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### June 7, 2017: The play An Act of God Cannot Decide What It Wants to Be

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Title: The play An Act of God Cannot Decide What It Wants to Be

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6/7/2017—Last night I saw the play An Act of God at the Pittsburgh Public Theater. Marcus Stevens plays the role of God in this, essentially, one man, one act show. Stevens was very good but was undone by uneven writing. The problem is that the play does not know what it wants to be. The Broadway play by David Javerbaum is advertised as a comedy and it is funny in places. Comedy is Javerbaum's background, but the play does not sustain its comedic theme. While jokes abound concerning God and religious believers, there is a serious undertone of the play that the writing simply cannot pull off. Around two thirds of the way into the play, there is a serious suggestion that there is something wrong with God, that God is a homicidal psychopath. This could be told as a funny thing and at the beginning that is how it is treated. But in an extended set piece about the life of Jesus, the audience learns that Christ's sacrifice was real but that the sins that were forgiven were actually those of his father, God. The audience is not spared the story of the crucifixion and as you can imagine all subsequent jokes fall flat. This is actually a serious matter that Javerbaum has no business messing with unless he intends a serious treatment. At its heart, this play is about an early Christian heresy: Marcionism. Quoting Wikipedia: "Marcionism was an Early Christian dualist belief system that originated in the teachings of Marcion of Sinope at Rome around the year 144. Marcion believed Jesus was the savior sent by God, and Paul the Apostle was his chief apostle, but he rejected the Hebrew Bible and the God of Israel. Marcionists believed that the wrathful Hebrew God was a separate and lower entity than the all-forgiving God of the New Testament." But does this culture need a play about Marcionism? Indeed, judging by the reactions of the people I was with, there is not any longer enough cultural familiarity with the issues for the point of the whole idea to be intelligible. So, if Javerbaum wants to write The Book of Mormon, let him do so. If he wants to write The Crucible, let him write that. But Javerbaum's God is too jokey to take seriously and too serious to be funny.