

Orthodox Criticism Tested!

A REPLY

— TO —

FATHER LAMBERT'S

"Tactics of Infidels,"

— BY —

CHARLES WATTS

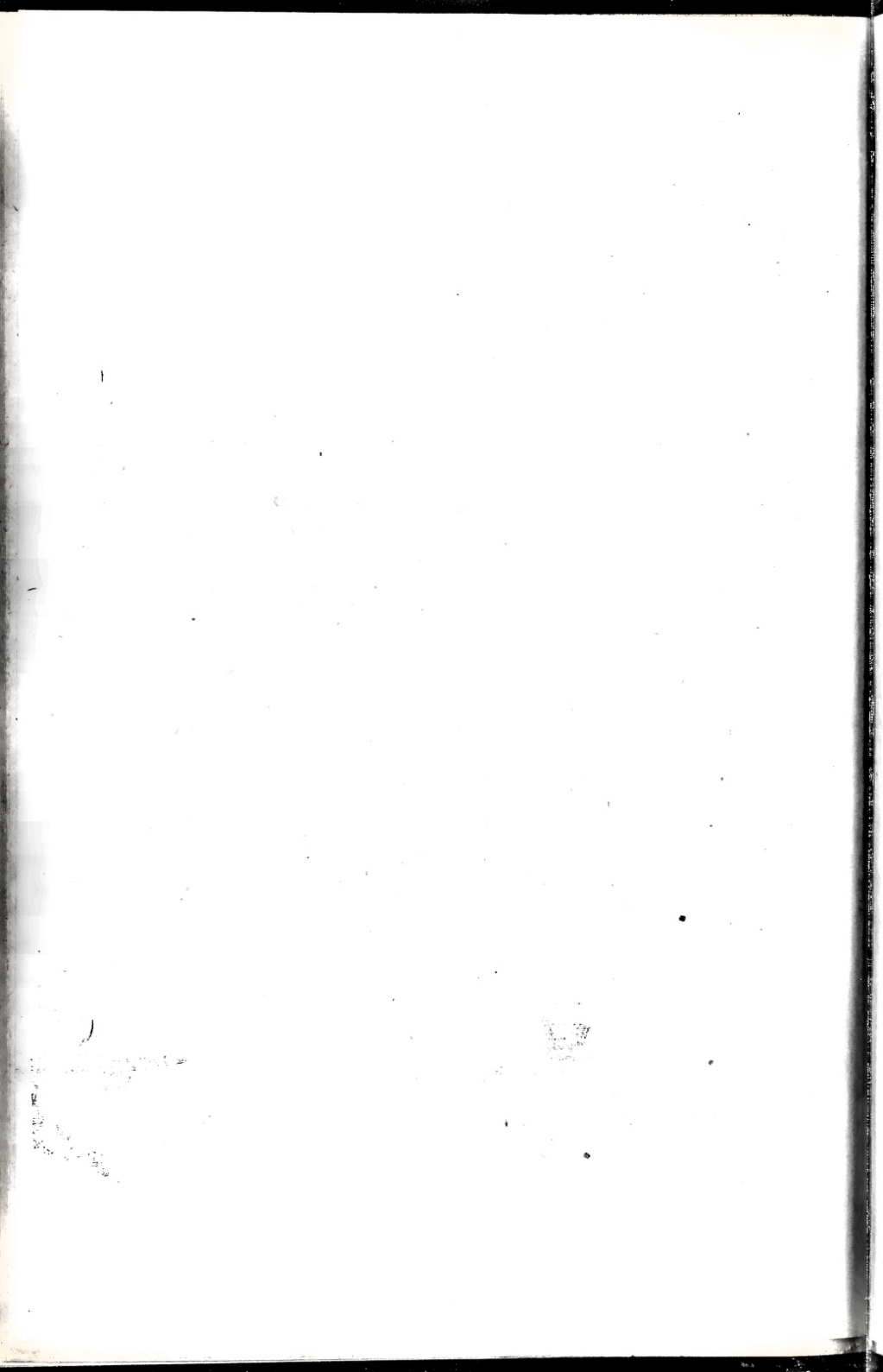
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Sinners: Which?" "Bible Morality," Etc., Etc.*

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THE CRITIC OF "TACTICS OF INFIDELS" CRITICIZED.

FOR some few years past a certain Father Lambert has devoted much of his time to a defense of the Christian religion, mainly by attacking Col. Ingersoll. Mr. Lambert seems to labour under the impression that if the Colonel can only be extinguished Christianity will necessarily be demonstrated to be true. But the falsity of a system no more depends upon the assertions of one man than its truth upon the declarations of another. Christianity will not stand or fall by the quibbles and sophisms of Mr. Lambert; so neither will the opposite by the great eloquence of Colonel Ingersoll. In the following criticism of a book called "Tactics of Infidels"—which appears to have had a very large circulation—it is not intended to defend either Colonel Ingersoll or Mr. Lacy—since they are quite able to defend themselves—both of whom are made to figure largely in its pages, but simply to show wherein Mr. Lambert's reasoning is at fault. We do not care to discuss men, but only to examine the principles they represent, and the arguments employed by them to defend their views. It is charitable to assume that every man is honest in the advocacy of the opinions he puts forward, unless the contrary be very clearly proved. It may seem strange to a man brought up under religious influences, and with a strong emotional nature, who has never read a Freethought work, or listened to a criticism of the evidences of his faith, that any one should doubt what he holds to be infallibly true, but it is no less astounding to one who has freed himself from the trammels of the orthodox religion that any one can for a moment believe in the monstrous pretensions of the so-called Catholic Church. Still so it is, and the sincerity of many such is beyond question. In what follows the dialogue form has been adopted, because Father Lambert seems to prefer that to any other; and to think that it has many advantages, for his side at

least. His idea is that our teachings are easily disposed of by this method, so we will humour him by submitting his own to the same kind of test.

It is not intended in this criticism to give a thorough and exhaustive reply to Father Lambert, but only to glance at some of the more conspicuous of his fallacies, and to show that, although he prides himself so greatly on his logic, he occasionally falls into the most illogical kind of reasoning.

Ingersoll. The universe, according to my idea, is, always was, and forever will be * * * It is the one eternal being—the only thing that ever did, does or can exist.

Lambert. When you say "according to my idea" you leave the inference that this theory of an eternal universe never occurred to the mind of man until your brain acquired its full development. Of course you do not intend to mislead or deceive; you simply meant that your "idea" of the universe is, like most of our modern plays, adapted from the French or elsewhere. * * * The old originals, from whom you copy, thought it incumbent on them to give a reason, or at least a show of reason, for their "idea." In this enlightened age you do not deem it necessary. It is sufficient for you to formulate your "idea." To attempt to prove it would be beneath you. Have you got so far as to believe that your "idea" has the force of an argument, or that the science of philosophy must be re-adjusted because you happen to have an "idea?"

Lacy. The words "according to my idea" are said to imply primitive conception; because I say "I have an idea," I leave the inference that no one ever conceived the same idea before!

Lambert. There is a difference between *an* idea and *my* idea. To say you have an idea might cause surprise, but to say it is *yours* is to claim originality for it. If Ingersoll were to claim some of Edison's ideas as his, he would be liable to prosecution for infringement of the patent laws. The pantheistic theory of the universe is too old to be claimed by Ingersoll as *his* idea. In claiming it he carries out his usual method of appropriating the thoughts and speculations of others without giving credit, for which he deserves the title of the Philosopher of the Purloined. Of course, one may get at his meaning, but this verbal hypercritic of Moses should try to say what he means.

Watts. Is it not something like splitting hairs to thus quibble about the expression "according to my idea?" Surely a man means nothing more by that phrase than that the thing thus presents itself to his mind. There is no necessary claim in it to originality. Father Lambert would doubtless say, "according to my idea Christ is God," but surely no man in his senses would

suppose that to mean that no one before had had the same idea. The pretended difference between *an* idea and *my* idea is not worth discussing, for the former is an abstraction. There is no such thing as *an* idea that is not, in reference to some person, *his* idea, and it consequently becomes to him *my* idea. Originality in ideas is rare, and surely a Roman Catholic should be the last person to make complaint on that score. No doubt the Pantheistic theory of the universe is old, but that to a Roman Catholic ought to prove a recommendation. And as to Ingersoll, it is admitted that his meaning may be got at. Well, then, what more is wanted? Is it not somewhat unfair to first accuse the Colonel of purloining ideas and passing them off as his own, and then to admit that the Colonel's language does not mean that. This is hypercriticism with a vengeance. And shallow enough, too, it is at that.

Lambert. Ideas are the elements or timbers of a judgment, as the bricks are the component parts of a house. As the house is greater than one of its bricks, so is a judgment, an assent or a faith greater than any one of the ideas composing it. A judgment is, then, more than an idea, on the principle that the whole is greater than any of its parts. Your mistake arises from ignorance of the difference between a judgment and an idea. It is another mistake to advance this ignorance as an evidence of modesty.

Watts. The difference between one's judgment and his idea is another quibble which savours more of nonsense than of metaphysical reasoning. A distinction of course there is in strictly philosophic language, but this largely disappears in ordinary conversation. An idea is a representation of a real thing, and a man's judgment regarding that is in truth his idea of it. I read that a certain man was sentenced to death for a particular crime. I *judge* that the sentence was just, that is it was just according to *my judgment*, that is that *my idea* of justice corresponded with the sentence. And when I say *my idea* I do not mean that the idea originated with me, but that it accords with my conception of the things involved in it. "Faith is an assent to truth on the authority of another," says Lambert. But that is not a good definition of faith, in fact it is a very clumsy one. There may be no *authority* of another in the case. Faith is, where it is reasonable, largely based upon experience—not authority, and it is just that *authority* against which we protest. I have faith that if I sow seed in the spring, I shall reap a harvest in the fall; that if I sleep when I am fatigued I shall rise

refreshed, but to no authority am I indebted for this, but to experience. The experience may not be all mine, but a generalization of other men's, but there is no *authority*. We reject the Father's definitions in common with his theology, for the one is the outcome of the other. A judgment is no doubt largely based upon an idea, but one may surely be allowed to state the idea in connection with the judgment, without being liable to be misunderstood. Besides, if it be wrong to say *my* idea, when the same idea is held by other persons, it must be equally wrong to say *my* judgment unless in such judgment I stand alone.

Lambert. "That which is eternal is infinite. It must be infinite, because if eternal, it can have nothing to limit it. But that which is infinite must be infinite in every way. If limited in any way it would not be infinite. Now, matter is limited. It is composed of parts, and composition is limitation. Change supposes succession, and there can be no succession without a beginning, and therefore limitation. Thus far we are borne out by reason, experience and common sense. Then—Matter is limited and therefore finite, and if finite in anything finite in everything; and if finite in everything, therefore finite in time, and therefore not eternal. The idea of an eternal, self-existent being is incompatible in every point of view with our idea of matter. The former is essentially simple, unchangeable, impassible, and one. The latter is composite, changeable, passible and multiple. To assert that matter is eternal is to assert that all these antagonistic attributes are identical—a privilege granted to lunatics only."

Watts. Infinity we cannot conceive of, it is a mere negation, for it means the not finite. Now, being a negation, how can it possess the attributes here ascribed to it, or, in fact, any attributes at all? Sir William Hamilton, one of the greatest metaphysicians of this age, and an orthodox Christian, has completely pulverized the logic of Lambert. He shows that what men absurdly call the infinite is simply the indefinite, and that to talk of the infinite is to use a word without meaning. Matter is composed of parts, and therefore limited. What parts? Can we conceive of a *part* of matter which cannot be further divided? Is it not infinitely divisible? And if so, here is infinity, that is, the infinitely small, ascribed to it. If it be not infinitely divisible, then we must reach a portion of matter the half of which is equal to the whole, which is an absurdity. But the infinite "is essentially simple, unchangeable, impassible and one." This means that it cannot be divided. Sir William Hamilton has shown the absurdity of this in regard to

duration. Eternity and infinity are one, for eternity is infinity of duration. Now, there is an eternity of the past and an eternity of the future, that is, an Infinite Duration in the past, and an Infinite Duration in the future, and these are divided by the present; that is, your supposed Infinity is cut into two parts. And here is the *reductio ad absurdam*. Either these two parts are infinite or they are finite. If infinite, then there are two infinities *succeeding* each other; if finite, then two finites can make an infinite. This is not my idea, but that of the greatest Scotch metaphysician; and Father Lambert can choose which horn of the dilemma he pleases. The same argument will apply to space. Take another illustration, also from Hamilton. A foot is infinitely divisible, that is, it is divisible into an infinite number of parts; a mile is infinitely divisible. But, as one infinite must be equal to another, therefore a foot is the same as a mile. All this goes to show that we have no conception of the infinite and cannot discuss it. When we speak of it we simply mean the indefinite.

The human soul, says Lambert, is not eternal because it started at a certain point, but will live forever. Well, that starting point was a point in duration, and hence duration itself from that period is not eternal. The human soul, then, is finite; but, if so, how can it last forever? for that is just what the Father argues that finite things cannot do.

Lambert. The future life of man is not actual and real, but potential, and will ever remain potential.

Watts. What in the name of reason does this mean? If man's future life be not *real*, why trouble about it? What possible concern can we have with the unreal? This is really to teach non-existence, which is assuredly not in harmony with the theology of the Vatican.

Lambert. To imagine, or rather to conceive an infinite line is to conceive a line to whose lineal value nothing can be added, for as long as an addition to it can be conceived it is not yet infinite. Is such a line conceived as a reality? No. Let us see why. Imagine your infinite line extending through space in opposite directions—say north and south. Now this so-called infinite line is not infinite so long as we can conceive it increased by additional length. Let us now imagine another so-called infinite line of equal length with the first, and running parallel to it. If we add the second to the first do we not increase its lineal value? Most certainly. Then the first line was not infinite because it admitted

of addition. Nor are the two together infinite, because we may imagine another parallel line and another addition and a consequent increase of lineal value. We may continue this process for ever and never exhaust the possibilities—never come to a lineal value that excludes possible addition. From this you will see that you cannot conceive, much less imagine, an infinite line so "readily" as you thought.

Watts. Why, certainly. But what does all this prove but that Sir William Hamilton is right, and that man can form no idea of the Infinite, and that every attempt to describe it must end in hopeless confusion and contradiction. The Father has in this paragraph completely refuted himself.

Lacy. Space is infinite expansion but nothing more.

Lambert. Expansion of what? Expansion without something expanded is a mere fiction of the mind, having no real existence outside the mind. Expansion is a mode of matter, and without matter it is a non-entity. As matter is finite its expansion is finite. Herbert Spencer defines space as "the abstract of all co-existences," and by "the abstract" he tells us he means "that which is left behind when the realities are absent." Now, take away all reality and what have you left? No reality, nothing. Then, according to Spencer's definition space is no reality. But reality, real being, is the first essential condition of the infinite, therefore space, having no reality, no real existence aside from matter, cannot be infinite.

Watts. Space is unquestionably infinite expansion, if you substitute indefinite for infinite. Expansion of what? Well, we don't know. It may be an abstraction, as Spencer supposes, but there are a hundred different opinions on that subject entertained by the ablest philosophers. But it is certainly as real as eternity, which word the Father uses glibly enough. At all events, the conception of space is as clear as the conception of matter, and clearer than the conception of God. If space be not infinite, as Lambert says it is not, then it is limited, and we should be glad to be informed what limits it, and whether the something that limits it exists outside of space, which, of course, means nowhere. Is there some place where there is no space? If not, space is everywhere, in other words, infinite. If space be the possibility of extended things, still there can be no limit to that possibility. But Space and Time are realities, despite the talk of such small and gabbling metaphysicians as Father Lambert.

All the talk about the infinite line is just an illustration of Sir

Wm. Hamilton's doctrine that no clear conception can be formed of the infinite, but that any discussion of the subject must be involved in paradox and contradiction. The Father should read Dean Mansell's Bampton Lectures, a book written from a religious standpoint, and in defence of Christianity. The Dean makes short work of the nonsensical talk about the infinite. The argument about Numbers and Duration go to show the absurdity in which the whole thing is involved, and to illustrate Hamilton's position. What the Father is trying to prove it is difficult to make out. No addition of finite numbers will make an infinite. Of course not. Whoever supposed that it would? But, as no number of finites can make an infinite, and as we can only conceive of finites, what becomes of the talk about the infinite?

Lambert. The incapacity to conceive *how* a thing can be done is no proof that it cannot be done. . . . The fact that the *how* of an act or process is inconceivable is no proof that it has not a *how*, or that it is impossible. . . . It is one thing not to conceive a thing and quite another to conceive a thing to be impossible. . . . I cannot conceive *how* God created the world, but I can conceive no impossibility in the creative act. I cannot conceive the nature of matter, but I can conceive no impossibility in it.

Watts. We do not attempt to explain the *how* of anything, and questions with regard to it are childish. And we are not alone here. Let the Catholic give us the *how* of the facts of nature, or of his own being. But, he says, there is a difference between not being able to conceive of a thing and the conceiving of it as impossible. Why of course! It is only Christians who confound these. "I cannot conceive," says the Father, "*how* God created the world, but I can conceive no impossibility in the creative act." Well, to me such an act seems impossible. Will Mr. Lambert explain how to him it does not seem so? Did God create the world out of nothing or out of pre-existing materials? If the latter, these must have been eternal, or there must have been a prior creation, to which the same argument would apply. If the former, was not that an impossibility? How could an infinite make a finite, *i. e.*, could an infinite cause produce a finite result? Is not this an impossibility? Or, in truth, how could there be space or time for the finite when the infinite occupied the whole of both? Besides, we have been told that there is no change or succession

in the infinite. But, if at some point of duration or eternity he performed an act which commenced or ceased, then he changed in time, became related to time and consequently to succession. Why was not creative power displayed before the creation? In a word, it must have been eternal, as God is eternal and unchangeable. If the infinite does not change, then from all eternity it must have been creating worlds, and in that case these worlds would themselves be eternal. We would like an explanation of this. I am not asking for the how, but for an explanation as to the possibility of conceiving of such a process. "Everything," says L., "is possible that does not involve contradictory attributes." Very well. Then here are the contradictory attributes. God is eternal and unchangeable, yet he put forth a new exertion a few millions or so of years ago and created worlds, thereby changing his course of action. "Change supposes succession and therefore limitation." God changed his action, therefore became subject to succession, *ergo* limited, that is, not infinite.

True, a thing may exist of which we are unable to form any conception, but at least it can have no concern for us. What can we have to do with that of which we can form no conception? It is a waste of time even to talk of it. But we know quite as well as Father Lambert the difference between the failing to conceive a thing and the conception of its impossibility. And it is just this latter that we urge against his theology. But, says the Father, "You must have some conception of the creative act, or you could not assert that it is inconceivable." Of course, we have a conception of what Theologians say in reference to the act, and we declare their statements to be self-contradictory and absurd. But this is a very different thing to forming a conception of the act itself. For we declare such an act to be both inconceivable and contradictory.

Now, the concession that we must think of God with limitations, as Lambert maintains, shows how impossible it is for us to conceive of the infinite at all. It is clear that our conception of God, according to Lambert, is not correct. But how can he reach, in thought, a being that transcends all human conception? Besides, if we can only conceive of God as limited, and yet he may be unlimited, what becomes of the argument that matter cannot be infinite, because we conceive of it as finite. If God, although only thought of as finite, and described as such in the Bible, be

really infinite, the same argument will apply to matter. This mode of reasoning is suicidal, and cuts its own throat.

Lambert. As to space, we have seen that it is not a real being, but only a relation between material beings; that abstracted from material beings it is nothing; that it bears somewhat the same relation to extended or expanded things that form does to matter or weight to ponderable things. Annihilate extended or expanded things and form and space and weight will "fade away like the shadows which flit before us and are seen no more."

Watts. Space, then, is nothing at all; in a word, there is no space. Things therefore exist nowhere, But that which exists nowhere does not exist at all: *ergo*, there is nothing in existence. The Father confounds the filling of space with its annihilation. Space is not destroyed by being occupied. It is still there, but no longer empty. To say that where a body is the space is not, is to say that a thing exists where it is not,—for it surely exists in space,—which is egregious nonsense. According to this philosophy things do not exist in space but outside of it, and where that is we should like to be informed.

Lambert. Christian philosophers tell us that space, in as far as it is real, is the distances between extended or spaced things, and can exist only when extended things exist, just as form can have no real existence without things formed. Space in this sense is limited to extended things and therefore cannot be infinite.

Watts.—Then Christian philosophers have taught nonsense, as the Father himself has in these pages. But who are the philosophers that have taught this? Space is just the one thing whose non-existence or even limitation cannot be even conceived. Let the Father try if he can accomplish this impossible feat. What about the Ether? Scientists tell us that this fills all space, so then there is no space left and space is not. According to Mr. Lambert, to fill an empty thing is to destroy the thing itself when it is filled, which is assuredly something new in reasoning.

Ingersoll. To put God back of the universe compels us to admit that there was a time when nothing existed but God.

Lambert. It compels us to admit nothing of the kind. The eternal God can place an eternal act. His creative act could therefore be co-eternal with his being. The end of the act—that is, creation—could be co-existent with the eternal act, and therefore eternal. To deny that is to affirm that there could be a moment when the eternal and omnipotent God could not act, which is contrary to Christian teaching.

Watts. Here we are told that God can place a creative act. What that means no one can tell. Place it where? Where it is, that is, where it took place, or somewhere else. Really, this is child's talk, and not reasoning. God can place anything, but he must place it somewhere. The Father's argument, if worth anything, is that he can place it *no*-where, and where that is I presume even a priest cannot tell. "His creative act could be co-eternal with his being." Well, in that case creation was from all eternity, hence the created thing was from all eternity, hence matter was from all eternity, which is just what the Father elsewhere denies. But to look at this in another light. The Creator is the cause, the creation was the effect. Is it not a necessity of thought that the cause must precede the effect? If not how can we discover causation at all? Sequence and antecedence would be meaningless terms. God created, that is, called into being, the universe. Then before that occurred there was no universe, which means nothing existed but God. No, says Lambert, creation is eternal. Then the thing made was contemporaneous in existence with its maker, which is, in fact, to say that it was not made at all. To state that a thing is as old as the maker of the thing is not argument, but downright nonsense, and may serve to bewilder children and ignorant Catholics, but assuredly can only be a source of amusement for educated men.

Lambert. That creation could be co-eternal must be admitted if we admit that God is eternal and omnipotent, and this we must admit if we admit his existence. Hence it does not follow that putting God back of the universe proves that he antedates it.

Lacy. If this be not so, what becomes of the dogma that God created matter "out of nothing?"

Lambert. If he can create from eternity he can create "out of nothing" from eternity. The dogma is in no danger.

Lacy. Can you conceive of such a creative act, without a time or point in infinite duration when it was performed? Try it.

Lambert. I cannot conceive *when* it was performed, for the simple reason that if it be an eternal act it could not, because eternal, ever have had a "when." Any act of which *when* can be asserted is not an eternal act.

Watts. But it is not a question of conceiving of the *when* but of the fact so called. And that involves a contradiction in terms. That which was created was clearly an effect. Now an eternal

effect is a meaningless expression. You might as well talk of a square circle. Every effect must have a cause, and the cause must in the nature of things precede the effect, or it could be no cause at all. Moreover, I should like the Father to tell us how we can know of a cause except through its effect. In Nature we see cause and effect co-related everywhere. But we know nothing and can know nothing of a supernatural cause. That transcends knowledge. Besides, how can a finite effect be produced by an infinite cause? This question has been asked before but it comes in here too. Does the infinite in its effect become finite? Effect is probably nothing but transferred force. And an infinite force cannot in its transference become finite. Hence an Infinite Cause cannot exist. Let Father Lambert meet this argument.

Lacy. We are told in the *Notes* that before creation was, time was not. This as poetry may pass, but as fact it is inconceivable.

Lambert. If it be conceivable, even as poetry, it is conceivable. Hence your argument from inconceivability falls to the ground, for that which is conceivable even as poetry is possible, and that which is possible is conceivable as fact. I must here again repeat that inconceivability is not the criterion of possibility, and that therefore our inability to conceive a thing is no evidence that the thing is impossible. If sceptics could once get this truth injected into their skulls, they would perhaps use their unmetaphysical catchword less.

Watts. It is not conceivable either as poetry or anything else, save perhaps absurdity and nonsense. The so-called truth which sceptics cannot get "injected" (an injection of truth is surely a new method of administering that article) "into their skulls" is no truth at all but a whimsey wild as any legend in the holy(?) Catholic record of marvellous exploits. Inconceivability may not be the criterion of absolute possibility, but it certainly is of truth as presented to man. And Christians more than any other class of men use it as such. It is, in fact, their stock argument against what they are pleased to call infidel notions. How can any one assert the truth of that which is inconceivable? Think of a time when there was no time, a period when yesterday was to-day, and tomorrow the week before last. It is of no use to say that this, although inconceivable, might possibly be, for that is to use words without meaning, which is just what this priest does. Words should represent ideas, but to use words which have no ideas to correspond to them is to play fast and loose with language, and to

befool men by engaging in a game of battledore and shuttlecock with phrases.

"Oh, sense, thou art fled to brutish beasts, and men have lost their reason."

Lacy. But if it be true (that before creation was, time was not) how do we know that it is true?

Lambert. We know it in this way. Time is the measure of movement and change in moving and changing things; it is an appurtenance of changeable things, and it is evident that an appurtenance of a thing cannot exist without the existence of that to which it appertains. Therefore, without created things, time could not be. It does not require much profound thinking to see this.

Watts. It certainly does not require much "profound thinking" to see the absurdity of this. See how adroitly the word "created" is dragged into the conclusion, when it did not appear in the premises. Why may not eternal things be moveable and changeable? In fact, are not such conditions essential to all things? If the eternal existence—whatever it may be—could not move or change, then it is clear it could not act. For all action is movement, and *a fortiori* change. There can be no action without a movement on the part of that which acts, and if God does not move, it is as clear as that two and two make four, that action on his part is impossible. Jesus represents God as working and the Old Testament record of creation is one of activity on the part of Deity. Now work means change and movement. Nor does the absurd fiction of an eternal creation remove this difficulty, for the creation of this world was certainly not from eternity, since we know that in its present form it had a beginning. The creation of the earth and of the organic beings upon it involved action, and consequently movement, on the part of its creator. As, therefore, there must have been movement and change to produce that which was not previously existing, or even to alter the form of that which was, there was movement and change in Deity when such creation took place. And as God has thus moved and changed, he, too, must be subject to Time, and consequently Time was eternal. Time and space, the two great facts in the universe, are not to be shuffled out of existence by the wily—I had almost written silly—sophisms of this popish priest.

Lacy. We are told that "God is pure act," the source and origin of all activity and life. How there can be "pure act," or any other act, without an actor, is another riddle to which we succumb.

Lambert. Riddles and conundrums seem to buzz about your brain like blue-bottle flies about a dead horse. You should try to learn and comprehend that which you do not know and understand, and not imbecilely yield to gross ignorance and display it as an evidence of profundity.

An act is the reduction of a potentiality or possibility to a reality. *Pure act* is an act of being which excludes all potentiality. A Being which is *necessarily real*, which excludes from its essence everything that implies imperfection or defect of reality, is *pure act*. Potentiality of any kind always and necessarily implies defect or lack of reality, because it has always something not yet actuated or realized in act. Being, therefore, which is necessarily real, with supreme and infinite reality, excludes all potentiality. Now God is necessarily and essentially real. He excludes from his essence everything that implies imperfection or defect of reality. He is therefore Pure Act.

Watts. Lord Byron once wrote respecting a contemporary of his, that he went about "explaining metaphysics to the nation," and then added, "I wish he would explain his explanation." These lines are most applicable to Mr. Lambert. He really does make "riddles and conundrums" buzz about our ears. It is difficult to imagine him serious in this jumble of words, which he calls logical argument. An act without an actor. You might as well talk of a walk without a walker, a stroke without a striker, a kick without a kicker, a thought without a thinker. A being who acts, performs an act, but without an actor there can be no act. "Pure act" is pure nonsense, without any adulteration, and such as few men but a Roman Catholic priest would try to throw dust in men's eyes by talking about. Moreover, an act requires not only the actor who performs it, but also an agent upon which it is performed. What was the agent in this case? "God is pure act." Then the word God is a name for an act performed by some other being, who is higher than God, and somewhere there must be an agent upon which the act is performed. But such unmitigated absurdity is hardly worth discussing. And we are to be accused of "gross ignorance" and "imbecility" if we fail to understand this meaningless jargon. Be it so. Truly that proverb about "blind leaders of the blind" has received a verification in the case of Father Lambert.

Lambert. The difference between murder and killing is determined by the intention. If a hunter, intending to kill a deer, kill a man whom he mistook for a deer, he is not guilty of murder because he

had not the *intention*. It will be observed, then, that the moral nature of an act depends on the nature of the actor, and the goodness or wickedness of the moral act depends on the intention of the free moral agent. It is a mistake to suppose that a good act is a moral one and a bad one is not. Every act of man, good or bad, done with an intention, is a moral act. We attribute morals, good and bad, to man alone, because he alone of all the inhabitants of the earth is capable of forming an intention and acting from a motive.

Watts. Man performs thousands of acts with an intention which are not moral acts. They are neither moral nor immoral, but simply unmoral. He eats, drinks and sleeps with an intention, but such acts do not fall within the range of any ethical code in this world. The regulation of these is, no doubt, subject to moral law, but the acts themselves *per se* are neither moral nor the reverse. A man takes a walk along a country road to relish the scenery, or sails in a boat on a lake for enjoyment, listens to music, gazes at a great painting, or reads a poem, all with the intention of amusing himself, but these are not moral acts. The Father's notions of ethics are about as hazy as his philosophical disquisitions.

Lambert. A standard of right, or a measure by which to distinguish what is right from what is wrong is necessary for man,—without it all difference between right and wrong, is destroyed. Men may and do err in the application of this standard, but this fact does not lessen its value, for the error is not in the standard but in the application.

Lacy. You say, yes, "the will of God," but how do we determine that will?

Lambert. When a man is called on to act he is obliged as a moral agent to consider, there and then, whether the act he is about to do is good or bad. He must determine it by the light of his knowledge of the will of God. If he does this honestly and to the best of his ability his act, so far as he is concerned, is good. He must always follow his conscience and act on his own honest interpretation of the standard. His knowledge and conception of it may change but the standard is unchangeable; because founded in the will and nature of God. It is man's duty to act according to the will of God as far as he knows it or honestly believes he knows it at the time. His *knowledge* of the will of God is the measure of his merit or demerit.

Watts. The statement that the will of God is the standard of right and wrong is a gratuitous assumption, a begging of the whole question. No scintillation of evidence is produced in support of the assertion. And many very eminent Christians have disagreed

with it *in toto*. Dr. Samuel Clarke, a far greater man than Father Lambert—and, withal, a dignitary of the church—maintained that the moral law was to be found in the fitness of things. Adam Smith discovered it in sympathy, and Paley in a sort of utilitarianism; whilst, if I mistake not, Cardinal Bellarmine placed it in the decisions of the Pope of Rome, and held that should the head of the church decree that acts now considered moral should henceforth be immoral, and *vice versa*, the moral law would be changed. We deny that the will of God has aught to do with the standard of right and wrong among men, and demand the proof. Let that be forthcoming.

But, in the next place, where is this will of God recorded? Surely if it were to be discovered anywhere it should be in Nature. And yet no one can gather from natural phenomena, what is right and what is wrong. For, as Mill has shown, Nature does every day that which men are imprisoned and hanged for doing. She is, and can be, no guide in morals. Mr. Lambert will no doubt reply that the will of God is to be found in the mandates of his church; and the Protestant will tell you it is in the Bible. But here again we want the proof, which is not forthcoming.

Moreover, the teachings of both the church and the Bible are so contradictory that no formulated moral code can be obtained from either one or the other, or both combined. The church has enjoined repeatedly the performance of acts atrocious in their character and pernicious in their results, and anathematized and excommunicated those who had too high a moral nature to perform them,—whilst the moral code of the Bible is such a heterogeneous mass of contradictions that there is not wanting a text to justify any act, however outrageously immoral.

Lambert. Protestants, like Catholics, hold that the will of God is the standard, and they value the Bible only because they believe it to be a revelation of that will.

Watts. Exactly, but that only shows how blind they all are. The will of God, according to one, is in the Bible, and according to the other, in the church; and these two are in flagrant opposition to each other. What is the use, therefore, of talking about an abstract will of God, which no one can discover, and about which those who believe in it are at sixes and sevens? If there be such a will it is perfectly useless to man as a guide in life, because no one knows where it is to be found. And the moral code which

society recognizes is found neither in the Bible nor in the church, but based upon the general experience of mankind, as to what is best for the happiness of the race. Surely Father Lambert must be aware of this.

Lacy. The standard of right and wrong, whatever rule may be professed, is in the mind and heart of man and has varied from age to age, as he advanced from the barbarism of the past to the comparative enlightenment of the present.

Lambert. The standard is certainly in the mind of man, for all peoples in all times have recognized a supreme will as the standard. Catholics, Protestants and Jews call it the will of God; Pagans call it the will of the gods—but all recognize a supreme, supernatural will as the standard of right and wrong. You say truly, then, that it is in the mind of man. But it is not always in his heart, for men often do what they know to be wrong. This standard has never varied, though men's knowledge of it may have increased or diminished, or their application of it may have differed.

Watts. It is assuredly a most astounding statement to make to say that the standard of right and wrong has never varied. Why it has never remained the same for a century at a time, and hardly any two nations think alike about it. Moreover, where is the standard? What is the use of saying that different people call it the will of God? No two of them agree as to what that supposed will enjoins. Unless the said will of God can be found written somewhere in a plain and unmistakeable form, it amounts to nothing more than "a will-o-th-wisp." The Roman Catholics say it is in the Church, the Protestants in the Bible, the Parsee in the Zend-Avesta, the Mohammedan in the Koran, the Hindoo in the Shaster and Vedas, and the Pagan in none of them. And all these records of the will of God teach different systems of morality. No doubt men often do what they know to be wrong, but they also often do wrong believing it to be right. When Christians persecuted and burned each other they did it most conscientiously, believing firmly that they were obeying the moral law, acting in accordance with the will of God, and therefore doing right. What has taught us now that these acts were wrong? Not the will of God, but the advancement of human knowledge. The Roman Catholic would think he was doing wrong in eating meat on a Friday, whilst the Protestant laughs at this as a silly superstition. Where is the will of God, then, which both profess to take for their guide?

Lacy. Our knowledge of the rules of morality has come to us by slow degrees, and is not perfect yet.

Lambert. If so, we cannot say that murder, theft and adultery are wrong. We must wait for developments! Some new discovery may yet prove that vice is virtue and virtue vice, that honesty is a superstition, decency a prejudice and duty an illusion.

Watts. That is a *non sequiter*. Because we have not yet attained to a perfect system of ethics, it does not follow that some questions in connection with it are not settled. "Murder, theft," etc., are known to be wrong, not because they conflict with some imaginary divine will, but because they are prejudicial to the well-being of society. It would be very difficult, in fact, to prove that "murder, theft and adultery" were contrary to the will of God, for all are sanctioned in the Bible, and have been defended by the Holy Catholic Church. That Church has committed murder on a very large scale, has practised robbery in the confiscation of the property of heretics, and even Popes have been the fathers of illegitimate children, and, in some cases, the very personification of impurity, lust and uncleanness. Yet these Popes were infallible, and the vehicles of the divine will. Is not this the height of absurdity?

Lacy. Christian theology also affirms that there are three Gods, co-equal and infinite in every divine attribute, although declaring that the three are in some inexplicable sense, one.

Lambert. This is the kind of stuff infidel writers feed their credulous dupes on. It is difficult to understand how one brought up in a Christian community, and pretending to know anything about even the simplest elements of Christianity, could honestly make the above statement. . . . A Sunday school boy of ten years who, after studying the first three chapters of his catechism, should make such a statement as Mr. Lacy makes, would richly deserve to be spanked for inattention or pitied for his stupidity. . . . "Christian theology affirms that there are three Gods!" The man who makes such a statement sacrifices all claim to consideration as a scholar, or to having the most ordinary knowledge of the subject he elects to talk about. Yet this is the kind of people who are most flippant and noisy about theology, the Bible, and Moses. They are always as ready, as a self-cocking pistol, to give their "honest" and ignorant contents. Here is the author of a book, who undertakes to treat of philosophy, revelation and Christian theology, and who attributes to Christians a doctrine they not only do *not* hold, but which they have in all times *condemned!* And this ignorant upstart states it as if it were a matter about which there is no doubt whatever. Can any language be too severe for such an

offence? If he be ignorant of the Christian doctrine on this subject he is too ignorant to discuss Christian theology in a cross road grocery; and if he be not ignorant of the Christian doctrine of the unity of God, and yet made in cold type the above statement, what are we to think of him? Does not his statement justify me in dismissing him as too ignorant or too dishonest to deal with in discussing the great question at issue?

Watts. Here is a storm in a teacup. The Father's holy ire is like that of an incensed Jove. But he should remember that not only is abuse not argument, but that, as a rule, it proves the lack of argument. To call an opponent ill names, apply to him such complimentary epithets as "ignorant upstart," and rave about his unfitness for the task he has undertaken, is, no doubt, quite in keeping with the priestly intolerance of the popish hierarchy, but it is not likely to carry conviction to the calm and impartial reader. The Father should remember the story of the dispute about the body of Moses, recorded in "sacred scripture," between the devil and an archangel. Verily that archangel would have been silent had he encountered Father Lambert, and it is even questionable whether the other disputant would have had much chance with him. And, after all, what is the matter? What is all this commotion about?

Lambert. Christian theology affirms that there are not three Gods, but *one* God, one divine nature, and that in this one divine nature there are *three persons*. The unity is asserted of the divine nature, tri-unity of the divine persons, and it does not require more than average brains to understand that *nature* and *personality* are not one and the same thing.

Watts. But personality surely implies a distinct and separate consciousness. One Bishop, in fact—Sherlock I think—said that the three persons in the Godhead were "as distinct as Peter, James and John." That either means three Gods, or three persons of whom each is one-third of a God. Which is it, Father Lambert? Don't try to escape by calling out "mystery." There is no mystery at all, but simply a use of words without meaning, which is the synonym of nonsense. In fact, the mass of absurdity that has been written on this question is astounding. Three Gods yet only one God.

Lambert. It is inexplicable how one can be one and three at the same time and in the same sense, but that is precisely what Chris-

tian theology does *not* affirm. When it affirms unity and trinity or God it does not affirm them *in the same sense*. It asserts that the divine nature is *one*; the divine persons, *three*.

Watts. Is that so, friend Lambert? I must ask you whether you are not familiar with a mass of nonsense called "The Creed of St. Athanasius." Have you not subscribed to that creed? Now what does it say? "The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God. And yet there are not three Gods, but one God." Now, tell me, does not this predicate that they are three and one in the *same sense*? If not, then words have no meaning. Nothing can be more clear and plain. And the absurdity is repeated a dozen times or more in different ways—and always to show that these existences are three and one in exactly the same sense. Who is the "ignorant upstart" now? The tables are turned, Father, as any one can see with half an eye.

Ingersoll. He (God) authorized the murder of millions.

Lambert. He never authorized or ordered the *murder* of anyone from Abel to Garfield. God is the author and giver of life, and those He places on this earth He can remove at His will. No man has a right to live one instant longer than his Creator wills him to remain, be he born or unborn, innocent or guilty. As creatures of God we are absolutely His and can have no right whatever as against Him.

Lacy. The proposition embraced in the Father's comment raises two questions: 1st, Has God a "right" to do whatever He arbitrarily might will with His creature man, moulded in His image, whom He made a little lower than the angels, and thought worthy of a crown of glory and honour? Has He the right, for instance, to inflict wanton punishment without any moral aim whatever?

Lambert. Yes. He has the right to do whatever He wills with His creature man, first, because being infinitely perfect He wills rightly and justly, and secondly, because man is His creature. To suppose God to will unjustly or punish wantonly is to suppose Him to be imperfect, but you cannot suppose this since you have admitted Him to be perfect. God being infinitely perfect and just His will is infinitely perfect and just; and an infinitely perfect and just will has a right to will what it wills to will. This does not need demonstration, it follows from the admitted existence of a perfect Being.

Watts. This bit of Jesuitical sophistry is worthy of a priest. It, in fact, begs the question in dispute. How are the perfections or

any being to be learned but by the acts of such a being? God is assumed to be a perfect being and then all kinds of what, under other circumstances, would be deemed not only imperfect but very vile and atrocious acts, ascribed to Him, are said to be perfect because He performed them. This is logic with a vengeance. The acts of God prove His perfection, and His perfection makes the acts perfect. There is, then, no absolute distinction between perfection and imperfection. A man declares that he has a command from God to commit murder, and he slays most brutally many of his fellow men. This is not a crime, because of the assumption that a perfect being ordained it to be done. But no, the man may have been a deceiver, or himself deceived, and thus his act not of God at all. Exactly. And to-day no one would believe his story about his having received such a command from God. Why, then, should not the same common sense be used when discussing the pretensions of men who lived in earlier times? Assume, if you please, that God is perfect and just. Then it follows, as clear as that two and two make four, that He could never have commanded any human being to perform acts which are unjust. But the Bible ascribes such commands to Him. Therefore the Bible is, so far at all events, false. The atrocious murders and vile licentious acts, which are said to have been commanded by God in the Old Testament, were either ordered by Him or they were not. If they were, then He is unjust; if they were not, the story is untrue. Let Father Lambert choose which horn of the dilemma he pleases. If there be a God He has given to man the faculties by which justice can be distinguished from injustice, benevolence from malignity, virtue from vice, and by those faculties the acts ascribed to God himself must be judged. To believe otherwise is to make the justice and goodness of God terms without meaning.

Lacy Has He (God) the right to inflict wanton suffering without any moral aim whatever?

Lambert. This is an absurd question. It is as if you should ask, Has the perfect Being the right to do wrong? Has the perfect Being the right to be imperfect? A question that supposes imperfection in the perfect Being involves a contradiction and requires no answer. God, being perfect, has a right to do as He wills.

Watts. But can He will to do wrong? If not, then we err when we ascribe wrong to Him. And that is just what the Bible does.

To say that an act which would be wrong in man is right in God, is to deny that there is any absolute distinction between right and wrong. Or, if the will of God makes an act right and just, then there is no meaning in saying that God acts rightly, or justly, and, moreover, such acts as murder, theft, etc., having been decided to be right because God commanded them, then it is only right that men should so regard them. And on this principle the Holy (?) Catholic Church has acted again and again in the history of the past, when she resorted to the fire and faggot argument to convince heretics. Such sophistical quibbling as this priest indulges in is pitiable.

Lambert. The difficulty is not in conceiving divine justice, but in understanding its application. Our ignorance of all the conditions, circumstances and divine purposes disables us from judging the acts of God in any given case. But, knowing that he is the perfect Being, we must conclude *a priori* that his every act is just, without reference to how it may appear to us whose minds are rendered impotent by ignorance. To know what justice is and to discern the justice of a particular act are different things. Man is capable of the former but not of the latter in all cases, for the latter depends on conditions of which he is ignorant.

Watts. But what is this but saying that we know nothing at all about God? What nonsense to talk of God's perfections, when we are unable to judge of what perfection in him would consist. We can only judge of any act, whether of a man or a God, by such faculties as we possess, and if these are useless for the purpose in the case of God, how absurd it must be to talk of the justice of God at all. If justice in God means something totally different from justice in man, it is only misleading to say that God is just. I am told that God is love, but that may, upon this principle of reasoning, mean something totally different from what I understand by the term, from its use amongst men; it may in fact mean the very opposite,—hate. But all this goes to show how idle it is to talk at all about that which no one can understand. All the adjectives which Mr. Lambert uses to describe God, may mean something entirely different to the ideas they convey when applied to men, and therefore only serve to make "confusion more confounded."

Lacy. If God be God, he is no Nero, no Herod, no Gessler, but a Father lifting up his children to himself.

Lambert. This is true, and therefore you and Ingersoll slander him when you make him out a tyrant.

Watts. Why, it is you who make him a tyrant, by declaring that tyranny is not tyranny when practised by him. Your entire argument is, in fact, a defence of his tyranny by an endeavour to show that his most tyrannical acts are right.

Lambert. If it (the Bible) is inspired by God, its precepts and commands must be just and right, however they may appear to us. It will not do to say the Book commanded unjust things to be done, and therefore it is not inspired. This is to beg the question, for if it be inspired those things which you imagine to be unjust are not and cannot be unjust.

Watts. Well, but does not the fact that this book commands unjust acts, or what we should call unjust acts under any other circumstances, prove that it is not inspired by a just God? And if it be inspired, then we ought to take our ideas of justice from its pages, and completely revolutionize our present ethical code. But even Father Lambert dares not do this. Acts are commanded, or said to be commanded, by God in the Old Testament, which Mr. Lambert, with the fear of the law before his eyes, dares not to perform in America. He might plead that they were right because they had been approved of by God. But a judge—even a Christian judge—would make short work of all such nonsense, and the Father would soon find himself where he could write no more books on the "Tactics of Infidels."

Lambert. He who has the absolute right to take life cannot be guilty of murder in taking it; for *murder* is, an *unjust* killing, and there is no unjust killing in the taking of life by him who has the absolute right to take it. There is no escape from this reasoning except by denying the absolute right, and you cannot deny this but by denying God's existence; for on the hypothesis that he exists, he is creator, and being creator, the absolute right of dominion over his creatures necessarily follows, * * * to deny this right is to deny God's existence.

Lacy. If by absolute dominion he meant to govern without regard to the principles of justice, written by God's own finger on the human heart, we fail to see it.

Lambert. Inasmuch as absolute dominion does *not* mean to govern without regard to the principles of justice, your *if* is of no consequence. No one thinks of asserting that the perfect Being can govern without reference to his own essential attributes, of which justice is one. When I assert the absolute dominion of God,

I simply assert that he is accountable to no one but himself, and that whatever he does, merely *because* he does it, is beyond human criticism.

Watts. This begs the whole question. We maintain, as Mr. Lambert must know, that the book is not true which ascribes unjust acts to God. He assumes that God did act as here represented, and then declares the acts recorded to be good, because they were done by God.

But if our sense of justice is to be considered a guide for our own conduct, we have the right to criticise, by means of the same faculty, the actions of others. And when we are told with one breath that God is good and with the next that he is the author of acts at which humanity shudders with horror, we simply say that no one but a born fool can believe both statements. Either God is not good, or else it is false to say that he performed, or ordered to be performed, the acts which are ascribed to Him in the Bible. The only other alternative is to assert that we are incapable of judging of what is just and right. But that is a more fatal position still to the Christian, for it involves the fact that we have no guide for our own conduct. Hence, we ourselves may kill and torture, inflict pain in the most brutal form, and declare it wise and good to do so. In truth this is what the Church has done in all ages, and no wonder, with such pious examples before them ascribed to their God. If we are at all capable of distinguishing between right and wrong, between justice and injustice, then we say boldly that such cruel acts as are ascribed to God in the Bible are most terribly unjust. Nor is it any answer to say that God did them, for that is to say he has no sense of justice himself and is not good. We have rights even against God himself, for, if he exists, it was he who gave us the faculties by which his own acts are condemned. Our position, nowever, is this, that the book which ascribes acts of horror, deeds of blood and fierce cruelty to God is not true. Father Lambert, with all the audacious effrontery of his class, assumes the truth of the record and then proceeds to raise a superstructure of argument upon the assumption. And this miserable quibbling he calls logical reasoning.

Lambert. The Hebrew military laws did not abandon captive women to the insolence and brutality of captors. On the contrary

they made special provision forbidding the first familiarities of the soldier with his captives. If you study the 21st chapter of Deuteronomy, verses 10 to 14, you will learn that the soldier was obliged to make the captive his wife.

Watts. But to compel a woman to marry a man whom she loathed and detested, a foreign invader of her country, the slaughterer of her kindred and friends, does not mend the matter much. What was such a marriage but another form of foul licentiousness? This explanation leaves the case nearly as bad as it was before. Compulsory marriage of people who detest each other, solely for the purpose of gratifying the lust of the man, is brutal, unjust, and loathsome.

Lambert. As further proof you quote from Numbers: "But all the women children who have not known man by lying with him, keep for yourselves," and add:—

Lacy. Female innocence to be offered on the altar of lust! Noble trophies of victory!

Lambert. A Comanche Indian would probably interpret the verse that way. But what is there in the words to justify the inference that the captives were devoted to the lusts of the captors? The captives were to be adopted into the nation and subsequently to intermarry with the Jews in accordance with the law of Deuteronomy quoted above. It is only a libidinous imagination that can give the words any other interpretation. The United States government "keeps for itself" the children of those Indians whom it destroys. Are we to infer that those children are to be offered on the altar of lust?

Watts. But to charge your opponent with having "a libidinous imagination," although a very Christian argument, does not get rid of the difficulty. The text, interpreted by common sense, and not by theological hocus pocus, clearly means that these young women were kept alive for purposes of debauchery. Otherwise, why the qualifications stated? The case of the children of the Indians is not analogous, for there both sexes are preserved and treated in the same way. Here it was the females only, and they of a particular age, and in their virginity. The sophistry of this wily priest may be able to do much in the form of hood-winking his credulous dupes, but it is inadequate to the task of explaining away the plain meaning of this charming and delicious text.

Lacy. In this age does the Father require a writer to prove that slavery is an evil and polygamy a sin?

Lambert. He does most emphatically require those who reject revelation to prove the wrong or sinfulness of slavery and polygamy. Those who believe in revelation believe they are wrong because they are forbidden. But on what principle do you, who reject revelation, believe they are wrong? Oh, they are slimy and filthy. There, there, we have had enough of that kind of talk; it proves nothing.

Watts. Can anything be conceived of equal to this in reckless and impudent audacity? Revelation forbids slavery and polygamy? Where? Let us have chapter and verse. Both are pretty generally referred to in the Bible, and always without a single word of condemnation. Had any unbeliever made an assertion of this character, Mr. Lambert, with his excessive politeness, would have called him a "liar." The entire statement is simply truth reversed. Those who attach no importance to so-called supernatural revelation are the men who have always been first and foremost in condemning polygamy and denouncing slavery, whilst the Christian Church defended at least one of these monstrous evils up to quite recent times. Why are they wrong? Because they sap the foundation of all society, and are out of harmony with the best interests of mankind. That is why, Mr. Lambert, and not because they are condemned or forbidden by your so-called revelation, which they most assuredly are not. Such an attempt to hoodwink the ignorant dupes of a miserable superstition has rarely been witnessed as is presented in the pages of this cunning priest's book.

Lambert. The apostles claimed a divine communication and mission. They worked miracles.

Lacy. Here again is a begging of the question by one who was to grant nothing and take nothing for granted. Here it is *assumed* that miracles were wrought, the very statement denied in the controversy.

Lambert. There is the same evidence to prove the miracles of Christ and the apostles that there is to prove the existence and acts of Alexander and Cæsar, namely, history and tradition. If we reject the former we must on the same principle reject the latter, and if we adopt this principle we cut ourselves off comparatively from all the events and personages of the past. The miracles of Christ and His apostles are historic facts or events subject to the same rules of historic criticism that other facts are.

Watts. But it should be borne in mind that this is just what we deny, and for which we demand and wait for proof. Is there the same

historic evidence of the Christian miracles that there is for the existence and actions of Alexander and Cæsar? If so, it is marvelously strange that it is never forthcoming. Why does not this priest produce it? We are tolerably familiar with the sort of evidence that his Church deals in. It is manufactured for the purpose, and is no doubt very conclusive to the poor dupes who are bamboozled by an objectionable class of ecclesiastical dictators who preserve their authority and their pay by lording it over their victims. But rational men, who are not in bondage to the most iniquitous hierarchy that has ever disgraced the earth, are not to be fooled in this way. We assert boldly that no such evidence can be produced, nor such evidence as would satisfy a legal mind and convince an intelligent jury in a court of justice, even were the issue the conviction of a prisoner for stealing a brass-headed nail. But does not Mr. Lambert see that the cases are not at all analogous? In the first place, it is of no great importance whether Cæsar lived or not, or whether Alexander performed the acts ascribed to him. The question is not a very momentous one. The world would not be much affected whatever decision was arrived at regarding it. But on the belief in the miracles of Jesus our eternal salvation, it is said, depends, and evidence should therefore be obtainable about which no mistake could be made, and which no reasoning could overturn. And secondly, everyone knows that the strength of evidence tendered in support of any event should be in proportion to the commonness or uncommonness of the event itself. That which would suffice to prove an ordinary event would be perfectly inadequate to show that an extraordinary one had taken place. If I am told that such a man as Cæsar lived, I have no reason to doubt it, because there is nothing improbable in the alleged fact. But if I were informed that he worked miracles, and came to life again after he was dead, the highly improbable character of the circumstance would render much strong evidence necessary before I should be convinced. There are stories told in fact, which no amount of evidence could establish as true. The testimony of a million men could not prove that which, by the very nature of things, is impossible. And although I am not saying that the miracles recorded in the New Testament are impossible, I do say that they outrage all the laws of probability, and can only, therefore, be believed on the production of an amount of evidence

ten thousand times greater than that which would suffice to show that Cæsar had lived and written the commentaries ascribed to him, or that Alexander had been a great warrior.

Lucy. The sceptic says, along with miracles we read of witchcraft and demoniacal possessions.

Lambert. And the merchant says, along with gold coin he meets with counterfeits, but he is not so asinine as to reject all money on that account. He takes care, however, to test each piece or note, and rejects the false and accepts the true.

Watts. So, so, Father. There is the same difference between miracles and such cases as those of witchcraft and demoniacal possession, as between good coin and counterfeit money. Be it so. But both the Bible and the huge ecclesiastical establishment which you call the church, treat all three with the same authority. Then, miracles are true, and demoniacal possession and witchcraft spurious. It is quite refreshing to find a Romish priest writing like this. It seems after all that there is a good deal of counterfeit in the Bible and in the Church, which is just what we have always maintained. Surely this was a slip of the pen on the part of the priest. Witchcraft spurious! Yet the Church has put to death many thousands of persons for practising it. Demoniacal possession a sham! Yet the Bible teaches it, and the Church maintains its truth. Be careful, Lambert, or you will be indicted for heresy by your own church, and may be compelled, like poor Gallileo, before any ignorant tribunal of the same hierarchy, to eat your own words and recant.

Lacy. A crazy man was supposed to be possessed by the devil.

Lambert. Supposed by whom? Where did you acquire this piece of information which you impart so gratuitously? We find in the Scripture that certain persons were said to be possessed, but we do not find that crazy men were supposed to be possessed. This is an inference of your own which is not justified by the premises. As a matter of fact the Scriptures themselves make a distinction between demoniac possession and insanity, and recognize the existence of both.

Watts. The Scriptures "recognize the existence of both." Quite so. Then please, Father Lambert, tell us how you reconcile this with your former statement, that demoniacal possessions were spurious and stood in the same relation to miracles that counter-

feit does to genuine coin. We know perfectly well that in the Bible a distinction is made between insanity and the being possessed by devils, but we contend that this shows the ignorance of those who wrote the Bible. No scientific man to day believes in demoniacal possession, and Christians of education use their utmost endeavours and the most ingenious and sophistical arguments to explain away the meaning of those passages in the New Testament, where it is mentioned. But to be serious, is such childish nonsense worth discussing? The fact is, Christianity in its orthodox form is obsolete, and the wretched old worn out despotism, called the Church of Rome, out of place in the midst of modern civilization. It could only flourish in an age of ignorance, darkness and superstition and must disappear before the light of science as clouds before the noonday sun. That any man of intelligence can be found in this age to defend its audacious pretensions, its absurd dogmas, its puerile mummeries, its despotic proceedings, its persecuting spirit, its illiterate and ignorant priesthood, its ridiculous claims, its false and mischievous teaching, is perfectly astounding. But so it is. Delusions die hard, and the greater the delusion, sometimes the harder the death. Demoniacal possession! What would be thought of any man who should talk about that absurdity in a meeting of men of science? He would simply be laughed at, and no one would deem it worth noticing, nor his opinions worthy of discussion.

Lacy. We hear the Bible called "God's Book," as if it had been written as a unit.

Lambert. If you heard that you must be in the habit of keeping strange company. If you had asked an intelligent Christian for information on the subject, he would have told you that it was written by many authors and at long intervals of time; that its present arrangement, chaptering and versification are a matter of convenience.

Watts. It is a quibble, and a very poor one at that, to say that the Bible is acknowledged by Christians to be composed of many different books which were written by various men at different times, therefore, it is not spoken of as "a unit," or one. Mr. Lambert knows perfectly well that according to Christian belief these were simply instruments in the hands of God, in fact, vehicles through whom the divine teaching flowed down to mankind, and that their own private views are not found at all in what they wrote.

The book had one author and that author was God, the men employed being simply amanuenses, writing down what they were inspired to put on record. Everywhere, therefore, amongst Christians this volume is spoken of as a unit, under the name of the Word of God. The teaching in its various parts—in whatever age written—is believed to be of equal divine authority, and passages from every book are frequently preached from in the pulpit, and quoted in every-day life as applicable to the affairs of human existence as we find it at the present time. The Romanist, of course, puts the authority of his church above the Bible, but no Protestant will for a moment allow this to be done. With both the Bible is the word of God, and the latter takes as his motto, "The Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible." The "strange company," therefore, was Christian company. Strange enough, no doubt, but Christian still.

Lacy. The Pope is in his own sacred person also infallible.

Lambert. Here as usual in presenting Catholic doctrines you misrepresent. Had you consulted any of the many books which treat of the decrees of the council of the Vatican you would have learned that they do not teach that the Pope personally, or as a private individual, is infallible, but that he is infallible only in his *official capacity*, as supreme head and judge of the church. As a lawyer you should understand this distinction. You know the decision of one of our judges given as a private individual, and unofficial, has no weight in law; while the same decision given formally in his public and official capacity, is decisive.

Watts. If anywhere in the world a prize should be given for quibbling this priest would certainly take it against all comers. He is surely the champion hair splitter. How adroitly he introduces an analogy, which is no analogy at all, and thus throws dust into the eyes of his readers, and then winds up with a flourish of trumpets as though he had achieved a great victory over his antagonist. The Pope is infallible only in his official capacity, whatever that may mean. He is infallible as head of the church. But is he not always head of the church? If yes, then he is always infallible, if no, who is head of the church when he is not? Or is the church sometimes without a head? There is no analogy in the case of the judge dragged in neck and crop. The opinion of a judge will be just as sound and just as accurate in private as in public, only if given in the one case it has authority, whilst in

the other it has not. But infallibility cannot be laid aside then, for it is an individual and not an official quality. An infallible being must be always infallible, no matter where and to what his infallible power is applied, and if the Pope be really infallible, he is quite as much so when giving orders about his dinner, choosing his servants, selecting his stockings, or scolding his menials, or when delivering his decrees *ex cathedra* in the conclave of Bishops. To maintain the contrary is to ascribe the infallibility to the chair in which he sits or to some of his official surroundings, which would be too absurd even for a Roman Catholic to maintain, which is saying a great deal.

This infallibility doctrine has been the curse of mankind in all ages where it has been taught. It has deluged the world with blood, and stopped the onward march of progress by fire and sword. Superstition is its twin brother, persecution is its offspring, and cruelty of the most damnable kind the weapon it has ever employed. The Protestant ascribes infallibility to his Bible, and the Romanist to a common-place old man in the Vatican. We say "a plague on both your houses!" Infallibility is not within the reach of human beings, and they who pretend to have it cannot avoid arrogating to themselves superiority over their fellows, and treating better men than themselves as inferiors. The arrogant and often impertinent and insolent tone of the author of "Tactics of Infidels" bespeaks the true papist in every line. He is a priest of an infallible church, which church is unparalleled for the mischief it has done in the world by any organization in ancient and modern times. It has everywhere championed despotism, ignorance and priestly intolerance, and has seldom, if ever, been found on the side of freedom, benevolence, and justice. But its end is near. It is out of harmony with the institutions of this country, and with the aspirations of modern thought. When it is gone, the people will breathe more freely, and feel that a horrible night-mare has been removed.