

**THE ENCHANTED
UNIVERSE: AND
OTHER SERMONS**

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The Enchanted Universe: And Other Sermons by Frederick F. Shannon

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FREDERICK F. SHANNON

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The Enchanted Universe

AND OTHER SERMONS



BY

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To
Mrs. Vicie Sigbert,

Whose
Strength of Mind,
Greatness of Heart,
And Stability of Purpose,
Have Made
Her Life a Benediction,
This Volume
Is Gratefully Dedicated

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I

THE ENCHANTED UNIVERSE *

"And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."—GEN. II: 7.

A PROPHEET of the soul declared that the universe, vast and broad and deep and high, is a handful of dust which God enchants. Man and his universe, the soul and its physical setting, is a subject which has commanded the supreme thinkers of the race. Toiling upon this problem, Kant asked four questions. First, has the world a beginning, and is there any limit of its extension in space? Second, is there a thinking self, an indivisible and indestructible unity, or does nothing exist but what is divisible and perishable? Third, am I free in my acts, or am I, like other beings, led by the hand of nature and of fate? Fourth, is there a Supreme Cause of the world, or do the objects of nature and their order form the last object which we can reach in all our speculation? For the solution of these problems, says

* Delivered at the 83d New York Congregational Conference, Binghamton, N. Y., May 17, 1916. Repeated by request in the Broadway Tabernacle Church, June 18, 1916.

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Kant, the mathematician would gladly sacrifice the whole of his science, which cannot give him any satisfaction with regard to the highest and dearest aspirations of mankind.

It is evident, therefore, that my subject, while an old one, is always new. It is old in the sense that the text is one of the earliest expressions of man's double nature—a creature of dust and a child of divinity. It is agelessly new because man is abidingly interested in his own place and standing in the vast scheme of things. His position is set forth in the Bible not only with insistent and powerful emphasis, but with a grandeur that is not even approached in all the literature of the world. This particular passage is but one of many memorable expressions of man's enchanted universe, of his lower and higher relationships.

I

Man's relation to matter is thus stated in the first part of my text: "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground." And what is this dust of the ground, this dust of the stars, this dust of the material universe—this strange, illusive, unstitched, ever-fluttering garment of matter, in which Deity clothes Himself, out of which man leases his house of dust for a few brief summers and winters? Well, that is a difficult question indeed. Nobody has told us what matter is for the