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# BIBLIOTHECA SACRA

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## ARTICLE I.

### THE THEORY OF A FINITE AND DEVELOPING DEITY EXAMINED.\*

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THE theory of a finite Deity is not altogether new. It was foreshadowed long ago by more than one eminent philosopher. Indeed, there has always been more or less difficulty on the part of unaided reason to reconcile the existence of the world's imperfections and evil with the doctrine of Divine omnipotence. This apparent difficulty has been regarded as virtually amounting to a theistic dilemma; namely, that if God could have made a better world than He did He cannot be perfectly good, and if He could not have made a better one than He did He cannot be almighty. This point was developed at some length by John Stuart Mill in his "Three Essays on Religion"; and his conclusion—which, upon the basis of his expressed and implied premises, would seem plausible—was, that God cannot be omnipotent. He thus unequivocally declared: "Not even on the most distorted and contracted theory of good . . . can the government of Nature be made to resemble the work of a being at once good and omnipotent" (p. 38). And with reference to the animal kingdom he said: "If we are not obliged to believe the ani-

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Vol. LXXV. No. 300. 1

mal creation to be the work of a demon, it is because we need not suppose it to have been made by a Being of infinite power" (p. 58). He therefore came to the definite conclusion, "Omnipotence . . . cannot be predicated of the Creator on grounds of natural theology. The fundamental principles of natural religion as deduced from the facts of the universe, negative his omnipotence" (pp. 180-181). This great thinker thus, in a lengthy argument, contended for a Deity that is finite in power, as also supposedly in wisdom and other attributes.

William James also declared for a finite Deity; and in his work entitled "A Pluralistic Universe" he set forth his grounds for such conviction. It should be noted, however, that he distinguished this Deity from the Absolute, whose existence he does not deny. On this point he said: "I believe that the only God worthy of the name *must* be finite. . . . If the absolute exist in addition . . . then the absolute is only the wider cosmic whole of which our God is but the most ideal portion" (p. 125; see also p. 193).

Various philosophical solutions of the problem of evil that have been offered, thus agree in ending in a Deity whose power is either limited by His very nature or circumscribed by the laws and forces of the existing universe. But it seems to have fallen to this time of a world-catastrophe somewhat fully to develop this theory of a finite and evolving Deity, by adequately setting forth the supposed philosophic grounds upon which it might be considered safely to rest. Several important works in which this theory is defended and more or less developed, have thus recently issued from the press. Among such should especially be mentioned Edmund H. Reeman's work, "Do We Need a New Idea of God"; and to

this class belongs Hastings Rashdall's "Theory of Good and Evil." This view of God is also contained in George Bernard Shaw's latest works; while it is considered tenable, and not incompatible with religion and Christian faith, by Lucius Hopkins Miller, in his work, "Bergson and Religion."

In addition to the works noted above, several important articles in support of this theory have also lately appeared. The April number of *The Hibbert Journal* (vol. xvi. no. 3) contains an article, entitled "The Doctrine of a Finite God in War-Time Thought," by R. H. Dotterer, in which the author holds up the fact of sin, even any one instance of sin and suffering, as "sufficient by itself to make out a *prima facie* case against the hypothesis of omnipotent goodness." He declares further: "Unless we are willing to throw overboard all our logic and all our ethical convictions, we cannot, in the presence of the tragedies of human experience, reconcile the idea of omnipotence with that of universal benevolence." Again he says: "Events do not take place arbitrarily. Nature has no mercy; makes no exceptions; does not turn aside to avoid running over anyone. . . . God does not, so far as we can see, and therefore, we infer, he cannot, interrupt or change this order. His purposes are not accomplished *instantly*, but in the course of a process." This last statement is in line with one of Mill's great arguments, especially as expressed on pages 28-31 of the work noted above. Dr. Dotterer therefore considers the apparent temporal and physical limitation of God as not merely a *self*-limitation, but an absolute one; or else if His ends could be attained with less human suffering, if good, He would occasionally change the order of natural events to preserve innocent lives and prevent unhappiness. He contends that a good God would not thus have limited Himself unless compelled by some

“ulterior necessity,” or a “limitation that is absolute and inevitable.”

Another contribution bearing upon this subject appeared in *The Contemporary Review*, December, 1917 (no. 624). This article, entitled “A Philosopher’s Theology,” by H. R. Mackintosh, is an excellent review of A. Seth Pringle-Pattison’s important work, “The Idea of God in the Light of Recent Philosophy.” Although the author of this article does not directly contend for a changing and developing Deity, he speaks on this subject as follows: “Does the religious consciousness, then, accept the idea of a changing God? It doubtless repudiates wholeheartedly the notion of a God who is morally alterable, who is more loving or holy at one time than another. None the less it believes that the very thought of a historical revelation, willed and effectuated by the Father, implies that a potential relation of God to man, as of man to God, is now become actual, and that in this sense change, activity, experience, is predicable of Deity.” And again he says: “We should further have to ask whether, in these high latitudes, process can be conceived which is *only* process, and not in some sense progress. It is indeed very probable that Professor James and M. Bergson have not spoken wisdom’s last word on these trying problems.” Thus this eminent writer apparently holds to some form of progress in Deity, and the inference from the above statement is that such progress might be expressed in terms of Bergsonian philosophy.

Of perhaps greater philosophic significance is an article, entitled “Some Theistic Implications of Bergson’s Philosophy,” by Frank Hugh Foster, in *The American Journal of Theology* of last April (vol. xxii. no. 2). This is an attempt from an apparently thorough examination of Bergson’s published

works, especially his "Creative Evolution," to set forth what to its author seems to be that great philosopher's conception of God as an eternal Becoming, and to apply his principles to a further development of the idea of a supposedly evolving Deity. After briefly stating the Bergsonian theory of evolution, he proceeds to identify Bergson's "Vital Impulse" with God, concluding with the following words: "And thus the imperfection of the Vital Impulse must be God's own imperfection, if he is morally in earnest with this world, that is, if he is God." Again, in his answer to the explanation of apparent imperfections in nature on the part of those who hold to the belief in a static God, he says: "The imperfection of the world and of the World-Builder, if it is an imperfection, must therefore, after all, be the imperfection of God, in the opinion of those who believe in a static God. We may well accept their conclusion and are well convinced that Bergson will do so, for to us and to him there appear to be real imperfections, false solutions of creative problems, blind alleys into which evolution has run and where it has found itself unable to proceed, hesitations and new attempts — all of which, if actually what they seem, necessitate a developing World-Builder, and this necessitates a developing God since it is impossible upon the basis of a static God." Whether Dr. Foster has properly interpreted Bergson as to his conception of an ever-operating Deity — on which there are differences of opinion — does not concern us here. We are here concerned wholly with the substance of the theory itself, especially as set forth by these later writers.

From what has so far been stated, it might, in a general way, be said that this theory of a finite and developing Deity as set forth by its various exponents, has grown out of an

attempted solution of the problem of evil, especially as illustrated in great catastrophes like the present destructive war; for in the existence of that evil it would seem to find its chief justification. And its defense is largely based upon the apparent evolutionary world-process as a ceaseless struggle upward, especially as expounded in Bergson's great work, "Creative Evolution." And, as a purely philosophic theory, it certainly is a very ingenious one; while, from the viewpoint of such as may accept unchallenged its underlying premises, it would seem that its conclusions should leave the matter of God's supposedly necessary limitations no longer an open question. But it is precisely in the premises that we must differ from its advocates. We shall therefore proceed to an examination of some of the chief elements of this theory of a finite and developing God, confining our present discussion, however, to the more purely philosophical aspect of the subject.

THE NATURE OF GOD AS MANIFESTED IN SUPPOSED UNIVERSAL  
EVOLUTION.

Let us examine, in the first place, the more direct evidence, from the apparently evolving cosmos itself, that God supposedly is an evolving Being, or an eternal Becoming.

The fundamental supposition is that, by the process of evolution, the universe has developed into its present form and that by that same process it will continue to develop throughout all future time. As the impelling cause, there is assumed a unified force, which manifests itself in its higher form as life, whence it is called by Bergson the "Vital Impulse" or "Vital Impetus." And, in the last analysis, it is this force that supposedly constitutes the physical universe, as the universe is regarded as itself nothing but energy or the expres-

sion or manifestation of energy in motions. Thus all things are apparently in process of change. And this evolutionary flux is taken on the whole to be a progressive one, so that the "Vital Impulse" is regarded as a thrust upward. And yet this upward thrust is seemingly for a time overcome in local deteriorations, as illustrated in the case of the fading and falling leaf, which would amount to a reversal of the "Vital Impulse." And in the attainment of vegetable life this supposedly tends temporarily to become torpid and would thus be checked in its thrust upward. Then, in the struggle for food, there would emerge the animal world. But, even in the animal world, life is supposed to be in danger of halting its upward progress in an apparent contentment with its attainments, in a pausing and sinking into the torpor of a merely skilled instinct. And thus, by this reversed motion of matter, there would again be a neutralization of the upward thrust of the "Vital Impulse." Then, supposedly upon another trial, in which it apparently rises above instinct, it lays its emphasis upon intelligence. And now with the attainment of intelligence, in an emphasized "self-activity," it constantly antagonizes torpor, thus steadily perfecting the "organization of indeterminism." And hence there is supposed to emerge a moral world as the goal and justification of the whole movement. But even in the moral world the "Vital Impulse" is supposedly often thwarted,— a fact assumed to be illustrated in the present destructive World War. Such, in very condensed outline, is apparently the Bergsonian theory of evolution.

The inference therefore is, that this "Vital Impulse" or "Vital Impetus" as the impelling force in evolution, is not perfect in power and not certain as to its methods, but that it enlarges or develops in its struggle upward. And as this



“Vital Impulse” is identified with God (though not yet definitely done so by Bergson), God is supposedly a finite, changing, developing Being. And hence the imperfections of the “Vital Impulse” as manifested in the evolutionary process of nature, would be God’s own imperfections. As an omnipotent God would have power enough to accomplish the tasks before Him without any imperfections in them, the supposed imperfections in nature would presumably be so much evidence that God cannot be omnipotent, as such apparent imperfections (pain, sin, etc.) would be inexplicable upon the theory of a static God. And hence a God who develops with or through the evolving universe is the apparent conclusion from the above premises.

And this would, of course, also be true even if the actual immediate Creator of the universe would not be the Ultimate, or would be some sort of subordinate World-Builder to whom creation was or is entrusted by the actually Ultimate. For, in such a view, the lack of giving sufficient power to such subordinate World-Builder to create a universe without imperfections, would supposedly be irreconcilable with the theory of a static God as the Ultimate, as perfection would apparently have to be stamped upon all His works by an infinite God, whether directly, or indirectly through a subordinate agent or agency. As such a distinction between the immediate World-Builder and the supposed Absolute, upon the premises, would, however, not add any essentially new element to the problem of Deity, we shall not to any great extent separately consider it. Our answer will be found applicable whether the universe be regarded as the direct work of the ultimate God, or that of a subordinate World-Builder to whom (or which) that work was delegated upon the bestowment of the necessary power. And this would even be true upon the supposition of any

number of successively subordinate World-Builders or World-Operators. However, this view could not seriously be maintained, as it would involve insurmountable difficulties.

Let us now examine several of the more important elements of this theory of a developing Deity. Assuming that the whole of universal nature is in process of some evolution, and that there are limitations and maculæ manifest throughout the whole, as well as occasional local reverses, would that disprove God's omnipotence? Would not evolution as the Deity's (or some World-Builder's) *modus operandi* in nature, which is by nature finite, as we shall see, necessarily bear the marks of limitation? And, of course, man with his native limitations and imperfections would naturally read into nature imperfections due to his own state and condition. And although the facts of pain and sorrow and all the inhumanities of man to man will be discussed under a separate head, it should here be said that these are due to sin. And hence, as the effects of sin, they can in no sense be ascribed to God. All that can be said is that, if God had not created man, there would not be these. But in creating man a free agent, He did not create his sin and consequent imperfections, as will be shown later.

And as to the other apparent maculæ in nature, it might with considerable suggestiveness be asked, Who can truthfully say that these are maculæ from the viewpoint of the greater whole? The fading and falling leaf may seem to be such when considered in itself alone; but in the universal flux of nature it cannot be so regarded. And so of the other objections against omnipotence from other apparent temporal retardations or apparent maculæ in the supposed upward thrust: Upon the basis of this theory, these would rather

illustrate distinctive steps in the upward progress of such otherwise universal evolution. Surely, the elimination of a useless leaf or twig is not meant to be an injury to the tree, nor indeed is it so in reality. But this point surely needs no further enlargement here.

It is thus seen that we cannot infer from such *modus operandi*, because not all its processes are clear and its apparent maculæ understood, and because it apparently acts in ebbs and flows, that therefore the Deity who thus operates is not unchanging and not omnipotent. Indeed, in just such rhythmic movements should we expect evolution to act in its upward progress, as a chain of secondary causes governed by imposed laws, if that were God's mode of operation. Thus the lightning flash appears in zigzags as the result of its seeking, by nature's laws, the path of easiest resistance. But that does in no way indicate a limitation in the Creator as its ultimate Cause. As the created product is by nature finite, it must by nature be subject to just such limitations. But therefore to ascribe such limitations to the Creator or some directing Deity, and thus to reduce Him to finiteness, is totally unwarranted. Creation is surely not the measure of the Creator. This is even true of human work, in which case *both* work and worker are certainly finite entities. It is therefore only too evident that the supposed universal evolution as the Creator's *modus operandi* in nature, can in no way be of evidential value in any argument against the unchangeability and omnipotence of God.

What is said above with reference to the natural apparent imperfections of any finite or incomplete, and still developing, creature of God, would be equally true of the same viewed as the work of a subordinate World-BUILDER, as indeed it would be true of such a subordinate agency or agent Him-

self. The finite work of such a subordinate World-Builder, who must necessarily Himself be finite, would bear the marks of essential incompleteness and finiteness, and therefore of apparent imperfection. And this would even more naturally be so in the case of the finite work of a finite subordinate World-Builder than in that of an infinite God without such subordinate agent or agency. Such subordinate World-Builder would even Himself have His necessary limitations. Surely, as all the power of man is, upon the same premises, from God, while not all the work of man is perfect, or bears the marks of completeness or perfection, so would the work of such a subordinate finite World-Builder (or World-Builders), all of whose power would be from God, bear the marks of finiteness and apparent incompleteness and imperfection. Hence our argument in defense of the apparent imperfections in nature stands, whether the cosmos be regarded as the direct work of God or as that of some subordinate World-Builder, or successive World-Builders.

In this general theory of a developing God as an eternal Becoming, as deduced from the supposed limitations of evolution, there is apparently an identifying of the limitations and bounds of creation with the supposed limitations and bounds of the Creator. The apparent implication is that the Creator is confined within, or limited by, His creation, and that the creature's limitations, or necessary finiteness, are such, therefore, because of supposedly corresponding limitations in the Creator. Indeed, the physical universe is closely identified with the supposedly ever-operating Deity as the "Vital Impulse" of the supposed upward thrust of evolution. And whether that Deity be regarded as the indwelling power, somehow analogous to the soul within its body, or as Him-

self (or itself) one also in essence with physical nature itself as simply the evolved or evolving product from or of His own Being, a finite God must necessarily come out of this theory under whatever form it may appear. And, therefore, the limitations of nature, due to its finiteness, must also be ascribed to God, either as identical with it or as confined within its bounds.

Moreover, this would seemingly be all the more true if the whole physical cosmos were nothing but a manifestation of force — a fact or theory which Bergson apparently incorporates into his theory — so that its very matter would be only the result of motions, or only motions, from infinitesimal to cosmical, or a form of energy. Thus, if that force or energy were wholly identical with the "Vital Impulse," it would be very evident that the apparent imperfections of physical nature as itself intrinsically nothing but energy (or the "Vital Impulse") would necessarily be the imperfections of the "Vital Impulse" as God, or as God's subordinate World-Builder. It surely requires no further proof to show that this view directly and literally identifies the universe as energy with the "Vital Impulse" as God, or at least as some subordinate World-Builder. And as the matter of a subordinate World-Builder has already been disposed of as not requiring separate consideration in our argument, we observe that this would resolve the problem into one of determining whether that hypothetical "Vital Impulse" is actually, or even in effect, identical with God. And, of course, if the "Vital Impulse" is not identical with God, as we endeavor to show, this theory must necessarily fall.

It is, however, contended that personal causation is essentially creative, so that not only is there more in the effect than was in the cause, but also that the person himself neces-

sarily grows with his work. And thus it is held that as man develops by exercise so also *must* God develop in His work of creation. But, in so far as this may be said to be true in the case of man, it is because of the factor of *will* as an *implanted potentiality* in the worker, to which by its very term there belongs the ability of bringing forth that which is apparently new. But there is a vast difference between the so-called creative work of man and that of God, as we shall see. And, of course, to infer that, because man grows with his work, therefore God also must develop with His work of creation, is to *assume*, or at least to imply, that God is essentially finite, and therefore capable of development. This would, in a sense, be measuring the Creator by man His creature; and hence the necessary limitations of the finite creature man would seemingly also attach to God. And thus as man the creature is capable of development by activity, because of his created freedom in finiteness, it is assumed that so also must God the Creator be; and hence He must necessarily be a finite and circumscribed Being to make such development possible.

And the above implies the further supposition that not only in measure (finiteness) is God like man, but also in ultimate essence and in the essential nature of His attributes. And thus, as development can be ascribed to man and to his attributes, so also would the natural inference seem to be that it can be ascribed to God.

And, furthermore, this theory would also have to be retroactive. But in its retroactive application to God and nature it would lead us to a strange impossibility. If the Deity were an eternally developing Being, He would have been less and less from æon to æon backward; while at the beginning of eternity, if we could speak of such a beginning, He might be

said to vanish into an infinitesimal. And hence, theoretically at least, in the eternity past there would have been no God, whether identified with the universe or considered as merely a wholly immanent "Vital Impetus." And, upon the basis of the former, there would then have been neither God nor universe. Thus all reality, of whatever nature, would theoretically have had a beginning, before which it could have had no existence and beyond which there could have been nothing. And hence it should need no further argument to show that, even if God were *now* infinite, He surely would have been less than infinite before. And thus at least not until now would there have been *any* infinite, which, as we shall show, is not only inconceivable, but, in the nature of the case, impossible. But even more objectionable would this theory be from the standpoint of the supposed effect without any cause. Surely, upon the basis of the above, there could at least have been no cause at the *beginning*, if we could speak of such, to produce a universe, not to speak of the theoretically evolving God, whose origin would be infinitely more difficult of explanation than a universe as His creative work. And even though there had been for *Him* at least no beginning; nevertheless, for Him to grow or develop, even upon the supposition of something inherent in His nature as an indwelling force, there would have to have been something external to Him as a conditioning cause to make such growth possible.

In this connection it should, however, be remembered that William James distinguished the Deity from the Absolute, a point in which Dr. Rashdall has agreed with him, but which we have already partly covered in our consideration of an hypothetical subordinate World-BUILDER. Upon this basis the Absolute would include God, as well as other beings,

unconscious and conscious. And thus by implication infiniteness is by this contention even *denied* to God in such a distinction. Hence, by the very supposed existence of another and more inclusive reality — entity or entities — than God, development on the part of God is assumed to be possible because of His essential finiteness in its relation to other external entities. But this is in effect simply shifting, one step backward and outward, one apparent absolute for another beyond it, perhaps still more absolute. And this shifting might be conceived of as indefinitely repeated; but in each case it would only be deepening the mystery of existence. Nor could such integral recessions ever terminate, and end in an absolutely infinite.

Moreover, the supposition that because God acts He must think, and therefore grow in thought so as even to think of things not thought of before, belongs to the same category as the one that if He works He must develop with His work. As the answer to this is largely contained in our discussion immediately above, little more need here be said. As the essential nature of an uncreated Being must necessarily be very different from that of created and limited and physically circumscribed man, so must thought in God and thought in man be essentially different. Man's thinking is either inductive or deductive, from facts or principles previously established, accepted or assumed. God's thinking cannot in the same sense at all be spoken of as deductive or inductive. Instead of speaking of God as thinking in the sense in which we speak of man as thinking, we should speak of Him as by immediate vision *knowing*. For with Him knowledge cannot even be conceived as being the result of investigation, generalization, and deduction. The same might be said of God's willing, for it would be more correct to say *acting*, as



surely we cannot chronologically separate thought, will, and act in an eternal being. Hence, as there can be no real parallel between God and man in this respect, it must follow that it is incorrect to say that, because man by thinking grows, so also must God grow. And the further deduction from this point also, that therefore also must his power grow, falls with the falling of the above as to supposedly growing thought.

Nor would Wundt's statement, that spiritual energy tends by its very nature to increase, add anything to this argument against the unchangeability of God. Wundt's necessary implication is that such a spiritual entity, in order to increase, must be finite, for surely an infinite spiritual entity could not become more infinite. Hence, a more correct statement of that principle would be, that *finite* spiritual energy tends by its very nature to increase. And this is certainly true, as is, of course, apparently Wundt's contention.

But then it is contended that some *uncaused progression* is possible to uncaused existence or to an uncaused or eternal being. But such would be a contradiction in terms, as it assumes an effect (progression) to which by the word *uncaused* it denies a cause. And to assume such change in God because there is and must be change somewhere, is to take the changing cosmos and to throw it back upon God. Indeed, the counter charge might be made that, as somewhere there must also be an *unchanging*, and as God would thus be a changing entity, therefore that unchanging must be the *universe*. Now, if the physical universe were that unchanging entity, then the creature might be considered as more perfect and more complete than the Creator, and nature as a super-god would come out of such an argument, unless God were strictly identified with nature. But this alternative, in making

God a finite Being, as will be seen, would leave us without *any* infinite. The difficulties and contradictions involved in such an argument would thus be insurmountable. Instead of clearing up the mystery of Deity, which would even be deepened by this contention, the universe itself would become an even greater mystery than its God. On the other hand, by assuming God to be unchangeable, and absolute in His power of creation, as indeed both reason and Scripture testify, nature becomes not only easily possible to reason but God also acceptable to faith. Since there must apparently be an unchangeable (as indeed the very word *change* would seem to imply), and since the universe is one ceaseless change, that unchanging something cannot be the universe, and must therefore be its Creator.

From what has been said above it is thus seen that this theory of a finite and developing God is untenable. The fallacy in its various elements lies in the premises. As already implied, the manifest fallacy of the Bergsonian aspect of it consists in apparently confining God within the universe or in somehow identifying it as a supposedly evolving entity with God Himself. Indeed, it will be seen that in such a theory there is a veiled *petitio principii* as to God's supposed finitude; namely, that according to it there is no infinite and absolute entity; for the physical universe is by nature or constitution a finite entity, as has been shown in a recent work on creation.<sup>1</sup> And thus, if God were conterminous with the universe, or somehow identical with it, He would necessarily have to be as limited or circumscribed in His attributes, and

<sup>1</sup> *Creation Ex Nihilo: The Physical Universe a Finite and Temporal Entity.* By L. Franklin Gruber. With a Foreword by G. Frederick Wright, LL.D., F.G.S.A. Boston: The Gorham Press. 1918.

as changeable in his nature or essence, as the universe itself. There would thus nowhere be an infinite either in essence or in attributes.

However, to say that there is no infinite is to dethrone all reason and common sense. Some entity must necessarily be infinite, as is even already implied in the very idea of *finiteness*. That which is finite or limited must be so because of a something beyond it by which it is limited. And there must necessarily be an *ultimate* "beyond," that is not thus limited or circumscribed. And this must be true of attributes no less than of essence. Hence, as the physical universe is necessarily finite, as noted above, it cannot be conterminous or identical with that infinite something; and therefore the contention that would confine God within, or identify Him with, the universe, would make of the *finite, God*, who by implication would supposedly have to be the God of the as certainly *infinite*. But as the finite cannot be an eternal entity (Creation Ex Nihilo, chap. iii.), it would have to be later in origin than its limiting infinite, which must necessarily have to be eternal and self-existent. Or, this supposed God of this theory would have to be a temporal and younger entity than His enviroing infinite. And as He (as identified or conterminous with the universe) and His enviroing infinite would presumably be the only entities, and as He could not have originated Himself, it would necessarily follow that He would be that infinite's creature instead of its Creator, as the infinite would by its very nature have to be the eternal. And thus we have reached a *reductio ad absurdum*. Or, in other words, as that infinite would be the creator of this dynamic or evolving Deity as a Becoming, that infinite would be the real God of this evolving Deity. And thus as that real God would ultimately have to be identical with the God of the Christian

Scriptures, we find that this supposedly dynamic Deity would not be the God of Revelation, or at least not the *true* God. And, indeed, as this dynamic Deity in every mark of inherent potentiality would have to be identical with the universe, it must follow that those who worship him (it) are really worshipping, and in consequence serving, the creature in its potentiality and operative causes in some apparent evolution, instead of the eternal Creator (Rom. i. 25), who according to both Scripture and reason must be infinite and unchanging. Surely, the ultimate Cause or Creator must be greater than, and unlimited by, His creature, the physical universe.

From what has been said above it becomes clear that the fundamental error in this argument for a finite and developing Deity from an apparently evolving universe, lies in identifying the hypothetical "Vital Impulse" in it with God the Creator of it. Surely, the "Vital Impulse" either as confined within the universe, or as identical with it as ultimately and essentially nothing but energy or as an emanation, cannot be identified with the true God to which our argument above leads us. On the contrary, if we accept the hypothetical Bergsonian "Vital Impulse" as a reality, it must be the imposed force or potentiality as the agency in God's creative operations. And thus the imperfections will become intelligible in the light of what we have already said about the natural limitations of a finite entity and those of an hypothetical subordinate World-BUILDER, while they would be no evidence against God's omnipotence.

It is thus seen that the evidence from nature itself as an apparently evolving entity, is not only inadequate to establish the theory of a finite and developing God, but that this evidence is even inapplicable in an argument for such a

theory, while a number of incontrovertible facts unite in sustaining the accepted theory of a static Deity.

#### MEANING OF THE WORD INFINITE.

It seems that exponents of this theory of an evolving Deity also regard Him to be infinite, but with a different meaning attached to the term *infinite*. This point is touched upon by Dr. Mackintosh in the following words: "The truth is, 'finite' and 'infinite,' as employed in philosophical theology, are terms much in need of scrutiny. The crucial question seems to be: Does infinite mean all-inclusive? Clearly we can conceive a reality, say the series of prime numbers, which is infinite in the sense that it has no assignable limit, while yet to call it all-inclusive is absurd. . . . When theology says that God is omnipotent, not as being able to do anything and everything but because He can do that which He wills, it exhibits some real sense of this difficulty."

The last sentence of the above quotation involves a moral problem whose consideration would take us too far afield. But the implication is that God's power is limited by His *will*, whose dictates He can, however, execute. Thus the further implication is that God can do no wrong, because, being good, He could *will* no wrong. However, this would involve the question as to what would constitute wrong on the part of God, and to what regulative laws He could be subject. Moreover, in balancing God's will against His power, there would be no contradiction in saying that both His power and His will are infinite. The two would not be mutually exclusive, if considered as distinct attributes, as each could be infinite without in the least limiting the other. In this sense as applied to attributes, there can be more than one infinite, as we contend that all the divine attributes are

equally infinite. And, indeed, if one is infinite, it would seem to be necessary that all be equally infinite to sustain what might be called the moral equilibrium in the Godhead. But, then, there is even a sense in which God's will and power may be considered *one*, the power consisting in His will, for who can separate will and power or act in the doings of an eternal Being to whom there can be no time relations? Indeed, in speaking of will in God, care must be exercised not to regard will in Him as altogether the same in nature as human will, for even in this term as applied to God we have a veiled anthropomorphism. We can readily see that such a misinterpretation or misunderstanding of terms like power, thought, will, act, as applied to God, must almost unconsciously lead the philosophic mind to a finite and evolving Deity. For, surely, as applied to man, thought, will, act, are successive steps followed by an exercise of power which was in the individual before his thought led his will to issue in act. Indeed, each one of these involves temporal relations, and each one may be regarded as made up of successive elements. Thus human thinking is a mental *process*, actually *proceeding*, involving various related things, both objective and subjective, and various relations. The same is true of willing. Hence, all these terms as applied to man necessarily imply finiteness in both space and time, and therefore they imply progress and development. But in a pure spirit, God, to whom, as eternal and immaterial, there can be no space and time relations, and to whom these terms can therefore not be applied in exactly the same sense as to man, they must not be interpreted in the limited and limiting human sense. Hence, much of the confusion of ideas as to the being and attributes of God is due to various erroneous definitions of terms. And this the term *infinite* has not escaped.

According to some men, infinite, as applied to God, is taken simply to mean immeasurably great, or to be one form of the *finite*. And as immeasurable means that which is beyond *our* ability to measure, the word infinite becomes synonymous with the word *indefinite*. Hence, the only infinite is supposedly the mathematical infinite.

That which is great to the extent of being immeasurable by us, is made to be equivalent to an infinite. Or, whatever in the least transcends our faculties must be infinite. Thus, if our faculties are comparatively very limited, as indeed all really great thinkers have always themselves consistently held, then infinity would begin immediately beyond the range of our faculties and would continue in successive reaches of equal magnitude in a multiplicity of successive contiguous infinities. Or, there would be as many infinities as the measure of reality would be number of times greater than the measure of the human mind. And hence another *reductio ad absurdum* comes out of the premises upon which the theory of a finite Deity is established, upon a full logical application of them.

Thus if the term infinite simply meant immeasurable by man, then truly there might be an indefinite number of such immeasurables, or infinities. But as the word *infinite* literally means *without end*, there can be only one infinite of the same nature, or else, in their succession to one another, succeeding ends of such supposed infinities would have to be followed by successive beginnings of succeeding contiguous infinities. And thus there would be ends, and also beginnings, to such successive infinities, both singly and as a whole, which is in contradiction of the endlessness of an infinite. However, the definition of an infinite as merely immeasur-

able by us is at fault, and thus an equivalent to infinite is found in the word indefinite.

Moreover, to make the mathematical infinite the only real infinite is to make the measuring-rod greater than the thing measured. Mathematics is a tool, and a tool that in its real nature is applicable only to the physical cosmos. It is the human mind's instrument of measure, necessarily implying that that to which it is applied is mathematically constituted. And that fact already implies that as an instrument of measure it can at least not be greater in its own measure than the thing to which it is applied as made up of a unit or units of its measure. But as the physical universe has been shown to be a finite entity, mathematics as its measure must also be finite in its applications and powers. And if it be urged that a measure can be conceived under certain circumstances or in certain cases as being greater than the thing measured, even then the measure could not be infinite, if the thing measured is *finite*. For, if the thing measured is finite, then, no matter how much greater than it were the measure, it would also have to be finite. In this case the thing measured (the universe) might be regarded as the measure and the measure (mathematics) as that which is measured; and as the lesser is finite in measure so also must that be which it is now regarded as measuring. No number of times the measure of a finite can constitute an infinite, as the finites joined in its measure would not only have internal termini, but also external limits to the whole internally contiguous series.

Now what is the testimony of mathematics as to its own finiteness or infiniteness? It is unreservedly that it knows no infinite, that it can measure no infinite. As it deals with integers and fractions of integers (which themselves from a lower point of view may be regarded as integers), its measure



cannot constitute an infinite, as no number of integers can constitute an infinite. Hence, there can in no real sense be a mathematical infinite, although we may *indicate* such an infinite.

Now with reference to the application of the term *infinite* to God, it should be said that it does not mean the same as *perfect*. Perfection must indeed necessarily accompany His infinity, but it does not constitute that infinity. Thus infinity in God or the Absolute cannot mean perfection, except by implication. And, of course, if infinite as applied to the Absolute meant possessing all existing perfections, then God as the Absolute would necessarily have to be infinite. To say that all perfections are possessed by God is already by implication to acknowledge infinity in Him, even as to those very perfections. And, indeed, as a physical entity (the universe) can by nature not be infinite, and as God must necessarily be a spiritual entity, He must be infinite, as there must be an infinite — and He alone, as there can be but one such infinite.

Now, of course, if God is infinite, as reason demands and as we believe we have proved Him to be, there could be no development either of His essence or of His attributes. Surely, there could be no other such infinite external to an only infinite being that could necessitate or make possible as a condition such development, while a finite could not condition, limit, or increase an infinite — as, for that matter, an infinite could not increase or grow. And as an infinite can by nature not become less than itself, or a non-infinite, and could not be limited except perchance as a voluntary act, it must be unchangeable, as indeed its very fullness itself would already imply. There could, therefore, be no essential internal change possible to it, as that would make it less than

infinite in the changed respect. And with infinity and unchangeability must stand the attribute of omnipotence, not to speak of the other attributes.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSALITY AS APPLIED TO DEITY.

We come now to an examination of the doctrine of causation as applied to Deity. In the physical universe as a chain of causes, it is held that, in a sense, there is nothing new in the final effects that was not originally already in the causes. And this fact would, of course, naturally follow from the laws of the conservation of matter and energy. Now, if this be granted, it would need little argument to prove that the physical universe could afford no evidence for a developing Deity, at least as the inherent or indwelling Cause. On the contrary, the law of causality, as implied in, and reënforced by, the laws of the conservation of energy and matter, would unanswerably make for a static Deity, at least as manifested by or illustrated in the existing universe. However, this would assume not only that these great laws are inerrantly established and absolute, but also that our conclusion from these laws as to an unchanging God would be correct upon other premises, especially as to the relation of the Deity to the universe, of Creator to creation. It might, moreover, seem to imply some sort of necessity in the creative Cause, even as necessity is manifest in the caused and causing order of nature. Hence, it is important for our purpose to consider the law of causation with reference to Deity, and also to apply it to the question of supposed necessity in the Creator and of the need and purpose of creation.

In the first place, if the universe were in its last analysis essentially nothing but energy, and if this energy or force were actually identical with the hypothetical "Vital Im-

pulse" of Bergson, and if that "Vital Impulse" were identical with God, as is assumed by some exponents of the theory of a developing Deity, then the universe itself would be God or the manifestation of God. Then, as noted above, upon the basis of the laws of conservation of matter and energy (or, in this view, of energy), God in His power, greatness, and completeness could not develop, at least as an undivided entity in its totality. Hence, upon these premises of reasoning, further argument would not be necessary in defense of the theory of a *static* Deity, however great or small that Universe-God or Divine Universe would be. But that would necessarily make of Him a *finite* Deity, as the universe, as we have shown, is essentially a finite entity. Therefore, as an infinite there must be, and as we believe we have shown that that infinite, rather than the finite universe, must be God, it must follow that God must be greater than this supposed Universe-God or God-Universe. From this it would therefore follow that, even if the universe as intrinsically nothing but energy were Deity or a manifestation of Deity, then it could not be or manifest the whole of Deity. And as God would thus have to be infinite even according to this argument, further discussion would not be necessary, upon the basis of these premises, to show that omnipotence, and indeed the infinitude of all the other attributes, must go with that essential infinity, or else God would be finite in at least those respects in which He would thus not be infinite. Or, in other words, there would be the manifest contradiction that a totally infinite God would be partially finite, whereas infinity in one attribute necessitates infinity in all. However, as, according to this view of God, He would be immanent in, or identical with, the universe, but not wholly so, He would, beyond the universe, also be transcendent. And in that transcendence

and immanence He would have to be regarded as infinite, while yet finite in or through the finite physical universe, or in His immanence; and thus in this finite physical universe He might supposedly be changeable and not omnipotent, and hence manifest imperfections throughout its mighty reaches. However, that this cannot be true must follow from the fact that God as an undivided and indivisible whole, as apparently necessarily a personality, cannot be infinite in whole and limited or finite in part, unless we could speak of a kenosis or self-limitation as a limitation in part. And, moreover, the point that the apparent imperfections of the finite universe could not be ascribable to God in the integrity of His infiniteness, is covered, or at least implied, in our consideration of the natural limitations of a finite and in that of a subordinate World-Builder working under the Absolute. Hence, in this view of Deity, either as wholly or even as partially identical with the universe, the imperfections of nature can constitute no argument against His infinity, unchangeableness, and omnipotence. Indeed, from what is said above and elsewhere, it might be said that these imperfections, as altogether normal in nature upon the theory of a static Deity, even indirectly make for such a Deity. Believing that this point needs no further consideration here, we shall pass on to a consideration of a more common view of God's relation to the universe as its Cause, to see whether any of its elements make against the theory of a static God.

A clear distinction must be made between secondary or caused causes and first or uncaused, and therefore pure and free cause. All secondary causes must necessarily themselves be effects; and thus they themselves are what they are by a necessity imposed upon them by their antecedent causes or

complexity of causes ; and hence they cannot be free causes. But this suggests a chain of causes whose ultimate link or links must be the first in this series of caused or secondary causes, for no such series of integral links can be infinite. And so far it may truly be said, that if no new element were introduced from an external source, the power manifested in these successive effects (or later links of secondary causes) must potentially have been in their antecedent secondary causes (or successive effects). But that first cause, or parallel of causes, in all these chains of effects, must have been caused by a cause utterly different from all those of these various series. In a word, the first in each series of secondary causes must have been the effect of an uncaused, and therefore free, cause. If this were not so, and if that primary cause were in essence similar to the successive secondary causes, then it would be equivalent simply to the addition of one more to the chain of similar causes ; and so on indefinitely, and yet, never reaching infinity, as noted above. Hence, as an infinite there must be, as already shown, there must be what we have called a primary, first, and uncaused cause, which must therefore be essentially different from all secondary causes created by it (Him), and hence free and absolute as far as these are concerned, as will more and more appear.

The above point may be illustrated by the striking of a row of successive contiguous balls. The motion of each ball, as we ascend the series from the last to the first, is the effect of the motion or energy of the one next preceding it, as itself a secondary cause. But the primary mind-directed blow, or rather the directing mind, as the first cause in this case, is altogether different as a cause from the motions of the successive balls as secondary causes. And while none of the balls has any kinetic energy apart from the impact of the

mind-directed blow, or rather the causative mind, and while the energy of each successive ball is wholly the effect of the energy of the next before it, the causative mind is not measurable by the energy of the balls, and hence not by the energy of the blow. And it is, moreover, totally different in essence from any of its effects, even including the muscular energy that wields the hammer to move the balls. And while that initial blow is not an act of necessity from the viewpoint of the causative directing mind, it is an act of necessity from the viewpoint of the effects as caused secondary acts. In other words, the mind acted by choice and not by necessity, while the effects of energy in the series of balls are such by necessity. And from them as actual facts looking toward the initial blow of the causing mind, the blow also was one of necessity, as far as they are concerned. And thus it would become easy, from the viewpoint of the imparted energy as an actual fact, from this relative necessity of the blow, also to read necessity into the action of the original actor, or into the original actor himself. Hence a manifest contradiction may come out of a confusion of these ideas.

In applying our illustration above to the creative Deity in His operations in the universe through secondary causes, it becomes clear that all secondary causes (not now including man) are such by an imposed necessity, and that even the Creator's act in primal creation was an act of relative necessity as viewed from the created universe as an existing reality, or else it could not be in existence. But the error must not be committed of reading *absolute* necessity into the Creator's act of creation or into the Creator Himself, as if in Himself there existed some necessity of creation. The necessity of His creative act, in order to bring forth the universe, existed in the universe as a future actuality, and not

in the Creator of it as a potentiality. And thus, though the universe may be said in a figurative sense to have potentially existed in the Creator before its creation, that potentiality was by no means one of necessity. Or, creation was a matter of choice, and not of necessity, on the part of the Creator. He could create, or not, at will.

Moreover, it is manifest also that the Creator must be altogether different in essence from His creation. And, while there is no energy or other property inherent in the universe which was not put into it either directly, or indirectly as a potentiality, by the Creator, it is also clear, from what is said above, that the energy, etc., of creation, is not the measure of the power of its Creator. He could have created, or could create, a greater and far more wonderful universe than He did, and He could have created one smaller and less wonderful, even as a man could strike a harder blow or one not as hard, or lift a weight heavier or lighter than five pounds, or build a larger or a smaller house than he does. And though this last point would not in itself prove the power of the Creator to be infinite, any more than in our illustration above man would be proved infinite in power simply because the measure of the energy of his blow in moving the series of balls is not the measure of his own power, or simply because he could do a greater work than he does, that infinity of power in the Creator must, nevertheless, follow from an added consideration. As we have already shown, there must be an absolutely infinite. But as the physical universe can by nature not be infinite, it cannot be the measure of that absolutely infinite. Hence, it must follow that if God is that absolutely infinite, although the energy, etc., of the universe is not infinite, it cannot limit the power of that infinite Creator of it to finiteness. And, indeed, a necessarily infinite Creator must

be infinite in all His attributes. And, of course, He must be absolutely free.

In this connection it becomes necessary for us to consider whether the application to God of the principle of causality is proper. It is true that God is in no sense an effect. It is also correct that He is not self-caused, and that He has no more to do with His existence than we have with ours. But the nature of our existence must not be confounded with that of God's existence. He is not because He was caused to be, but because He is absolute or ultimate existence, and the *only* ultimate and absolute existence, as we have shown. Nor could there be two absolute entities. We are because we were caused to be. God is uncaused and independent; we are caused entities, and therefore necessarily dependent, even dependent upon God as the only absolute and independent. Hence the comparison of God's existence with our own existence can have no value in an argument against God's unchangeability or omnipotence.

But while God is uncaused, and the only uncaused Being, and therefore free, and thus in no sense an effect, as the Great First Cause He alone is a pure or true cause. For, all secondary causes, also in themselves being effects, are not pure causes. The First Cause alone really fully matches the following definition of cause by John Stuart Mill: "We may define . . . the cause of a phenomenon to be the antecedent . . . on which it is invariably and *unconditionally* consequent" (A System of Logic [Eighth Edition, 1888], p. 245). This definition is not strictly true of any secondary cause, for no phenomenon or effect is invariably and unconditionally consequent or dependent upon any such cause. Not being a pure cause, because it is conditioned by preceding and concurring



or coöperating causes, there is no unconditionality between such cause and its associated consequent. But as the Great First Cause is a pure cause, it (He) must be a true cause, and the only one, according to the definition of Mill. Thus our argument proves that God alone is a real cause — a cause absolute — instead of being no cause at all.

However, in speaking of God as the Cause of the universe in a *physical* sense, there would seem to be an assumption that would need attention; namely, that God created or caused the universe in a *physical manner*. Surely, if creation was the calling into being of physical nature, then it cannot have been in a physical manner as that term is understood, as physical processes themselves then first came into being. Hence it must have been in a hyper-physical, or transcendental, sense that God was the Cause of creation. Or, in other words, it was by Divine power acting *immediately* or *directly* in the primal creation of what had no elemental existence before, and not mediately through means as secondary causes, which at that ultimate point of creation had no existence. Hence the test of the unchangeability and omnipotence of God by applying to them the principle of causality rather establishes that omnipotence and unchangeability.

In what is said above there is already an implied answer to the objection against the doctrine of the unchangeability of God, growing out of the doctrine of causation; namely, that if God is the cause of the universe in the physical sense, everything in universal nature for all time must always have been *in* Him before its creation. And, therefore, as an exhibition of his perfections, if creation were merely a representing or a repeating of what had always been the same, in God, it would have lacked sufficient reason. In other words, why

a creation if its purpose would have been answered without it, as would supposedly have been the case if God had in Himself eternally and essentially everything in the future universe?

Although we have already shown that it is incorrect to speak of God as the cause of the universe in the physical sense, there are other elements in the above objection that require consideration. According to this objection the universe *in toto* must eternally have been in God before its creation. And hence naturally would arise the question, Why, then, its creation? But the universe as a potentiality must not be confounded with the universe as an actuality. The two are very different things. The one is a possession of the necessary wisdom and power to create such a universe; the other is the manifestation of that power and wisdom in the created product.

Although the limited power of man in his work from materials at hand is not an exact parallel to the power of God in creation, human acts afford us an illustration of what is stated above. A person's ability to build a house is a very different thing from the finished product, and yet one might truthfully say that the house was potentially in the builder, at least as an idea, before its erection was begun. But we anticipate the possible objection that the builder simply put together certain materials of nature according to some definite plans, whereas in creating the universe either the Deity operates through or in eternal matter (and perhaps as somehow confined to or identified with it), or perhaps He created that material from Himself as some sort of emanation from the substance of His own Being. The latter seems at times to have been the conception of Sir William Hamilton, among others; the former is at least apparently that of Bergson, *et al.*

But both of these views assume precisely the point at issue; namely, an impotence, or the want of omnipotence — and therefore changeability — in God. For, in restricting the creation simply to an eternal operating by Deity in or through the supposedly eternal universe-stuff, or to some sort of emanation of His own substance, both views by implication deny to the Creator the power of absolute creation, or creation *ex nihilo*. And this latter is undoubtedly not only the Scriptural teaching as to primal creation, but also the unmistakable testimony of all the voices of universal nature (Creation Ex Nihilo, especially chaps. vi. and vii.). Hence it is this theory of a developing Deity that would limit Him in His power to create, and not the essential nature of God or His relation to such a universe as real Creator. From this it follows, then, that the supposition that the perfections of God in the creation are only a repeating of what is eternally the same in Him, is foundationless. For although, as now amply shown, God does not change either in essence or in attributes, there is a difference of manifestation, and therefore of His perfections in their manifestation.

The illustration of man's work from materials at hand and God's work even in a creation *ex nihilo* is applicable in our argument, although there is this difference, that in the building of the house the builder uses already existing materials, while in the creation of the universe, according to this view, God created also the materials. In both, the materials, either before or after the completed work, were not a part of the designing worker, but were essentially different from him. In neither, therefore, was the finished work, as an actuality, in the worker before it was begun, but only as a potentiality. And this potentiality was not one as to the substance itself, except as to the ability in the one of gathering it as already

existing, and in the other of also creating it. Moreover, it might be said that this potentiality in both was one of accident, not one of essence or of necessity, for both acted from choice alone and might have continued the possession of the potentiality without having it issue in actuality. And, of course, if in creating the universe God simply worked upon and through eternally existing matter, or if the universe as perhaps nothing but energy were simply a manifestation of, or an emanation from, God, then He would necessarily have to be finite, as already shown. And then our application to God of our illustration above would be superfluous, as such a conception would not only *assume* Him to be a finite Being, but it would also by implication limit His omnipotence by that finiteness and by denying to Him the power of absolute creation, as noted above. However, the contradiction involved in such a view has already been pointed out.

The foregoing paragraphs also embody a partial answer to the objection as to the need of creation, because a creation would have added nothing to the knowledge of God concerning Himself that He did not know before; for, as implied above, a creation involves more than knowledge. And such a creation would not be meant to add to the knowledge of the Creator of it. But if there were, or were to be, rational beings, the purpose of creation from this point of view would be apparent. However, as God's knowledge would include, and really be the cause of, that of such rational beings, it might again be contended that creation would thus add nothing to the sum total of knowledge. And this would, of course, be true also if the universe existed in God *substantially* (a point to be discussed with reference to rational beings in our next paragraph), instead of merely

*potentially*. But this contention as to the totality of knowledge also is nullified by the above consideration. And although God's knowledge must, of course, have been or be as comprehensive as His own Being in all its attributes, and therefore necessarily even more comprehensive than the universe about to be created, that undoubtedly infinite knowledge on the part of God would not have made impossible *some* knowledge on the part of rational beings already created or to be created later. For surely no one will contend that God's knowledge, whether infinite or not, in the least nullifies man's actually existing partial knowledge. In other words, God's knowledge cannot be exclusive of man's knowledge, any more than man's knowledge can lessen the knowledge of God. Hence, in the possibility of such partial knowledge on the part of rational creatures, already existing or about to be created, a universe-potentiality in God would have abundant reason and justification to issue in *actuality* in a *created universe*.

It is thus seen that the universe viewed as only a *potentiality* in the Deity before its creation, could not lack sufficient reason in its actual creation, or be a mere repetition. From this point of view such an objection would certainly be groundless. And even if God had the whole universe in Himself *substantially* before its creation, and if there had been a body of eternal spirits before its existence to enjoy the same upon its creation, creation would not have been a mere repetition or display of what they supposedly knew of God from eternity before its creation. To be so would require omniscience on the part of such hypothetical eternal spirits, or a knowledge of God as great as God or as His knowledge of Himself. For only on the supposition that they knew what was substantially (or even potentially) in the Being of God,

and all that was in His Being, could such a bodying forth in creation have seemed unnecessary. And even then would this have been true only upon the further supposition that no other finite and more ignorant beings might have been created either before, or synchronously with, the creation of the physical universe, or even after the completion of that creation. And certainly, upon the correct basis that they do not and could not know all that was in God before creation, there would be a good ground for creation to manifest more of God than was before manifest to them.

But, then, what about hypothetical eternal spirits? Surely, there could be none such, or else they would have to be identical with God, or co-eternal and co-equal with Him, both of which suppositions are necessarily impossible or even contradictory. And to speak of *eternal created* spirits, is a contradiction in terms, for that which is eternal cannot have been created, while a created entity cannot have been or be eternal; for creation implies a time and condition of creation, before which it did not exist. Hence it must follow from the above that, however viewed, in assuming the existence of any intelligent beings to contemplate creation, that creation would legitimately subserve the very purpose which this theory would deny to creation, whatever other purpose or purposes, more or less exalted, it may subserve in addition.

And to this may even be added another purpose in creation, in emphasis of the one which we have shown to be altogether proper and reasonable; namely, that perhaps by the very nature of a creature, which must necessarily be a finite entity, only a finite and created entity can directly and adequately be contemplated. Man can by nature as a sense-bound personality not directly behold the personality or being of God. And this would undoubtedly also to a degree be

the case with *any* creature, whether as a sense-bound personality or as a pure spirit. And thus for the more satisfactory contemplation of God as an undoubtedly infinite and certainly uncreated spiritual Being, it was only proper for Him to manifest Himself in finite and created works in manifestation of His glory. Thus even as in the incarnation of Christ Jesus we see the Father and know the Father's heart, as we could not see and know directly, so in a finite and created universe as their complement or counterpart, created and finite rational beings can behold the Creator's glory as they could not by immediate vision behold the eternal God as unmanifested in His works. But the necessity for creation upon this basis also would in no sense be in the Creator, but in the rational creature that would thus be enabled to look through nature up to nature's God.

But, then, the further question might be raised, Why the creation of any rational beings at all? For, apart from such, presumably no such reason for physical creation could be offered. This would surely be the objector's last recourse; for his next question would naturally be, Why does even God exist? Well, that He does exist, not even an honest objector should deny. And if one should, as indeed many do, deny this, and insist on being an aimless tempest-tossed orphan in the universe, then he would not remove but only deepen the mystery of his own existence and that of universal nature. For then the existing universe would be infinitely more difficult of explanation than upon the doctrine of an absolute creation by a transcendent Deity, however immanent He may continue to be in its operations. That anything else exists is more mysterious than that God exists. And that God exists is manifest from an array of evidence from universal nature

that makes His existence an absolute necessity as a postulate of reason, even as the only necessity ascribable to Him is that of existence.

Hence, in that undoubtedly infinite Creator we come to the ultimate and absolute, through whom all things exist and by whom they continue. Himself uncaused, He is the Great First Cause of all. He moves all, though Himself unmoved. To deny this would be to contend that God is Himself moved by something external to Himself. Such would be grossly materializing God, and ascribing to Him physical properties and necessary relations of time and space. Nor can an Ultimate be spoken of as perchance depending upon a still more ultimate, as is elsewhere implied. One ultimate there must be, one therefore that is absolute, independent, and unmoved by external power, because there can be no such external power. At any rate, motion can surely not be ascribed in the physical sense to God, who as necessarily infinite must essentially be everywhere. We therefore take God as the I AM, JEHOVAH, whom by searching we cannot further, or at least fully, find out.

FREEDOM AND THE FACTS OF SIN AND PAIN IN THE  
LIGHT OF THIS THEORY.

In accounting for sin by referring it to free will, the Christian apologist does not ascribe necessity to God in thus creating man a free agent. Nor could it be said in an absolute sense that God could not have prevented man from actually sinning, whether in some or in all cases. God certainly could have made man either with or without such freedom. To deny this is to *assume* what is a point at issue; namely, that God is not omnipotent. But if man had been made without



freedom, he would not have been a moral and responsible being.

Here, however, we are confronted with the supposed difficulty that freedom apparently involves something new; whereas, in a universe of a static Deity, such freedom would always have existed in Him. That freedom involves something new is indeed true from the viewpoint of a *created* universe, wherein it was new at its introduction or creation; but from the viewpoint of the Creator it is as old as the eternal God. And hence both these statements would be correct from their own viewpoints. And, therefore, as freedom involves something new and at the same time is as old as the eternal God, there can be no contradiction in such attribution of both newness and age or eternity to freedom as applied respectively to creature and Creator. The thing that can truthfully be said is, that the attribute of eternal freedom in the Creator appears temporal in His creature, to which it is imparted by Divine fiat. But such temporal impartation of freedom to the creature would not lessen it in the Creator, nor would it involve a change in His being.

Now for the reason why God chose to make man a free agent rather than a creature of necessity, we should have to look away from and beyond man himself, especially as an isolated unit in creation. And hence here we should be entering upon a problem of moral purpose transcending man and his capacity of solution. This might even be regarded as forbidden ground. But there is no doubt that the answer to this question of God's purpose in creating man a free agent, must be sought partly in the nature of God and partly in the ultimate purpose of man in the all-comprehensive whole. And looking at the nature of God, among other attributes, we see

freedom there. Hence, man, as apparently the highest product of His creation in the physical universe, would naturally in God's image be created free.

The above might, however, be construed as implying that God in being free could also sin. But that this is not correct becomes evident when it is remembered that if God is infinite, as we believe we have proved, then He must also be infinite in all His attributes. An infinite cannot transgress or sin, as such sin or transgression would imply limitation. An infinite must be not only perfect but complete and absolute. How could an infinite sin when there is no other infinite and surely none greater? By whose laws could He be said to be restricted and governed and to whom considered to be accountable? In essence whole and in all attributes apparently equally infinite, as our conception of God must necessarily regard Him, there could be no unbalancing among them nor any eccentricity of any one of them beyond its own infinity. It may, however, be contended, that, in thus reasoning from the infinity of God, we are *implying* His omnipotence, and that therefore further argument would be of no value. And this is in a sense true, as surely an infinite God would necessarily have to be unchangeable, as already shown; and hence His omnipotence would need no further proof. However, as the subject should, in the interests of clearness and completeness, be viewed from various angles, this form of argument is a valid and legitimate one, and is also employed elsewhere.

But even the point made above must not be regarded as at least in this respect to read necessity into the being of God; for necessity necessarily implies some one or something external that necessitates, or by whom or which there is some necessitating restriction or limitation. And as this cannot be the

case with an undoubtedly infinite being, whether regarded as personal or impersonal, even in this respect of not being able to sin, necessity cannot be ascribed to God. Hence, although God cannot sin, He must be free; or, in other words, His existence is one of absolute sinless freedom.

Thus God is sinless by His very nature as the only eternal and absolute being by whom all other beings exist and unto whom they are related as dependent. And with His nature we must stop, for there is nothing with which directly to compare it; and therefore further investigation and analysis would bring us no nearer a solution. We thus come upon the ultimate, which cannot be defined in terms of a nonultimate, or even of another ultimate (for there can be none), and for the definition of which there is no superultimate to which as a genus the ultimate is related as one of a species. This ultimate must therefore be accepted as the mystery beyond which reason cannot go. And some such ultimate mystery necessarily meets us at the final terminus of all human ratiocination, as we have already explained. And here we surely have the simplest ultimate that can make our reasoning sure and safe, and that can possibly account for all the complexities of all other existence.

With man, the creature, the status of freedom and the possibility of sinning are different. He is by nature finite, and that finiteness manifestly implies restrictions. Indeed, finiteness implies *necessary* relation to, and interdependence in the midst of, multiplex finiteness. And such relation and interdependence, apart from will, would involve necessity. But coupled with will it permits of freedom. And such freedom implies the possibility of acting contrary to, and of rising above, environment; and it therefore involves the possibility of transcending mere physical restrictions. By this

we mean that sin is the transgression of higher than mere natural restrictions, of what we choose to call moral restrictions, imposed upon man as a social being for the good of the whole social fabric, as well as of himself as one of its units. Hence the moral law as summarized in the Decalogue. Thus the taking of a thing that belongs to a fellow man, in being an exercise of the will, is a rising of the impelling personality above passive environing physical conditions. But, apart from the thing's real ownership, the taking in itself considered would not be sin. But here the higher moral law governing man as a social being comes in, and thus the thing's real ownership makes the taking of it by another sinful. Hence it follows that freedom of action in the social sphere involves the possibility of transgressing against fellow men and of sinning against God, even as in the physical sphere, considered purely as such, freedom of action involves the possibility of rising above mere otherwise necessitating environment. And if man did not possess this freedom of action or possibility of choice in the moral sphere, he could not possess it in the purely physical sphere, for the moral here exists in, or is associated with, the physical. And if he possessed it in neither, he would be a physical automaton and morally irresponsible. Hence, by his very nature as a finite being possessing will, man, as a free and responsible agent, is able to sin. And this analysis of the reason why man could sin would seem to throw light upon the fall of certain angels, as reported in the Christian Scriptures; for angels, too, are finite: and thus our reasoning may even apply to them.

But this possibility of sinning on the part of the creature can in no sense be attributed to the Creator, no more than the actual sinning. He did not make man a sinner, nor does He cause him to sin. And in no sense can He therefore be ac-

counted as the cause of sin. He made man by nature free; and, in the exercise of that freedom, the creature, who is by nature finite, can transgress the moral laws that were imposed for the regulation and development of society. Thus man became a transgressor, a sinner, against his fellow men and against his God. Or, it might be said that essentially man was made free and innocent, but accidentally, or apart from God's creation of him, he became a sinful being. And again we emphasize that neither can any responsibility be attached to God because of man's defection, nor can any necessity be ascribed to Him in so creating man. Hence, the argument from the sin of man, in an endeavor to establish God's impotence and changeability, upon the plea that if He were omnipotent and unchangeable He could have prevented sin, utterly fails of its purpose.

And the above is, of course, equally true, however great the depths of wickedness to which man has sunk, and whatever sufferings the race has thus brought upon itself *through* sin. Not all the savagery of barbarous tribes, nor all the brutality of all the wars since history began, with all their attendant sufferings, not to speak of the present World War in particular, can thus, in the light of all the facts, constitute any real evidence against the omnipotence of God. To blame God for human sin and suffering is a cowardly repetition of the old, old story, of passing the guilt along to some one else, of the man putting it upon the woman. Nay, it is going much further, in that it is the putting of the guilt of both upon their God who created both free and moral personalities. Surely, a little reflection should be sufficient to convince any intelligent and conscientious person that God the Creator is not responsible for the sins and sufferings of man, as illustrated in the lives of both individuals and nations. To make Him

responsible for these and thus to limit His power, would surely be magnifying beyond all proportion the greatness of this self-conscious creature we call man, and of his little speck of a world that floats somewhere within the immeasurable immensity of the God-created and God-sustained universal whole. For the power of the God and Ruler of such an inconceivably mighty universe must not be balanced against the potential of our little earth, nor can His power be limited by the acts of man.

Now in viewing man in the light of his ultimate purpose in the all-comprehensive whole, what light does this afford for the reason why God made man a free agent rather than a creature of necessity? Well, here we may be said to encroach upon the realm of prophecy, for that ultimate purpose of the all-comprehensive whole cannot become fully apparent until the final consummation of all things. As our consideration above, from the nature of God and that of man, had to do with creation, so this consideration from man's ultimate purpose has to do with his final redemption and coronation. And as this last will be the final destiny of man according to Scripture, especially according to the testimony of the Book of Revelation, as well as also according to the profoundest philosophic conception of man from a natural point of view, we may there perhaps find the hint of an answer to our question.

Freedom in man makes possible for him an immeasurably higher destiny. Indeed, *development* in *freedom* does not belong to the same category as a supposedly merely environmental development through the necessitating laws of physical nature. The former is moral and spiritual; the latter, physical and natural. And the question naturally arises, whether will (or mind), as we find it in man, does not *neces-*

*sarily* imply freedom, or whether freedom is not a necessity to human will. To will, already means to be free in volition. And such freedom makes possible that moral and spiritual development in man which was his by his created nature, and which is his again by grace, despite his defection and temporal retrogression. We say, "By grace"; for by grace, through the atonement-provision of the incarnate Lord, man's possibility of moral and spiritual development is restored. Thus, though man fell from his created state of holiness, and from his fall could not restore himself, nevertheless, by his regeneration, or in a sense recreation, in Christ, in whom his nature is once more exalted by its union with the Divine nature, the possibility of development is once more before him. And though he can resist that grace, because he still has a certain natural freedom, by accepting it his prospects are even enhanced. As God by His power made man in His image as creation's crown, so in God's incarnation in the image or likeness of man, man was crowned and exalted as the special object of His redeeming love to be a joint-heir with Christ as Creation's lord. And thus, although "now we see not yet all things put under him," "we see Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. ii. 8-9). And in Him we see man exalted apparently above the possibility of his original created nature. And of this exaltation of the redeemed we are permitted to catch a glimpse in Revelation vii. 13-15: "And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and

serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

Thus man's apparent ultimate purpose in the all-comprehensive whole, in his immeasurably greater possible development and destiny, must have been the final cause of his creation as a free personality, from the viewpoint of the consummation, even as the very nature of man as a finite moral personality must have been the reason from the viewpoint of creation.

The fact that man was originally made a free and perfect personality, must not be construed to mean that therefore development could not have been possible to him. Perfection must not be confounded with completeness, and much less with infinity. A thing may be perfect as far as it has progressed or been developed, when it is still far from being complete. And a thing may, of course, also in a sense be complete without being perfect. Thus man's perfection and holiness in creation did by no means make impossible his further development toward a higher and ever higher completeness as a free moral personality, any more than his imperfection in his fallen state made impossible, by grace, his development toward perfection and even toward completeness.

In our consideration of sin above, the status of pain is already largely implied, for physical pain results from direct or indirect transgression of the laws of nature. Thus, in his freedom of action, transgressions of nature's laws are possible to man, even as are possible transgressions of the moral laws governing his relations to his fellow men. And the argument in proof of the fact that the existence of sin is in no way an evidence against the unchangeability or omnipotence of God, is equally applicable in proving that the exist-



ence of *pain* is not an evidence against that omnipotence and unchangeability.

Indeed, there is a manifest teleological value in the sensation of pain, as also there is in that of pleasure. The creature might be conceived as having been so constituted as not to experience pain in a transgression of nature's laws. But this provision has the purposive effect to cause a desire in the individual to avoid a repetition of such transgression, even as the provision of pleasure has the purposive effect to cause a desire to repeat it. Thus the sensations of pleasure and pain are inseparably associated, as secondary causes, with the preservation of the individual, as well as of the race. They are therefore teleological means to greater ends. Thus design, with which the universe teems everywhere, is even manifest in these unmistakably implanted guides of life. And what is true of man is only in a lower degree true of animals. It has, however, long been questioned whether the sensation of pain is as keen in animals as in man. All the evidences are against it; and thus there is undoubtedly far less of suffering in the world than is generally supposed. And that suffering in animals may not only be different in degree but also in kind from suffering in man, and may not even at that be an essential evil. But, at any rate, apparent pain in animals, as well as in man, is a means to a benevolent end, and is not inconsistent with absolute goodness and omnipotence, as will be shown in what follows.

The above brings up the old objection, which might be raised against this part of our argument; namely, that the very use of means, whether in these sensations of pain and pleasure or in any other form in nature, would supposedly be an evidence against the omnipotence of God. In other words, the use of means is taken to indicate that a certain

end could not otherwise be attained or else Deity would have acted directly, and therefore that such use would be an evidence of limitation in God. Thus either what we speak of as means of an operating or superintending Deity could supposedly not be such at all, or if that Deity actually did employ them as such He must be limited in His operations by such use.

This was the argument made against design by John Stuart Mill (Three Essays on Religion, pp. 176-177); and it has been accepted by many others since. As an answer to this objection has already been given, because it is equally applicable here we shall incorporate a paragraph of it, as follows: "This objection of Mill, if analyzed, leads, however, to a counter objection to his objection. If Mill could contend that 'Design in the Kosmos is so much evidence against the omnipotence of the Designer,' we contend that his contention, by just that much, limits that omnipotence. An omnipotence that is not *able* to work by design or through means is not omnipotent. Indeed, a being(God) that would not be able to operate *through* means would be as truly limited, though in a different way, as a being(man) that is not able to operate *without* means. If Mill had said that *necessary* means or design would limit omnipotence, he would have spoken correctly. Man is limited by *necessary* means. And, if design or means in creation were *necessary* with the Creator, He, too, would be limited. But that is precisely what we contend is not the case. However, Mill inadvertently speaks of 'the necessity for contrivance — the need of employing means'; and thus he really nullifies his own argument against design. It is, therefore, Mill who limits the Creator's omnipotence by design or means, by reading into them *necessity* on the part of the Creator; but the mere *use* of

means by the Creator, and the *presence* of design in nature, do not thus limit Him" (Creation Ex Nihilo, p. 236). This objection against means in whatever form (pain, etc.) has, therefore, no validity in an argument against the omnipotence of God. Indeed, in some Biblical miracles we might be considered to have an illustration of God's operating directly, without means. However, this point we cannot develop here further.

The physical universe is thus a vast purposive mechanism. And, hence, design and means are manifest everywhere. It is so because it was so *constituted*, and therefore it is governed in accordance with its *constitution*. Nor can such a constituted creation in the least limit the Creator of it, however men have tried so to limit Him by an appeal to arguments that involve manifest contradictions. And only by such contradictions can God be limited or conditioned. Thus even His omnipotence could not cause Him *not* to be, any more than it caused Him to be; for as He is an uncaused being, His omnipotence is simply an inherent attribute of that Being, so that the Being is not dependent upon the attribute. Nor could His omnipotence really make a stone that is not a stone. Very suggestive and conclusive as to this point are the following words of the well-known man of science and Christian apologist, Dr. G. Frederick Wright:—"It is no heterodox limitation of divine power to affirm that it cannot make a thing to be and not to be at the same time and place. Yet this logical necessity imposes conditions upon an omnipotent Creator. The Creator is not at liberty to make a thing, and then govern it as though it were something else than he has made it. . . . When he has made it dependent in one way, he cannot destroy its dependence without destroy-

ing the ground of its existence" (*The Logic of Christian Evidence*, p. 104).

It must not be forgotten that the impossibility of doing contradictory things is implied in God's attribute of wisdom. Governed by a wisdom that is apparently perfect and infinite, His operations must be consistent; whereas the doing of contradictory things would involve a nullifying of His wisdom, either as to the one or as to the other. God's wisdom, moreover, implies that His operations are what they are because to be otherwise would contradict that wisdom. And it must, of course, be evident that His omnipotence cannot override that wisdom and make it of none effect. His omnipotence must be exercised in accordance with His wisdom, and, in the nature of the case, be bound by it in its proper sphere. Thus God is within Himself a law unto Himself.

Now, in applying this thought to the animal creation (not now to speak of man), it can readily be understood that, as animals are constituted, and conditioned by surrounding nature, the sense of pain, no less than that of pleasure, would be altogether consistent with their being. Otherwise there would even be involved a contradiction, as pointed out above; namely, that they could have been made without the possibility of pain and still be constituted as they are and conditioned by nature's laws. Indeed, this would open a great field for investigation; but it would not be possible here to do justice to it, nor would further discussion be necessary for our consideration. Enough has been said, we believe, to show that the sufferings in the animal world constitute no evidence against the omnipotence of its Creator, nor would they constitute any evidence against His benevolence; for benevolence must be an attribute of Deity no less than omnipotence and wisdom, while wisdom would necessarily involve

benevolence. And, for that matter, all the Divine attributes must be balanced and consistent one with another, so that the measure of one must be the measure of the other. Thus omnipotence would involve omniscience, and these would involve absolute benevolence or omnipotent goodness. But as this point of the undoubted benevolence of God in universal nature has been adequately developed by a number of eminent apologists, we shall not further develop it here.

We hold, therefore, that the facts of freedom, sin, and pain can in no way be of evidential value in an argument against the infinitude and omnipotence of God, nor can they be against His perfect goodness. And, although we have examined only the more important elements in this theory of a finite and developing Deity, with this point we must close our present discussion.

It has been shown that this theory cannot be defended upon scientific and philosophic grounds. The apparent paradoxes in man and nature, which have been supposed to make against an infinite, unchanging God, are not adequate evidence against such a Deity, nor are they even relevant, when viewed in their proper perspective. As in the case of James's theoretical multiverse, a higher synthesis would unquestionably unify the various parts and departments, the apparent inconsistencies. As there can be but *one* God, in spite of James's theory of a pluralistic universe, so also must that one God be infinite, eternal, unchanging, and omnipotent, in spite of nature's difficulties, as we have endeavored to prove. And that God who thus matches reason, also corresponds to the God of the Christian Scriptures.