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THE

BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE CONCEPT OF GOD.

BY REV. GEORGE T. LADD, MILWAUKEE, WIS.

A THEME at once so promising and so transcendently lofty as this, demands of him who ventures to write his thoughts underneath it, an immediate disclaimer of undue pretensions. The author of this Article lays no claim to the discovery of any metaphysical secrets. He knows of no new instrument, like the intellectual intuition of Schelling or the dialectic development of Hegel, by which to view, as they are in themselves, the mysteries of the Divine Being. He is of opinion that the ancient organon of knowledge, the human soul, is trustworthy. He does not even venture to promise any wholly new light upon any of the questions with which he is to deal, much less the complete solution of any of them.

It cannot, however, fail to appear to any careful observer of the course of current thought, that questions which concern the reality and nature of the Personal Absolute, whom faith calls God, are the leading theologic questions of the day. Theology is called in question, not so much as to the validity of its special dogmas, as to its right to existence at all. The "stream of tendency," the "One not ourselves," coming from Greek thought, and the personal I Am, the One revealed in ourselves, coming from the Hebrew heart, have met each

other in the world's highway. Are the two one? and is that one the One everlasting and true, the absolute and infinite God? To answer these inquiries the thinkers of the age are taxing the resources of thought. The true, permanent answer does not depend upon the decision of investigators; it will be given vitally in the experience of the individual, in the history of the race. But the answer, so far as the investigators can furnish one, must consist in more thoroughly analytic criticism of the facts and laws of nature, history, and consciousness.

What each investigator especially needs is a point of view from which to conduct the criticism of difficulties. From such a favorable point of view we should be able to distinguish between real, insuperable difficulties, and alleged but removable ones; also to see in some measure wherein and why the real, insuperable difficulties are such.

In the January number of this Quarterly there appeared an Article upon "the Origin of the Concept of God." The view then expressed may be summed up in two or three sentences: "This concept is the resultant of God's revelation of himself to the human soul"; "It is a centre upon which converge many lines, not only of argument, but also of intuition, feeling, and purpose"; "The organon for receiving the divine self-revelation is the entire soul of man." I do not say that this way of viewing and authenticating that knowledge of God which the human soul furnishes will solve any of the difficulties which accompany the knowledge. On the contrary, it shows that many of the difficulties are necessarily involved in the constituent elements of that knowledge. It does, however, seem to furnish help for the classification and criticism of these difficulties. It seems to offer suggestions which may be used so as to show whence and why the difficulties arise, in what they consist, what is their rationale, so to speak, and what ones among the whole number are likely to be either lightened or solved by the progress of the race. So far as the former discussion has led to a true opinion upon the nature of this concept as to origin, it

will also help to a true opinion upon its nature as to its obscure and seemingly contradictory elements.

The object of the present Article is, then, *The Classification and Criticism of some of the Difficulties of the Concept of God as they appear when examined in the light of the former Article upon the Origin of this Concept.* And though the present Article can be only fragmentary, it is our hope to make it so much one with the former, that whoever accepted the truth of that will be helped by this over difficult and dangerous paths of research.

We enter, then, the present discussion with a certain basis laid in that which has gone before. We find the truths from which to take our points of starting in these following statements, which are corollaries of the central truth just stated, viz. "The concept of God is the resultant of God's revelation of himself to the human soul."

According to this view of the origin of the concept of God, all knowledge of God is of the nature of divine self-revelation. God unrevealed is an unknown God. This statement is true of every form of knowledge, however derived from any of the manifold sources of self-revelation, in which the divine is made known to man. The proof of this statement consists partially in a criticism of the forms under which all knowledge comes to the human soul. All knowledge of principles is in some sort a self-revelation of God; and the subjective necessity which marks all principles as such, is an assertion of the divine vigor with which their revealer impresses objective law and fact upon the organon through which his revelation is made. The postulate of all rationality in man is a self-revealing God. But the special proof of this statement is discovered when we analyze the concept and the organon through which the concept is given, and observe how the truths given in the concept correspond with the faculties given to the organon. The analysis shows us one common source for the soul which knows God, and for the facts and laws which reveal God. The facts and laws thus take the form of a self-revelation of the same

One who constituted the soul capable of receiving the revelation.

And, farther, according to this view of the origin of the concept of God, there is a certain necessary disparateness between the finite organ and the infinite object of revelation. Known as self-revealed to the finite soul, God cannot be fully known; there must always be more beyond in the boundless recesses of divine being. And according to the laws of intellectual research, this necessary incompleteness of every concept of God will give rise to difficulties insurmountable by the intellect. Comprehension is the work of the intellect, and the intellect is not satisfied until it can comprehend. The intellect never rests in its concept so long as there are in it elements which baffle its attempts at detecting their genesis and at classifying them with the other elements of the concept. Not only is intellectual research stimulated by this uneasiness, but it also tends to stimulate the more practical and emotional activities of man. Reverence, awe, and sense of mystery feed upon the food which is but husks to the intellect. Trust, love, hope, and self-sacrificing obedience thrive upon the hardships of the understanding.

According to this view, however, there is implied in the fact of any divine self-revelation at all, a participation in the divine nature and in its real truth upon the part of man. The dictum which Mr. Mansel quotes with approval, "To know God as he is, man must himself be God," is ambiguous and unsatisfactory. But when Trendelenburg asserts, "We apprehend God, so far as we apprehend him, only through that in us which is of divine lineage, through the necessary in knowing and through the good in purposing, and, above all, through the union of the two,"¹—we find in the assertion a philosophic basis for believing at once in the limitedness and in the objective validity of our knowledge of God. "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

This view of the origin of the concept of God makes the

¹ Logische Untersuchungen, ii. p. 507.

entire soul of man the organon for the divine self-revelation ; and in doing this it also makes the constitutional soundness and symmetry of man's total being responsible for the validity of the concept. It forces, then, either the acceptance of the truth about God, or the alternative of utter scepticism as to all fundamental truth and utter misplacement of man's deepest intuitions and cravings.

This view also indicates with much clearness the source and nature of some of the special difficulties which men have with the concept of God. Some of the difficulties are seen to be due to such weakness and lack of symmetry in the organon as have an ethical significance. It is not as pure intellect that man is like God, or fitted to know God ; but as endowed also with moral affections and ideas, with free will, and with a spiritual nature. We may, therefore, have error and confusion from the trenching of one set of faculties upon another, or from the choice to exclude the revelation from any one of its channels of influx.

This view of the origin of the concept of God suggests the truth that the divine self-revelation to man must be historic, evolutionary. It must take the form of an objective process, conditioned for its acceptance in different stages upon the point reached by the soul of man in a corresponding subjective process. Historic limitations and a historic process of freeing the soul from limitations are of the very essence of divine self-revelation. God reveals himself in connection with historic phenomena and processes. That which is back of all development does not itself develop ; but the revelation is given to us in the form of development. It is only as in pursuit of a goal that God is made known to us. It is only as itself being more and more lifted forward toward the comprehension of the goal that the soul is fitted to apprehend the truths which appear in the process of development.

These corollaries, derived from the argument upon the origin of the concept of God, will for the present sufficiently indicate the points of view from which I now propose to

consider some of the difficulties of the concept. The former argument will also furnish a classification of these difficulties.

If "the concept of God is the resultant of God's revelation of himself to the human soul," the difficulties of this concept may be divided into three classes, according as they belong (1) to the object itself, so far as it is unrevealed, (2) to the organon through which the revelation is made, so far as it is made, and (3) to the changing relations which exist between the revelation and the organon. God himself, the soul itself, and the process of revelation, will all be concerned in the criticism of these difficulties.

The first class of difficulties are those which forever inhere in the unrevealed being of God. They render it forever impossible that God should be adequately, in all his essence and attributes, comprehended, or otherwise known, by man. If perfect comprehension were necessary to any valid knowledge whatever of objective truth, the dictum "to know God as he is, man must himself be God," would be the final word upon the matter. These difficulties of the first class — if we may venture to give a name to anything so shadowy and impossible definitely to fix — we will call the transcendental. They are not capable of statement in any form of words which is not itself self-contradictory. They are the outcome of that constant conflict between the consciousness of limitation and the longing to pass the limits which ministers, *as a conflict*, to the growth of the human soul. As soon as these difficulties are driven to fix themselves in any definite shape, they pass at once out of the transcendental sphere. They then become difficulties which are to be investigated and distinguished between, as either inherent or removable, by a criticism of the contents of consciousness. But the shadow of the more beyond still rests upon them.

"The means are wanting," says Trendelenburg, "to a direct and adequate knowledge of God." Supposing the metaphysical problems all settled to the satisfaction of all disputants, supposing an entire agreement as to the objective validity of a certain concept of God, as to the personality of the Abso-

lute, as to all the cognizable qualities, motives, and laws of this Personal Absolute, there would still remain the impulse toward dissatisfaction, the suspicion of difficulties in the more beyond, which belong to the transcendental nature of the object of the concept.

Even in the case of the finite and conditioned our knowledge of the necessary is indirect, and there is always the suggestion of a shadowy something which is beyond the positive contents of consciousness. There is no commonest act of sensuous observation which, when analyzed, does not make us feel the vastness of the unrevealed more beyond; for there is vastly more than we can know in the smallest object of sense. Of all the forms of sense which surround us we may truly say, as Sir William Hamilton makes the church Father, "*materiam spiritumque cognoscendo ignorari et ignorando cognosci*" is the only way to real knowledge. There is a vast transcendental field of both finite and infinite being, of the qualities of which we can only declare that they are unrevealed, and therefore unknown to us. The unrevealed infinite meets us on every hand and in every act of our finite knowledge. We know the whole of nothing. Know as fully and as truly as we may, there is much more beyond, involved as a fact, but not disclosed as to its mode, in every act of knowledge. The skirts of the Infinite are heard sweeping by us in every moment of intuition, but the hand of the Infinite is over our eyes. The wind which the train of his glorious raiment awakens plays upon the harp of feeling, but bears to us no definite knowledge of the unseen face of the wearer of the raiment. But when the hand is removed we behold his hinder parts, and live. In the case of perception by the eye we do not complain of our limitations. We examine, indeed, to find the grounds upon which rests our confidence in the act of vision. We criticise the contents of vision to determine what of them are accidental and phenomenal merely, what are by their necessity proved to belong to objective and eternal truth. We do not spend much time and strength in longing to know by vision qualities of matter

which either are not in themselves visible, or can never, because of their lack of relation to our organs, become visible to us.

But it is the peculiarity of the metaphysics of absolute being that it is not content to remain metaphysics; it longs to overleap the barriers and come into some impossible sort of communion with what is beyond. This longing is part of the stimulus toward the divine which acts from so many points of impact upon man. It can never, however, give us what it is neither in the will of the Self-revealer nor in the capacity of the organ of his self-revealing to permit.

Nor are these difficulties escaped, nor even intrinsically lessened, by introducing some extraordinary means or act of knowledge. Were the knowledge thus gained valid it could never be complete. Let the soul soar to heights of logical development or intellectual intuition, far above all ordinary ken, beyond all realms of self-conscious experience, it still comes down from its sublimation both dazed and panting for more breath and light. Beyond that which is itself beyond all the intuitions of ordinary man there is still infinitely more. Were it true, as the mystic metaphysician informs us, that "there dwells in us all a secret wonderful faculty, by virtue of which we can withdraw from the mutations of time into our innermost disrobed selves, and there behold the Eternal under the form of immutability," the longings of the soul would not even thus be satisfied. The "secret wonderful faculty" of Schelling, in so far as it is faculty, is only a limited means of knowing; it, like every most common-place faculty, can bring only knowledge limited by its own construction.

We find, indeed, the vain attempt to transcend by some act or process of knowledge the limitations which belong of necessity to all our knowledge of both infinite and finite, in those systems of the philosophy of theology which Hamilton and Mansel have criticized as though they were mere word-building. But those systems, judged by a criticism which includes the full contents of consciousness, are somewhat more than

mere word-building. They contain, in pretentious and often invalid form, the real substance of the truth which we need to recognize in our present contest with the philosophy (?) of nescience. So far as they pretend to knowledge beyond the limitations of all knowledge, they are fallacious. So far as they insist upon the correspondence between thought and real being, so far as they afford a ground for insisting upon the objective validity of those acts of the soul by which the eternal realities of the divine are conveyed, in the form of necessary ideas and principles, to the soul, they are true and helpful counter-irritants of positivism.

Mr. Mansel is indeed right in his metaphysics when he criticizes these German philosophers for their failure to found their systems in a criticism of consciousness. But much of his own criticism is as abstract and contradictory of the contents of consciousness as are the systems he criticizes. The critic of philosophy should no more enter the battle in the vale of Valhalla than the philosopher himself. Joining in this battle, he may find that he has unwittingly, given a sword thrust, not to the shade of an opponent, but to the real person of a friend. We can posit the incomprehensible, but not the self-contradictory, through faith. We, too, believe with Mr. Mansel that "to know God as he is, man must himself be God," if by this sentence is meant that no adequate and complete revelation of the divine is possible within the finite organon of revelation, and that all our knowledge of the divine must therefore be fragmentary and unsatisfying. But we quite dissent, if by this sentence is meant that no revelation at all corresponding to his being is possible for God, and that the organon of revelation can give us no ground for affirming the objective validity of its own work. The necessary forms of sense-perception may be only some among many unknown forms of knowledge; and they certainly give conditions to all our perceptions of things of sense. But to affirm that they are *only* regulative, that we have no right to aver the real correspondence of things to the forms, is a step beyond toward the gulf of utter scepticism. Surely the very

conditions of all knowledge aver it to be limited. But it may, nevertheless, contain postulates and intimations and intuitions which reveal the absolute truth beyond. Only a perfect analysis, ending in complete breaking up of all the foundations of thinking, can warrant us in saying that this partial is, though confessedly partial, also unfaithful to the reality of things.

Thus much, then, seems true of this first class of difficulties inherent in the concept of God. Only so much of the divine is known as has been revealed to us. The unrevealed God is the unknown God of Mr. Spencer and his followers. Of the infinite whole which is back of and beyond all the divine self-revelation, we can only say that it is there. We are driven to the affirmation by the constant unrest and dissatisfaction which we find in all known forms of the concept, regarded as fit to satisfy in full the desires of the rational soul for knowledge. That which is transcendental in God also stimulates us to the sense of awe, mystery, and worship before the unknown. To God unrevealed, to that in the depths of the divine being which he has not disclosed to us, we cannot say that any of our terms of knowledge apply. We know God as a person; but we feel that our conception of personality does not adequately represent the whole being of God. We believe in him — granted that we know him — as the Absolute; but we also believe that the word and the idea of the absolute does not adequately represent God. The heart affirms him as Heavenly Father; but the term father, sweetest of all in which to express our more practical relations, we are confident is quite below the unrevealed reality of God. He is first cause and *causa sui* — so revealed to us; but terms of condition and causality do not fully set him forth. We summon all the glorious names with which men have learned to address the Eternal One, and taken all together they give, when analyzed, in one grand picture the sum-total of the self-revelation of God; but they do not tell us of the more beyond, except to affirm that it is there.

In criticizing the second class of difficulties found within

the concept of God, we shall need to remember the truths just stated. These difficulties, however, unlike those of the first class, present themselves in forms of thought which demand criticism and contain positive contents of objective validity. Yet a false philosophy of nescience would have us treat both classes alike. With the claims of nescience fully carried out, metaphysics is transcendentalism. With it, therefore, difficulties which require research into the foundations of knowledge are transcendental difficulties. Of course, then, it finds the concept of God not merely inadequate; it finds every possible concept self-contradictory. This its theology is the spurious child of its false philosophy. To it the sphere of infinite being is not light in the centre, but is shaded into obscurity along its infinite stretches in every direction from the centre of light; to it there is only darkness, formlessness, and void in all the vault of infinite being.

That is to say, such results in philosophy and theology as these, nescience claims in general terms as the precious boon of all mankind. But in the special terms in which even the claim is made, whenever it defines itself, there lie always concealed vast stores of positive knowledge. The very treasures of truth, formally banished by deliberate act of judgment from the kingdom are smuggled in again by some naïve unconscious decree of judgment. To know as much as Mr. Spencer, for instance, knows in his denial of the divine self-revelation, is almost enough for a wise man to know of God. "A great deal, it appears," as Father Dalgrains sarcastically remarks, "is known about the Unknowable." The Unknowable is indeed expected to move feeling and influence the practical life; for it is printed in large letters to excite fear, it is conjectured, "like grenadiers' caps."

In proof that the various elements of this concept of God correspond to certain positive and definite contents of consciousness, we cite the following facts of experience. And first of all, the very dispute shows the reality and persistence of human convictions as to the subject in dispute. If the concept of God in some form or other perdures, and the

difficulties which attach themselves to it endure, this of itself tends to assure us that in some positive contents of human thought we must seek the reason, and in part the answer, for these difficulties. There is something where so much dust of controversy arises ; so much intellectual fuss is not about absolutely nothing.

And farther, the manner of stating and discussing the concept with its difficulties clearly shows certain definite forms of the positive contents of consciousness which give rise to these difficulties. Nothing is more certain than that men have certain definite conceptions which they name God ; that they believe in the objective validity of their conceptions ; that they insist upon the fatherhood of the Infinite, the personality of the Absolute, and upon many other alleged verities of religious sort. But the persistence of the concept of God, and of its difficulties in these special and definite forms, shows that the philosophical treatment of the concept in regard to these forms is at once a gift to, and a demand upon, the human soul. In considering, then, the personality of the Absolute and other similar questions, to resolve all the phenomena into impotency and try to sweep them off the board of analytic dissection with one majestic wave of the hand is merest child's play. There have been many attempts to put out the candle of theology's logic, as preparatory to putting out the light of the human soul, in whose indestructible thought, feeling, and purpose positive theologic truth has its warm hearth, its fruitful womb. " Put out the light, and then — put out the light." The extinguisher has fallen upon the tallow and wick of argument ; but the light, the soul in which the truth of God shines, will not therefore be put out.

And farther, in proof of the unceasing demand made by this concept upon the critical faculty, to find in the elements of the concept real knowledge of objective verity, we are to notice how the soul of the destructive critic avers the impracticability of his own attempt at destruction, when in the very act. So often as the giants of destructive criticism go

over the field of proof and cut down the ripe stalks of the theologic harvest, they are forced to leave enough seed to sow again the entire field. The sentence which the author of "First Principles" quotes with much evident approval,— "A God understood would be no God at all," — contains a certain undoubted truth; we cannot perfectly comprehend God. But it is a long way from this sentence to the one with which he closes the same chapter on "ultimate religious ideas," and declares, as the result of conclusive argument, "The Power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable." Mr. Spencer himself knows it is *not* "utterly inscrutable." For he has himself made the illogical, but inevitable leap from thought to being, has learned to call the objective reality a Power, and spell it with a capital, has found it manifested in the universe. And if manifested by the universe, may we not examine the form of manifestation, and conclude something as to the nature of the Power? No; for the Power is utterly inscrutable. Yes; for it is manifested in the universe, and known as Power. There is something more to note in all this than the imbecility of language, or even the impotency of human thought about the Absolute; there is pre-eminently to note the strength of the soul's postulates and primitive convictions triumphing over the logic of nescience.

Nor does the writer from whom Mr. Spencer quotes so largely escape making an example of himself to the theologian, even though engaged in offices supposed friendly to theology. It is a singular anomaly when the philosophy which fights so valiantly to rescue the objective in the region of sense-perception from the clutch of sceptical idealism surrenders without a blow in defence when the objective in the region of truths necessary to religion is attacked by a sceptical positivism. In the Absolute and the Infinite, written in capitals to excite veneration, and arrived at through impotency and the consciousness of "counter inabilities," we have no interest at all. With such terms, handled in purely abstract fashion by either philosopher or critic of philosophy,

anything may be done in the way of word-building and logomachy, nothing can be done in the way of coming at truth. What is put into them at first by him who uses them may be, so often as he will, taken out of them again; but in all the process of shortening and elongating the contents no new substance of information is gained.

Should Mr. Mansel or any one else succeed in disproving the authority of the positive contents of consciousness to testify to objective truth about God, he would overthrow the rational grounds of religion. No refuge of faith would save the case; for the act and faculty of faith must establish themselves by the very authority which has been discredited. It is not juggling with abstract terms, but faithful criticism of all the contents of the soul, which is needed in dealing with these difficulties.

The entire discussion increases our conviction that there is with man positive truth about God. To this conviction—Hegel while asserting a philosophy which finds the Absolute in the very process of thought itself, Mansel while denying to all philosophy the power to establish the objective validity of this process in which Hegel found the Absolute, Spencer while laying again the foundations of a philosophy in which the Absolute is known only as the Unknowable, “writ large”—all alike contribute elements of strength.

In dealing, then, with the second class of difficulties, we may begin our work of criticism with the conviction that certain positive and definite contents of consciousness correspond to all the elements in the great concept of God. The work will raise this conviction to the dignity of the postulate which really underlies all attempts at philosophical criticism of this concept.

The work is such as to demand criticism which is both metaphysical and complete—in the meanings of these adjectives which subsequent discussion will explain.

Metaphysical criticism of the difficulties of the concept of God is that which examines the concept, to find what elements of objective validity are in it which distinguishes the

accidental from the necessary, and which tests the ground upon which the so-called necessary rests.

And the criticism of this concept must be what I have called complete, as well as metaphysical. It must be such criticism as recognizes all the phenomena, and makes the self-conscious effort to adjust the relative weight to which are entitled the elements contributed by all the various parts of the soul. The soul of man is the organon of the divine self-revelation. The criticism of those difficulties of the revelation which are due to the constitution of this organon requires, then, a thorough knowledge of the human soul, so far as psychology at present furnishes the knowledge. Not only the grounds and objective validity of the soul's necessary truths must be tested; but the activities of the soul in their manifoldness, the relations of reciprocity, harmony, and what I may call supplemental quality must be taken constantly into the account. It must not be permitted that intellect ride out of its sphere and over-ride feeling. Feeling must not be allowed to nauseate rationality by taking it upon its unsteady boat and over the disturbed seas of its changeful voyage. Yet must it be remembered that there is eternal verity in feeling, and criticism can detect it. There are truths wrapped up in the heart's embrace through all the centuries of human life, and gentle, heartfelt philosophy can disentangle them. Complete criticism will also recognize and aver the sphere of faith, and as well of freedom. It will consider how in faith the soul not only lays all the foundations of her most cherished knowledge and of her dearest convictions, but also how in faith she lifts up herself eternally above the clouds of scepticism, the snow-capped summits of intellectualism, into the immediate sunlight of God. Complete criticism will also recognize how, even in the work of the senses, seemingly standing at the extreme from faith, there is concealed the presence of the Absolute, and how the problem of their power to testify to objective truth under the form of necessary notions and intuitions is closely interwoven with the problem of the objective validity of the concept of God.

Nor will the complete criticism of which I speak fail to recognize everywhere the dominant and yet limited power of choice in man—a power which weaves into every argument for God, and every objection to each argument, the element of choice, and which constantly calls the soul to decide between what is pleasing to the senses or to the pride of learning, and what is subject rather of spiritual trust, hope, and enlightenment. Such criticism will always aver the existence of a spiritual nature in man, of a part of the human soul which is peculiarly adapted to be the organ of the highest self-disclosure of God.

The difference between the application of barren dialectics and complete metaphysical criticism to difficulties of this kind may be illustrated by a passage from an author already quoted. In answer to Schelling, Mr. Mansel asks, in his *Metaphysics* (p. 273): “Can I be conscious and not conscious, substance and accident, reality and phenomenon, personally existing and merged in the absolute, at one and the same instant, in one and the same act?” To such barren questions we may reply either Yes, or No, according to the positive contents we have put into them. To the question, “Can I be conscious and not conscious at one and the same instant, in one and the same act?” we may reply: Yes, I can, in a certain sense which it is very important to investigate. The activities and possibilities of my finite ego are very far from being measured by, or wholly indicated in, any individual act of consciousness. Whether I can acquire knowledge, and even go through processes of ratiocination, out of self-consciousness, or not, is certainly a question which admits of debate. My selfhood of which I have never been conscious is doubtless, as intimations derived through my conscious self inform me, decidedly the larger part of me. And as to being substance and accident, reality and phenomenon, at one and the same time, all the validity of my knowledge not only, but of my being, depends upon this being possible for me. However incomprehensible, the thing is realized in every act of self-consciousness. Even

the last question may be answered affirmatively: I am "personally existing and merged in the absolute," my personality is grounded in the divine; for "in him we live, and move, and have our being."

Since, then, the existence of positive and definite contents of consciousness given in the elements of the concept and the need of thorough metaphysical criticism are apparent, we will call the second class—The Metaphysical Difficulties of the Concept of God. They are such difficulties as inhere in the nature of the organon through which the divine self-revelation is made to man. But such difficulties are twofold, according as they concern the objective validity of the concept and the power of the organon to authenticate its concept, or concern the harmony and adjustment amongst themselves of the various elements contributed within the one organon to the one concept. Of the second or metaphysical class there are, then, two kinds of difficulties, which we will call the ontological and the psychological.

The ontological difficulties arise in the attempt to authenticate the objective validity of the concept of God. Thus far in all our discussion we have spoken only of a *concept*. But what about the reality? To the very word "concept" there is attached the suggestion of unreality. That there are and have been manifold human conceptions of God there can be no doubt. But scepticism inquires whether these are not mere misconceptions, and whether there be a reality underlying them all. If such reality exists, then in the next step criticism can inquire, What is it?

Every discussion of the ontological difficulties should keep constantly in mind the following truths:

First, every inquiry into reality of whatever sort ends in ontological difficulties similar to those which lurk concealed in the concept of God. In all research we come ultimately upon the same problem, and are forced to ask ourselves: Does the concept, though resulting from clear and necessary intuition and logical correctness of reasoning, after all correspond to the reality of things?

Secondly, in no form of the inquiry can we find any guarantee which is not, directly or indirectly, given us in the process or product of thought itself. We cannot compare the concept with the reality, because we cannot have the reality given to us in some form other than the human form of knowledge, nor see by some process other than that of comparison whether the two agree or not.

Thirdly, we find in every act and product of thought elements which reveal themselves as necessary, and which by this their form of revelation contain postulates of the reality of things. These elements of knowledge the soul grasps and holds as a veritable possession of objective truth. There is in the grasp and grip of the soul the conviction not of impotency and of being regulated, but of strength and of being made the subject of a divine self-revelation. The metaphysical limits of the human mind are not so much sources of weakness because they are limits, as sources of strength because they mark off the domain in which the mind holds sovereignty over its own subjects.

Fourthly, not only is the guarantee of objective validity to our thought given in the necessary of thought itself, but this guarantee is practically sufficient for all men, philosophically so for him who understands aright the true philosophy of human thought. Thought postulates the objective validity of its own work. In all thought, then, is involved, as the very condition of its existence, the conviction that reality is cognizable and actually known by the soul. And, to use the words of Trendelenburg, "this confidence would be a contradiction, if somewhat thinkable were not presupposed in things themselves, if truth were not presupposed in the actual." All finite thought is the result of the interpenetration of the finite mind with real being; and to reach the case in hand we may add, All finite being is interpenetrated with divine thought. Therefore,

Fifthly, the concept of God, like every other concept containing elements of necessary truth, asserts its own objective validity in the persistence and necessity of those elements.

Yea, this concept affirms its objective validity in that it takes up and unites the various necessary elements of human thought, and appears of its own nature as the one concept presupposed in every form of human thought, in every form of objective being, and especially in the correspondence of the two. The true link between the two realities of thinking soul and thinkable universe is found in the reality of God.

Sixthly, even necessary truths offer themselves in some sort to the soul of man for free and rational acceptance. As the conclusion of all ontological research, there remains the call to a choice; and in the last analysis intuition and trust, the act necessary and the act in some sort spontaneous, are seen blended together. The receptive attitude of insight toward fundamental truths is at the basis of all philosophy. But these truths, if not accepted to be with choice and joyfully held, do not cease their regulative function nor their insisting upon such acceptance. In the case of the concept most lofty and comprehensive, the elements of choice are of all the most important. Atheism, then, whether in the form which denies God, or in that which refuses to affirm him, must ever remain invidious. No courtesy of belles-lettres or Christian charity can altogether remove its odium. For atheism results from the refusal of the soul to affirm its confidence just upon the one subject of human knowledge which is not only most important and comprehensive as subject of knowledge, but also most obligatory and helpful as object of trust and love.

With these preliminary remarks, we proceed now briefly to sketch the grounds within which lie all the proofs of the objective validity of the concept of God. The objective validity of the concept of God is given both as the postulate of conviction and as the result of argument.

The objective validity of this concept is the postulate of conviction. We may argue from the conviction; but it is not as furnishing the basis of argument that this conviction does its most efficient work. Its work is vital, rather than logical. History and self-consciousness alike show us that,

argue as they may, men cannot successfully argue against God — that he is pleading his own cause with a hundred indestructible voices in the constitution of the soul. As the basis of the argument the postulate may seem a *petitio principii*; but as the vital effect of a divine self-revelation it will inevitably, in the long run and the large number, gain its holy cause. The undying conviction remains, and will do its work. To the conviction, indeed, in some form or other, all its sceptical critics are fain to come round. Mr. Spencer postulates an “inscrutable Power,” which the universe manifests to us, as the most certain of all objective verities; Mr. Arnold, “an eternal not-ourselves, which makes for righteousness.” We accept their concessions only as special and fragmentary forms of the same conviction which dwells within ourselves, viz. that by thinking man knows the reality of God. But the cause will live without their concessions: it has God and the soul upon its side.

The objective validity of the concept of God is also given as the result of argument. Science — it is true in some sort — may, if it will go deep enough, arrive at the underlying fact from which, as the postulate of conviction, religious instinct and faith take their rise. It does not, however, arrive at this fact by direct argument. The objective validity of the concept of God cannot be the conclusion of a direct argument. For the ontological difficulties, in the case of this concept as elsewhere, concern first principles and the basis of all truth; and “first principles, as principles, admit of no direct proof, but only of indirect verification.” In all consciousness the primal, most important elements never emerge to be looked at in their naked and abstract reality; yet they are just the elements which are underneath and present in every act of consciousness, and which alone make self-consciousness possible. Strictly speaking, there is no consciousness of the ego, nor of freedom, nor of time, nor of space, nor of any of the necessary forms of thought. The real things are the very ones which I never meet face to face, and what I do thus meet is what I call phenomenal,

unreal. But in every act of self-consciousness there is found entangled, as postulates of all its acts, and of thinking and being as well, certain verities given to the human soul. Thus God is, so to speak, found entangled in all the phenomena of self-consciousness and of the objective universe.

It will be seen that what I have called the postulate of conviction is the same thing under another form with that which I now call the result of an argument. Only, in the argument the soul has become conscious of the postulate — *has reasoned its way up to the postulate, and found it there.*

The objective validity of the concept of God is reached as the conclusion of an indirect proof, when we consider God as the postulate of all thought. In all thought there are detected universal and necessary elements, and in every mind there is revealed a work of order and of rationality. If a “not-ourselves which makes for righteousness” is the postulate of moral law and order, a not-ourselves which makes for rationality, and reveals his own rationality within us, is the postulate of all thought. No explanation of evolution, no concatenation of phenomena, goes one step toward unfolding the mystery of human thought, until we ground it in a universal thinking being, not ourselves. All thought is possible for man only as a divine self-revelation; a divine revealer is the postulate of all thought. *Cogito, ergo sum*; *Cogitamus, ergo Deus est*; these sentences are alike not the inferences of a syllogism, but the simple averment of postulates of thought — one upon the subjective, the other upon the objective, side.

The objective validity of the concept of God is also reached as the conclusion of an indirect proof, when we consider God as the postulate of a thinkable universe. To be the object of thought the universe must be thinkable. Objective forms, adapted to reason, and therefore bearing the stamp of a rational author, are implied in the fact that the universe is, though only partially, at all intelligible to man. All science of nature, so-called, implies the objective validity of its underlying concept, which is the concept of an intelligible universe.

But the intelligible finite forms of the universe reveal, as their postulate, the same One who is revealed by the intelligent forms under which the thinker thinks them; both alike reveal God. He is therefore the postulate of an intelligible universe, the ground of the intelligible forms which the universe reveals to man. Behind all theories of ideas, behind all doctrines of evolution, behind all those philosophies of nature which deny to man any knowledge besides that of the phenomenal or which assert the existence of an unknowable Absolute, there lurk and play forever the twin forms of immortal conviction—the universe is intelligible, and man may know the reality of it. We must *think* the universe, if at all, under some form; and if *we* think it under any form, it must be that form under which it is given us to think. To try to think it under any other form than the highest, results in thinking it under some form lower than the best possible for man. In thinking the universe under the form of “sleeping plants” or “dreaming beasts,” and so talking of “plastic life-principle” or “unconscious purpose to build,” we do not escape the necessity of postulating a thinkable universe and objectively valid thought. In thinking the universe as grounded in the same One in whom we see our own thought to be grounded, we make a higher and more consistent use of the same postulates.

And from the subtile, but persistent and comprehensive, reciprocity of the thinking soul and the thinkable universe, we gather more than twofold strength to our conviction that the ground of both is in one thinking and creative God.

The objective validity of the concept of God is also reached as the conclusion of an indirect proof, when we consider God as the postulate of the world's evolution. There is a process of unfolding, there is a goal toward which the cosmos is moving. We see only fragments of the process, we catch only dim glimpses of the grand goal. To suppose that the laws of Darwinian evolution are anything more than the merest fragments of the whole, is to betray that foolish confidence in having reached an ultimatum, with which so

many thinkers have cheated themselves in all ages. Nor is Darwin, any more than Hegel, upon the right road to the secret of evolution — Hegel quite as much as Darwin; for the process of unfolding is as surely a process of thought as it is a product of physical forces. It is both. The belief in a goal of the universe, in laws and a process of advance toward the goal, is confirmed by observation and reasoning, but is not wholly their product. In this belief there are certain postulates of an underlying power, of an all-engrossing purpose, of an all-worthy end. To think of going no whither and of moving with no purpose, is as painful for reason as to think of coming no whence. We are urged onward to lay the ground of evolution in God, and to find the goal toward which the world is moving in his final purpose.

The real being of God is required by thought to serve not only as the ground of all phenomena, but as the ground for the orders of phenomena and for all forms of human science which deal with the various orders. The being of God is the one rational explanation of nature, history, art, and politics, of the unfolding ethical and religious life of man, and of the relations which maintain themselves amongst all these complex interests and forms of growth. And not only our explanation, but our sole guarantee of the reality of human progress, is in the real being of God. To show this truth will occupy us in another Article. For the present it must suffice simply to state the great truth that, when we speak of a cosmos, of a course of history, of a destiny for the race, when we assert the improbability of man and the hope of improvement, when we trace a progress of the universe in rational form, from diffused gas through azoic rock to highly organized and reciprocally related forms of animal life, and trace a progress of history from rude, disjointed savagery to civilizations highly organized and organically bound together by commercial, social, political, and ethical ties, we make an attempt to understand the whole only so far as we posit for its ground and cause and goal — a Personal Absolute, who is the living God. As another has expressed the thought, “we

read the great world-poem in the idea of God." We lose all warmth and light from the focus of our own being, and from the hearth of the universe, in losing God.

Of what has been said upon the objective validity of our concept we make, then, the following summary. The concept of God is our guiding idea in reading the cosmos. Experience and the idea demand one another, and the greatness and conclusiveness of our knowledge lie in this, that they everywhere so interpenetrate. The concept of God enables us to read, not perfectly in all details, and yet as one intelligible whole, the universe of God. No other concept will do this; no idea — that is, no concept with power to grasp and unify the phenomena — of the world is possible without God. We are justified in saying to any inquirer, on grounds of reasonableness alone, accept God as the postulate of thought, thinkable universe, and unfolding cosmos. But we recognize in our exhortation the possibility that he will make choice of another way of viewing the universe.

But, be it especially noted, in not accepting the theistic view of the universe he will misuse his choice and starve his affections. He will continue to feel, if feeling be not destroyed, as did Dr. Bushnell, "My heart wants the Father"; and the Father will continue to say to him in the divine self-revelation, Here am I; take me. And when he heeds the invitation, the inquirer will find that he has grasped, as the object of faith's choice, the same One who appeared to his reason, as the postulate of the many and positive necessary convictions within the soul.

There is one form in which pre-eminently the human soul postulates the objective validity of its concept of God. This form is that of conscience, with its insight into the eternal verities of the moral law. The "eternal not-ourselves which makes for righteousness" is God. Mr. Arnold may attempt to show how he can arrive at this "not-ourselves" without metaphysics or faith, but will never succeed in the attempt. It is by metaphysics or faith, and in the categorical imperative, that he will be forced to search for the object of his admira-

tion. Both metaphysics and faith lead us to the same conviction, viz. the "categorical imperative" postulates the reality of a Personal Absolute with a moral nature, who is God.

The second division of the metaphysical difficulties of the concept of God meets us next in this inquiry. To them I have given the name psychological. If we rest in the objective validity of any possible form of the concept, the question still remains, what special form is valid? In the effort to sketch any such valid form new difficulties at once emerge. These difficulties, as well as the ontological, concern the inherent form of the organon in which the divine self-revelation is made.

Of such psychological difficulties only one, and that too briefly for thoroughness, will now be considered. We find the concept of God given to us in the form of a Personal Absolute or an absolute personality. But there are special difficulties with this form. They are claimed by some to be such as wholly to destroy the concept. It is said, personal and absolute are mutually contradictory and mutually destructive epithets. They cannot co-exist in the same concept. And besides this, one of them, viz. absolute, represents no positive thinking whatsoever; we cannot possibly "conceive" the absolute. To think is to limit, to condition; the absolute is the unconditioned, the ground out of all relations, etc. And other elements of the concept of God besides that of personality can never be united with the absolute; we cannot think of absolute cause, etc.

What I have at present to say upon this difficult question of the Personal Absolute will be given in the following remarks.

First, the term personality is not to be looked upon as exhausting all the divine being in its possible or actual forms of being. We know God as personal because he is so far revealed to us who are ourselves persons, and whose own personality presupposes and affirms as its ground the personality of God. The more beyond of God may be farther

depths of personality, or farther depths of divine being not to be brought under the term personality at all. That this unrevealed more beyond is contradictory to personality we cannot surely say until we know the more beyond. That it is not contradictory we may affirm on the ground of what is revealed. As Mr. William Knight has said: "With entire consistency, therefore, we may affirm at once the personality and the transcendency of God."

Secondly, our knowledge of personality affirms itself as not complete, but true so far as it goes. If we know anything, we know personality. With the phenomena of our own personality we stand momentarily face to face; we have no other knowledge so immediate and convincing as that which is given in the knowledge of ourselves.

And yet, Thirdly, all the essential marks, the secret and the sub-conscious ground of personality, are quite incomprehensible to us; the senses and the intellect, that is, cannot represent them adequately under their forms. "Know thyself," is the most familiar of exhortations to knowledge; and what can be readier at hand than the sufficient means for such knowledge. Yet who of the wisest psychologists at all comprehends his own personality? What possible life can be after that form which human life is known to take? This is the riddle of the Sphinx; and it is an all-devouring Sphinx who propounds it. The ground of our limited personality, the ego, is not taken cognizance of by outward or inner sense, is not conceivable, is not representable by an act of the imagination, is not the conclusion of a debatable syllogism. We talk of self-consciousness, and criticism recognizes the postulate and averment of a self in every act of consciousness. But no man can by senses or intellect come directly at that selfhood in which he inevitably believes. The existence and persistence of the ego is the postulate of man's whole self-conscious being. Every ego is, then, in some sort, an absolute; it is the invisible and incomprehensible ground of self-conscious life.

The essential qualities, the constant activities of this same

ego, are themselves incomprehensible. The mystery of finite thinking even is unsolved; we think, we know we think; but *how* we *can* think, no man has yet told. The finite thinker cannot understand his own finite work. To adopt that abstract style of setting forth the contents of consciousness and then involving them in contradictions, which Mr. Mansel and others have adopted, we may say all thought is self-contradictory; for, in thought we are two and one at the same time, otherwise the self-conscious subject and his object could never come together in the same act. And thought involves memory, which is, when handled in Mr. Mansel's fashion, a self-contradictory act. Nor can any man begin thinking; for thought is comparison and comparison involves memory, which involves thought, or else two become one, before they are two, and there is a beginning which is supposed to be absolute, and yet presupposes a previous beginning, etc. That freedom is impossible, and has been proved to be so over and over again, every reader knows; but without freedom there is no true personality. When a writer, however, proves by abstract reasoning the impossibility of the actual on the ground that it cannot be understood, or explains away the plain postulates of thought by confusing them through a ratiocination, every step of which presupposes those same postulates, we may perhaps reply to him: It makes us sad to hear the conclusions of your philosophizing; but then — as said Böhler to Wesley — “*Mi frater, ista philosophia tua excoquenda est.*”

You cannot “conceive” the Absolute Person, says the objector to the reality of such a being. No, I cannot “conceive” my own finite personality, cannot even represent the possibility of it in terms satisfactory to logic. But I shall continue to believe and know that I am a person, if I cannot conceive my personality. The impossibility of conceiving is a very different mental state from the positive and indestructible affirmation with which the soul lays down its own postulates. I have such affirmation for my own personality, and, in a measure, for that of God. I frankly say I do not

wish to be able to "conceive" either my finite or his absolute personality; for, what I can conceive I am apt comparatively to disregard — it is the phenomenal and transitory.

Since, then, we can neither "conceive" nor understand our own personality; since there lies in its essential characteristics the possibility of involving them in the contradictions of an abstract logomachy; since we can only get our knowledge of personality in the form of postulates of the soul which testifies to the validity of its own prime convictions; since we find in these postulates the assertion of positive but incomprehensible contents, — we are warranted in being very modest about affirming what is not a possible form of personality. The actual form of that definite act of the soul called self-consciousness, we immediately know; but possibilities of personality in general lie much farther in the background. On the other hand we *do* know with a knowledge which carries immediate conviction, that certain forms of manifestation testify to an underlying personal being. We know much better what are actual manifestations of personality than what are its abstract possibilities.

Fourthly, that inscrutable background of being which we detect lying beyond and lurking within the phenomena of our self-consciousness should teach us other lessons in addition to that of modesty. The essence of personality may not be, does not seem to be, in the limited of the individual phenomena, so much as in the ground which lies back of them. In this background of our own being we can see intimations of the unconditioned, the absolute. Rationality and conscience do not reveal themselves so much as necessary outcome of our limited personality, but rather as fragmentary specimens, so to speak, as intimations of a personality that encompasses ours. "There neither is, nor can be but one reason," says Coleridge, "one and the same, even the light that lighteth every man's individual understanding, and thus maketh it a reasonable understanding." So that Lotze may be believed when he teaches that our finiteness is "not a productive condition of personality, but rather a hindering barrier to its

perfect development." And again, "In God alone is perfect personality; in all limited spirits there is only feeble imitation of it."

Fifthly, as to the other factor in the Personal Absolute, it is perfectly easy to juggle with the word "absolute." The self-contradictions evolved from it all depend upon the contents previously given to it. If the absolute means the absolutely unconditioned in any sense and way whatever, it is manifest at once that we cannot converse or reason about it at all. We cannot even say that it is, or is not; for, what *is* for thought must to some extent come under the conditions of thought. We have not interest enough in an absolute that is absolutely absolute to debate or even inquire concerning it. But even Mr. Spencer's absolute, which is so abstract that to affirm personality of it is to limit and so destroy it, gets itself limited by its author, when he speaks of it as the "utterly inscrutable Power which the universe manifests to us." It is plain that we cannot rescue the idea of the absolute from "the death-kingdom of abstract thought"—where, as we suppose, exist (pardon the unphilosophical assumption involved in the word) the Hegelian Nothing, the inscrutable Power, and other stalwart heroes begotten by the fathers of lofty speculation,—without proceeding at once to clip its celestial wings and bind it down. And it is equally plain that as soon as we proceed to limit the absolute, we, with unerring philosophic and religious instinct, introduce into it some of the elements of personality.

We begin by speaking of it as the ground of being, as the power which the universe manifests. And when forced to inquire under what characteristics and forms does the universe manifest this ground of its own being, we say: Why, to be sure, under the forms of force, rationality, final purpose, and — we are inclined to hope — also love, which are all prime qualities of personality. The utterly inscrutable power is manifested to us thus in the scrutable forms of personality; and so we spell it with a capital — Power — as Mr. Spencer does. But we should lament with Mr. Arnold, to

observe that the personality of the "not-ourselves" is here brought in again upon "the poor old dead horse of so-called natural theology"; did we not, unlike him, have a high respect for natural theology. Indeed, is it not plain, that only by belittling the idea of personality and evaporating to a minimum residuum that of the absolute, can the two be kept from uniting in the concept of God?

We do not claim by the term absolute to exhaust the transcendent being of God. We accept it and define it so far as we find its validity is guaranteed in the soul's positive contents of truth. For — and here we return to our guiding thought — the self-revelation of God is real, but conditioned upon the organon through which it is made.

The proofs of a Personal Absolute are abundant and convincing, if we approach them with the ground cleared from the objections. These objections consist in wishing us either to think too high or too low. For, on the one hand, we are invited to consider the self-contradictions involved in abstract ideas of personality and the absolute; or else, on the other, we are required to conceive just how God can come to individual acts of self-consciousness resembling our own, and still be the Absolute. But barren dialectics and positivism, under its two forms of nescience and "reasoned realism," are always alike unsatisfying. When the soul accepts the divine self-revelation it finds rest where only, as says a German philosopher, "the restless movement of the spirit quiets itself," viz. "in the conception of the whole."

The proofs of the personality of the Absolute have been in a measure brought forward while discussing the objective validity of the concept of God. They lie partly in the forms under which the universe manifests the Absolute to us as its ground, and partly in the wants of the human soul.

No investigator can attempt the phenomena of the physical universe without constantly postulating the objective validity of underlying force. When the wonderful relations of these phenomena are more clearly seen, when their classification under laws and species is found to be most widely

possible, and when the conception of a cosmos — of an orderly whole which represents the sum-total of the phenomena in their relations — grows strong within the mind, then the investigator is ready to affirm that the underlying force is one and intelligent. For, thought is then seen to be, not the posthumous and illegitimate child, but the parent of the universe. Force is then written Will, and seen to be guided eternally by thought.

And final purpose also, entangled in the phenomena of the universe and liable to misinterpretation, still inevitably appears. There has, doubtless, been much falsehood taught, much mischief done, by finding final purposes otherwise than they really are. But the fact that final purposes are manifested in the universe is a simple, undeniable fact. Investigation would be folly without, would indeed negative itself; for there would be no tracks in nature for the investigator to follow, no power in the investigator himself to make consecutive search for them.

We confess that the grand final purpose, and the goal to which we are destined, cannot as yet be discovered by human research. But there is revealed to faith a hint and a hope, which accord in good measure with the mind's reasoning, and more fully with the cravings of the whole soul. We are given glimpses of a consummation which is devoutly to be wished — the complete triumph of love, the vindication of the method in the reaching of the goal. And at these glimpses the soul so raises herself from the slumber of indifference or the down-sinking of despair that she stands erect upon her feet, and with glowing eye and beating heart overlooks all the intervening obstacles, to grasp by faith the end.

Will, Thought, and Final Purpose, guided by Love — these are the forms under which, more or less clearly, the phenomena of the universe manifest themselves, when we rise to the conception of them as a whole grounded in the Absolute. They then reveal to us that absolute who is their ground, as a person. The Personal Absolute is God. Let it not be sup-

posed, however, that the soul of man would attain this truth — especially the conviction that love is the motive, and the victory of love the goal of the universe — without the silent, potent pressure which comes from its inmost cravings. Long before it has self-consciously examined facts and proofs, the cravings of the soul will, it is likely, have forced it to a hope, or even a joyful and firm conviction. “A legitimate satisfaction for the religious emotions” of him who blends thought with his feeling is found only in the Personal Absolute.

That a conceivable view of the Personal Absolute may be given which shall prove, if accepted, immensely comforting and helpful to the hungry heart of man, there can be no valid doubt. It is comforting to believe that the Power, which is manifested in, and moves the universe, is united with intelligence and such love as secures a benevolent consideration of each individual, and a lofty goal for the whole. But the sceptic insists that the belief, though comforting, may not be true. The cravings of the soul, however, do not meantime stop; there is much practical force in them. We find, therefore, that the world of men will not, that even the aristocracy of thinkers, which sets itself up within and above the world of men, cannot, coolly weigh the arguments pro and con God, as though they had no personal heart-interest in the turning of the scale. In the objectors and in the objections there is a self-revelation of God; even by the objections the manner of this self-revelation is more clearly made known. For argument, conviction, and hope alike teach us that God has revealed himself to man as the One who supports, penetrates, and moves forward all the universe with his own force, intelligence, and love.

But all this is gross and contemptible anthropomorphism in the sight of certain philosophers and critics of philosophy. Well, be it called anthropomorphism, or whatever other title these wise men will, we will bear the opprobrium of the title. We would rather honestly earn our bread for the soul, and have it fresh, than smuggle it in stale, to eat it with fear and

clandestinely, in a corner. We do, indeed, think God, so far as we think him at all, in human forms of thought; we do this with positive affirmation, with the joy which comes from the consciousness of possessing a true self-revelation of God within the soul. To be that *μορφή* of soul which is called man, and which is therefore capable of receiving a limited but true revelation of the divine, is our glory and crown of honor. We choose rather to think God anthropomorphically than to think of him after the fashion of "sleeping plants" and "dreaming beasts."

We believe also that we have better reason to think *Him* thus than even to listen to the arguments of objectors. Were it not unlikely to accomplish any good thing, we should flout at them in the words of Mr. Kirkham: "But in the name of all proportion and modesty have I not ten thousand million times more pregnant evidence, in this daily course of life and mercy, and in all these convincing voices within and without me, that the living God is here in the plenitude of love and wisdom, than I have that inside that incongruous heap and patchwork of appearances, ye clept Atheist, there is a mind and conscience like my own."

Many of the minor psychological difficulties of the concept of God disclose themselves as in part akin to this central difficulty of the Personal Absolute. Problems concerning the origin and nature of moral evil, the relations of the finite and the absolute, the reconciliation of perfect benevolence with the vast use made of suffering, when analyzed, appear closely allied to the one problem of a personal God. The mysteries of life fall back into the life which sends forth, and again swallows up, all other mysteries.

The difficulties which emerge in the concept of God when we try to unite in it the two factors of infinity and personality, are much like those which have just been discussed. The methods of barren dialectics, or of nescience, or of scepticism as to the positive and necessary contents of consciousness, can play their tricks within this sphere of thought as well as within the other. The word "infinite" may be used

as barren of all contents, and so have no worth to contend about. But the infinite, in the sense of the unknown indefinite, lies back of all our contents of conscious personality in ourselves ; and in the sense of the great without limit, or the absolutely perfect, it unites with the definite contents of our highest conception of personality, to form the concept of God.

With the discussion of these two metaphysical difficulties, viz. that of the objective validity of the concept and that of the Personal Absolute, we must for the present content ourselves. To sum up what results have been reached in their discussion, a few words will suffice. The difficulties of the concept of God, so far as they are inherent in the organon of the divine self-revelation, are metaphysical difficulties. They call for a complete and metaphysical criticism of the positive contents of consciousness. This criticism shows us the limited but trustworthy knowledge which the soul has of objective reality. It shows this knowledge in the form of postulates. It warrants us in saying, we have the knowledge of God, as we have all our knowledge, in fragmentary form, but also in the form of a divine self-revelation, the verity of which is averred and guaranteed in the prime convictions of the soul. Nay more, this knowledge of God is the one form of knowledge which seems best to bind together, harmonize, underlie, and explain all human knowledge.

But we think we hear some reader complain ; You have not shown us God as the conclusion of an indisputable syllogism ; you have told us nothing comprehensible concerning the limited absolute, the finite infinite, the uncaused Causa sui which is out of all relation to every effect ; you have not shown us how we may "conceive" God. No, reader, the solution or the negation of such mysteries is only for those who are giants in philosophical speculation, of whom we do not claim to be one. We do not know so much about the transcendental nature of the inscrutable Power which the universe manifests to us, as does Mr. Spencer. We have no "reasoned realism," which is adequate to explain everything

by the principle of identity, and then explain away even this principle itself ; we do not know the universe without postulates, as Mr. Lewes appears to know it. Therefore it is that we have admitted many insuperable difficulties, taken many things for granted, and averred as true much which we confess we cannot understand. But we need only to open our eyes in the simplest act of sense-perception, and then criticize thoroughly the contents of consciousness called up in the act, to find therein a whole world of postulates, incomprehensibles, and insoluble puzzles. Such lofty problems of theology are, however, best solved by authority. Seeking one which all the theologians on their side of the problem will consider with most favorable predisposition, we light upon the dictum of Augustine : " Deus, sine qualitate bonus, sine quantitate magnus, sine indigentia creator, sine situ praesens, sine habitu omnia continens, sine loco ubique totus, sine tempore sempiternus, sine ulla sui mutatione mutabilia faciens nihilque patiens." And when this princely philosopher of theology soars above all the Aristotelian categories in the effort completely to think God, and then, by the very expression of his thought discloses himself as still within the region of those categories, does he not teach the same truth which all history and philosophy and theology affirm, viz. that a complete and adequate knowledge of Divine Being is wanting, but that his self-revelation furnishes within the symmetrical activities of the human soul a valid though fragmentary knowledge of Him ?

The third and last class of the difficulties of the concept of God, we have called the historic or evolutionary ; they are such as admit of relief or solution by the growing correspondence which takes place between the objective process of divine self-revelation and the organon through which the revelation is made. A full discussion of these difficulties would take us from the work of analysis and into the field of history. It may be at some future time attempted. We content ourselves for the present with the following somewhat desultory thoughts.

It is part of the creed of any one who intelligently believes in God, that there is an objective process of revelation to be detected in the universe, and that there is also a growth of the soul of man in adaptation to receive, to comprehend, and to sympathize with the process. This growing correspondence between soul and process belongs both to the individual and to the race.

The sum-total of influences in which every man is set forms an organic whole, which may be looked upon as constituting for the man so much of God's self as presses for consideration upon him. The objective phenomena remain disjointed and utterly unintelligible, unless they are regarded as representing the plan of God; every man's life is a plan of God. It is the universe in so far as it constitutes the individual's element of life, which is to be regarded as representing for each the process of the divine self-revealing to him. Sickness and health, sorrow and joy, gains and losses, the knowledge which comes from study of science, history, politics, the emotions which come from the beauties of nature and human art, the purposes which are strengthened or broken down in the hard strife of practical life, are to be unified only under the supposition that they constitute parts of one process. And in close correspondence with the objective process, regarded as the vehicle of divine disclosure, goes on the growth of the soul of the individual, which is the organon for the disclosure. The objective process is from the more to the less limited; the growth of the organon is from selfishness and crudeness toward that condition of light and love which enables it to take in more and more of God. This, when there is that true development of the constitutional powers of the soul which he undergoes who becomes a self-conscious child of God. But when the soul refuses or neglects to respond to the truth of God by which it is surrounded, it not only mutilates its own growth, it even reacts upon the process. "There is the true light that lighteth every man coming into the world." "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness taketh it not in."

But it is with a world-process of divine self-revealing and an historic growth in the spirit of the race that our thought is chiefly occupied. This process gives us the nature of God more and more clearly written as the centuries move on. And the inworking of the same God makes the soul of man more and more capable to receive and understand the process. Standing at our point in this great world-process, and opening our souls to its voices, we can catch certain intimations at least, of a clearing-up of certain difficulties. We can put forth certain hopes for the future, which are in a measure certified by the experience of the past.

The improvement of man in the total of his soul will help to solve some of the difficulties of the concept of God. Certain arguments for the being, the benevolence, and other attributes of the Personal Absolute, will gain in scope and cogency from the increase of man's knowledge. They have already made gain; they will make still greater. If we make our theology, as we are bound to do, more and more *biological*, we shall comprehend under it all the facts and laws of life, looked upon as proofs of the living God. "The Father worketh hitherto," and present life is the manifestation of a living God. The biological turn which human research is now taking has helped, and will still farther help, in understanding the source of all life. We hail the sifting of that pile of mingled chaff and wheat which has lain upon the debatable threshing-floor of natural theology, because we know that though the interpretation and collocation of the facts of natural theology may be changed, the ideas under the pressure and guidance of which it does its work are eternal.

But it is not the whole truth that man is improving, and so growing in fitness to receive the divine self-disclosure. The improvement itself is part of this disclosure, for it is of God.

In the objective process itself lies also a promise of help for the race in the solution of certain difficulties. Some of the greatest difficulties of the concept of God arise from mis-

conception, or imperfect conception, of the final purpose and goal of this process. Imperfect conception is inevitable for those who stand so far away from the goal and who see only fragments of the final purpose. The more of the journey is run, the more clear will the law of the journey and the destination of the traveller appear. The fullest strength and harmony of the teleological arguments depend upon our being able to gather up all the phenomena and show them in the light of one comprehensive and sufficiently worthy final purpose. This we cannot, as the result of a logical argument, now accomplish. When we look to the end and read the law of the process in the light of the end, we hope for and believe in what we do not now see. Yet this hope and belief are not without rational foundation. We are urged forward to a point of relief and rest; we find it in victorious divine love securing the completed kingdom of our God. But that the goal *is* one worthy, and that the motive power *is* love, we shall see more clearly in the nearer approach to the goal.

It is evident, however, that when we attribute so much to the love of God, and hope for so much from the triumph of love, we must use the word in some sense which shall not contradict the present patent facts and laws of suffering. That suffering is no mere accident of the universe is sufficiently evident to him who reads aright the laws of life. To all life, as we know aught of it, craving and resistance are necessary; both of these, in the very essence of their meaning, involve suffering. It is by understanding more and more clearly how this enormous use of suffering comports with love and works out its purposes, that we may hope to have also lightened some of the difficulties which accompany our knowledge of God.

And it may be — we only make the suggestion — it may be that the advance of dormant necessary truths and ideas into the consciousness of the race, will clarify, widen, and ground in reality, more and more, our knowledge of God. All historic process in the matter of the soul's fundamental

ideas, beliefs, hopes, and aspirations has consisted, so far as we can discern, not in shoving them back and gaining from the conquest of their territory more ground for the shallow, muddy pools of positivism, but in bringing them forth more clearly, and establishing them more firmly in the domain of human consciousness. It may not, then, be impossible for some of those very truths of Christianity which now seem to stand most isolated and remote from the necessary, or even the real, knowledge of the race to establish themselves in closer organic connection with the sum-total of its knowledge. The contributions which Christianity has made to our concept of God is one of those interesting collateral subjects of research which are suggested by our general theme.

“The concept of God is the resultant of God’s revelation of himself to the human soul.” It is a centre upon which converge many lines, not only of argument, but also of intuition, feeling, and purpose. Viewed in the light of these statements, the difficulties of this concept seem to us to lose their weight as objections to the reality of that Personal Absolute whom faith calls our Father and our God. The difficulties make the thinker feel, with a sense of awful mystery, the inadequacy of his attempts perfectly to compass the Eternal with forms of sense and understanding. But they also show that Eternal One as, in his valid but limited revelation of himself, he stands before, and within, the human soul. They make the thinker conscious of his own finiteness, but conscious also of possessing the self-disclosure, according to the form of his finiteness, which the Infinite has made. They permit him to say: I know not the whole of God, and many things, therefore, I dare neither to affirm nor to deny; but what I do know of Him, I find so grounded in my very being, so confirmed by the forms of all external being, so comforting to the heart, so fruitful in the life, that I affirm it beyond the possibility of trustworthy denial.