

that I exist, else I assume, with Paul, that nothing can think. But while making an assumption proves my existence, it does not prove the truth of what I assume. I might assume, with Prof. Oken, the objective existence of nothing, and that the whole universe originated in nothing; and that, after all, is as good an assumption as the theological fiction that God made the universe with nothing but nothing as the raw material from which to make it.

My assumption that God exists proves my own existence; now if it can be ascertained that God assumes that I exist, it will prove his existence. I can prove my own existence in an indefinite number of ways. I can pinch myself, for instance. My ability to analyze the preacher's discourse and prove that he has not proved anything about God proves that I exist.

If the preacher cannot prove his own existence, he has no right to collect his salary. If he cannot prove the existence of God he has no right to talk for God or collect money for him. If the existence of the preacher and the existence of God are alike obscure, why did not the preacher deliver a preliminary discourse to establish his own existence? I fancy I see him waxing eloquent over the question, "Where am I at?" it would not be so bad. In an old book of fables, which I recollect reading when quite young, there is a story about God hunting for the first man he had made, who was hid away in the brush. According to that story, God found his man. But millions of people have been hunting for God through long, weary ages and they have never found him, though, as Paul says, "Peradventure he is not far from each one of us."

The preacher said that "science teaches that all energy originates in will, and all will power is of God." Then, of course, the inference is that all things are just as God wants to have them, else he has let some of his energy get beyond his control. Then he went on to elaborate the design theory. He told what God intended by this and that. He told how he provided for all his creatures, even for the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. But he did not say a word about how that provision is made. He did not tell how God provides for the hawk by giving him a lark or a sparrow for his breakfast; how he provides for the wolf by giving him a lamb for his dinner; how he provides for the alligator by giving him a tender little darkey for his supper; how he provides for kings and lords and monopolists by giving them "the earth and the fulness thereof". He did not tell how throughout the long geological ages God has displayed his divine energy in providing the strong with fangs and claws

to devour the weak and helpless. He did not mention the fact that all the progress that man has made has been in resisting this divine energy and, as far as he could, adjusting it to his own ideas of what it ought to be.

He seems never to have thought of the comfort there may be in the discovery that the processes of nature are neither moral nor immoral. That while from the standpoint of purpose and design they are merciless as famine, as fiendish as a tiger—fitter to be purposed by a devil than a god; yet from the standpoint of philosophy, based on science, they are inevitable. There being no future for the individual man, philosophy has only the incongruities of this life to account for, and there being no god, nobody is to blame.

The preacher insists that the universe is entirely distinct from God. If that is so, all the essential properties and powers of things exist of themselves. Then he asks what would be the result if God should withdraw from the universe. The result would be nothing. The universe, being distinct from God, would all be here. He says if God—the source of all energy—should withdraw, we would all crumble into dust. We do all disintegrate as it is, and that is also a manifestation of energy. If all energy is of God, and God is everywhere, then God is as much in a rotting cabbage as in a budding rose.

Lastly, the preacher said there was no reason why God should kill the devil. He said that God was going to treat the devil justly, and in the end the devil would get his due, and that those who were impatient for God to kill the devil were more unjust than God. Of course, there is no reason why one assumption or spook should kill another, and there is no reason why any sensible person should take sides in a fight between spooks and ghosts. As the Hibernian said, "Let 'em fight it out betune the two."

But god and devil are alike the creations of priests and preachers and are alike useful to them in plying their trade. They could not spare the devil, for it is in and through him that they live, move and have their being. When it is authoritatively announced that the devil is dead there will be sad mourning when they come to preach his funeral.

"You're bid to the funeral, ministers all,  
We've dug the old gentleman's bed;  
Your black coats will make a most excellent pall  
To cover your friend who is dead.

"Aye, lower him mournfully into his grave;  
Let showers of tear-drops be shed;  
Your business is gone—there are no souls to save:  
Their tempter, the devil, is dead.

"Woe comes upon woe; it is dreadful to think  
Hell's gone, and the demons have fled;  
The damned souls have broken their chains' every link—  
Their tempter, the devil, is dead.

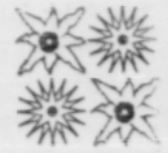
"Campmeetings henceforth will be needed no more;  
Revivals are knocked on the head;  
The orthodox vessel lies stranded on shore—  
Their captain, the devil, is dead."

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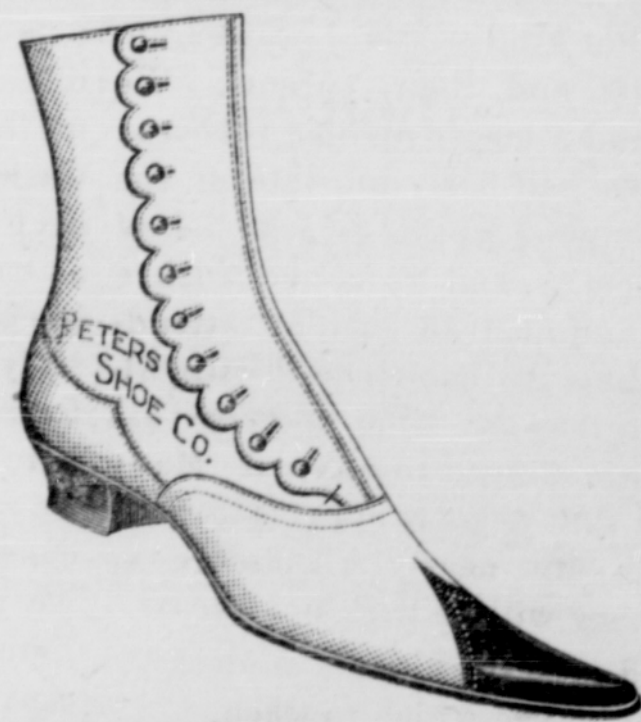
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