

**THE UNCAUSED BEING AND THE
CRITERION OF TRUTH: TO WHICH IS
APPENDED AN EXAMINATION OF
THE VIEWS OF SIR OLIVER LODGE
CONCERNING THE ETHER OF SPACE**

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The Uncaused Being and the Criterion of Truth: To Which Is Appended an Examination of the Views of Sir Oliver Lodge Concerning the Ether of Space by E. Z. Derr

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BY

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FOREWORD

This work was completed before the death of William James, professor of philosophy in Harvard University, and the criticisms of his *Pluralistic* philosophy stand exactly as then written, without additions or alterations of any kind. As a man, Prof. James was beloved by all who knew him, and his benevolent nature and open mindedness endeared him to many whose philosophical views differed radically from his own.

But esteem for the man should not disarm criticism of the writings he has laid before the world. In his last work, "*A Pluralistic Universe*," Prof. James, in declaring for a *finite* God, strikes at the very foundation of Monotheism. Polytheism, with all of its absurdities, is the logical outcome of such a philosophy. Prof. James seems to have been so weighed down by the presence of so much suffering in the world that he could not reconcile it with the existence of an Omnipotent Deity. He therefore declares in his "*Pluralistic Universe*":—"I believe that the only God worthy of the name must be *finite*. . . . If the Absolute exist in addition, and the hypothesis must, in spite of its irrational features, still be left open, then the absolute is only the wider Cosmic whole of which

our God is but the most ideal portion, and which in the more usual human sense is hardly to be termed a religious hypothesis at all. Cosmic emotion is the better name for the reaction it may awaken. Observe that all the irrationality and puzzles which the Absolute gives rise to, and from which the finite God remains free, are due to the fact that the Absolute has nothing, absolutely nothing, outside itself. The finite God whom I contrast with it may conceivably have almost nothing outside of himself; He may have triumphed over and absorbed all but the minutest fraction of the Universe, but that fraction, however small, reduces him to the status of a relative being, and in principle the Universe is saved from all the irrationalism incidental to absolutism. . . . Because God is not the Absolute, but is himself a part when the system is conceived pluralistically, his functions can be taken as not wholly dissimilar to those of the other smaller parts, as similar to our functions, consequently. Having an environment, being in time, and working out a history just like ourselves, he escapes from the foreignness of all that is human."

The *finite* Being here depicted is shorn of the chief attributes of Deity—creative power and Omnipotence—and there is no good reason why there should not be a multitude of such limited beings.

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But this is not the place to enter upon a criticism of Prof. James's philosophy; this is done under the head of Polytheism.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

It is doubtful if arguments concerning the existence of a Creator can be advanced which will be satisfactory to all minds.

To one the dictum of Descartes, "*J'ai tiré la preuve de l'existence de Dieu de l'idée que je trouve en moi d'un être souverainement parfait,*" is all sufficing. Another looks abroad on nature and sees in the starry heavens and the broad expanse of ocean unanswerable arguments for the existence of a Deity. The beautiful adaptation of means to ends observable in all of nature's ways appeals to many with irresistible eloquence. The great Galen spoke of his anatomical writings as a hymn of praise to the Deity, and Sir Charles Bell regarded the mechanism of the human hand as a strong argument for the existence of a designing power overruling Nature.

The arguments drawn from these sources are hallowed by time, and will never lose weight with the mass of thinking minds. But there are those who demand more convincing proofs than these arguments can supply. To the assertion of the Pantheist that "The Universe as a whole is to be regarded as the Deity," the arguments