

to know much about what is above him. Though he is the vainest of creatures, he is in truth the most pitiful object in the whole realm of nature—an insect creeping on this floating ball, which is itself but a grain of sand in the universe! I remember your illustration from the myriads of creatures that live on plants, from which you picked out, as a fit representative of man, an insect too small to be seen by the naked eye, whose world was a leaf, and whose life lasted but a single day! Surely a creature that can only be seen with a microscope, cannot know that a Creator does not exist!

This, I must do you the justice to say, you do not affirm. All that you can say is, that if there be no knowledge on one side, neither is there on the other; that it is only a matter of probability; and that, judging from such evidence as appeals to your senses and your understanding, you do not believe that there is a God. Whether this be a reasonable conclusion or not, it is at least an intelligible state of mind.

Now I am not going to argue against what the Catholics call "invincible ignorance"—an incapacity on account of temperament—for I hold that the belief in God, like the belief in all spiritual things, comes to some minds by a kind of intuition. There are natures so finely strung that they are sensitive to influences which do not touch others. You may say that it is mere poetical rhapsody when Shelley writes:

"The awful shadow of some unseen power
Floats, though unseen, among us."

But there are natures which are not at all poetical or dreamy, only most simple and pure, which in moments of spiritual exaltation, are almost conscious of a Presence that is not of this world. But this, which is a matter of experience, will have no weight with those who do not have that experience. For the present, therefore, I would not be swayed one particle by mere sentiment, but look at the question in the cold light of reason alone.

The idea of God is indeed the grandest and most awful that can be entertained by the human mind. Its very greatness overpowers us, so that it seems impossible that such a Being should exist. But if it is hard to conceive of Infinity, it is still harder to get any intelligible explanation of the present order of things without ad-

mitting the existence of an intelligent Creator and Upholder of all. Copernicus, when he swept the sky with his telescope, traced the finger of God in every movement of the heavenly bodies. Napoleon, when the French savants on the voyage to Egypt, argued that there was no God, disdained any other answer than to point upward to the stars and ask "Who made all these?" That is the first question, and it is the last. The farther we go, the more we are forced to one conclusion. No man ever studied nature with a more simple desire to know the truth, than Agassiz, and yet the more he explored, the more he was startled as he found himself constantly face to face with the evidences of MIND.*

Do you say this is "a great mystery," meaning that it is something that we do not know anything about? Of course it is "a mystery." But do you think to escape mystery by denying the Divine existence? You only exchange one mystery for another. The first of all mysteries is, not that God exists, but that we exist. Here we are. How did we come here? We go back to our ancestors; but that does not take away the difficulty: it only removes it farther off. Once begin to climb the stairway of past generations, and you will find that it is a Jacob's ladder, on which you mount higher and higher until you step into the very presence of the Almighty.

"But even if we know that there is a God, what can we know of his character?" You say, "God is whatever we conceive Him to be." We frame an image of Deity out of our consciousness—it is simply a reflection of our own personality cast upon the sky, like the image seen in the Alps in certain state of the atmosphere—and then fall down and worship that which we have created, not indeed with our hands, but out of our minds. This may be true to some extent of the gods of mythology, but not of the God of Nature, who is as inflexible as Nature itself. You might as

* In the mind of Agassiz, the idea of an Intelligent Creator constituted the supreme incitation of scientific study, in which he was literally "seeking after God." As the result of his long experience, he says that "A belief in God—a God who is behind and within the chaos of unguessed facts, beyond the present vanishing point of human knowledge—adds a wonderful stimulus to the man who attempts to penetrate the region of the unknown." Nor was he ashamed to confess that always, as he resumed his investigations, he breathed "a prayer to the Being who hides his secrets only to lure on to the unfolding of them."