This is the end of the fragment.