

How to Search for the Truth

George Washington Carver¹



I believe the Great Creator of the universe had young people in mind when the following beautiful passages were written:

In the 12th chapter of Job and the 7th & 8th verses, we are urged thus: *But ask now the beasts and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee.*

Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.

In St. John the 8th chapter and 32nd verse, we have this remarkable statement:

And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

Were I permitted to paraphrase it, I would put it thus: And you shall know science and science shall set you free, because science is truth.

There is nothing more assuring, more inspiring, or more literally true than the above passages from Holy Writ.

We get closer to God as we get more intimately and understandingly acquainted with the things he has created. I know of nothing more inspiring than that of making discoveries for ones self.

The study of nature is not only entertaining, but instructive and the only true method that leads up to the development of a creative mind and a clear understanding of the great natural principles which surround every branch of business in which we may engage. Aside from this it encourages investigation, stimulates and develops originality in a way that helps the student to find himself more quickly and accurately than any plan yet worked out.

The singing birds, the buzzing bees, the opening flower, and the budding trees, along with other forms of animate and inanimate matter, all have their marvelous creation story to tell each searcher for truth...

We doubt if there is a normal boy or girl in all christendom endowed with the five senses who have not watched with increased interest and profit, the various forms, movements and the gorgeous paintings of the butterfly, many do not know,

¹ From an essay included in a letter of February 24, 1930 to Hubert W. Pelt. See *George Washington Carver: In His Own Words*, G. R. Kremer, ed. (University of Missouri Press, 1987), pp. 142-3. Kremer preserved the idiosyncrasies of Carver's writing and spelling. Kremer notes how, regarding these, Carver once said, "I am more interested in the ideas expressed than the mechanics of writing.... [p. xii]"

but will study with increased enthusiasm the striking analogy its life bears to the human soul.

Even the ancient Greeks with their imperfect knowledge of insects recognized this truth, when they gave the same Greek name *psyche* to the Soul, or the spirit of life, and alike to the butterfly.

They sculptured over the effigy of their dead the figure of a butterfly floating away as it were in his breath. Poets to this day follow the simile.

More and more as we come closer and closer in touch with nature and its teachings are we able to see the Divine and are therefore fitted to interpret correctly the various languages spoken by all forms of nature about us.

From the frail little mushroom, which seems to spring up in a night and perish ere the morning sun sinks to rest in the western horizon, to the giant red woods of the Pacific slope that have stood the storms for centuries and vie with the snow-capped peaks of the loftiest mountains, in their magnificence and grandeur.

First, to me, my dear young friends, nature in its varied forms are the little windows through which God permits me to commune with Him, and to see much of His glory, majesty, and power by simply lifting the curtain and looking in.

Second, I love to think of nature as unlimited broadcasting stations, through which God speaks to us every day, every hour and every moment of our lives, if we will only tune in and remain so.

Third, I am more and more convinced, as I search for truth that no ardent student of nature, can “Behold the lilies of the field”; or “Look unto the hills”, or study even the microscopic wonders of a stagnant pool of water, and honestly declare himself to be an Infidel.

To those who already love nature, I need only to say, pursue its truths with a new zest, and give to the world the value of the answers to the many questions you have asked the greatest of all teachers—Mother Nature.

To those who have as yet not learned the secret of true happiness, which is the joy of coming into the closest relationship with the Maker and Preserver of all things: begin now to study the little things in your own door yard, going from the known to the nearest related unknown for indeed each new truth brings one nearer to God.

With love and best wishes,

G.W. Carver