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G O D,

IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENCE

AND COMMON SENSE,

BY

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A LECTURE DELIVERED AT THE BIJOU THEATRE, MELBOURNE,
DECEMBER 31, 1882.

Melbourne :
J. C. STEPHENS, PRINTER, 106 ELIZABETH STREET.

1883.

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G O D

IN THE

Light of Science and Common Sense.

"THERE'S not a living man in all the earth but hath God near to him as his own soul ; there's not a woman in the world but hath God nearer than the love in her deep heart ; there's not an infant in the world but hath God near to it as the blood in its young veins ; there are no souls forsaken of their God."

"Canst thou, by searching, find out God ? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection ? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do ? Deeper than hell, what canst thou know ? The measure thereof is larger than the earth, and broader than the sea." Words put by the author of the Book of Job into the mouth of Zophar, the Naamathite.

It had been well if such thoughts had prevented men from dogmatising about that of which the best informed human beings can know but little. Very few of the Bible writers, and very few of the religious teachers of the present time, have manifested much modesty in treating this subject. They tell us what God is, what he has done from the beginning, and what he will do for an eternity ; they have fenced him round with their creeds, they have been visitors in his council chamber, and seem to look upon him as their special property, very much as Barnum does on Jumbo.

But if at any time men might justly expect to know the truth upon this, the greatest of all problems that can be presented for human investigation, we certainly may. If men ever had a right to speak or write upon this question, we certainly have, for all questions that concern humanity concern every one of us, and no people that ever lived on the planet know as much about the universe as do the people of the present time.

Since the books of the Bible were written, the universe in space and time has been more than a million times enlarged. We have travelled on our telescopic steeds over the illimitable celestial fields, and have made the acquaintance of millions of suns that the ancients never saw. Geology has opened to us the doors of the Great Past, and we have explored its chambers, that, like a universal museum, contain the forms in which life has been embodied for many millions of years. The men who lived before these grand discoveries were made, were compelled to draw their conclusions from that part of the universe with which they were familiar; their knowledge of God was as limited as their knowledge of the universe; knowing nothing of what geology has revealed, they crowded into a few days what had taken countless ages to perform; and all their ideas of God and his operations, drawn from these false premises, were vitiated in consequence. From the vastly higher stand-point that we occupy, we take up the great problem of the ages, and bring the light of science, and reason informed by science, to bear upon it.

The belief in a God or Gods is well nigh universal; yet there must have been a time when it first dawned upon the human mind. The savage looked around him, he beheld the sun that warmed and cheered him, the river from which he drew the fish for his food, the tree whose nuts satisfied his hunger, and his own body more wonderful than all. And he said: "We make our huts, our clubs and spears, and a great Maker must have made all these things I see around me. He made these bodies that shine above me; his mighty

hand shaped these mountains and this firm earth, and he, by his wisdom, fashioned man." This was a very natural thought. It was as sure to spring up in the mind of man as the thought that the earth is flat, and that the sun rises and sets every twenty-four hours.

The Greek father of the Gods, the "immortal Jove," was only a magnified man. Homer tells us:—

"He rolls the thunder o'er the vaulted skies;
Shakes his ambrosial curls, and gives the nod;
The stamp of fate, and sanction of the God.
Jove, on his couch, reclined his awful head,
And Juno slumbered on the golden bed."

Nor were the ideas held by the writers of the Bible much superior to this. Jehovah was only a giant Jew, and if the Jew had painted him, he would have had a full beard, and an aquiline nose. Adam hears his voice as he walks in the garden in the cool of the day; Jacob wrestles with him all night; he shows himself to Moses, while he covers him with his hand. Isaiah sees him with a dress on, for "his train" or skirts "filled the temple." He labored for six days making the universe and its occupants, and, at the expiration of the time, rested and was refreshed. He made coats of skins, and clothed Adam and his wife, after he had turned them out of his garden into the cold world, and was so well satisfied with the Egyptian mid-wives as to make them houses. Those must have been indeed God's houses. Jesus believed in a personal God, who lived in heaven, sat upon a throne, and at whose right hand he expected to sit; and even to-day a large proportion of Christians expect to see a personal Divinity, to hear his voice, and be welcomed by him to his palace of delights.

It is very easy to see, however, that this is not, and cannot be, true. Of what use can feet be to a being everywhere present? He cannot possibly move from one locality to another; he can neither come down nor go up, for he is already both down and up; he can sit upon a throne no more than a man can sit upon his own chin. Christians also agree that God knows all things, and knows them from all eternity. To such a being eyes and ears are equally unnecessary. What could he see

that he had not already observed? What could he hear that he had not already heard? Nor could he reason with a brain; reasoning is only possible to beings limited in knowledge, who desire to learn what is to them unknown. Nor can an infinite being have shape. That only has shape which is bounded, for the boundary constitutes the shape. To render shape possible there must be space outside, but what can be outside of infinity? An infinite little finger would leave no room in the universe for the rest of the hand. How, then, could there be a body? The notion of a God with a shape, then, is evidently false, for if he has shape he is finite, and cannot be God, if God is infinite.

"But cannot God, if he is infinite, manifest himself in shape?" If he does, it can only be that part of God which exists in shape that can be seen, and that can bear no proportion to the part that is unseen; for the finite must be infinitely less than the infinite; and instead of seeing God under such circumstances, we should only see what is infinitely less than God.

But if God is infinite, he is everywhere and everything; for if he is not everything, he must be crowded out by everything that he is not. God, to be infinite, must be not only in the sun, but he must be the sun, or the sun takes up space that God does not, and he lacks so much of being infinite, and consequently of being God. We must either abandon the definition of God, which represents him as infinite, and in that case abandon the idea of universal Christendom, or we must accept the doctrine that God is not only in all, but is all.

It is evident that God is everything, even if we accept the Jewish story of creation. Before anything was created God filled the universe; he must have done this if he was infinite. He must have made the universe, therefore, out of nothing, or out of his own substance. But a universe full of God has no place even for nothing. Creation could only, therefore, have been the shaping of God in one form into God in another form.

But if God is all, then God is the universe, and the universe is God; and this, it seems to me, is the only

rational conception of God that we can entertain. All the force in the universe is God's force; all the life is God's life; all the truth is God's truth; all the thought is God's thought. It follows that whatever is true of the universe, is true of God, and whatever is not true of the universe, is not true of God. God is all we see and know; and all that exists, which we do not see and know; the latter infinitely greater than the former. God is infinite, for the universe is infinite. God is everywhere, for the universe is everywhere. We cannot depart from God, for we cannot leave the universe; nor can God forsake us, for the universe can no more leave us than we can leave the universe, or a man run away from himself.

We can readily see that many of the Jewish and Christian ideas of God will not bear investigation. We read, "God created the heaven and the earth," which is very much like saying God created himself, which is absurd, for heaven and earth is only a phrase meaning what we mean, when we say the universe. Think of the universe planting a garden, and walking in it in the cool of the day! The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is no more reasonable than the universe of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Who gave these men a monopoly of the universe? If God means the infinite and the eternal spirit, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost are no more appropriate than universe the father, universe the son, and universe the Holy Ghost, which is no more appropriate than the mother universe, the daughter universe, and the baby universe. God cannot be love unless the universe is love. Love is, of course, included in the universe, but so is hate and jealousy, envy and revenge; and if God is any of these, he is all.

It follows, if the universe is God, that he knows most of God who knows most about the universe; he who knows least about the universe, is least acquainted with God. Theologians, as a general thing, know very little about God, for they do not study the universe, which only truly reveals the divine. Geology that gives such a wide view of the past, that has rescued from

oblivion almost an eternity, is well fitted to give us enlarged conceptions of God, because it reveals to us so much of the universe, and its operations. Here we may see what has been done by the universe, the only God, during hundreds of millions of years. Here is no evidence of a personal Deity, no miracle-worker, no achiever of impossibilities. The earth is rounded by law, the same law that enspheres a rain-drop; the rocks are formed by law, that which binds the particles constituting the pebble holds the mountain masses in its firm embrace, and composes the solid sides of the warm-hearted earth. The same laws that govern life to-day governed it then. Here are myriads of shells, fishes, reptiles, birds, and beasts that came into being and perished before man's appearance. Life, climbing through them to higher forms, more man-like beings, till it culminates in the men and women we behold on the planet to-day. Were these forms made in mere sport or wantonness, as a tavern-lounger whittles nothings all day? Had there been a God that could transcend law, and for whose operation it was quite unnecessary, why this waiting for its slow process, and waiting for a hundred million years, as geology demonstrates? A God waiting, as the blacksmith, who stands by his forge till the iron is hot enough to be beaten into shape, or a farmer till the winter's snow disappears before he can plough or sow!

There was no life on our planet till it had, naturally, cooled to that state in which life was possible, and this we know was many millions of years after it came into being. As the planet continued to cool and improve, a corresponding improvement took place in the animals and plants living upon it, and man only came after all the natural steps had been taken from the simplest protozoa to himself. Why not man on the boiling earth? or why not the heated globe cooled by a word, and all things made at once that could best subserve his welfare? The reason evidently is that no power outside of nature exists in the universe, and only by the operation of law can anything be accomplished.

The being called God in the Bible, and worshipped by so many millions in what are called Christian countries, differs very widely indeed from the God which nature reveals.

The God of the Bible is omnipotent ; he speaks, and it is done ; he commands, and it stands fast. At his word, chaos flies, and order from disorder springs. Around the earth, a sunless, starless void extends in every direction ; but he speaks, and a myriad suns in splendour shine, and around them planets in their order roll. He needs no time, no instrumentalities ; the thought and the execution of it are instantaneous, and impossibilities are unknown in his kingdom. He says, " Let the earth bring forth grass and trees," and full-grown trees nod to their full-grown neighbours, and their rings of growth mark years that have never been. Again, he says, " Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature." And instantly the hitherto lifeless sea swarms with myriads of busy forms. Immense whales gambol in the ocean, birds darken the air that never before yielded to the pressure of a wing, for what can refuse when omnipotence calls ?

But since the universe or nature is the only God, how different from this are the facts, as science reveals them. Nature requires time to accomplish her work, and must use instrumentalities. She cannot make grass till she has first formed the soil in which it may take root. Nor can she form soil till rocks have been produced, whose worn down particles compose it ; nor even then, unless there be light and warmth to perfect its organisation. She cannot give a tree the perfection of a thousand years growth till the thousand years have transpired. She can only attain the summit by faithfully taking all the steps that lead there. She cannot reap till she has sown, and not then till the crop has grown and ripened, and for everything accomplished by her so much must first be done.

If you say this limits God's power, I answer I am not responsible for the limitation. God's power is limited, because the power of the universe is limited. A sheet of paper cannot be made with only one side nor a stick

with only one end; a clock can never strike less than one, and three times one can never be two, not even to a God. Our ideas of God must conform to the facts of nature, or they will be false, though sanctioned by all the priests that ever officiated, or sacred books that were ever written.

The God of the Bible loves Jacob rather than Esau before either is born; he loves the Jews above all people, and showers miraculous favours on them. He feeds them by miracle, watches over them, fights for them, guides them and delivers them, while he curses all the nations round about for their sake.

Nature is no respecter of persons; all fare equally at her hands; she has no well-beloved sons or daughters. The frost that stiffens the field-mouse in its nest freezes the blood of the baby that was carelessly left in the log cabin; fire burns flea and philosopher alike; the earthquake takes down prince and peasant at one gulp; the saint swinging his censer before the altar, and the doomed malefactor in his cell. The sun warms every man's land, ripening rice for the Hindoo, and wheat for the Caucasian, even expanding the narcotic leaf for the tobacco-raising sinners of the Connecticut Valley. The king has an idiot child, to the sad regret of a nation, the cobbler's boy is a world-blessing philosopher; not that nature cared more for cobbler than for king, but he drew more from her deep fountains that are open alike to all. The infusorial point drinks its fill of enjoyment, and the "rapt seraph" can do no more.

The Gods of the past were at times impatient; disturbed by opposition, sometimes grieved, and at others angry, and "swore in their wrath." Nature is sublimely patient, calm and majestic. Above the earthquake's shock, and the volcano's cloud, sit enthroned, unmoved, undimmed the everlasting stars, fit emblems of Nature. For millions of ages she turned the ponderous globe round and round; bathed it with sunshine, cooled its fevered brow with her breath, and waited—oh, how long she patiently waited—till life came, and then watched and cared for it, while millions of years passed like days, till the brute ripened into the man.

Nor did she curse or drown the speechless savage because he was no philosopher. Philosophy is the ripened fruit of humanity, and for it she is still patiently waiting.

The drunkard at midnight howls his blasphemies through the streets. How does Nature treat him? She sends sleep, who puts her arms around him, and gently lulls him to rest. He awakens in the morning with a parched mouth and aching head, but this is only a warning against his direst enemy. Nature punishes not, for she knows no vindictiveness; the evil consequences that follow only follow as inevitable effects, as the stick is consumed when it falls into the fire, or the tree is riven by the lightning's stroke.

God is, then, no majestic monarch sitting upon a throne, and desiring the adulation of his abased subjects, listening with a smiling countenance as they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, heaven and earth are full of the majesty of thy glory." He can be no personality, no more he than she, as properly our Lady as our Lord. In him we live and move, and have our being, and in us God lives and moves, and has his being. He sees with our eyes, hears with our ears, and thinks with our brains. We hear his voice in the song of the blue bird, in the thunder of Niagara, and the whisper of the evening breeze. We see his glory in the sun that walks in majesty, the rainbow that spans the heavens with its arch of beauty, and the dew-drop that mirrors earth and heaven in its tiny glass. The farmer beholds him in the springing blade, and the gardener in the blushing rose, the mother in the smile of her darling babe, and the husband in the love of his trusting wife.

This doctrine destroys all orthodox theology, cuts it up by the roots. Jehovah is gone—swallowed, as the rods of the Egyptian enchanters were swallowed by the rod of Moses. If Jehovah exists, he is a part of the universe; and, since the true God includes the entire universe, it includes him also. If he does not exist it is well, and saint and sinner may rejoice.

Salvation by Jesus cannot be true; men were never lost, or in danger of being lost; they never departed from God, and Jesus, therefore, could never bring them nigh. The universe has too many sons for Jesus to be an only begotten one. A mediator between God and man is less needed than a mediator between the sun and the earth, or between a mother and her child, and is as impossible as it is unnecessary.

The theologian rears his brick and mortar establishment, and then says to the man who walks on Sunday in the grand old woods, "Why don't you come to the house of God?" Is thy brick and mortar steeple house in any sense the house of God that these woods and fields are not? Show me the house that the lightning will not strike, that the earthquake cannot throw down, that needs no repairs and cannot be damaged, or commences to repair its own damages as soon as made, and I will show thee God's house in the special, theological sense. All houses are God's houses, as all men are his sons, and all beyond this is pretence.

By making God an individual, with human attributes, men have linked his name in a special sense with their little, and sometimes their very mean doings. The barefaced begging, church fairs, raffles, lotteries, guess-cakes, and grab-bags, raise £6,000, and then a £12,000 steeple house is reared; an expensive organ is placed in it, a fashionable preacher engaged, and the place is styled God's house; a gilded book, lying upon a velvet cushion before the preacher is called God's book, the preacher's talk is God's word, or his gospel; the people, who pay to support the establishment, and make professions of their belief in the doctrines taught in the house, are called God's people, and all the operations connected with the house, the people, the preacher, and the book, are styled God's cause.

Show me the book that water will not wet, that fire cannot destroy, that is neither affected by mould nor time, and I will acknowledge that it is God's book in a sense that no other is. The men and women that water cannot drown, fire burn, mosquitos bite, or powder

blow up, and that no bullet can penetrate, may be God's people, but our planet has never seen them.

The old idea, the Christian idea of God, pampers pride, and builds up a priestly aristocracy. Moses goes on Mount Sinai to talk with God, and then he comes down, and says: "Here are the tables of stone written by God's finger;" and thus the exceedingly faulty code of Jewish morality is palmed on the world in God's name, and is painted on some of our Christian churches to-day as the supreme moral law. "He commands you to offer sacrifices; it pleases him to smell the sweet savour;" and then there must be a class of men to do this acceptably. Aaron is consecrated, and his sons, and the people are burdened with the support of an army of idlers, who pretend to go between the people and God. They are a holy people unto the Lord.

So we have to-day in our land thousands of Christian priests, who come between the people and God with their prayers. They are the reverends, right reverends fathers in God, whose prayers take the place of the ancient sacrifices. God is thus set at a distance, only to be approached through Jesus and his deputies, who came to bring men nigh.

Here is the universe free for all. He sounds deepest who has the longest line; he sees farthest who has the best eye, and the best telescope; but the heavens show him no more favour than they do the blind man, who gropes along the pathway, staff in hand. What man can coax an extra sunbeam into his house, or shower on his potato patch? When he can be found, we may accept his claim to be a favoured child of the universe—a well-beloved son.

What passes for theology is for the most part fancy, wild and fantastic notions handed down from barbarous times, and a proper study of the universe alone furnishes us with the means to form a theology worthy of the name.

We are told that God works miracles, but what is a miracle? Something, it is said, that is done contrary to the laws of Nature. But if our view of God is correct, this is manifestly impossible. The laws of God

are but Nature's methods of operation ; and how can he do anything contrary to his way of doing it ? Whatever is done by the universe is in accordance with its laws, for its laws are but the way in which things are done. The very fact that anything is done is evidence that it is done according to the laws of the universe, and consequently it can be no miracle.

Prayer, in the sense of asking God for special favours, is ruled out by this view of God. Who would beg the rain to cease, expecting an answer, or to the clouds, in anticipation of a shower, to the rocks for geological knowledge, or the stars for the truths of astronomy ? Canst thou stay the sun's fiery chariot with thy breath, or lock the wheels of the rushing planets by thy entreaties ? The man that could overturn law by prayer would be a veritable God-father, the God of all Gods.

Cursing God does not trouble him, praising God cannot affect him. So far as the universe is concerned, the ravings in the tavern are alike with the ravings in the prayer-meeting. All men are God manifest in the flesh. We are all God's people, all lambs of his flock, and his pasture is large enough for all that eternity can produce.

"But is there not a great Creator that made all things ?" What did he make them of ? If he made them of pre-existent matter, then matter is something separate from him, and must equally have existed from all eternity. We cannot conceive a matter distinct from its form and extension, and these properties must have been held by it eternally, if it existed eternally. Who made them ? If these could exist without a maker, then all things else might exist without a maker. If matter did not exist eternally, then God made all things out of nothing, and before he began there was nothing but himself, a solitary from all eternity. For let him commence at any time to fill the infinite void, there must have been an eternity before that, when God saw nothing, for there was no light, and nothing to be seen ; when he heard nothing, for there was nothing to hear, and no air to convey the sound ; when he could not smell or taste, for there was nothing on which

these senses could be exercised. He could do nothing, for there was nothing to be done, nor think, for there was nothing to think about; and he must have been in a worse condition than a jelly-fish in an idle ocean. Can any reasonable man credit this? What could have induced him to commence operations after doing nothing for an eternity.

Besides this by no means solves the difficulty. If we accept a God, who made the universe, he must be greater than the universe that he has made, and he still remains to be accounted for. Instead of removing the difficulty we have merely substituted a greater one. What a wonderful eye that being must have had who fashioned the eye of man! What an ear that being must have that can hear the innumerable voices of the universe, and what fingers he must possess who spread out the heavens and fashioned the earth! If we are to take the ground that all things must have had a maker, this being must also have had. Who fashioned his all-seeing eye? Who created his all-hearing ear, and built up his marvellous structure? Are we told that he is the uncreated cause of all causes, the eternal, without beginning and without end? So is the universe, whose existence is constantly being demonstrated to us, and which, when accepted, relieves us from the necessity of imagining a being, whose existence never can be demonstrated.

“But if we accept such a doctrine as that *there is no heavenly father*, to whom we can go with all our troubles, pour them into his loving ear, and receive his blessing. Earth without him would be a dungeon, and heaven itself be shrouded with gloom.” A father who would allow his child to drown, when he heard his piercing cries for help, and could just as easily save him as not—a father that could see his child in a burning building, and make no attempt to snatch him from the flames, that would allow some of his children to torture others to death with excruciating agonies—what would such a father be worth? What worse would it be to be destitute of a father than to have such a father as this?

Here is a ship at sea with 500 souls on board ; infants in arms, children that run about on deck, men and women in their strength. A drunken sailor has gone into the hold, and, while tapping the brandy cask, has set the ship on fire. The first cry of alarm comes from those who see the smoke rising from the hatchway. Then comes the startling cry of fire ! fire ! dreadful on land, horrible at sea, a thousand miles from shore. See the flames climb the mast, and leap from shroud to shroud ! Out of their cabins rush the passengers, only to see their terrible doom in these mounting flames. The boats are surrounded with fire, and only one small boat is launched, into which half a dozen sailors jump, one of them the very man who fired the vessel. Then come the despairing, agonising cries of the doomed multitude. Some pray, some curse ; prayers and curses are alike powerless to avert their dreadful fate ; their calcined bones go down with the hissing hull to the Atlantic depths. Where was their heavenly father ? If there was a good God, the Father of the human race, who cares for us as a father cares for his children, such things would be of course impossible.

Here is a locomotive with a thousand passengers, driving through the darkness of a stormy night. Fathers hurrying home to their wives and children ; and in homes far away loving hearts are waiting, and prayers are going up to heaven that they may return in safety. But a bridge that crosses a gulf has been swept down by the wind, and there is a chasm ! Not a whisper from our Father. How could you, O God ? On rushes the train, and down it sinks with every soul, and over them rush the cold, un pitying waters. What father would have allowed his children thus to perish ?

“ But what a cold, uncomfortable doctrine.” Supposing it to be so, I am not responsible for it. It might be comfortable to be told that some good friend had left you an immense fortune. Trusting in the statement, you lavishly spend your money, and then discover that you have been miserably deceived. You would not thank the man who brought you the intelligence.

Suppose that God should act as a father would, what would the result be? The drunken sailor fires the vessel, but God in his mercy blows the fire out. He could not do this for one vessel without doing it for all, or he would be partial. Captains would know this, and why, then, should they prefer sober sailors? why should they exercise special care over their vessels and crew? If God cared for vessels, he must also care for houses. Wherever his children were likely to be burned by fire, there would he be to save them. The consequence would be that no particular care need be exercised by the owners of buildings. God would be the universal watchman, and carelessness, indifference, and drunkenness would be no more detrimental to the safety of a building than caution, vigilance, and sobriety.

The wind has blown down the bridge, and God whispers to the engineer, who stops his train before he reaches the chasm. Let this be done for all trains, and what would be the result?

The universe is better regulated, as it is for man's highest welfare, than it would be if a personal Divinity cared for every man, and did for him what a father or a mother would do for a child. The baby is born an idiot, a curse to the family for a life-time, but idiots never come without cause; he was begotten when his father was drunk, and inherited the beclouded reason of his drunken progenitor. The law of inheritance by which this is done has greatly helped to bring the whole human race to its present exalted position. By its aid we obtained a Shakspeare and a Newton, and by it earth is eventually to be made a heaven.

If God cared for us as mothers care for their children, he must needs be mother, father, nurse, watchman, policeman, physician, guide, insurance society, and general factotum for the whole human family. Why should mothers or nurses watch over their children, when God, with sleepless eye, looks after them? Why should the policeman walk his rounds, when God will not suffer his children to come to harm?

Were this the case, it would dry up the stream of charity, paralyse the arm of endeavour, close the eye

of watchfulness, kill sympathy, and reduce mankind to universal babyhood.

It is absolutely certain that the universe does not treat us as a father treats his children. What good father would permit one of his boys to put the other on a burning log-pile, and roast him to death? Could we believe either in his goodness or his fatherhood if he saw the whole transaction, and never uttered even a word of expostulation? What should we think of a father who could look on calmly, and see four of his sons bore out the eyes of a fifth with red-hot irons, pull his tongue and nails out by the roots, and pour melted lead down his throat? Might not that boy as well be an orphan, as to have a father who cared as little for him as that?

"But," we are told, "God sees that it is best that he should not interfere, as this would destroy men's freedom." But an omnipotent God could have made something else to be the best, and have thus preserved his children from all this suffering. If God is so bound that he must permit this suffering, in order that certain results may be accomplished, then there is something in the universe greater than he; that something is King, and he is its subject, and ceases, therefore, to be God.

"But Nature allows all these things," of course, because they cannot be avoided. The blossom must precede the ripened fruit, and the fruit must be green and sour before it can be ripe and sweet. Planets must have a fiery birth, and, therefore, must be scarred by volcanoes, and rent by earthquake throes as they pass to maturity; and there is in the universe neither the power nor the disposition to turn aside to save a city any more than there is to save an ant-hill.

Here is the moon doomed, by the absence of air and water, to be a barren waste. Between Mars and Jupiter a world has evidently been shattered to atoms, and possibly all the beings that then existed upon it. Meteoric masses, fragments of large cosmical bodies, occasionally fall to the earth, as larger ones have fallen in past times, and produced disastrous consequences, and these show us what we call accidents belong to the

heavens no less than the earth, and that there is no more miraculous exercise of power to prevent two worlds from coming into contact than there is to prevent two pebbles from striking together as they go rolling down a stream.

"This view of God is terrible," says one; "it chills my soul." But if it is true, which would you rather have? It is no more terrible than the truth; and it is better to accept the truth than to go through the world forever the victim of a fraud and a lie. But is it any more terrible than the doctrine held by Christians? Is a being who drowned the world purposely less terrible than a universe, in which such a thing happens by the operation of natural law? Accept the God the Bible reveals, and we have a devil, as much worse than a common devil, as an infinite tyrant is worse than his victim.

The old idea of God makes man a cowardly slave. "What are we that we should come into thy presence, or lift up our eyes to the place where thine honour dwelleth." Are the words that drop from the man's lips, while he kneels at the foot of the image that in his ignorance he has set up. "If thou hadst been just to mark, and severe to punish," he continues, "we had been long since in that place where hope never comes." He makes his God so high, so unnatural, so cruel, that a come-between is necessary, and blood must be shed to obtain his favour.

Taking the common orthodox view of God, if we are defective, it must be because he has made us so. If God is omnipotent, he could just as well have made us perfect as not, and we have the very best grounds of complaint against him. We might justly pray, "O God, we are thy children, so thou hast informed us in thy word; thou couldst have made us pure as angels of light, and as happy continually as the sun is bright; but thou has made us subject to sin, and all its woe. We, therefore, lay this at thy door. It is not anything that we chose, but it is what thy decrees have brought upon us. Thou has so constituted us that we are as sure to sin as we are to breathe. We, therefore, lay all lying, theft, adultery, drunkenness, and murder upon

thee, for if thou hadst not willed it, it never could have been. O God, we pray thee to reform thyself, and then the whole world will be reformed. Kill the devil, or reform him. Shame upon a God who ever allowed him to exist. Put out hell ; a God that cannot manage the universe without a hell should abdicate the throne, and allow a better God to take his place. Give every child born into the world a good physical constitution, and a large well-balanced brain. Open the door of heaven for every human soul, and let it be a heaven as good as a God can make, that we may have compensation for the great injustice we have experienced at thy hands.

We would suggest to thee, O Lord, great improvements that are needed in this world of ours. Make fertile the frightful deserts, temper the climate of Africa, and improve the appearance of its inhabitants. Give us better weather in New England, and let there be more sunshine in Old England ; destroy the mosquitos, and kill the black flies ; let the weeds depart, and give us good crops with less labour. Make the rich bend their backs to labour, and give the poor a respite from excessive toil. Thou hast placed us upon a world, O God, that might be very greatly improved. Give us thy omnipotent power, and thy infinite wisdom, and in half an hour we would make a world so beautiful that thou wouldst blush to think that thou hadst placed man on such an unfinished mud-ball as this."

Such a prayer might bring God to his senses, and lead him to kneel and ask our pardon for the unnecessary misery that he had caused us.

But Gods of this description only exist in the imaginations of the ignorant, and all things are as perfect as the conditions under which they have been produced would allow. It is in our ignorance that we have made kings to rule over us, popes to think for us, priests to pray for us, and gods to damn us.

But the world is growing wiser ; we say to the king, "Rule your mighty self, and you will probably have enough to do." To the pope, we say, "Think for yourself, old man ; but whether you do or not, you cannot

think for us. You are, doubtless, as infallible as the swearing fisherman, your illustrious predecessor and patron saint. He on one occasion is said to have drawn money out of a fish, and you draw it constantly from the helpless people, who have been caught on your papal hook." To the priest we say, "Pray for us no longer; your prayers can no more change the order of the universe, than the croak of a frog can cause the sun to shine on us at midnight." To the false gods that have been palmed upon us in the name of this or that religion, we say, "You are as impotent to damn as you are helpless to save. Here are we the children of the universe, and we shall always be. It took the eternity of the past to produce us, and we are for the eternity of the future."

You say God is infinite. I say the universe is infinite, without beginning and without end. God, you tell me, is omnipresent; it is certain that the universe is omnipresent, for it is all; outside of which nothing can be. God knows all things, so does the universe. Even what some call dead matter recognises whatever takes place in its vicinity, and can repeat it to the intelligent mind. The universe is the ever-living, the originator of all life, the fountain of all energy, the father of all love, all hope, all intelligence, that liveth and abideth forever. It is not omnipotent, for there are things in their nature impossible; but it can do all that is possible to be done.

There is a sense in which the universe or Nature is both our father and our mother, caring equally for all, doing the best possible for all. The Infinite has given us life, knowledge, wisdom, love, and poured out bliss for us like an overflowing fountain. Has given us not only life, but future life, and all glorious possibilities. More than father, it has done more than father could ever do; dearer than mother, the mother of all mothers; the love of our mother is only a drop out of her infinite heart. For millions of years we shall climb the mount of progress, and know more and more of the infinite mystery, forever revealing itself to the human soul.

A universe without a spirit, an animating principle, would be the corpse of a universe; and this is what people have mistaken for it, and shrunk from it as they would from a corpse, if it was set up to rule over them. I believe in a universe, every atom of which throbs with life and motion, and is guided by the highest intelligence. These stars around us are suns, and these suns are the fathers of countless worlds, that are not like any useless drift weed, to be washed on an unknown shore; but worlds steered by the infinite spirit of humanity; and not humanity a walking clod for seventy years, and a rotting clod at the expiration of that time, but humanity—men and women—with living souls, the highest embodiments of this infinite spirit. What urges blazing suns to throw off fiery drops, that cool into stony worlds? What causes them to blossom into life, and life to advance through fin propelled fish buried in the waters, to scaly reptile basking on the rocks, to soaring bird, and tree-climbing ape that fathers the first rude man? It is the living, guiding, governing spirit, never for a moment absent from any part of the universe, never breathed into man, or lower organic form, because always present. This is the life of our life, the soul of our soul; our father, our mother; and all people are our brothers and our sisters, the offspring of this spirit. Let us love them, help them, bless them, and we shall receive a satisfaction that no worship of false gods can give; and, after death—

“The good begun by us shall onward flow
 In many a branching stream and river grow;
 The seed that in these few and fleeting hours
 Our hands unsparing, and unwearied sow,
 Shall deck our graves with amaranthine flowers,
 And yield ye fruits divine in heaven's immortal bowers.”

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