

The science by means of which they demonstrate the existence of an impossible intelligence and an incomprehensible power, is called metaphysics or theology. The theologians admit that the phenomena of matter tend, at least, to disprove the existence of any power superior in nature, because in such phenomena we see nothing but an endless chain of efficient causes—nothing but the force of a mechanical necessity. They therefore appeal to what they denominate the phenomena of mind to establish this superior power.

The trouble is, that in the phenomena of mind we find the same endless chain of efficient causes; the same mechanical necessity. Every thought must have had an efficient cause. Every motive, every desire, every fear, hope and dream must have been necessarily produced. There is no room in the mind of man for providence or chance. The facts and forces governing thought are as absolute as those governing the motion of the planets. A poem is produced by the forces of nature, and is necessarily and naturally produced as mountains and seas. You will seek in vain for a thought in man's brain without its efficient cause. Every mental operation is the necessary result of certain facts and conditions. Mental phenomena are considered more complicated than those of matter, and consequently more mysterious. Being more mysterious they are considered better evidence of the existence of a god. No one infers a god from the simple, from the known, from what is understood, but from the complex, from the unknown and incomprehensible. Our ignorance is God; what we know is science.

When we abandon the doctrine that some infinite being created matter and force, and enacted a code of laws for their government, the idea of interference will be lost. The real priest will then be, not the mouth-piece of some pretended deity, but the interpreter of nature. From that moment the church ceases to exist. The tapers will die out upon the dusty altar; the moths will eat the fading velvet of pulpit and pew; the Bible will take its place with the Shastras, Puranas, Vedas, Eddas, Sagas and Korans, and the fetters of a degrading faith will fall from the minds of men.

VII.

"But," says the religionist, "you cannot explain everything; you cannot understand everything; and that which you cannot explain, that which you do not comprehend, is my God."

We are explaining more every day. We are understanding more every day. Consequently, your God is growing smaller every day.

Nothing daunted, the religionist then insists that nothing can exist without a cause, except cause, and that this uncaused cause is God.

To this again we reply: Every cause must produce an effect, because until it does produce an effect, it is not a cause. Every effect must in its turn become a cause. Therefore, in the nature of things, there can not be a last cause, for the reason that a so-called last cause would

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