

A LECTURE,
ON
WHAT AND WHERE IS GOD?*

DELIVERED BY P. B. RANDOLPH,

IN CROSBY'S MUSIC HALL, CHICAGO, ILL., ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, NOVEMBER 11th, 1866.

[Reported for the "Spiritual Reporter."]

All men believe in God to a greater or less extent; and while no two persons exactly agree, yet none will, if sane, be hardy enough to deny *in toto* the existence of a great super-ruling power, called variously, God, Allah, Brahm, Aum, or Jehovah, for the evidences are so numerous and palpable, that none can withstand them. I believe I have new light to throw upon this subject. While all men agree that God exists, there are different and hostile opinions concerning Jesus Christ; for some men laugh at the idea that he is God, while others fully accept that doctrine.

One man will tell you that Jesus is a myth; another, that he was a divinely-sent seraph; another, that he is very God. Opinions differ, and I will here state, that Christ, to me, is not a myth, nor a personage one thousand nine hundred years deceased, but a living, actual, and acting being. It matters not to me whether Christ was the son of Joseph, as some assert; the offspring of a Magdalen, as others declare; or the chieftain of a new sect, as claimed by others; for, to me, he is the road to glory, the avenue to peace, quiet, good, and rest. I raise no questions concerning his divinity. Suffice it, that *his example* is divine; and if I follow *that*, I shall live right, and, dying, be far from wrong. I trouble myself very little about Strauss, Fuerbach, Renan, or "Ecce Homo," for the Christ of my soul is the universal

* This is the celebrated lecture on God, delivered in Crosby's Music Hall, by P. B. Randolph, for which he was denounced as being "Infidel" by the *Chicago Evening Journal*, and for which General O. O. Howard withdrew his countenance from him, without either hearing or reading it, but merely on the assertion of some bigot who never heard it either. General Howard demanded back certain letters that he had given Mr. Randolph, because he had *heard* that his lecture was not cut out on the "orthodox" pattern himself most liked. The whole *posse* of his maligners cannot produce so clear and grand ideas of Deity as are to be found in this lecture. It proves that Mr. Randolph firmly, truly, believes in God, and with a depth and fervor so great, that the bigots who disgrace the name of Christian and Theist can neither comprehend, emulate, nor appreciate.

Here is the lecture, word for word. Let the world judge who is the infidel, Mr. Randolph, the God-inspired orator, or the men who stab at and wound him, robbing him of bread and life, by hounding the dogs of sect upon him, to arrest the onward march of truth.

Spirit of Good, hovering over us and bathing the universe, into which I seek to plunge myself, be washed clean and made pure. Viewing Christ and God from a purely orthodox standpoint, my belief in either is not strong; but viewed from this, the summit of the ages, both, to me, are the sublimest of realities.

We are told by one set of reasoners, that God and Nature are one. I do not believe it, neither does my soul accept the view, that regards Deity as the tyrant, vengeful being who sits enthroned upon the pinnacle of the universe, and rains down blessings upon one hand and hurls discriminate damnation on the other. We are told that God is heat, and life, and light, and electricity, which may be true; but, if so, that view is only partial, for He is all that and far more. We are told that He is an active power, manifesting Himself in growth, and change, electrically, chemically, magnetically, mechanically, spiritually, and in other modes, all of which is true; and yet one-half the great story has not then been told. Our Father is not a tyrant; He has a throne; He is surrounded by angels; He is central, located, yet ubiquitous. He is like man in one respect. Man's spirit and intelligence pervade his body; but his center, or pivot, is in the largest brain. Just so is God abroad through his body—the universal system of Nature; but that Nature has a center, the universe has a sensorium, and there, at that point, of which more by and by, God exists. Zerdusht says: A winged globe: When the soul was created it had wings. They fell away when it descended from its native element; and cannot return till they are required. How? By sprinkling them with the water of life! Where are they, these waters? In the gardens of God. How are they to be reached? By following God, when He pays his daily visit to the soul. Now, there is a great deal in this riddle of Zoroaster. I shall solve it presently; for it is a solemn thing, albeit we laugh all gods to utter scorn, that are modeled after us. We tell Ashtevett and Astarte that they are “played out,” to use an expressive vulgarism; while Dagon, Bet, and fifty other gods, do but excite our derision and contempt; nor have we too much respect for PAN, or any other of that numerous family; for even the “Great Positive Mind” of the Harmonialists fails to satisfy our yearnings, or answer the soul's demand for a God.

Morell tells us, that we cannot divest our mind of the belief that there is something positive in the glance which the human soul casts upon the world of infinity and eternity—that there is a goal, a point of points, in short, a conscious God; and we believe Morell; yet, while doing so, are startled by Sir Wm. Hamilton's "Man can have no knowledge of the Infinite God." I do not agree with Hamilton. Calderwood says: "There can be no image of the Infinite." This may not be entirely true. Sometimes there arises to the surface certain primary beliefs, theretofore lying *perdu* in the deeps of the soul; and an invincible conviction of God's existence is the strongest of these. It is strange that philosophers cannot see that *two*, nay *three*, universes exist, one of which—the Material—is but the projected shadow of the other—the Spiritual—and hence is negated by it; for which reason, it will be forever impossible for the material, cognizing faculties to grasp that which environs, and stretches so immeasurably above it. Years ago, I did not dream that time, and sorrow, and deep trouble, and constant yearning, would develop a faculty whose functions should be that of knowing God, just as that of numbers, starting from a 1, 2, 3, my boy, and 5 and 5 are 10, my girl, presently deals with the calculus, differential and integral, skips to fluxions, and then measures interstellar spaces and weighs the worlds of farther heaven. I know this to be true. I used to believe, that not till we were dead and begun to "be" and move in another state, could we know the mysteries, God, time, soul, space! That here, at best, we are only vouchsafed imperfect glimpses thereof, during certain peculiar conditions inducible by mesmerism and drugs of various kinds. But these views are changed. There is now developing in many persons a new or God-knowing faculty; and one of its first revelations to us is, that God is not Panthea or Nature, for that is only his vehicle; that He is not a being of infinite extension, but infinitely intelligent, qualitatively and quantitatively. This we know by faith alone, which declares *that* God is; while the new power tells us *what* He is. The fleet of stars now sailing down the deep; the storm-fiend, lightning-crowned, striding forth to ruin and destroy; the nebulous clusters around the galactic poles, do not proclaim God's being half so solemnly as does this little faculty of the soul, that whispers us in the midst of the rush and whirl of life, that

God serenely lives and is, that the great *Aum*, the Lord of Lords, has a being, actual, personal, central, effulgent—glorious. And this organ assures us that all our actions are weighed in the scales of eternity. Aware that death awaits him, the wise man, in whom it begins to operate, avails himself of every opportunity to learn; he questions all things, and demands the proof, even at the risk of being wrongly understood—as I am already warned I shall be, for the lecture I am now delivering; because, on some things concerning God, I cannot believe as many do, I shall be denounced.* No true man will flinch for that. He ought not, will not suffer his soul to be warped from her true purposes. He knows that ignorance, cupidity, and lust of power, are the baneful trio of this world. He suffers and grows strong, for he has learned by his new faculty that the human soul is an emanation from Deity, and that to it He has imparted essential and original knowledge, the organs or faculties being so many windows through which he looks out upon the SEA, whereon floats all matter, like tiny shallows on the bosom of a lake. He has learned that the soul is the mirror of the universe, standing in relationship to all living things; that she is illuminated by an inward light that flows through this new organ; but the tempests of the passions, the multitude of sensual impressions, the dissipations darken the light, whose glory only diffuses itself when it burns alone, and all is peace and harmony within us.

When we know ourselves to be separated from all outward influences, and desire only to be guided by this universal light, then only do we find in ourselves pure and certain knowledge. Purity of Purpose, Will and Deed, are the keys which unlock the gates of Power, which is Knowledge. In the state of concentration which follows, when we resolve to be truly good, the soul can analyze all objects, things and subjects on which its attention may rest; and it can unite itself with them, penetrate their substance, explore, untrammelled, all mysteries, even unto God himself—so know more of Him than hath yet been known, and become master of all important truths beside.

Love is the touchstone of knowledge; but, to be pure, it must be universal, and embrace all God's creatures in heaven, on earth,

* This proved true; the next day two papers attacked him bitterly, and a third one within a week—all urged on by sectarian Christians, who, because they could not rule, sought to ruin him.—REPORTER.

and in the worlds around us. All efforts of the true God-student are not to be confined to studies of former writings about Deity, but to elevate and purify himself. His path will be thorny, his road very rough; but, although he suffers, the guerdon is certain, for so shall the gates of glory be opened unto him, and he be put in possession of the sacred key. I, therefore, announce a new truth—not original with me, but handed down the ages from the peerless lips of Christ himself, but heretofore not well understood. And that truth is, that God is, in one sense, a CONDITION of existence. “I and my Father are one,” said Jesus. Why? How? I reply: It has been said that the universe is dual, or material and spiritual. I believe it to be triplicate—material, spiritual and Deific, and that a man can become so perfectly good and pure as to be in a material body, leading a spiritual life, and immersed in God at the same time; not as the Buddhists have it, or the churches either, but at perfect union with the great soul of the universe, even while living in this valley of Unrest and Shadow. Life is the vehicle of soul, soul the vehicle of God. Man is a dual mind; with the outer he knows all the things of matter, its accidents and incidents; with the inner, he cognizes that which is disparated from matter, or spiritual things; and with this inner power refined and clarified, he is able to cognize the Great Supreme—to cast a bridge across the gulf of death, and land him safely on the further side. Hence, I do not believe in a distant God, or a Christ nineteen hundred years off, but in an ever-present Creator, and an ever-present way. Christ is to me more than a myth or a fancy. He is more of God than all others; and when He says to me, “come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest,” it means life to me; and when I go on the wings of prayer, I fly back with a blessing. I wish there was more of Christ in the churches, and that those who profess also possessed him, and were immersed in that sea of love which I call the God-condition, and which I believe will be the state of all good men by and by. I believe in God more than some Spiritualists, more than some Christians, hence am not a party-man or sectarian, because I believe that my soul is filled with the divine truth of a new era in Religion, and I announce it to the world. Let us now inquire what the duty is, and where? In all humility and trust, I hold the universe to be triplicate—that is to say,

material, spiritual and Deific—each an octave above the other.

First, We know that all the suns and worlds of space could be crowded into a very small corner of the vast expanse around us; we also know that matter is impermanent, fleeting, changeful, and therefore must have had, if not an absolute commencement, at least a beginning in the form in which we see and know it; and that it is everywhere subservient to Mind—the Supreme Mind.

Second, We know that the direct flight of matter is toward spirit; that is, toward refinement, rarefaction, spiritual, essential, avowed conditions.

Third, Mind is like spirit and matter, graded; and we ascend from the Bushman of Africa to the loftiest genius that ever lived—each ascending grade being one step nearer the Archetype, the Creator, the Supreme. Now, a human mind is restless; its law, expansion; hence it must, if immortal, one day reach an intellectual altitude, God-like and grand, and yet can never reach the absolute, because it is limited, that is boundless. Its development is in lines and curves. God is fullness, absolute completeness. Mind finds its field in nature, but the unconditioned God filtrates nature, hence cannot be contained wholly within that sphere; and, therefore, the soul that seeks God must climb the sky, sweep through the brotherhood and hierarchies, and challenge the great Beyond for an answer to its great question: "What is Deity?" I have already defined God as the brain of the universe, and its soul; but He is divinely more than that, for He is the center, and pervades, by His aura, which is life, embracing law and principles, the vast domains of existence.

The material universe is bounded, limited, circumscribed, and circumvolved, or surrounded, by a vast and almost inconceivable ocean of spirit, and in the breast of that vast sea is cushioned the ethereal belts, zones, and worlds, as is also the material constellations. The material zones of constellations revolve within corresponding spiritual or ethereal zones or belts; on all sides of the spaces—seven of them; and in the midst of this space, equidistant from each of the seven, embracing alike the material and ethereal zones, belts, rings, universes and constellations—in the profound and awful deeps of Distance—is a Third universe of universes—and this is the Vortex, the center—the dwelling-place of Power, the seat of Force, the fountain of all Energy—the unim-

aginable dwelling-place of the great I AM—the super-celestial throne of the ever-living God! Alone? No! The purified souls of the myriads of dead centuries are there, contemplar, but not co-equal Gods. He is there—in HUMAN FORM, but not in human shape. Here concentrate, at one point, the quintessence of all within the entire family of universes. God is not Panthea, Jehovah, Aum, Brahm, Allah, Jove. He is self-conscious. Not heat or motion, but the soul of these; not light, or life, or electricity, but *their* life. Not spirit or soul, but souls' and spirits' crystalization. Not intelligence, but its concentration, its refinement, its last and final stage. Not music, or form, or tone, or beauty, but their infinite and last sublimation—an auroral sun of suns, ever-moving, from whose negative radiations convolving nebulae are formed—themselves the prolific parents of immeasurable galaxies, not of stars, but of astral systems. And this God was never wholly incarnate, yet pulsed through many an Avatar—filled the hearts of many a Chirst, and will till time shall be no more. Hence it follows that no soul—for souls are incarnate rays from God—ever was, or can be, wholly lost; and again, that no antagonistic power can exist within the domain, lit up by rays from His grand Deific Brain. And this is the mysterious God I worship; and He is whom Jesus proclaimed, and adored, and whose rays soften the most obdurate heart, and not unfrequently transform Christians into followers of the glorious religion of Jesus Christ—the most perfect that this world has ever yet developed or produced. This God lives, moves, sleeps not—loves ALL. He it is that springs the wires of the Ages, and ordains the drama of the centuries. To Him I pray, when all the world is hostile, and bigots rave and persecute. He it is, who tells me, “Blessed are ye when men shall persecute and revile you falsely for my sake.” And so I rely on Him, and say, let the storm come down. God rules and reigns: all will yet be well. He is here, there, everywhere; in the bending heavens, and in this Music Hall. He protects and loves us all, and favors us by special Providence through angelic proxies when we do right—which is His will. He hears our prayers, and if we pray well, will answer them. He lives and loves, rules and governs. He gave us Christ and courage, Hope and Faith; therefore we will trust Him, for “He doeth all things well.”

Many readers, into whose hands will fall this number of the SPIRITUAL REPORTER, may not have been informed of the bitter attacks which sectarists never fail to make when opportunity offers; therefore, we submit the following from the RELIGIO-PHILOSOPHICAL JOURNAL:

P. B. RANDOLPH.

Our readers are undoubtedly apprised of the history of P. B. Randolph, lately from New Orleans, of his coming Northward for the purpose of collecting funds for the establishment of a high grade normal school for the colored people of Louisiana; and later, of his coming Westward as one of the Southern Loyalists on their visit to the tomb of Lincoln. After this event Mr. Randolph returned to Chicago, where he remained for some weeks, and during that time delivered a lecture on Sunday afternoon, at Crosby's Music Hall, discussing the question, "What and Where is God?" We did not hear this lecture, and know nothing of it more than what appears below. We presume, however, that it was, throughout, one of Mr. Randolph's peculiar efforts, not strictly "orthodox" according to the schools; therefore it excited the indignation of certain parties who took it upon themselves to employ the characteristic weapons of orthodoxy, insinuation and proscription, as a corrective. The result was the appearance of the following in the Chicago *Evening Journal* of Thursday, Nov. 22:

EXIT "DOCTOR" RANDOLPH.

A shrewd and not wholly uncultured African arrived at Washington from New Orleans, in May last, accredited with first-class letters of introduction, and representing himself to be the agent of the better classes of colored people in Louisiana and Texas, who especially desired the establishment of a normal school for the education of colored teachers. His bearing was so grave, and his letters so good, that he won the confidence of General Howard, who gave him a strong indorsement, and of the President as well, who promised him money, but never got ready to pay it. Any number of Senators and Representatives and Heads of Departments and Bureaus added their names to the long roll without inquiry—who ever knew these gentlemen to inquire?—and after furnishing the enterprising reporters at the capital a daily item for some weeks, the prosperous "Doctor" went on to New York and

published a card announcing that he was now ready to receive funds; and solemn bankers and brokers sent in their checks. He kept shy of the regular Freedman's Aid Commissions, and for awhile also of the American Missionary Association, under whose auspices an excellent normal school had been sometime in progress at New Orleans. At length he thought himself strong enough to brave the consequences, and called at the rooms of the Association. The secretaries examined his credentials with courtesy, and requested him to call again after a week. A confidential note was sent to the rooms in this city (to which all reports from the Mississippi Valley are addressed) inquiring whether the "Doctor" was all that he seemed—

"So fair he seemed—
* * Almost too fair for earth."

Documents on file were forwarded to New York in reply, and the school scheme straightway dwindled.

Next he turns up at the Southern Loyalists' Convention as a delegate from Louisiana, makes many speeches, and plays well the role of a first-class Southern politician; is named one of the delegation to visit Lincoln's tomb, and arrives in Chicago a very distinguished guest.

This tour ended and speedily forgotten by the public, the versatile "Doctor" plunges into metaphysics, especially into metaphysical theology. He leases the Opera House for a Sunday afternoon, and draws a large audience at twenty-five cents a ticket, to hear an entirely original exposition of the doctrine of the Deity. How lucidly, how reverently and how convincingly he spake, may be gathered from one of the reports published next morning:

"Quite a large audience gathered at Crosby's Music Hall, yesterday afternoon, to hear the lecture of Dr. P. B. Randolph, on 'What and Where is God?' He stated that if weighed in the orthodox scale, he believed there was no God. If in the more liberal one of reason and newer light, there most certainly was a God. People in ancient times, long before the Christian era, believed there was a God, but what and where he was they pretended not to say. When Christ came, the people called him God. The speaker did not believe that Jesus was God any more than that any one of the audience that sat before him was, but he believed that He was nearer to God, by possessing more of the attributes of God, than any other human being that ever lived. He did not believe in the Christ as presented to-day by the orthodox churches, or as taught by the Spiritualists; he believed Him much more than that. The speaker said he was to announce the great truth of the nineteenth century—a greater and more potent one than the coming of Christ. The Apostles had no conception of the great truth. That great fact was that God is electricity, is motion and light.

"The speaker labored for upward of an hour to impress his infidel notions upon the minds of his audience. So far as the object in view was concerned, however, his blasphemy produced no useful results, and the audience dispersed with no stronger conviction derived from the discourse than that the lecturer was hopelessly confused in his theological reasoning."

Some friend of General Howard, who had long regretted the imposture, thought the time had come when it might be ended, and

forwarded the above paragraph to the General's headquarters. Whereupon he receives, with the General's thanks, a copy of the letter below:

"WAR DEPARTMENT,
"BUREAU REFUGEES, FREEDMEN AND ABANDONED LANDS, }
"WASHINGTON, November 16, 1868. }

"SIR: Have the kindness to return to me any letter or letters indorsing yourself or your course that I may have written you. This request is based upon a lecture delivered by yourself at Crosby's Opera House, Chicago, wherein you expressed sentiments diametrically opposed to those I cherish. It would be wrong for me even to seem to approve them.

"With much pain, I subscribe myself your obedient servant,

"O. O. HOWARD.

"Major General, Commissioner.

"To Dr. P. B. Randolph, of New Orleans."

This exposure will suggest anew the expediency of operating benevolent enterprises through well established and approved organizations, whose executive officers are of our own citizens. Nothing is easier than for a first-class rogue to secure stunning indorsements, and to collect money on the strength of them.

An infidel negro is almost as rare as a white crow. He is a cruel libel upon his race, and deserves to be branded wherever found.

That persons of violent prejudices could be found in the church, or in other narrow places, who would lend themselves to underhanded schemes or plots, to injure one who does not believe as they do, is no wonder; such things are common in the world's history. Neither is it a wonder that a political paper should issue a half column of slanderous insinuations against a person for whom it has no sympathy, and against whom a public prejudice could be induced; but for a man occupying the position that General Howard does, to publicly and officially discountenance and withdraw his support from any person, simply because of a difference of belief on matters of religion, is strange indeed, and withal a startling, dangerous precedent. It will be seen that the *Journal* article contains no specific charge against Mr. Randolph—it is simply a parade of cowardly insinuations. We are informed that "some friends" forwarded the above paragraph to the General's headquarters, and forthwith came the edict of disfellowship, "based upon a lecture" in which were "expressed sentiments diametrically opposed" to those "cherished" by General Howard. Are we in the fifteenth century? Is General Howard a theological functionary, and the Freedman's Bureau an ecclesiastical court from which he issues his holy orders and determines the status of individuals? Evidently General Howard is either a theological

bigot, allowing his prejudices to swerve his judgement and determine some of his acts, or is he a tool fit to be used by theological partizans; in either case he is entirely unfit for a position of public trust.

Mr. Randolph has labored earnestly for the colored people for years, and was continuing to do so when this letter and its accompanying uncertain remarks in the *Journal* raised a howl from the churchmen against him for infidelity. Committees, bowing to public prejudice or prejudiced themselves, withdraw their engagements from him, and disheartened he has returned to Chicago, to await the turning of events. All of this for what? Because he differed from General Howard in theology, and because General Howard, in the high position of Commissioner, at the head of a national Bureau, the business of which is to look after the interests of Refugees and Freedmen, so far forgets himself, his duty, and the dignity of his office, as to play the *role* of prelate. We hope this weakness will be heartily repented of, or if not, and General Howard and his like propose to make belief in theological dogmas the pivot upon which their favor or disfavor turns, let the people make a note thereof, and see that their interests and liberties are entrusted to proper hands.

No man should hold office in America, either by election or appointment, whose theological prejudice determines the course, or a single act of his public administration, involving the interests of others. Belief or disbelief in theology or God is not the standard by which we are to judge the characters or determine the rights of individuals.

Since writing the above we have received the *Chicago Evening Journal*, from which we make the following extract, from a letter written to that paper by Mr. Randolph. It more fully shows the slanderous manner in which he has been treated by that sheet:

"I have *not* received checks from bankers or brokers. I have, in behalf of my school, traveled thousands of miles, and spoken scores of times, printed thousands of pamphlets, one of which I send you, written hundreds of letters, at a cost of not less than \$1,200, and I have collected by my lectures and donations in cash an aggregate of \$430.50, and should have kept on lecturing for money to build my school, had not noble men, who have known me many years, dissuaded me, both on account of the difficulty and expense of so doing, and the certainty that speedy death must

follow my continued vocal exertion without the necessary rest. I never spied any commissior, never antagonized any school, and, save the amount named above for printing expenses and necessary travel, never collected a dollar, but ever directed donations to be sent to the gentlemen named as Treasurers in New York, New Orleans, Chicago, and Bennington, Vermont. If these gentlemen have received checks for my school, which they had not last week, I desire said checks to be returned, as they will not be needed, for the amount necessary to found the school can now be raised without their aid—most gratefully acknowledged.”

Thank God! the days of racks, frying-pans, and an *auto da fe*, are forever gone! Hear the modern *pope*, O. O. Howard: “Wherein you expressed sentiments diametrically opposed to those I cherish.” Crime enough, surely (?). Is this America? One would hardly think it, by the foregoing quotation. Startling as it may seem to many, this country is controlled by the priesthood, who are anxious to foist a national religion upon the people; who are working with might and main to bring about a union of Church and State. Schools, academies, colleges, in this boasted land of liberty, are, with few exceptions, under the dominion of the American priesthood!

In the most brazen manner, theological bigots elbow their way into political positions, and woe to those who have the manhood to differ from them, and over whom they have power. They use their positions to smother freedom of opinion whenever and wherever they can, and the only reason why mediums are not hung, as in the days of Salem witchcraft, is because religious bigots have not the ability to execute what their passions dictate.

The great contest between Conservatism and Liberalism is now at our very doors. A fierce religious war is about to burst forth upon us in all its maddening fury. Popery, in its two principal forms of Romanism and Protestantism, will not loosen its grasp upon our institutions without a struggle. The Friends of Progress, having witnessed in the political world the utter folly of Principle secondary to Policy, will have no compromise with hydra-headed Conservatism.

On the side of the Friends of Progress, a determined, yet calm, demeanor will characterize them, feeling, as they do, a serene trust in the ultimate victory of Truth over Error. “So mote it be.”—REPORTER.