

**THE APPROACHING CRISIS:
BEING A REVIEW OF DR.
BUSHNELL'S RECENT LECTURES
ON SUPERNATURALISM**

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The Approaching Crisis: Being a Review of Dr. Bushnell's Recent Lectures on Supernaturalism
by Andrew Jackson Davis

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ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS

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THE
APPROACHING CRISIS:
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A REVIEW
—
OF
DR. BUSHNELL'S RECENT LECTURES
—
OR
Supernaturalism.

BY ANDREW JACKSON DAVIS,

AUTHOR OF "NATURE'S DIVINE REVELATIONS," "GREAT MARCHES," ETC., ETC.

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PREFACE.

THE GREAT QUESTION of this Age, which is destined to convulse and divide Protestantism, and around which all other religious controversies must necessarily revolve, is exegetically foreshadowed in this Review; which is composed of Six Discourses, delivered by the Author before the Harmonial Brotherhood of this City. Religious truths present themselves naturally to a good mind; and by such a mind they will be most accurately comprehended. Men of the greatest talent and learning frequently reason themselves into the profoundest errors, by commencing with the confusing impression that Truth is complex and supernatural. He who would apprehend the simplicity of Truth and worship at her shrine, must be ready at all times to divest his mind of prejudices and of preconceived opinions, whenever Truth reveals their falseness. The Author's method will be found to be plain, because such is truly the seal of reason.

The views presented concerning the "Word," it may be remarked, are mainly connected with the external peculiarities thereof; as the occasion does not now demand a deeper criticism. The Author is acquainted with a more spiritual *Logos*, within the original symbolical expression, (*ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ*, "the word of God," to be found, with identical meanings, in the Zenda Vesta, in the Vedas, also in the Bible,) which lies quite untouched in the present work. Indeed, the spiritual "Word" here alluded to, as originally signified by *John*, is not (*ὁ λόγος* and *λέγει*) Divine "Truth" and "Reason" dependent upon the paper and ink habiliments of the Old and New Testaments; but upon the intellectual progress and religious development of the human soul—a growth of parts into a completeness. The *organizing, unfolding, and energising* Spirit of God (which is the true translation of *John's* meaning) will surely be more manifested, or *inscribed*, in a New Dispensation than in any conceivable number of sacred canons. Superstition adheres to the form; Rationalism seeks the spirit.

Among all the Author's recent impressions, there stands no one question so *important and conspicuous* as that set forth in the succeeding pages. The most external and superficial aspect is first presented; but deeper investigations are certain to follow. There is much to illuminate our present existence, and far more to joyfully anticipate.

A. J. D.

HARTFORD, FEB. 25, 1852.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

FAITHFUL to my spiritual impressions, I watch, with constantly deepening interest, all the important and momentous changes of this eventful Era.

All superior intelligences regard the origination and universal application of the Art of Printing, as a power of immense and never-ending value. By it, the world is fast becoming illuminated with the scintillations of wisdom, and with the principles of a spiritual republicanism. By it, the early Alteration in the Church became widely diffused—an alteration, which, owing principally to educational convictions, the Catholic Church stigmatizes as the great "HERESY." But all Protestants know, from the various sources of civil and religious experience derived therefrom, that the alteration alluded to was a decided improvement or "REFORMATION" in all matters pertaining to Christianity. Printing first enlightened the people concerning the irreligion and atrocious ceremonies practiced by the early Church. And the world has at last come to see that religious *reformation* is both possible and beneficial. This conviction has attained a high place in nearly all well-educated and healthy minds. Changes and consequent improvements in almost every department of human interests, are confidently expected by those who live in the Nineteenth Century. While those who are confessedly mortgaged to the dogmatic organization of

Old Opinions, can not bring their minds to contemplate Reformations in any thing as possible without being accompanied by some overwhelming disaster either in the church or state. The enlightened and *clear-seeing* intellects, however, can read the events of this epoch,—recognizing plainly, in the long, well-defined shadows which approaching changes cast before them, the peculiar crisis or *interregnum* that is certain to precede the establishment of a higher form of ecclesiasticism and a nobler type of republicanism and religious freedom.

Religious reformation is demonstrated to be both practical and beneficial to mankind. Deeply impressed with this conviction, and believing also that the *highest point* of improvement, in social arrangements and religious institutions and faith, *has not yet been reached* by man, I obey my inflowing impressions, and strive to help move forward the ponderous Car of human progression. Accordingly, hearing that HORACE BUSHNELL, D. D., of the City of Hartford, had in contemplation the delivery of a course of lectures, bearing, as I supposed, on the great general question of religious Reformation, I made it a point, by interior direction, to be present on all the occasions, and listen to his disclosures.

Immediately after the pronouncement of his introductory discourse, I penned and addressed the following letter through the Hartford Times; the import of which will appear on perusal:

A LETTER TO REV. DR. BUSHNELL.

A SUGGESTION.

HARTFORD, Dec. 15, 1851.

DEAR SIR,—The simple announcement that you had in contemplation the formation and deliverance of a course of lectures “On the Naturalistic Theories of Religion as op-

posed to Supernatural Revelation," gave me much pleasure. Nor did that pleasure experience any diminution on hearing the first lecture of the proposed course, delivered by you last evening. Indeed, I can scarcely express the gratification excited in my mind by the clearness of your definitions, the broadness of your premises, the fairness of your statements, and by the goodness of your intentions, manifested in the introductory discourse to which I now refer. Your *position* in the question is, it seems to me, entirely *unlike* any other ever assumed by the clergy of Christendom. And your *appreciation* of the magnitude and importance of the subject—nay, its intrinsic momentousness to the welfare of mankind—is also vastly different and far more just, it seems to me, than I have ever before discovered in any other member of your exalted profession. That the clergy of this city have manifested wisdom in the selection (by suggestion and compliment) of yourself as the person most calculated to approach and treat this great question with ability and candor, is very evident; and that the enlightened portion of this community will be attracted, gratified, and instructed by the manner and method you design to adopt, there can be no doubt. You approach the subject, define your position, and declare your intentions and arguments in a manner considerably unlike the method pursued by most clergymen, viz., with a firm reliance upon *your own reason* or judgment, with which you design to address the *corresponding* faculty in the mind of the hearer. This, as you must be aware, is quite *a new method* to adopt in the analysis and examination of a Bible question, so undoubtedly important. Although you seemed not to acknowledge the "Sovereignty of Reason," in matters pertaining to a supernaturalistic revelation and faith; yet you very evidently rely upon *that* faculty (reason) to perform its appropriate functions in order to convince your audience of the soundness and legitimacy of your conclusions.