

GOD AND THE WORLD

assuming that god means a personal, extramundane entity. This "godless world-system" substantially agrees with the monism or pantheism of the modern scientist; it is only another expression for it, emphasizing its negative aspect, the non-existence of any supernatural deity. In this sense Schopenhauer justly remarks: "Pantheism is only a polite form of atheism. The truth of pantheism lies in its destruction of the dualist antithesis of God and the world, in its recognition that the world exists in virtue of its own inherent forces. The maxim of the pantheist, 'God and the world are one,' is merely a polite way of giving the Lord God his *cong e*."

During the whole of the Middle Ages, under the bloody despotism of the popes, atheism was persecuted with fire and sword as a most pernicious system. As the "godless" man is plainly identified with the "wicked" in the Gospel, and is threatened—simply on account of his "want of faith"—with the eternal fires of hell, it was very natural that every good Christian should be anxious to avoid the suspicion of atheism. Unfortunately, the idea still prevails very widely. The atheistic scientist who devotes his strength and his life to the search for the truth, is freely credited with all that is evil; the theistic church-goer, who thoughtlessly follows the empty ceremonies of Catholic worship, is at once assumed to be a good citizen, even if there be no meaning whatever in his faith and his morality be deplorable. This error will only be destroyed when, in the twentieth century, the prevalent superstition gives place to rational knowledge and to a monistic conception of the unity of God and the world.