

the house, they labor in vain that build it." The power and control of God cannot be left out of account, if we expect to build a ^{successful} life, a family, a nation, or a world, that ~~is to be~~ worthwhile.

Our civilization has tended in recent years to become secularized

It has become quite prevalent to leave God altogether out of account in planning our lives or in planning our world. Even when religion is mentioned as a factor, we often find on investigation that what is meant is merely a code of ethics or a general desire for helpfulness. True religion is much more than that. It involves recognition of the personal activity of God. "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

God is not a factor that can safely be ignored. || It is said that during the French Revolution, a man stood up in the Chamber of Deputies in Paris, and looking up to heaven said, ^(Arrogance) "If there is a God in the universe, I challenge Him to strike me dead." ^(Hushed expectancy) All the assembly waited tensely. Though most of them claimed to be atheists, few ^(Fear) present would have dared to make such a challenge. For two minutes they waited. No thunderbolt came. ^(Relief) Then they laughed and went on with their business. ^(Solemn warning) The very next day as the man was on his way to a meeting, a little fly flew into his ^{ear} eye and ~~blinded him~~. Soon afterwards he died. God did not need to waste a thunderbolt on him. A little fly was enough to put an end to the man's defiance. Many a small factor in life may mean the ruin of our plans if it goes the wrong way, and God controls all of these factors. ||

Often we hear the term "God" || used as if it were a mere symbol for general well-being, or a term for the summation of the universe, or some sort of ~~an~~ abstract principle. Even a hasty survey of the Bible shows that the God described there is not of this type at all. ^{rising inflection (assertion)} He is a Person || who thinks, feels, and takes an active part in the affairs of this world. He is not like a statue that we can examine