

Samuel Butler, Erewhon revisited (1901), extract from chapter XV

These are the words of the Sunchild about God and man. He said —

1. God is the baseless basis of all thoughts, things, and deeds.
2. So that those who say that there is a God, lie, unless they also mean that there is no God; and those who say that there is no God, lie, unless they also mean that there is a God.
3. It is very true to say that man is made after the likeness of God; and yet it is very untrue to say this.
4. God lives and moves in every atom throughout the universe. Therefore it is wrong to think of Him as 'Him' and 'He', save as by the clutching of a drowning man at a straw.
5. God is God to us only so long as we cannot see Him. When we are near to seeing Him He vanishes, and we behold Nature in His stead.
6. We approach Him most nearly when we think of Him as our expression for Man's highest conception, of goodness, wisdom, and power. But we cannot rise to Him above the level of our own highest selves.
7. We remove ourselves most far from Him when we invest Him with human form and attributes.
8. My father the sun, the earth, the moon, and all planets that roll round my father, are to God but as a single cell in our bodies to ourselves.
9. He is as much above my father, as my father is above men and women.
10. The universe is instinct with the mind of God. The mind of God is in all that has mind throughout all worlds. There is no God but the Universe, and man, in this world is His prophet.
11. God's conscious life, nascent, so far as this world is concerned, in the infusoria, adolescent in the higher mammals, approaches maturity on this earth in man. All these living beings are members one of another, and of God.
12. Therefore, as man cannot live without God in the world, so neither can God live in this world without mankind.
13. If we speak ill of God in our ignorance it may be forgiven us; but if we speak ill of His Holy Spirit indwelling in good men and women it may not be forgiven us.