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A Theological Puzzle.

If God made this earth, He also made all things on, under and in it, and the laws that govern all things,---the laws we call Nature,---He made all, good, bad, indifferent, sin, goodness, meanness, crime, virtue, all things and conditions and set the whole thing going in that way. It will not do to say that He did not intend it to work out just as it is working out; His mere intention would make it do that, or He is not God.

Being God He at all times knew and now knows all things that have been, all that are and all that will be. To deny this is to make Him less than God.

If He knows all things that will be, all those things He knows will be must be; they will come out just as He now knows they will. He does not know that a thing may be going to happen if something else does not interfere. He knows that it will happen, the thing that is to happen; with Him it is absolutely fixed, and can't fail to happen.

If He now knows a thing is to happen in the future, how can it fail to happen when the time comes? If it fails, then God knew all the time that it would fail and not happen.

If God knows now, as He must if He be God, and it is to be, that on January 1st, next, I will commit a crime, or rather do a thing men call a crime, how am I to avoid doing that thing? He knows whether I will or will not; has known it from the first of time; He sees that day now just as it will be when accomplished, just as He does the past; it is all the same to Him whether a thing is past, present or to be in the future however distant.

Then if He knows that I will commit that crime, how am I

to keep from doing it? I simply can not. I just have to do it. As the ability to do or not to do an act is the measure of the moral aspect of ~~my~~^{one's} conduct in the matter, what becomes of moral responsibility? We in fairness should not be punished in any way for doing a thing we can not help doing. This of course reduces us to the standard of a machine, and that is revolting to men, to their self-pride. We all want to feel that we are having a hand in shaping this life of ours. But do we? That is the most insoluble of all problems. I know the preachers will waive all this aside and reply that I do not understand, but that they do; and I know they do not understand any more than I do and that I know nothing about it. Again they reply that my ideas make men miserable and destroys hope. Why "miserable"? Because you are jolted out of an illogical belief? If so, then you are silly. "Hope"? What is it? Who needs the "hope" given them by a mere theory? Only the timid, the weak. The man, the strong man, does not need such a hope; he goes his way strong in the idea that He who made this life will make the next and all subsequent ones, if any, just as He wants them to be and that all the hope ever in man's heart can not change it one iota. He does his work in this life as he sees it right to do it, knowing that he is in the hands that will do as they wish with him and all his.

The logic of all this is that when men try to solve the mystery they simply commit the most stupendous folly of which man is capable. All life, here and hereafter, if any, is a Destiny.

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