

The God Pestilence



Johann Most



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"Knowledge is the key to be free!"

they explain everything, could no longer revel in superfluity; no longer glorify poverty and live in luxury themselves; no longer preach submission and practice arrogance; but who would, through the march of reason, be hurled into the deepest depths of oblivion.

Away with the malignant trinity - the murderous father, the unnatural son, the lascivious ghost! Away with all the debasing fantasies in whose name human beings are degraded to miserable slavery, and have been deluded into hoping for the joys of Heaven as an indemnification for the miseries of Earth. Away with those who with their sanctified hallucinations are the curses of liberty and happiness: the priesthood of all sorts!

God is merely a spectre, fabricated by designing scoundrels, through which mankind is tyrannised and kept in constant dread. But the phantom instantly dissolves when examined under the glass of sober reflection. The defrauded masses become impatient and no longer fear the bugbear, but will rather hold out to the priesthood the word of the poet:

*A curse to the idols to whom we prayed
That in winter our hunger and cold be stayed.
In vain did we hope, in vain did we wait;
To be humbugged and fooled was ever our fate.*

It is to be hoped that they will not stand humbugging and fooling much longer, but will, one of these fine days, throw their crucifixes and chalices and saints into the fire, transform them into useful utensils, and make of their churches theatres, or concert and assembly halls. Or, should they not be serviceable for that purpose, use them as corn bins or stables; find useful work for the priests and nuns, and then be surprised at themselves for not having done it long before.

This short, concise, and only practicable method will, of course, only be consummated in the storm of the coming social revolution; in fact, at the moment when the conspirators of priesthood, the princes, the nobility, the bureaucrats, the capitalists, and the exploiters of all kinds are swept away as by a whirlwind, thereby cleaning state and church with an iron broom of the accumulated mire of centuries.

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to go unpunished, but still submits to them from everyone. Some are amazed at his knowledge and the perfection of his works, yet his works are imperfect and of short duration, for he creates, destroys, and constantly improves upon that which he has made, without ever being satisfied with his productions. All his enterprises are for the sake of glory, yet his purpose, to be universally glorified, is never attained. He labours incessantly for the welfare of his subjects, but the most of them are in dire distress for the necessities of life. Those whom he apparently seems to favour most are the least satisfied with their lot. We see them nearly all refractory to a master whose grandeur they admire, whose wisdom they praise, whose benevolence they honour, whose justice they fear, and whose commandments they revere, but never keep.

The empire is the earth; this sovereign is God; his vassals are the priests; his subjects are mankind - a fine conglomeration.

The god of the Christians, as we have seen, is the god who makes promises only to break them; who sends them pestilence and disease in order to heal them; a god who demoralises mankind in order to improve it. A god who created man “after his own image”, and still the origin of evil in man is not accredited to him. This is a god who saw that all his works were good, and soon after discovered that they were bad; who knew that man would eat of the forbidden fruit, and still damned him eternally therefore. He is a god who is so dull as to allow himself to be out-witted by the Devil; so cruel that no tyrant on earth can be compared with him - that is the god of the Judaeo-Christian theology. He is an all-wise bungler who created mankind perfectly, but could not keep them in that state; who created the devil, yet could not keep him under control; a god who is omnipresent, yet descended from Heaven to see what mankind was doing; who is merciful, and yet has, at times, permitted the slaughter of millions. An Almighty who damned millions of innocents for the faults of a few; who caused the deluge to destroy mankind excepting a very few with whom to start a new generation no better than the preceding; who created a Heaven for the fools who believe in the “gospel” and a Hell for the enlightened who repudiate it. A divine charlatan who created himself through the Holy Ghost, and then sent himself as mediator between himself and others, and who, held in contempt and derided by his enemies, was nailed to a cross, like a bat to a barn door; who was buried, arose from the dead, descended to Hell, ascended to Heaven, and since then for eighteen-hundred years has been sitting at his own right hand to judge the living and the dead when the living cease to exist. A terrible despot, one whose history should be written in letters of blood, because it is a religion of terror.

Away, then, with the Christian theology! Away with a god invented by preachers of the bloody faith, who, without their important nothing, by means of which

created full of faults, shall be punished? If we do good only by the grace of God, why should we be rewarded? If God is inconceivable, why should we occupy ourselves with him? If the knowledge of God is necessary, why does he remain obscure?

Such questions are puzzles to them.

Every thinking person must admit that not one single proof of the existence of a god has ever been found; and besides this, there is not the least necessity for the existence of God. As we know the inherent properties and laws of nature, the presence of God, either within or beyond this nature, is really to no purpose, quite superfluous and evidently untenable. Morally the necessity for his existence is still more insignificant.

There is a large empire, ruled by a potentate, whose demeanour creates differences of opinion in the minds of his subjects. He wants to be known, loved and honoured, and that all shall obey him, but he never shows himself. Everyone endeavours to confound the conception of him by individual notions. The people, subjected to his power, have only such ideas about the character and laws of their invisible sovereign as his ministers see fit to make known, although the latter admit, at the same time, that they are unable themselves to form a conception of their master, that his will is inscrutable, his views of things and his properties unfathomable, and that even his servants disagree about the decrees sent forth by him, for in every province of his empire the laws differ, and they accuse each other of having altered and forged them. These edicts and commandments, which they claim to have authority to promulgate, are obscure; they are conundrums that the subjects for whose special benefit and enlightenment they are issued can neither understand nor solve. The laws of this hidden monarch require explanation, but those who explain are ever at variance themselves.

Everything that they relate about their concealed sovereign is a chaotic mass of contradictions. They do not say one word that could not at once be proved as a lie. They speak of him as exceedingly good, but still there is no individual existing who does not complain of his mandates. They speak of him as infinitely wise, but yet in his administration everything opposes common sense and reason. They praise his justice, and still the best of his subjects are, as a rule, the least favoured. They assure us that he sees everything; still his omnipresence alleviates no distress. He is, they say, a friend of order, yet in his domain everything is confusion and disorder. All his actions are self-determined, yet occurrences seldom if ever bear out his plans. He can penetrate the future, but does not know the things that will come to pass. He permits no insult to himself



FOREWORD

We live in a time when the alliance of religion and the state, assisted by technology and big business, promises to create an all-encompassing world order in which citizens will have everything except freedom. Laws abound, most of them proclaiming “public interest” - i.e., your interest, - as their reason for being. Religious fanatics, who want their notion of right and wrong, based on the crazy ravings in the Bible, to control the lives and conduct of everybody else, constantly put forward decrees on what thou shalt or shalt not do.

Johann Joseph Most's essay, *The God Pestilence*, was perhaps the first open attack on the church-state combination from the standpoint of Atheistic Anarchism - that is, total disbelief both in the existence of “god” and in the necessity for authoritarian government. Other commentators, such as Mill or Paine, the classical liberals, deplored certain excesses of authority or abuse, but never fought religion and dominance at the same time as two sides of one coin.

Aside from the present publication of this wonderful tirade, nothing else by Johann Most is in print today in English. The work is, however, Most in full voice, caustic, blistering and deadly accurate, a defiance-charged bolt shot at the hideous face of Religion. The essay was written a hundred years ago, and was first published by Most in his own newspaper, *Freiheit*, (Freedom) in German. But in all the years since, it has gone out to English-speaking readers only a handful of times: in 1902 as *The Deistic Pestilence*, published in Hull, England; in 1935 under the present title in an Anarchist newspaper issued from San Francisco. In 1970 I published it in *Selected Blasphemy*, and again in *The Match!* in 1972; and lately felt it needed permanent availability, thus this pamphlet, which will be kept in print indefinitely.

The long neglect of this brave work happened because of ideology and sadly mistaken priorities: Most was too godless for the majority of radicals, but too Anarchistic for most Atheists. Contemporary events show how vital it is to

combine the tendencies, because without a love of freedom, Atheism is nothing; it leads to the state-religion seen in the Soviet bloc. And without Atheism, radical politics often degenerates into prudery or ghastly moralism that completely cancels out any initial libertarian spirit, as in the case of today's feminism, which has ended up on the very same side as certain Bible fanatics in regard to issues such as so-called pornography.

As for Johann Most, as an anti-authoritarian and a vociferous opponent of religion, he was constantly in and out of jails a hundred years ago because of his persistence in expressing his thoughts. Christian authorities had him arrested in Austria, Germany, England, and the United States. In the U.S., pretexts were flimsy beyond belief, and the mood of the times is illustrated by one courtroom scene in which the prosecutor, screeching to a smugly approving jury, vowed to "shoot Most like a rattlesnake" if that body didn't convict him. The jurors applauded. Often in trials, since Most didn't speak English, newspaper reporters were allowed to translate his defences to charges, and the reporters delighted in the opportunity of fabricating outrageous statements from Most to liven up their own columns.

Persecution for a non-English-speaking foreigner, who hated religion and government, was severe in the latter part of the last century, when Most lived in America. But he stuck to his guns until his last breath, in 1906, at the age of 60. He was a very great man.

Fred Woodworth

These misguided, unhappy wretches have been defrauded of the real object of life; but what is worse; they form the great crowd in the train of the opponents to science and the march of reason, to revolution and to liberty. Whenever new chains are to be forged for mankind, they are willing to work at the anvil as if possessed by demons. Whenever the road of progressive development is to be blockaded by obstacles, these fools oppose in their broadest front to the spirit of the times. The attempt to cure such imbeciles is not only a good piece of work to them, it is really an attempt to cauterise a cancer which brings suffering to the whole people, and which must ultimately be unconditionally extirpated if this earth is to become a fit habitation for mankind instead of being a playground for gods and devils to torment us.

Out then with religion from the heads of the people, and down with the priesthood! The latter are in the habit of saying, "The aim sanctifies the means." Very well, let us apply this precept against them. Our aim is to make mankind independent of every condition of slavery, of the yoke of social servitude as well as of the shackles of political tyranny, and, not least because last, of all bane of religious darkness. All means to attain this object, and made use of at all opportunities offering, will be acknowledged just and right by every true philanthropist.

Every person, possessing common sense in place of religious insanity, neglecting to do the utmost in his power, daily, hourly, to overthrow religion, shirks a duty. Every person, released from deistic superstition, forbearing to oppose priesthood where, when and however an opportunity presents itself, is a traitor to his cause. Therefore, war to the black hounds! Implacable war to the knife! Incite against the seducers of man, enlighten the seduced! Let us make every means of strife subservient: The scourge of derision and scorn, the torch of science and knowledge, and where these are insufficient, weightier arguments, those that will be felt.

Unanswerable Questions About "God"

For the ignorant, or rather those craftily made and kept so, if they appear to have a little sense left, the following questions will be proper:

If god desires that we know, love and fear him, why does he not show himself? (If he is as good as the clergy tell us, what reason is there to fear him?) If he is omniscient, why bother him with private affairs and prayers? If he is omnipresent, why build him churches? If he is omnipotent, how can he permit that we blaspheme? If he is just, why the supposition that man, whom he

the people lose their faith," said he, "they will no longer bear their intolerable misery, but rebel!" That was to the point, and should have aroused the minds of all working people to earnest reflection if - yes- if the great majority of them had not become religious imbeciles to such an extent that it were an utter impossibility to comprehend the simplest ideas, though heard with normal ears.

It is not in vain that the priesthood of all sorts have always so strenuously exerted themselves to prevent the retrogression of religious sentiment, although, as is well known, when among themselves they could burst with laughter over the nonsense they preach for ready cash.

During thousands of years these brain-defilers have instituted a reign of terror without which the religious craze would long since have been abolished. Scaffold and sword, dungeon and chains, poison and poniards, assassination and judicial murder, these were the means by which the religious insanity was upheld, forever a blot of shame in the history of the human race.

Hundreds of thousands have been slowly roasted to death at the stake "in the name of God" because they dared to find a stink in the biblical mire. Millions have in tedious wars been compelled to break each other's heads, to burn and sack entire countries, and, after wholesale murder and incendiarism, to spread disease and pestilence, all to maintain religion. The most excruciating tortures were invented by the priests and their accomplices to scare into religion by the application of mundane devilishness, those who had ceased to fear God.

When a person maims the hands or feet of another, we say he is a criminal - what shall we call those who maim the human intellect, and, when failing in that attempt, with refined cruelty destroy the body inch by inch?

It is certainly true that today they cannot carry on their nefarious godly brigandage in the manner formerly in vogue, but in lieu thereof they have taken to worming into domestic affairs of families, misusing the schools for the furtherance of their ends. Their hypocrisy has rather increased than diminished. After their attempts to abolish the newly-discovered art of printing had signally failed, they with their usual cunning and craftiness, utilised it, and have gradually to a great extent made the press of today servile to their cause.

An old adage says, "Where a priest has trod, no grass will grow!" That means, in other words, if a person is once in the clutches of the priests, his intellect becomes barren - his intellectual functions cease to operate in a normal way, and instead religious maggots and divine worms wriggle through his brain. He resembles a sheep that has the staggers.

Among all mental diseases that have been systematically inoculated into the human cranium, the religious pest is the most abominable.

Like all things else, this disease has a history; only in this case there is no sign of the development from nonsense to reason that is generally assumed to be the course of history. Old Zeus and his double, Jupiter, were relatively quite honest, jolly, and we might even say somewhat enlightened fellows, if compared with the last triplet on the pedigree of gods who, on examination, can safely rival Huitzilopochtli * as to brutality and cruelty. But we won't argue at all with the pensioned or dethroned gods, for they no longer do any harm. It is the more modern, still officiating cloud-lollers and terrorists of hell whom we shall disrespectfully criticise, expose, and vanquish.

The Christians have a threefold god; their ancestors, the Jews, were content with a single simpleton. Otherwise both species are quite a humorous crowd. "Old and New Testament" are to them the sources of all knowledge. Therefore, willing or not, one must read the "holy writ" if one is to fathom their shallowness and learn to deride them.

How "God" Created Heaven and Earth

Taking only the "history" of these deities, we find an ample sufficiency for the characterisation of the whole. In a short sketch the case stands thus: In the beginning God "created" heaven and earth - consequently he found himself the only thing besides nothing in a complete void, where surely it must have been dreary enough to bore even a deity. So, it being but a trifle for a god to conjure worlds out of thin air, like a magician shaking eggs or silver dollars out of his coat sleeves, he "created" heaven and earth. Somewhat later he moulded the sun, moon and stars to suit himself.

Of course, certain heretics, called astronomers, have established long since that the earth neither is, nor could have been the centre of the universe, nor could

* Huitzilopochtli: A "god" to whom the Aztecs habitually offered human victims.

its existence have antedated that of the sun, around which it revolves. These people have proved it to be sheer lunacy to speak of the earth as something special and of great preponderance compared to the sun and stars. It has been taught to every schoolchild that the sun is only a star, and the earth one of its satellites, and the moon an under-satellite of the earth; furthermore, that the earth, compared with the universe, far from acting a conspicuous part, is only an atom, looking like a grain of dust.

But why should a god concern himself about astronomy? He does what he pleases and poo-hoo's science and logic. For this reason he made, after manufacturing the earth, first the light, and afterwards the sun. Today even a Hottentot understands that there can be no light on earth without the sun, but God - well, he is no Hottentot.

But let us continue to investigate. Thus far the "creation" is quite a success, but there was still something lacking - things were not lively enough. The creator wanted some pastime, therefore he finally made man. Curiously enough, he now deviated entirely from the method previously applied. Instead of accomplishing this creation by a simple and imperative "Let it Be!", he made it exceedingly uncommon and troublesome. He took a prosaic lump of clay in his hand, modelled it into the figure of a man "after his own image" and "breathed into his nostrils the breath life." God being of infinite wisdom, benign, just (in short, amiability itself), it occurred to him that this Adam, as he had named his last article, being alone, would find life exceptionally tedious. (Perhaps he remembered his own former lonely existence in "nothing".) And so he made him quite a nice, enticing little Eve. But in the meantime, experience had evidently taught him that the handling of a lump of clay was a rather unclean business, especially for a god; therefore he applied another new method of manufacture. He tore (dexterity is no witchcraft, least of all for a god) a rib out of Adam's body, and changed it into a charming female. Whether this rib, extracted from Adam, was restored at a later period, or whether after the performed operation Adam had to run about in the world as a "one-sided" individual, is a matter upon which the polite historian says nothing.

Modern natural science has established that animals and plants have, through the most manifold ramifications, developed during the course of millions of years from simple primeval matter to their present forms. Man is nothing but the most perfect form of this development, and he not only had, some thousands of years ago, a very brutish appearance, without language, but also (every other supposition excludes itself) he must have developed from inferior animal species.

This is the highest degree of getting-tired-after-a-whilishness. The occupancy of an isolated prison cell would be decidedly preferable. It is not surprising then, that those who are rich and mighty enough to enjoy paradise on earth should laughingly proclaim with Heine:*

*"The angels and the birds may own
The heavens for themselves alone!"*

And yet the rich and mighty foster and nourish divine idiocy and religious stupidity. It is, in fact, part of their business; it is really a question of life or death to the domineering and exploiting classes whether the people at large are dumfounded religiously or not. With religious lunacy stands and falls their power. The more man clings to religion, the more he believes - the more he believes, the less he knows. The less he knows, the more stupid he is - the more stupid, the easier he may be governed. The easier to govern, the better he may be exploited; the more exploited, the poorer he gets; and the poorer he gets, the richer and mightier the domineering classes get, the more riches and power they amass, the heavier their yoke upon the neck of the people.

The tyrants of all times and of all countries were always well acquainted with this train of thought, and for that reason always were on good terms with the priesthood of all creeds. Casual quarrels between these two kinds of enemies to mankind have been at all times only of a domestic character, merely a struggle for supremacy.

The priests or preachers know that they are done for unless they have the support of the circle of cronies at the governmental top. It is no secret to the rich and powerful that mankind can only be enslaved and exploited when the necromancers of the churches ingraft sufficient servility into the hearts of the masses of the people to make them look upon the earth as a vale of tears, to imbue their minds with the justness of the godly decree: "Serve ye your masters" (those in authority) and to buy them off with an alleged reward in some "home beyond the skies".

Mr. Windthorst, member of the German Parliament, arch-Jesuit and champion of the Clerical Faction,** once in the heat of debate gave us plainly to understand what the frauds and charlatans of society think in regard to this matter: "When

* Heinrich Heine: Nineteenth-Century German lyric poet and satirist.

** Ludwig Windthorst: German Catholic political figure.

invented, are only pleasant, agreeable, tickling sensations. This God exceeds in bestial cruelty everything malignant that we know of on earth. His prison is hell, his hangman the devil, and his punishments last forever. He employs worms that never cease gnawing, fires which are never quenched, and other devilties a thousand fold as chastisement; and only shows mercy for minor transgressions after long periods of time, provided the transgressor died a Catholic. For these he has under certain circumstances provided a “purgatory”, which differs from hell about as much as a jail from a prison. It is fitted up for comparatively transient inmates, with somewhat more lenient regulations - but at any rate, even in purgatory, you will be singed mercilessly.

By Divine Providence

The so-called “cardinal sins” are never punished with purgatory, always with hell. These include among others “blasphemy”, perpetrated by word, by writing, or by thought. Consequently, in this direction, God permits neither freedom of the press, nor speech, not even of the unspoken thought. This in itself is enough to stamp him from the outset as a successful competitor in churlishness with the basest despots and tyrants of any country or time, but the means and the duration of his punishments augment the baseness of his nature to the utmost. Consequently this “God” is the most atrocious monster conceivable.

His attitude is the more infamous in that he allows it be said of him, that the entire world, and especially mankind in their behaviour, is regulated by his omnipotent divine providence. He maltreats man for actions of which he himself is the originator or prime cause! How amiable, compared with this monster, are the tyrants of this earth of past and present time. Should it please God, however, to permit a person to live and die happy in accordance with his (God’s) conceptions, he maltreats him still worse, because the promised “heaven”, when examined, is a good deal worse institution than hell; for there you have no desires, you are always satisfied, without ever having a longing for any goal. (But as without desire and attainment thereof no gratification is possible, so existence in heaven is without enjoyment.) Eternally employed in “beholding the Lord”, eternally listening to the same strains from the same harps, eternally singing the same new and entrancing song in the same melody - if not the one of “Gabriel blowing the trumpet in the morning,” surely not anything more exhilarating.

Consequently, natural science stamps God with his self-proclaimed creation of man as a preposterous braggart. But of what avail is all this? God won’t have any nonsense. Whether his tales have a scientific ring, or whether they sound like foolish babble, he commands belief in them; otherwise he will let it come to pass that his competitor, the “Devil”, will get you into his clutches, which is supposed to be quite uncomfortable. For in hell there is not only moaning and the gnashing of teeth, but an eternal fire burns, an indefatigable worm is gnawing your soul, and a dreadful stench of burning pitch and sulphur fills the air. To all these discomforts the bodiless man is supposed to be exposed. His flesh, of which he is devoid, is stewed; his decayed and fallen-out teeth chatter; he howls without a throat or lungs; he smells without a nose - and all this eternally. A devil of a go! Taking all in all, God is, as he candidly informs us in his autobiographical chronicle, the *Bible*, extremely whimsical and revengeful; actually an ideal model of a despot.

Hardly were Adam and Eve in existence before God took it as a matter of course that this rabble must be governed. He decreed a penal code, which said categorically, “Thou shalt not eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge!” Since that time no tyrant has existed anywhere who did not lay down the same decree for the people.

Adam and Eve did not respect this prohibition; therefore they were exiled and sentenced to hard labour for life - they and their descendants for all time to come. Beyond this, “civil rights” were taken away from Eve, she being declared to be a maid-servant to Adam, whom she was to obey. Besides, both of them were to be under eternal divine police surveillance.

But in spite of God’s useless severity to mankind, they angered him more and more in proportion as they multiplied. How rapidly this multiplication took place is demonstrated by the history of Cain and Abel. After the former had slain his brother, he went into “a strange land” and “took unto himself a wife”. Whither the location of this strange land, and whence the women who were to be found there, God has forgotten to mention, a matter of no surprise, considering the burden of overwork he had to perform at that time.

At last God had had enough. He resolved to destroy all mankind by means of water. Only a few specimens of the race were excepted with which to make another trial. Unfortunately, notwithstanding all his wisdom, God made another misgrab, for Noah, the chief of the saved, was soon enough unmasked as a drunken sot who disported with his own daughters. What good could ever come of so degraded a family?

Again mankind spread; again they developed to such simpletons and rascallions in sin (about which certain psalm-books of today teem with descriptions) that God felt like bursting with heavenly wrath - the more so as all his exemplary local punishments, such as the destruction of whole cities with fire and brimstone, were entirely disregarded and "thrown to the dogs". He resolved to annihilate the whole mob, root and branch, when a really remarkable event occurred, toning him down considerably. (Otherwise mankind would have been done for long ago.)

The "Holy Ghost" and Mary

One fine day a certain "holy ghost" suddenly appeared upon the stage. He came hither like a "wart overnight", nobody knew whence. The Bible-scribe (God) merely says he himself was the Holy Ghost. All at once we have to deal with a dual deity. Said Holy Ghost took a notion to descend in the shape of a dove, or rather of a cock-pigeon, and to enter into an intimacy with an obscure woman named Mary. In a sweet hour he "overshadowed" the selected of his heart, and lo! she gave birth to a baby boy, which occurrence, as God positively avers in the Bible, never encroached the least bit upon her virginity. Now this boy was not only human, he was also God, being the son of God (of the holy ghost). The first-mentioned God now called himself God the Father, at the same time assuring us of his identity not only with the holy ghost, but also with God the Son; the father to be his own son, the son to be his own father, and either or both the holy ghost. Thus the "holy trinity" was shaped. Yes!

And now, poor human brain, stand firm, for what now follows is enough to stagger a horse. We know that God the father had resolved to fry the whole human rabble. But his intention filled the son with unbearable sorrow. He, being his own father, shouldered all the guilt of humanity, and allowed himself, in order to appease the fury of the father (being his own son), to be cruelly put to death by the 'to-be-redeemed' rabble - of course not without subsequently ascending hale and hearty into heaven. This sacrifice of the son (who is one with the father), tickled the father (who is one with the son) to such an extent that he immediately proclaimed a general amnesty, with conditions, which remains partly in force today.

That is the "historical" part of the "Holy Scriptures". Here we see that absurdity and nonsense are put on so thick that those who are already idiotic enough to digest such stuff are susceptible to the most crazy hallucinations. Among these

must be classed first and foremost the doctrine of reward and punishment of mankind in the "great hereafter".

It has long ago been scientifically proved that there is no existence of a soul independent of the body. That, which the religious humbuggers call soul, is nothing more or less than the seat of thought, the brain, which receives impressions by means of the living senses, and by such impressions becomes active, and that, consequently, at the moment of physical dissolution this action necessarily must cease. But what care the deadly enemies to human reason for the results of scientific research? Just as much as is necessary to prevent their promulgation among the people.

And so they preach the immortality of the soul. Woe to it in the "hereafter" if the body which here held it has not punctiliously respected God's penal code during life. As these folks assure us, their "all bountiful", "all righteous", "all benevolent", "all merciful" God is a super-highly developed poke-nose, sniffing into the minutest affairs and trifles of each and every individual and making entries of all their shortcomings in his blacklist.

He is quite a strange being. Under danger of giving new-born babies a bad cold, he desires that, to his glory, they be drenched with water, this being called "baptism". He takes a heathenish delight when hearing an innumerable herd of his faithful sheep bleat their litanies to him from their church-stalls, consecrated to such practices; or when the most devoted of his adherents send aloft without cessation their pious caterwaulings, and pray (or rather beg) for all things possible and impossible, while he participates in bloody wars and receives the thanksgivings and frankincense of the victors as the "God of Battles."

He gets rip-roaring mad if anybody doubts his existence, or when a Catholic eats meat on Friday, or does not by repeated application to the confessional chair scrub off his sins; or when a Protestant does not hold in contempt the bones of saints and the paraphernalia and images prescribed for Catholics; or when anyone does not, as a rule, toddle through the world with a face long enough to stop a clock, turned-up eyes, bent back, and clasped hands.

If such a person dies impenitent, then his "all merciful" god decrees a punishment to him in comparison to which all the scourges of the knout or cat-o'-nine-tails, all pangs and sufferings of prison life, all privations of deportations and exile, all emotions of those sentenced to the scaffold, all pains of the rack and other instruments of torture that human tyrants ever