Odd Things Preachers Have Said

## Adam Clarke

In spite of his vast knowledge, Clarke held some very “quirky” ideas. For example, he wrote: “There is scarcely any doubt now remaining in the philosophical world that the moon is a habitable globe.” He described this “lesser light” as a place of mountains, valleys, rivers, lakes and seas, and he believed that the moon is inhabited by intelligent beings.

Additionally, Clarke speculated that the “serpent,” used by Satan as an instrument by which to approach Eve (Gen. 3), was a creature of the “ape” family. The New Testament, of course, indicates that the “serpent” was a snake (ophis), a limbless reptile (cf. Mk. 16:18; cf. 2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9; 20:2).

Clarke also entertained the bizarre notion that Judas Iscariot did not commit suicide, as our common translations indicate in Matthew 27:5. Rather, the learned gentleman ventured the opinion that Judas was stricken with remorse over having betrayed the Lord. His mental anguish became so acute that he was seized with “violent dysentery.” He got choked, fell off of a seat upon which he was sitting, and his bowels gushed out.

Clarke further attempted to argue that Judas sincerely repented of his betrayal of Christ, and that the Bible student may entertain every hope that the traitor will enjoy eternity in heaven. Of course the evidence is clear that Judas hanged himself. The verb apagcho, in the middle voice, means precisely that, “to hang oneself.” The same term is used to describe the death of Ahithophel in the Greek version of the Old Testament (2 Sam. 17:23). Moreover, Judas was described by Christ as the “son of perdition” (i.e., worthy of perdition; cf. 2 Thes. 2:3) who “perished” (Jn. 17:12). And Peter noted that the wayward apostle “fell away” and went to his “own place” (Acts 1:25), i.e., the place of which he was deserving.

## Albert Barnes

Albert Barnes nurtured some unusual ideas. It is reported that he would not fish with a baited hook inasmuch as he considered that practice to be a form of deception (yet see Mt. 17:27).

Moreover, in his commentary on Job, when discussing the ostrich (39:13ff), he speculated that this curious creature was “the connecting link between quadrupeds and fowls.” Not even this generally conservative scholar was immune to the influence of evolutionism — though his work on Job was published a dozen years before Darwin’s The Origin of Species came from the press. Too, under the influence of Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), a Scottish church leader, he subscribed to the “Gap Theory,” which, he conceded, was “designed to solve some of the growing difficulties from the new science of geology.” He was intimidated by the assertions of the “scientism” of his day, hence, in weakness, compromised the biblical view of creation.