

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

HISTORY AND THE CONCEPT OF GOD.

BY REV. GEORGE T. LADD, PROFESSOR IN BOWDOIN COLLEGE, BRUNSWICK, ME.

THE rational grounds for a belief in God have been invaded and damaged especially by two classes of confessed friends. The one class have presented the reality and nature of Divine Being chiefly as the indisputable conclusion of a single syllogism or a single chain of syllogistic demonstration. The other class have denied that this fundamental inquiry of all philosophical theology admits of any trustworthy answer. The doctrine that God is, and that his existence is in the form of such and such attributes and predicates, is relegated by this latter class entirely to the decisions of authority or to the impressions of religious feeling. But the entire being of man must work harmoniously together, as to some extent in the reception of all truth, so pre-eminently in the reception of this most comprehensive of all truths. There is no single direct and indisputable argument which may be relied upon to prove the existence of an object of rational religious faith. Yet there is no other object of knowledge or faith upon which so many lines of proof converge, or whose reality is capable of becoming the focus of so many rays of conviction, as the absolute personality whom we call God. On the other hand, unanalyzed and uncriticised feeling can become only the

foster-mother of opinion ; it can never become the parent, tutor, and defender of a reasonable faith.

The so-called ontological argument of Descartes is a notable instance under the first class. The complete argument of this philosopher for the necessary being of God seems, indeed, to have been twofold ; the one part more strictly ontological ; the other, psychological. The ontological part is entirely unsatisfactory as a demonstration, and, in the form in which Descartes presented it, of little or no value as an argument. Its errors are, (1) that it assumes the reality of the subject of definition, viz. God ; and (2) that it introduces the very questionable conception of being or existence (left undefined by Descartes unlike Anselm in his similar argument) as an attribute of most perfect being ; and here again we have the assumption that a, or some, most perfect being really — that is objectively — exists. Now when postulates are put forth as demonstrations they injure the case to be proved ; when, however, they are criticised and exhibited as *postulates*, they are found to furnish the basis of all argument. All ontological demonstrations of the being of God are as such to be distinctly rejected, and the presentation of them is damaging to the cause of rational theology. Indirectly, however, an argument for the being of God may be derived from this effort of Descartes, and from all other similar efforts to set up ontological demonstrations. They all show how the concept of God underlies and binds together human thought, and how the validity of thought in general is connected with the validity of the concept of God. The psychological argument of Descartes, on the other hand, is not indeed what he wished to make it, viz. a demonstration ; but it is a noteworthy and strong argument. It is one argument from the finite thinker to thought outside of him, and giving to him the grounds and conditions of his thought. It is one of those arguments which prove from observed effects in the human mind an adequate cause carrying out a final purpose, — both cause and final purpose being attributed to the divine intelligence and will.

The remarks of Leibnitz upon the argument of Descartes do not leave us any more secure in the stronghold of an impregnable demonstration. "Whatever follows from the definition of anything can be predicated of this thing," taught this philosopher, "if a complete analysis discloses no contradictions between predicates of the definition"; "and no such contradiction is possible in the idea of God." But the reply to this argument destroys it as a demonstration. Definitions are either analytic or synthetic; according as they either unfold and display the marks which men have agreed to connote under a certain concept, or state and unite into a concept the marks which he who defines proposes to connote under his concept. Therefore, (1) from a synthetic definition of God it can only be proved that men believe in the existence of God as is shown by the fact that his existence is assumed under the concept of him; and this leaves it still necessary to show that the belief is true; (2) from an analytical definition it can only be proved that he who defines, believes in the existence of God; and this leaves it still necessary to establish that belief on other grounds.

In general, these forms of demonstrating the existence of God require a preceding thorough metaphysical criticism which shall establish the authority on rational grounds of the postulates, intuitions, and instinctive judgments of thought, as they underlie all truth, and especially as they unite in contributing to the ineffably grand idea of God.

And further, since the days of Francis of Verulam the doctrine of final purpose in nature has fallen into comparative disrepute. With the general disrepute of the doctrine has gone a special distrust of the argument from design for the being of one designing, for a person absolute in his power, thought, and final purpose. The rigidity with which the doctrine was formerly held, and the mistaken details of application into which it was pushed for theological ends, brought about a strong reaction against the entire argument. The reaction does not, in the least, discredit the doctrine, but it shows that in its previous forms it cannot be relied upon as

an unsupported demonstration. "The proofs for the existence of God," says the greatest modern critic of them,¹ "after having for a long time played a great part in philosophy and theology, have in more recent times, and especially since Kant's celebrated Critique, fallen into disesteem." To many, both nature and history seem to have forsaken God, and, as it were, left him in the lurch, to plead his cause only by means of dogma, sentiment, and a dogmatic or sentimental handling of Sacred Scripture. To the cause thus pleaded few thinkers will a long time listen. They speedily discover that both dogma and faith in dogma must have their grounds; and that if nature and history are brought into conflict with authority and religious feeling, the latter cannot maintain themselves.

But history, which is all to be explained only as divine self-revelation, is confirming anew, and with all the resources of so-called modern science, the ancient doctrine of the Bible, viz. that God is immanent in all so-called nature, and in all history. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." "In Judah is God known." When, then, any especially rigid arguments or especially tender feelings seem to be undergoing solution in the acids of sceptical criticism, we need not fear that their constituent elements are about to be annihilated. None of them will be lost, and the new combinations will excel the old. For it is just as the Eternal Truth underlying and shaping all this process of historical readjustment, that we have our firmest knowledge of God. Our rational basis of faith in him is not like a single rope of argument stretched by a human hand across the abyss of hopeless atheism. It is, rather, a web-like structure into which are being woven by the divine hand all the strongest cords of nature and history, Bible and church, reason and feeling, postulates of intuition and conclusions of scientific experience.

The accepting and combining of these many forms of the divine self-revelation in one idea of him who is revealed, is

¹ Ulrici, in his *Gott und die Natur*, first sentence.

the grandest rational exercise of the entire being of man. The effort is open, however, to special risks. The conception of the immanence of God in nature and history will certainly now be for some time the guiding conception of philosophical theology. The risk in handling this conception is from concealed pantheism. But the risk must be incurred; for the demand of God in history is that his indwelling shall be recognized. Doubtless, so much of orthodoxy as persistently refuses to be scientific and philosophical, may raise the cry of atheist or pantheist, against those who teach the doctrine of the divine immanency. The cry must be met by teaching also the doctrine of the divine transcendency. But the blending of the two doctrines is, indeed, as old as the Scriptures, as old as any form of the self-revelation of God. The risk of concealed pantheism is not the greatest risk of theology. It is the denial of the divine in nature and history, the refusal to believe in a *living God*, which theology has at present most reason to fear. All the various valid arguments for the being of God are, *as arguments*, different forms of the one argument from facts of final purpose to the will and thought which are necessary as a ground of those facts. The researches of the modern sciences of nature have made marvellous disclosures of such facts in nature. The researches of the modern science of history are making as marvellous disclosures of similar facts in history. The resources of this one comprehensive argument from final purpose are, therefore, greater than ever before. And the validity of the argument in all its various forms is intrinsically as perfect as ever before. As Trendelenburg declares, it has not been effectually discredited since the days of its great advocate, Aristotle. As intrinsically strong as ever, and much richer in resources than ever, the many-sided argument for the being of God commends itself irresistibly to all rightly constituted souls. What the argument proves, however, is not the remote personality of deism, or the impersonal somewhat of pantheism, but the ever-living God of Christian theism, immanent in nature and history, and yet

transcending both. The truth of all others most thoroughly proved by all departments of modern literature, science, and philosophy, is the truth assumed in the Christian Scriptures, viz. that of the existence and self-revelation of one in whom all things and persons "live and move and have their being," the one personal Absolute whom faith calls God.

These remarks are not intended to apologize for the argument which is about to follow. They are intended rather to place it in right connection of the reader's thought with the three Articles which have preceded. The last one of the three¹ was designed chiefly to show that the doctrine of the immanency of God in nature is involved in the modern sciences of nature. It was also maintained, in accordance with the writer's general view of the subject, that the failure to receive this doctrine is due to some lack in the symmetry of that total organ — the human soul — which gives conditions to the actual acceptance and realization of all the self-revelation of God to man. In nature, and in the sciences as such, is found the Divine Being with his divine qualities. Atheistic evolution is a patent self-contradiction. *Evolution involves a self-revealing God.* All the thought which it discovers is divine. Its ideal elements are only other names for the attributes of God. The whole conception of evolution, when analyzed, breaks up into various factors of the grand idea of philosophical theology; the conception, as it is actualized, is so, and can be so, only through the actuality of God. Criticism, on investigating the so-called discoveries of modern scientific research, finds in their contents the idea of God — entangled, so to speak, amidst forms of statement and conclusions which are supposed to have only a so-called scientific import. The unity of force which science professes to discover corresponds to the one absolute will; the unity of law to one absolute thought; the unity of progress, or the doctrine of one scheme of evolution, to the unity of this will and thought in one final purpose; while the one ever receding and yet alluring goal toward which, according to science, the

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra* for October 1878.

progress tends, corresponds to the goal of love—the perfected kingdom of God.

And what is true of nature in the more limited significance of that word is true of history as well. History is neither conceivable nor realizable without the divine in history. The immanency of an absolute person in history is the indispensable condition of history. Neither, on the other hand, is the divine self-revelation conceivable or realizable without history. A process of history cannot be which has not its ground continually in God. God cannot be known to man, that is, cannot realize his own purpose to reveal himself, without a process. Furthermore, this process of divine self-revelation, implying the divine immanency, in history is necessarily a two-fold process. The divine self-revelation grows in history. The capacity of man to receive the divine self-revelation grows also. The growth of the capacity in man is part of the general growth in history; it is also necessary in order that this historic self-revelation of God may actually be a revelation to man. The correspondence of the increase in proof—objective—of God, and of what manner of one he is, with the increase of capacity—subjective—to receive and comprehend the proof—itself demands an account of itself. This account can be rendered only by him who believes in God in history.

The doctrine maintained in this Article concerning the connection between history and the concept of God will lead to the illustration of these three propositions. First, the conception of history is dependent upon the idea of God, and the actuality of history proves the objective reality of God. Second, the self-revelation of God is dependent upon a course of history. A historic process is indispensable to that communion of thought and feeling which is to be established between God and the human soul. Third, experience shows a correspondence of progress in the divine self-revelation and the organ of that revelation. We can detect in the actual course of history, thus far realized, certain elements of the divine self-revelation, which, as a matter of fact, have been

progressively disclosed in history; while, at the same time, the human soul, the organ of the divine self-revealing, has been progressively prepared to receive in fuller measure these expanding elements. And we may hope that in the future the proofs of God in history will grow far clearer; while, at the same time, the capacity of man for receiving the growing divine self-revelation becomes enlarged. In this process, objective and subjective, of the divine self-revelation, historical Christianity has for nearly two thousand years played a most unique and conspicuous part. This great "world-historical" fact is the most important in history. Upon the theme here suggested we hope at some future time to present certain thoughts under an Article to be entitled, Christianity and the Concept of God.

The conception of history is dependent upon the idea of God, and the actuality of history proves the objective reality of God. We speak of a course of history. But the possibility of a "course of history" — reflect upon the pregnant words — can be allowed only on the postulate that the final purpose of one controlling and absolute personality shall give distinctions, conditions, laws, direction, and a goal, unto the whole. A course of history implies a vast differentiation of the innumerable elements of history; this differentiation postulates thought and will at the beginning and as the ground of history. A course of history implies a collocation and arrangement in order and inter-relations of these innumerable elements; this orderly arrangement is also the work of thought and will at the beginning, and as the ground of things and events. A course of history implies the weaving together of all its events, the giving of a direction to the resultant of all their forces, the selection of a goal toward which the course shall run; and all this implies vastly great exercises of absolute thought and will in history. A course of history implies the management of millions of individual men and scores of nations, that they may march as one grand army — though they seem often to be countermarching and retreating — onward to the battlefield or to the camp. This

view of God in history, of the divine as the ground of history, does not depend upon the individual's conception of what is the goal of history, the special final purpose served, or the result gained in any special era or act of history. It depends upon the conception of history at all. It depends upon the prime conception of an order, whatever that order may be; of a progress, under whatever laws that progress may be; of a course toward a goal, whatever the course and goal may be — in human affairs. The relativity of all these events in history demands an Absolute in which it may inhere. This general view of the truth, that the very conception of a course of history postulates the doctrine of the immanency of God in history, is illustrated in every noteworthy and most minute event. We see the meaning of the illustration more clearly in the more noteworthy events.

Every complicated product in so-called nature gives us an intelligible illustration of the great fact of final purpose in nature. To make any approach to the understanding of such a product we have to postulate thought and will as constituting its ground. The human eye is such a product, to which special analysis has frequently been given. Hartmann has calculated¹ that thirteen special conditions are necessary for normal seeing, and that the certainty of a spiritual or immaterial cause (*geistige Ursache*) for their combination is, on the mathematical doctrine of probabilities, equal to 0.9999985 or 0.99988. What significant event in history is not the result of vastly more combinations than these? In any such event what infinite and infinitely intricate causes are combined into one intelligible whole. The physical causes of geographical position, climate, physical relations innumerable; the intellectual causes of law, prevalent knowledge of science, of inherent intelligence or stupidity of race, of influence of teachers and interchange of thought among nations; the emotional causes of all manner of human desires and passions; the ethical causes; the great "world-historical" causes, whose unknown nature and flux and reflux

¹ *Philosophie des Unbewussten*, Vol. i. p. 42 f.

Matthew Arnold and others have confessed under the terms Zeit-Geist, tendencies, and drifts of the age, etc.; all these classes of causes, each class composed of untold individuals, work together to secure the total product of any great event in history. What is the probability, then, of a spiritual cause for the combination of these causes in such an event? Will a sane mind place it at less than 1.0; at less, that is, than absolute certainty? Is he who places it at 0.0 or 0.5 to be accounted sound in both mind and morals?

In examining any rather complex product of natural forces we have to call upon God at least three times during the examination. Even those forces whose nature and sources we presume best to understand, lead us to invoke the divine for their explanation. We know no other source of force than spirit; we know of no kind of force that is not by nature immaterial force. Where shall these forces which we think we know so well find their source and ground? Only the doctrine of the presence of God, at once immanent in all nature and transcending nature, will answer this question. We cry to God for our answer. But, moreover, every complex product of natural forces involves much more than we can account for by known natural forces or laws. He who knows all that is known of natural forces and laws cannot tell me why, when a sheet of mica is parted, one part is found electrified positively, the other negatively; much less why any tiniest speck of bioplasm moves as it does move, and grows as it does grow. Here is the unknown of force and law which mocks me with a challenge to choose for it some name. The chosen name shall be to me, and to all men, only the name of its mask. But the reality there, beneath the mask with its mocking name, challenges me to cry out after God. Whence otherwise the source of these forces so utterly unknown? And finally, in every complex product of natural forces, we examine to find one co-ordinating force, who put together, according to a wonderful plan, the various forces combining to form the whole. I know that only a force which thinks can do this work of wondrous combination.

The very gist of my search for explanation of the product is the question after the co-ordinating force. Did the other forces force themselves together into the whole? Impossible; there is postulated in the explanation a force of thought which gives conditions to the other forces, and carries out a final purpose in them.

Now all that which is true as to the ground in absolute personality of any so-called natural product, is pre-eminently true of each great event in history. Its explanation requires that the forces known and unknown to the natural sciences, together with the one co-ordinating force of which these sciences can take no account, shall be referred to the absolute will and thought and final purpose. The science of history requires, indeed, that we shall analyze and portray all the various known forces which conspired to produce any event. It requires also, that we shall, as far and fast as possible, reduce the unknown to the so-called known forces of history. But the *philosophy* of history requires a somewhat more. It seeks a ground for the history of each event, and for all history. There is no other such ground than the absolute person whom "faith calls God." The omnipresence of the indwelling Eternal Spirit marks every event of history. Let the thoughtful reader of history reflect upon the best attempts which have been made to account for any of the world's great events. He will welcome and respect all such attempts. The forces and laws of history, when discovered and enumerated, reveal to the mind at once philosophical and devout the thought and will of God. Science, however, in historical as in all other research, is the servant of philosophy and religion, but not their mistress. How meagre and unsatisfying does even the fullest enumeration of the causes of any historical event appear without concealed or open reference to the great First and Immanent Cause. Always for a residuum of influences, and for the one co-ordinating influence as well, the mind is compelled to fall back upon the doctrine of the immanency in history of God.

We have just read in the "Contemporary Review" several

very interesting and instructive historical Articles. Two of them are by Henri Taine upon "France before the outbreak of the Revolution"; one by Goldwin Smith, upon "The Greatness of the Romans." The latter writer begins his discussion with the question: "By what agency was Rome chosen as the foundress of an empire which we regard almost as a necessary step in human development"? and responds: "We are not aware that this question has ever been distinctly answered, or even distinctly propounded." The answer which the writer himself proposes, he calls "partial explanations of the mystery of Roman greatness"; although he lays great stress upon the "discipline" into which the Romans were early forced by "physical causes," without, however, omitting to mention the "pre-eminently practical and business-like, sober-minded, moral, unmythical, unacerdotal" characteristics of the Roman race. Suppose now that some most learned historian were distinctly to propound, and were then to endeavor distinctly and completely to answer this question. We should find his most scientific enumeration of natural causes largely suppositive, wholly inadequate. The physical situation and surroundings of ancient Rome — her seat on seven or other number of hills amidst an alluvial plane, by the Tiber, and not far from the sea; her climate, soil, and physical connections with other nations — must all be taken into the account. The natural characteristics of her component races, and of the races with whom she came into earlier and later contact, must all be set in order and duly measured. The intricate relations of the first set of causes (physical) to the second set of causes (tribal) must be also minutely traced. The numerous interferences, to help and hinder, from her citizens of great genius, in all their relations to the first and second sets of causes, and in their subsequent outcome, must be duly measured. And who will account for genius — in itself, in its opportunity, in its range of influence? Who will estimate what Rome would have been without the Gracchi; or how the Gracchi could have been without Rome? For how much

would we have to thank the empire if the father of him who crossed the Rubicon and changed the face of modern history had died a few years earlier so suddenly at Pisa, or if the foreboding dreams of Calpurnia had been heeded on that memorable Ides of March? And when the scientific historian has rescued from the unknown all these noteworthy causes of Rome's greatness, has weighed and combined them in just proportions, and in all their constantly shifting interrelations; then let him tell how much shall be attributed to those causes which we are ashamed to call by the name? Do bubbles breaking shatter the sea on whose surface they rest; or forming change the course of the great currents which, unheeding the burden, carry them along? Bubbles do seem to convulse the sea of human affairs, to change the currents of national life. Let the scientific historian who will give a complete account of the causes of the greatness of the Romans weigh these bubbles over against the currents of the world's movement. How many times was the destiny of Rome changed by incalculable trifles — by the aspect of a beast's entrails; by the turn to the right or to the left of the flying bird; by fair wind or foul striking the right or the wrong sail most opportunely; by the dream of the augur or the bribe paid into his hand; by the indigestion of the commander of an army; by the momentary lustful or loving impulse of fathers and mothers, whose offspring through the gratification of the impulse became the guardians of the nation's destiny; by the whims of a mistress, her smiles, her frowns, her favors; by the hoarse outcry at the right moment of popular frenzy from some throat, whose untrained brain without self-conscious motive had blindly bidden it utter then and there that cry; by the unforeseen storm of thunder and lightning, or by a sudden panic striking into the breast of a single soldier. Mayhap a milk-white sow and twelve vultures did not decide the position of the mighty city, or a she-wolf suckle her founder, or the cackle of geese deliver her from invaders. But in banishing these legends of the supernatural we have not got rid of the divine element penetrating to minutest details all her history.

Let us suppose that a complete enumeration of all the forces which conspired to constitute the greatness of the Romans is before us, and that the description of the application and ratio in combining of each is also for a thousand years of Roman history absolutely complete. The scientific historian has not then satisfied us that we may dispense with God in history. He has only completely described the method of God in the history of Roman greatness. What hand, we ask, wove these materials? What one force co-ordinated with such unity of plan these myriad forces? If the web-foot in the water and the wing in the air imply a somewhat as their ground which is a some one "whom faith calls God"; why not the more wondrous web and wing by which the mighty nation makes its way to the haven of empire and law through the currents of the world's history? And when we behold, further, how the God of Israel has already used the empire and the law of Rome to further his law and empire, do we make things clearer by refusing to credit the divine in the co-ordinating of Roman and Hebrew history? The description which Mr. Taine gives of the conditions preceding that greatest event of modern history since the Reformation, is most graphic and instructive. Physical causes of dire calamity, such as the failure and destruction of crops; old and widespread causes of governmental mismanagement; the pervasive and turbulent spirit of political and religious unrest; growing atheism as a reaction from ecclesiastical neglect and tyranny; these combined with the personal passions, weaknesses, and destinies of innumerable individuals, from the king to the half-witted and brutal cook who haggled the head from the captured governor of the Bastille, — all were "commixed and commingling" in the French Revolution. Did not a some one whose hand girds those who know Him not, and who makes the wrath of men to praise Him, restraining the remainder thereof, hold the helm as the ship of national destinies plunged, seemingly lawless, down this irresistible cataract? We envy neither the philosophical acumen nor the personal peace of mind of

him who rejects the doctrine of the divine immanent in history.

In observing the kind of historical books which are produced by disbelievers in this great doctrine, we reach one interesting illustration of its truth. History in the making is a work of divine art. In the writing, then, history cannot attain the highest art if the divine be unrecognized. There is no real life in the picture of history without God. The works of Hume and Gibbon are our best known illustrations of what can be done for history by those who deny to it the divine indwelling. Though the latter was a deist, his deity was no more potent in human history than the blank space left unnamed by agnostic atheism. It has been well said of "his magnificent panorama of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire:" "We move along a palace court of more than Egyptian proportions; there are colossal figures to the right hand and to the left; but the tenant, the regal soul of man, or the Spirit of God dwelling in man, is not here." "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." The oppressive, the utterly crushing despotism of the hydra-headed monster, history without God, holds the soul bound in an evil spell, until a voice breaks in from the invisible, and assures us: "In Judah is God known; his name is great in Israel."

The causes which enter into the composition of history may be divided into four main classes,—physical, intellectual, ethical, and religious. The working in history of each one of these causes gives us its own peculiar proof for the immanency of God in history. The combination of these classes of causes in the one result of progress demands the postulate of an Absolute who is the personal ground of forces, physical, intellectual, ethical, religious. We have seen in a preceding Article¹ how the evolution of material forms according to a plan requires for its ground a personal Absolute. This progress of physical causes is, however, a physical basis for all the progress of human history, or,

¹ Bibliotheca Sacra, October 1878.

rather, is the enveloping atmosphere of history. History, then, so far as it rests upon this physical basis and is interpenetrated with physical causes, has its ground in God. The proofs of God in the evolution of material forms are transferred in part to the sphere of history, when we observe how these forms are the basis of all history, and how they give conditions not only to its existence at all, but also to its special manner of existence in any given case. "What significant influence," says Ulrici,¹ "climate, construction of soil, mountain ranges or plains, coast-land or inland, disturbing moisture or arid sunshine, etc., exercise upon human culture, upon religious and ethical views, has been set in evidence by both old and new researches. It is the business of the philosophy of religion and of the philosophy of history to point out the guiding hand of God in this influence, in the shaping of natural relations and of the course of nature. The result has only been to establish the truth that the course of nature with its conformity to law by no means contradicts such a divine guidance."

The same preceding Article pointed out how the whole progress of thought, as well as the very construction of the special sciences in the unfolding of which this progress partially consists, bears in it proofs of the validity of the concept of God. The forces and laws of intellectual development are leading efficient causes in history. The proof they give to the being of God is, then, transferred to the sphere of history; it is also intensified on account of the higher and more complicated relations in which these forces and laws are seen at work. Whence the explanation of this mighty and complicated movement forward of human thought? It is not in you and me, the insignificant individual thinkers. It is not in the intellectual giants whose thoughts become potent factors in history. They work a somewhat which they do not plan. What force collocates and co-ordinates these intellectual forces of the individual thinkers, so that order is discernible in the resultant of their conflicting, contradictory

¹ Gott und die Natur, p. 730.

influences and impacts? Who can refrain from asking the question of Coleridge:

“ And what if all of animated nature
Be but organic harps, diversely formed,
That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweep,
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
At once the Soul of each, and God of all? ”

What explanation of the past progress of thought, what confidence in its future progress, is open to him who denies the personal Absolute as the ground of this historical process? A course of thought in history, a development of human intellectual activities, and a continuous discovery and unfolding of great elements of thought, of pregnant ideas — what vast combination of materials and forces in a unity of final purpose is necessary for this! With a different significance attaching itself to the words, we may say, with Hartmann, the “incessant interventions of an all-wise Providence are *natural*.” God is immanent in that process of thought which forms one class of the great causes of history.

All history is, moreover, intensely ethical; it is penetrated, caused, by ethical forces. To account for history without recognizing the permanence and growth of ethical ideas, and the inciting, controlling force of the ought, is utterly impossible. This ethical element it is, most largely, which makes the difference in the two uses of the word “history,” when we apply it, on the one hand, to the unfolding of natural forms, and on the other, to the process of human affairs. Even nature, it has been truly said, is not a closed circle against ethical influences. The physical part of man gives plain tokens of the prospective predominance of the ethical idea. When in the upward course of natural forms we reach the human body, we come upon clear intimations that a new kind of dominion, rather than that of mere physical force, is about to be established upon the earth. The sustenance and preservation of man's body cannot be attained without his bowing to the idea of discipline, to the ethical correlate of the mere force which chiefly controls the animal

creation. Control which has ethical elements is found even in the lowest stages of human history. And all the course of history is marked with the growing power and clearness given to the sense of obligation on the part of man to nature, to his fellow, and to God. Ethical principles and forces are fundamental and pervasive in all history. There is no conception of history possible which does not recognize them, no fact of history which does not exemplify them. In so far, then, as the ground of history is ethical, history is a proof of the reality of its own ethical ground. It is proof of a force which is ethical, and which, at the same time, gives to history its laws and course and goal. The idea and obligation of the ought, for individuals and for nations, is a widespread and controlling force in history. But the obligation acknowledged in the idea is to a moral power who is not identical with that course of history, in which, however, we find the constant expression of the idea. God is this power. The working of the ethical causes in history is due to the immanency of God in history. A perfect ethical Being is also postulated in the ideal goal of history. Better and better — that is, nearer and nearer the best in truth, goodness, and beauty — is the world to grow. But ever at the end of the process stands the figure of one perfect in beauty, goodness, and truth. It is only the drawing of his Spirit that brings men nearer the goal.

To account for the vast influence of religious causes in history without granting the truth of God in history is confessedly difficult. Part of the difficulty is overcome by atheistic science, to its own satisfaction, through depreciating the influence of these causes; part by resolving them into mere forms of physical force, of superstition, deceit, childish conceptions of nature and law; the larger part is overcome by being totally overlooked. I suppose that no student of comparative religion would deny the very great influence in history of the idea of God. The acknowledgment of this class of causes, known as religious, is not dependent upon the investigator's special attitude toward Christianity; it is

simply demanded as a result of knowing the facts of history. There has been a concept of God in human history. There has been a growth in this concept of God, and this growth can be traced in history. The acknowledgment of this evolution (if you please) of the great concept must be made by all who know the facts, whether they hold the view to which the Bible and modern research both point, — viz. that “Polytheism [and every other religious ism] appears to have gradually proceeded forth from the dark bosom of an original, undeveloped, germinal monotheism,”¹ — or hold other and conflicting views. Now, how shall we account for the existence and growth of this great religious factor in the history of the world? The concept in history postulates the immanency in history of him of whom it is the concept. No other growth of human thought and feeling is so deeply rooted, so far-reaching, so wondrous as the growth in history of man’s idea of God. All science, philosophy, art, government, all the human passions, desires, and emotions combine to receive and carry forward the self-revelation of God in the idea of God. The idea of God not as a cold and merely intellectual conception, but as the explanation of the world’s being which satisfies reason, as the object of the world’s trust, love, adoration, and obedience, as the source of the world’s endeavor to attain its goal in communion with God, — the idea of God is the commanding factor in the history of man. The reality of God in history is the only explanation and ground of history. Each one of these four great classes of causes in history reveals the immanency of God. History is the result of their combination by that absolute Person whose being is implied in the fact of such a combination at all. If Lessing held that humanity is progressive, and that this progress is dependent upon the divine self-revelation, as the centre of his system, that centre was well taken and defensible.

When we ask what is the ground of history, three answers are possible. They have been given again and again in all the past. The first answer tells of “atoms self-moved and

¹ Vid. Ulrici, *Gott und die Natur*, p. 737 ff., and the authorities quoted by him.

self-positing," of nature the universal mother; or, when the inquiry is more sharply driven, falls back upon mysticism or indifference, and ends by attributing all things to the mysterious something by which they have been accomplished, or by declaring its interest in the key-board only, to the exclusion of the player behind it. This is the shallow and shifting answer of materialistic positivism. The second answer is in the stanzas of the Persian poet Omar, if, indeed, we are thus to interpret him:

" We are no other than a moving row
Of magic shadow-shapes, that come and go
Round with this sun-illuminated lantern, held
In midnight by the master of the show ;
Impotent pieces of the game he plays
Upon this checker-board of nights and days ;
Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,
And, one by one, back in the closet lays."

This is the answer of poetic or philosophic pantheism and fatalism.

The third answer is that of philosophic theism, and of theistic faith as well: " Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." This answer maintains, as to his relation to history, both the immanency and the transcendency of God.

That the self-revelation of God is dependent upon a course of history is the second proposition which I promised to illustrate. The end of the divine self-revelation in history is to establish full communion between God and the human soul. A historic process is indispensable to the establishing of this communion. There can be no divine self-revelation to man which is not in and through a course of history. The most nearly perfect knowledge of God possible to humanity, and the most perfect communion of the human and the divine, must be the result of a process of unfolding. This doctrine of the dependence of the divine self-revelation upon history is a very different doctrine from that pro-

mulgated by any form of pantheism. The process of history is not God, nor a part of God. This process itself demands an Absolute in which it may inhere — a cause for itself as a process. Its cause, its ground, and not itself, is God. Nor is this the doctrine that God himself is in a historical process of becoming — the result reached, it would seem, from Mr. Arnold's philological argument to show that all the words for the Divine Being conceive of it as in a process of becoming. What god besides God shall be summoned to account for the process in which he himself is thus said to be involved? God does not become; he is; he does become revealed. His becoming revealed is not, however, to be conceived as an addition in time to make up a somewhat eternally lacking in the Divine Being, in the predicates and attributes of God. The truth taught by the doctrine of the immanency of God in history is this, — that the self-revelation of God to man is necessarily historic. God *is*; but he *becomes* known to us as he is. Without a process of becoming known, man cannot know God as he is. All the divine self-revelation is *through* another *to* another; divine self-revelation, that is, must be a process of becoming. Revelation has these indispensable conditions given to it not by a power outside of God himself, but by the divine power, wisdom, and love. The conditions are, however, necessarily involved in the very nature of the means by which, and the personality to which, the revelation is to be made. The means is a process of unfolding; the personality is an unfolding mind.

The historical nature of the Christian revelation has been often set forth with more or less of clearness and breadth of reasoning. We recognize the truth that the great ideas of the Bible are given and set in historical surroundings, and that, therefore, in order to maintain its divine origin and nature, we must receive the doctrine of the immanency of the divine in at least a portion of the world's history. We recognize also the truth that the special revelation of himself as the Redeemer which God has made in Christianity, though special,

is, nevertheless, in general historical connections with all that revelation of himself in history which God has been making since history began. The recognition of these connections does not depreciate, it vastly aggrandizes, the proofs, the value, the working force of Christianity. But furthermore, we recognize that this very special form of the divine self-revelation — the form which is central through its fact and doctrine of God the Redeemer incarnate in the Redeemer Christ — is itself subject to the general law of all divine self-revelation. It is in a historical process of becoming. Christianity, as rooted in Judaism and branching out ever more and more in the foliage and fruitage of the Christian church, is itself a historic growth. It is not a growth to be ascribed, with febleness of conception almost amounting to imbecility, to the mere combination of so-called natural forces. It is a growth which in a marked and special manner proves and exemplifies the doctrine of the immanency of God in history. It is a growth, nevertheless; and it could not be the potent, the dominant factor, the central illuminating fact which it is, if it were not an ancient and mighty growth. Its future promise is also involved in this truth, which we also recognize, — that Christianity, its doctrines, its institutions, its life, is growing still.

This doctrine that all the divine self-revelation must be in a historical process is not the doctrine of scepticism or nihilism. It is not the doctrine that all things, truth included, and all truths, the truth of Christianity included, are in a constant state of solution, indetermination, flux, and reflux. The Absolute is to be known through the process of becoming; the knowledge of the absolute is the result of the changes in the relative. The very unity and comprehensiveness of the self-revelation of God are conditioned upon its movement forward in history. The really true and really great knowledge of man is that which has abode true and grown great in history. This doctrine of the immanency of God in history, instead of leading to scepticism, because there has been change in the historic view of

God, affords the only reasonable basis of faith, because the knowledge of the true God has perdured and grown amidst the change. To be sure, as says a writer (Ulrici) already quoted, "the concept of God is so differently conceived by believers and unbelievers, theologians and philosophers, religions, churches, and confessions, that we must first scientifically make clear which of the different concepts shall be made the basis of our treatment of proof." But this is no more than is demanded of us in the intelligent attempt to possess ourselves of any fundamental truth. As has been already frequently declared in these Articles, the validity of our knowledge of God is guaranteed in the very foundations of all truth; for in these foundations do we find our knowledge of God, both concealed and revealed, wrapped up, and thus made secure.

The necessary dependence of the divine self-revelation upon a historic process is seen both when we consider the idea of God and when we consider the nature of man. The very idea of God requires for its form a process of becoming in the divine revelation. All the predicates and attributes of the Divine Being are such as require a historic exhibition and unfolding. Let us examine this statement by giving only a passing glance — a hint of what steadfast reflection would discover — at each one.

The predicates of God are his unity, eternity, immutability, and spirituality. Each one of these predicates requires for its revelation a process of history. The unity of God can be known only as it is revealed through the diversity of forms in which the revelation of the one God is made. That there is one God, and not many, may be received by the childlike faith which accepts unquestioning the original tradition of monotheism. That there is only one God is scientifically established in the conflict with polytheism more and more clearly, as the unity of the universe, its forces, laws, order, progress, and goal, is progressively made clearer by advancing scientific research. That there is and must be one God is made certain, as philosophical analysis more

clearly and more deeply unfolds the necessary postulate of one Absolute, and that Absolute a person, as the ground of all existence and progress. The unity of God is the unity of one person amidst changing things and personalities; of one ground for the quickly shifting, but interrelated phenomena; of one will and thought combined in one final purpose to determine and secure the goal of the world's multiplicity of forces, laws, and persons.

The revelation of the eternity of God must be in a historical process. The ground of his own being is in God; he is the only self-existent one. But the long stretches of time, the ages of ages, through which he is engaged in making himself known, loved, and obeyed, are the fixed shores which limit our conception of his eternity. Before the self-revelation began, *he* was; should this self-revealing terminate its process, *he* would be. But it is the everlastingness, to our conception, of the self-revelation, the forever knowing God as at work to make himself known, which gives all its substance and grandeur to his eternity as known by us.

The revelation of the immutability of God must be in a historical process. He is the unchanging in his being, predicates, and attributes whom we know to be such by contrast with the changing being of all which he has made.

The revelation of the spirituality of God is in a process of history. It is I in the microcosm who abide as the ground of all I experience, acting or suffering; it is He, the Eternal Spirit, who abides as the unchanging ground of all the subjects and objects of experience. The revelation and confirmation of my own spirituality to me is in the fact that I can bind the succession of phenomena, which have been and are and shall be to me, into one, and call them mine. That which is back of all, and unites all in me, is spirit. The binding of the infinitely vast succession and concurrence of phenomena in history, past, present, and yet to be made, constitutes the revelation and confirmation of the Eternal Spirit, who is in and through them all, and who is God.

The attributes of God, which are to be distinguished from

his predicates because the former, unlike the latter, express distinct elements in the divine being, require for their revelation a process of history.

The attributes of the divine knowledge are the omniscience and the wisdom of God. It is scarcely necessary to point out how their revealing implies a course of history. The absolute agreement of the divine knowledge is called all-knowledge, because it is with all objects of knowledge. Without a process of history there are no objects of knowledge conceivable by us: certainly there are no proofs of such knowledge revealable to us without the process of history. As the multiplicity, the intricacy, and subtleness of relations of all objects of knowledge become known to us, we know the greatness of the divine knowledge. We learn to say: He knows fully all these things of which I know scarcely anything more than that they are, and knows also boundlessly more beyond. The perfect knowledge of all possible ends of the world, and of the means best adapted to the actual divine ends—the wisdom of God—requires for its revelation a historic process. The very words “means” and “ends” have no significance except as parts of such a process. The more numerous and complicated the means, the grander and more remote the end, the more manifold and grand becomes the revelation of the divine wisdom. It becomes to our thought absolute wisdom when it is seen as establishing and controlling all the means, and as having chosen and secured the best end from the beginning. Choice and knowledge are not, however, to be conceived as ever separated in the divine wisdom.

The attributes of the divine feeling are the blessedness and benevolent happiness of God. We cannot even conceive of the fullest divine blessedness without the actuality or the prospect in the divine mind of revealing himself to his creatures in a process of history; while it is, we are taught by religion, the happiness of God to work for the happiness of the total universe which he creates.

But it is when we consider the attributes of that omnipo-

tent and holy will of God which is the centre of the divine being and the ground of the universe,— it is then that we understand most clearly the dependence of the divine self-revelation upon a course of history. Without such a course the metaphysical attribute of the divine will, the omnipotence of God, has neither scope for exercise nor minds to which it may become known. He only who considers the mighty power of God in history can get any adequate glimpse of the divine omnipotence. Who shall comprehend the mighty working of that will whose choice gives law, and whose *nisus* is the spring of all energy, to the universe.

The crowning majesty of this truth that God reveals himself by his immanency in history is, however, reached when we draw near to the hearth of spiritual light and fire. The Sinai of the Divine Being is that twofold ethical attribute of the divine will which exhibits itself in the holy love, and the derived, though necessarily correlated, holy justice, of God. The revelation of the holiness of God requires a process of history. Things and persons must work themselves out that the divine ground of their being may be seen to be a just and loving one. Justice is exhibited and proved in history ; so also love. We know that absolute justice has not yet vindicated itself, though the process of its revelation has been going on these thousands of years. Because sentence against an evil somewhat or some one is not executed speedily, we are not to judge that justice will never be done at all. Divine justice is entangled in this process of becoming ; it is absolute ; but it is revealed by degrees and stages, by partial instalments and payments, by hints of what is yet to come. The effect of the total process will be to make absolute justice appear. And how grand is such justice ! — biding its time, struggling, so to speak, with embarrassments and temporary defeats, yet calmly conscious of the certainty of the end.

And how otherwise than in a process of history could the adorable and holy love of God obtain a self-revealing ? The end of love is in the goal of the process. The endurance of

love — the long-suffering of our God — is revealed in the process. He waits for the reception in its fulness of the self-revelation of his love. His veracity is shown as he keeps to the heart during the ages the promise which he perpetually breaks to the ear. His pity is toward the weary race of men, as they move onward in history toward that goal for the race which his grace has prepared.

Let any thoughtful reader consider how impossible (with an impossibility dependent ultimately, of course, upon the will of God) for the divine goodness to make itself felt otherwise than in and through a course of history. Only the doctrine of a process of unfolding, of a revelation in history, can save to thought the goodness of God. The postulate of the intellectual nature of man is the existence of absolute truth; the postulate of his aesthetical nature is the existence of absolute beauty; the postulate of his ethical nature is the existence of absolute goodness. The full revelation, the growing confirmation, of this absolute goodness must be in a process of unfolding. Absolute goodness is wise, infinite, and perfect. The wisdom of absolute goodness requires for its display a vast field of intricate relations in the midst of which its discriminations may be made. Ranges and variety of character, number and variety of influences bearing upon the development of character, subtle and varied distributions of happiness and pain in order to reward or promote character — these conditions, which are inseparable from a process in history, all reveal the wisdom of absolute goodness. Time, so vast in its reaches that we cannot but call it everlasting, is necessary to vindicate the wisdom of the divine benevolence. Meantime we believe in the absolute goodness of God; but meantime, also, we inherit the faith of the ages, which has been begotten, and will be increasingly confirmed, by the experience of the ages. The faith of the child, and of that portion in its childhood of the race which receives the earlier revelation of monotheism, accepts unquestioning at first the doctrine of the goodness of God. But facts within and without are largely against the doctrine. The Eternal

Spirit in history, while it prepares the souls of the believing for a higher and more rational faith, at the same time is converting these seemingly opposing, into confirming, facts. The mistakes of God's goodness, as they appear to those who trust the judgment for the hour of a heart without a firmly abiding trust, become through history proofs of his wisdom in goodness. Absolute goodness cannot be revealed in application only to objects few in number and uncomplicated in relations. Absolute goodness is also infinite; that is, it includes an inconceivably vast number of objects in all their relations. It is without conceivable limit of number. That it may appear so requires a course of history. Not a few men have the conceit that they can be wisely and perfectly good toward a limited number of objects (though we suspect that the effort to actualize the conceit in the case of a single child would be likely to result in the destruction of both conceit and child). What goodness, however, but absolute goodness, penetrates everywhere? In the divine love flowers bloom and grasses grow, birds fly and fishes swim, man is born, flourishes, decays, and dies, souls unfold their powers and acquire powers eternal, nations rise and fall, after weaving their threads into the great pattern of the world's universal destiny. In the divine love the course of history is run around that central sun whose coming to the sight of man is but the manifestation in time of the eternal, redeeming divine love. The boundless extent, the infiniteness, of absolute goodness is revealed in a course of history.

But the goodness of God is absolute, because in all the infinite range of its application there is no flaw in the wisdom which guides it, or in its own adherence to the principle of love. This perfection of that benevolence which is at the basis of history cannot, of course, be demonstrated or scientifically proved. It is a part of the total conclusion at which we arrive both by faith and argument, viz. that all power, wisdom, and holiness are united in one absolute person whom we call God. In reaching the conclusion that the benevo-

lence of God is perfect, the heart runs a long way in advance of the head. As has been said, the conclusion is part of that one great and logical conclusion from the laws and facts of all other finite being, and through the intuitions, desires, aspirations, and traditional biases of our own being to the nature of that absolute being which underlies and explains all the rest. It is, however, as somewhat different from a merely logical conclusion that we receive the truth of the perfection of divine goodness. The truth comes in response to a longing, as food for an aspiration, as quieting for a condition of soul which would otherwise be one of ceaseless unrest.

An analysis of the idea of God has shown how the revelation of each one of its elements requires a historic process. God becomes known to man, as God is, through the unfolding of history. The doctrine of divine revelation, then, — the doctrine that we have any real and verified knowledge of the divine, — can be maintained only in connection with the doctrine of the immanency of God in history. I have said that the necessary dependence of the divine self-revelation upon a historic process is seen when we consider the nature of man. After what has been written in this and the three preceding Articles, we need not dwell at length upon this thought. The very conception of a revelation from God to man implies truth about the divine as an object, from the divine as a source, in the human soul as a subject, of revelation. Revelation is actualized, accomplishes its result, as fast and as far as it becomes a condition of the soul in man. And, moreover, as we have been employed in seeing, the condition of the soul in man, considered as an organ of the divine self-revelation, gives conditions to the nature of the revelation made. What man knows of God depends upon what man is; conversely, what man is results from the degree of perfection in man of the divine self-revelation.

If we know anything with certainty from a study of history, we know that man is himself in a process of unfolding. The intellectual, ethical, and religious forces, if not the

physical, which enter into human history, are not stationary, but are gathering increments from age to age. The attempts to explain all history from the point of view of physical forces, and to attribute to man's unfolding in history the strict doctrine of a conservation and correlation of forces, are ludicrously lame and impotent. That forces intellectual, ethical, and religious are increasing in time is due to the nature of the source of these forces in the self-revelation of God. But that they are increasing shows the necessity of such a manner of this revelation as shall undergo a process of becoming. Children cannot know God as do adult minds. To them he is a sort of unseen parent, by no means so real, and scarcely so knowing and potent, as the parents whom they see. The race in its childhood cannot know God as can the race in its adult mind. The race, moreover, in all its prevalent low condition of morality and spirituality, cannot receive more than a hint of the fulness of the divine self-revealing which awaits its improved moral and spiritual life. All the religions of history, so far as they have been true, have been fragmentary revelations of God. They have been perverted and limited, so far as they have been false, by the ignorance and sin of the souls whose religions they were. All but Christianity have been like light through chinks and crannies, like twilight before dawn. And Christianity itself will prove its permanent and universal quality by its power to stand as the revelation of God the Redeemer, ever in advance of advancing manhood. The same One who reveals himself in history adapts his self-revelation to the growth of man in history.

To religious faith the goal of human history is the establishment of that union in perfection which is now prevented by human crudeness and sin, but which is to exist between God and the soul of man. The dominant idea in history is a spiritual one; it is redemption resulting in union of the redeemed with God. But the redemption to be accomplished comes only in a historic process. As the condition in redemption of all the powers of man—rational, emotional,

voluntary—changes, the degree of the perfection of the divine self-revelation changes also. Christianity—as we shall see more clearly when we come to consider its relations to the concept of God—was given to man in germinal condition, in a process of history, and is still hastening onward in the fuller unfolding of its latent powers. It is a living religion; by its life and growth it gives ever new proof that it is in very truth the revelation of a living Redeemer and God. Its centre is immovable, eternally fixed; its great outlines are already indelibly sketched; its picture is before us, drawn once for all by hands that moved by the divine inbreathing. That picture is the record of God in history as it is given to us in the Sacred Scriptures. But the world has as yet scarcely begun to realize what a revelation in history of God is this. As the life of Christianity penetrates and moulds more and more the inner life of humanity, it will improve the conditions which now limit the divine self-revelation to man. All actualized self-revelation of God is founded in the union (normal or ideal) of the human and the divine. It is the highest grade of this revelation when the supernatural element is so infused into human nature as wholly to animate and control it; then the union between God and man is fully realized. This is the life which is hid with Christ in God.

I have said, “We can detect in the actual course of history thus far realized certain elements of the divine self-revelation which as a matter of fact have been progressively disclosed in history; while, at the same time, the human soul, the organ of the divine self-revealing, has been progressively prepared to receive in fuller measure these expanding elements.” I must now, in the third place, illustrate, though only very briefly and imperfectly, this statement. As with other great ideas, so with this pre-eminently great idea of God, a certain order and progress of development can be traced in history. The ordinary reasoning of atheistic evolution is this: because the idea of God has been subject to evolution, therefore there is no God. What reasoning

can be more self-stultifying? The unfolding in history of this idea is itself one of the most convincing proofs of the reality of a personal God. What combiner of the forces of history has evolved from and in them this marvellous, ennobling, and comprehensive idea, which so overtops, and at the same time explains, all these forces themselves? To increase the admitted real contents of the concept, and, therefore, empty it at once of all reality, this is strange use of argument indeed! Yet just this is what atheistic evolution attempts to do in all treatment of the idea of God. We have discovered more of force; therefore there is no omnipotent God. We are resolving all forces into modifications of one force; therefore there is no unity of God. We know a vast and growing deal about law; therefore there is no lawgiver. We have discovered a wonderful plan upon which the universe is constructed, — a plan which involves all things and persons, from the homogeneous gas at the beginning to our own brains at the end; therefore, and because we cannot find any collection of ganglionic nerve-matter large enough to serve such a purpose, there is no infinite mind. We can tell how all the ideas of so-called ethics emerge from mere beastly impulse, though, as we admit of all men most proudly and most gladly, we are bound in our conduct to recognize the pre-eminence into which by evolution they have hoisted themselves; but the most important conclusion is this — therefore there is no ethical Ruler, no moral Governor and Judge, of the universe. These arguments, and more with which we have become familiar almost *ad infinitum*, and quite *ad nauseam*.

The doctrine of God in history traces the unfolding of the great idea of God, that it may discover and report the method according to which the divine one has made a revelation of himself to the human soul. The great law of this method is that of a correspondence between the process of the divine self-revelation and the growth in capacity of the organ of that revelation. All human science, art, philosophy, government, religions, and transcendently the Christian religion, may be

looked upon as involved in and constituting this process. All the increase in human powers of knowing, trusting, loving, and obeying God, are growth in the capacity of this organ.

The idea of God in its unfolding in history shows certain elements abiding amidst all the process of unfolding. They are to be found in that "original, undeveloped, germinal monotheism" of which Ulrici speaks; but in such monotheism these elements are themselves, of course, found in undeveloped and germinal form. Aside from any appeal to the testimony of the Scriptures, we think that this form of religion may be regarded as constituting the original form of the self-revelation of God to the race. By it God is conceived, in very simple and primary fashion, as the cause of the various surrounding phenomena otherwise unexplained to the human mind, and as also, in some degree, the Father and Guardian of men and their affairs. The condition of manhood which bears a necessary correspondence to this form of the divine self-revelation is also undeveloped and germinal; but it is the true norm and germ of all subsequent right religious development. It is to be seen, in the best estate which it attains outside of the Scriptures, as portrayed by the hymns of the Vedas or by the earliest history and poetry of Rome and Greece. Its bright consummate flower for all time is that patriarch who obeyed the divine call with the pure simplicity of a child, and crossed the Euphrates to become himself a dividing line in all subsequent history. In corrupter or obscurer forms its elements are still retained in those religions which, like the religions of the ancient Egyptians and the later Romans and Greeks, divide into two sections the same nationalities, with an esoteric monotheism for the initiated, and an exoteric polytheism or fetichism for the people at large. But even in the grossest and cruellest forms of religious beliefs, superstitions, and rites the divine self-revelation is to be detected; all smeared over, to be sure, with filth of human corruption, all stained over with the blood shed by human terror, selfishness, and hatred, yet still retaining for the thoughtful student of history those indelible

characteristics which mark its heavenly nature and origin. For the debased soul of the devotees of such gods, the gods they worship seem the true correlate. Yet some of the elements of the true conception of God are not wanting to even these lowest conceptions. And how quickly, under given favoring circumstances, these dwarfed and contorted elements can be changed into the factors of an elevating and controlling idea of the divine, the history of Christian missions furnishes constant testimony. Yet, again, how impossible it is to dispense wholly with the elements of time in the forming of a consistent and wholly symmetrical concept of God, the history of the same Christian missions furnishes equally abundant testimony.

We should, however, form a very inadequate notion of the method of the divine self-revealing if we should restrict the growth of its elements to the growth of religion, technically so called. Some of the elements of the concept of God are of their nature such as to depend directly, and therefore very largely, upon the development of the philosophical side of man. Two distinguishing sets of elements, two corresponding great streams of tendency can be discerned in the unfolding in history of man's idea of God. The one of these is established mainly by, and mainly appeals to, the philosophic part of human nature; it constitutes man's idea of God as the Absolute, as the one whose will and thought are at the ground of all other being. The other of these two sets of elements is chiefly craved and established by the heart, or the emotional and ethical part of human nature; it constitutes man's idea of God as our Father, as the one who controls us with the moral law, and is worthy of our trust and love. I think history shows us that philosophical inquiry into the ultimate cause of the world and religious feeling after the All-Father must join hands to form the truest idea of God. Does it not also show us that they do come, on the whole, and given time enough, to join hands? Does it not show us, still farther, that it is this inquiry after the ground of things and persons by a soul which being naturally (that

is, by its own fixed law and order) ethical and religious, must believe in the Heavenly Father — that it is this inquiry which lies at the foundation even of all false religions ?

Now, the attempt is often made by thinkers upon the science of religion to effect a divorce between these two sets of elements. But how ineffectual the attempt must be, and ought to be, the solidarity of the very idea of God clearly proves. For, when analyzed throughout, the two propositions that God is the Absolute and that he is our Father in heaven are seen to involve each the other. The statement that God is the Absolute, the self-existent, First and Immanent Cause of the universe is, indeed, directed toward the philosophical side of human nature. It is the philosopher's way of speaking of God. But if it be without unworthy mental reservations, without pantheistic restrictions and fatalistic crudities, it leads on to the confession which the heart craves: We are thy children, and thou art our Father. Even avowed pantheists cannot avoid speaking in a figure of speech which betrays the foolish attempt they have made to separate by a fixed gulf between the real Absolute and the Heavenly Father. He who is the real ground of all being is the real ground of ethical and free human being, is therefore himself ethical and free in his relations to such being. Even according to purely philosophical ideas, when the ground of a vast system of ethical and free beings is called Absolute, without being himself thought of as ethical and free, the name is too good for the thing. And furthermore, if there is an actual work of redemption going forward in the world, this too must have the Absolute whom faith calls God for its primal and immanent source of life. It is as the ethical and free author and immanent source of redemption that we call God our Father in heaven. Of course, we are all well aware that such argument as this proves quite impotent with those whose entire point of view regarding not only God, but also human nature, is so different from the Christian. Impotent or not with such individuals, it does serve to show that their absolute is no real Absolute, not having the qualities which

are those of the Being who can be considered the First and Immanent Cause of the universe. Because he is not a personal Redeemer their absolute is only a fragment of the relative, a lower section of the universe itself. They have fallen into the anthropomorphic littleness of defining the Absolute by a fragmentary knowledge of the relative.

On the other hand, we cannot give the cry of the heart, and say, "Our Father which art in heaven," without, though unconsciously, acknowledging our philosophic faith in God as the Absolute. Man is so interlocked by cause and effect with all the universe below and around him, he so stands a microcosm amidst the macrocosm, a crowning and culminating product of creative force, that his Father in heaven can be no other than the one First and Immanent Cause of the universe.

We could wish that Christian apologists would never again instigate or further the attempt to break up the unity of the divine self-revelation as it comes from all the various channels of revelation into the one soul of man. To love, trust, and obey God we are not required to give up all thought upon his being and attributes, but rather to endeavor most strenuously to think up toward them. Nor need the result of the loftiest human thinking be other than to foster and give reasonable basis to the heart's utmost adoration and love. We may be sure that God in history will suffer the race to be satisfied neither with the exclusively or superlatively intellectual, nor with the exclusively or superlatively emotional, conception of himself. The safety which lies in a predominantly ethical conception of God comes largely from the fact that it so satisfies and controls both the reason and the affections of man. The true end of all philosophical inquiry into the divine being is a broader and more reasonable childlike faith in, and service of, God. But he who proposes to reach the end by dispensing in history with the inquiry will surely have less breadth and reason, but not surely more humility and sweetness, to his faith.

The two sets of elements of which I have spoken have by no means always grown together and alike in history. The undue predominance of either one in any individual nation or era of history has, of course, marred or distorted the corresponding concept of God. Individuals, nations, and eras have been more distinctively infused with one or more of the several elements of this great concept, and with one or the other of these two great streams of tendency. It would doubtless appear almost insulting to certain great leaders of modern thought to trace their denial of God — or rather their abnormal idea of God, through the seizure with the left hand of certain elements of this idea, while shutting the right hand against other elements — to the same tendencies which in lower peoples and earlier times have resulted in the grossest fetichism. Such a tracing might, however, justly be made.

The illustration of this thought concerning the method of the self-revelation of God in history by certain conclusions drawn from phenomena in the midst of which we are still living will close this discussion. These conclusions are drawn with the confidence of personal convictions, and yet in the full consciousness of the great difficulty which always accompanies the attempt to judge, in any broad way, the divine intent of our own present. The interpretation of God in the history of the present is with God in the history of the future. Things appear, however, as in a wondrous course of preparation for the enlarged revelation of God in the history of the near future. The hope is not altogether without warrant that the two streams of tendency which bear upon them the idea of God as the Absolute and the idea of God as our Father in heaven are about to unite, and flow henceforth together with a fuller current. We have no great reason to expect a speedy millennium. What the boastful nineteenth century has done through its inventions and science to lift up the race has still left the race some appreciable distance from absolute perfection. And already an undertone of sadness from the poetry, philosophy, and per-

sonal confessions of the period is breaking up through the thin melody which has been extemporized in token of oncoming triumph. Whether we look into the novels of George Eliot or the pessimistic philosophy of Schopenhauer and Hartmann, we may alike conclude that the race has not yet got into condition speedily to redeem itself, after dispensing with the work in Christianity of our Redeemer and God. Nor can we conclude by looking at Christianity in its present form and work, that the church is just on the point of reaping its final harvest. We confess to the impression that the same One who has conducted his work of self-revelation and redemption through the many centuries of the past, will continue that same work through many centuries in time to come.

We can scarcely, however, be excused from seeing that the present is a great era in the divine work of self-revealing. The material for a vastly expanded idea of God, both as the First and Immanent Cause of the universe and as our Father in heaven, seems rapidly preparing. God is in this work of preparing. It can scarcely be denied that the influences of so-called modern science and of present philosophy are likely to modify the conception of God held by those who come under these influences. It cannot be said that the modern sciences of nature or the recent developments of philosophy have changed or added any essential elements of the great concept. It cannot be denied that they have emphasized and expanded certain elements. The unfolding of the idea of God in history will not be ultimately damaged, but rather the more built up toward perfection by all this. It might as well be understood that — the reverse of a certain popular supposition — theology proposes to take all the entrenchments of atheistic science and philosophy, and convert them into defences and strongholds of faith. The complaints made against theology for the way it shifts its line of battle are more amusing than alarming. Certainly it can accept and use for its own purposes anything that science and philosophy prove true; this ability is a proof of the essential truth of its own teachings.

To be sure it persecuted Galileo for declaring to be true what it now itself uses as a proof of divine power and wisdom ; it changed its six literal days of creation into time-long periods, when geology pressed hard upon its interpretations. But one of the difficult questions which atheists and agnostics have to answer is just this : Why does theistic faith maintain its life and continuity of development while enduring these changes ? Shall we reason because the idea of God is subject to evolution, therefore there is no God ; or shall we reason, because the very ground, explanation, and centre of all evolution is in the idea of God, therefore there must be a God ? The conception of God as the Absolute has been greatly enriched and confirmed by the modern advances of science and philosophy. For this fact we do not call hurrah over an impersonal somewhat called science ; we thank a personal God, our Father in heaven.

In what elements especially the concept of God has been thus enriched and confirmed, let us now briefly inquire. Certain of these elements are close at hand. The modern sciences of nature have disclosed vast ranges and subtle applications of the forces of nature hitherto unknown. Of the ultimate nature of force they have made, and can make, no disclosure. The metaphysical attribute of the divine will is omnipotence. When the omnipotent will is acknowledged as the ground of all these forces, this element of the concept of God is seen as enriched and confirmed by the material furnished from the sciences of nature. These sciences have been very hard at work to prove the unity of their forces, and the doctrine of the conservation and correlation of forces. How much the proof still lacks he who has read Ulrich's criticism of the various attempts may judge for himself. Back of all the forces of heat, light, electricity, etc., however they may prove to be related, and in all the products of these forces, is the one co-ordinating force which builds the unity of the individual and of the universe with these forces. This greatly enlarged view of the unity in multiplicity of the universe confirms and enriches another element in the concep-

tion of God as the Absolute. The only real unity of which we know anything is unity of personality ; this is the nature of the divine unity.

The *πρώτου ψεύδος* of modern atheistic science is its denial of final purpose in nature. Trendelenburg has truly remarked¹ that the denial of final purpose, the exaltation to a place of sufficiency of so-called efficient causes, is much worthier the name of atheism (for example, in the system of Spinoza) than “the dreaded sentence that God is the immanent cause of things.” Indeed, this dreaded sentence is not atheism at all, but the doctrine of the Bible and of Christian theism. It is the position to which theology is more and more driven in its conflict with scientific atheism. The position must, however, be so taken as to hold two truths while holding the position ; viz. (1) The transcendency and self-conscious personality of God, and (2) The real personality — i.e. endowed with freedom — of man.

But atheistic science is unwittingly convicting itself of its own *πρώτου ψεύδος*. The modern sciences of nature have gathered and displayed vast, subtile, and intricate phenomena, which all enrich and confirm the ancient doctrine of final purpose in nature, and thus enrich and confirm also those elements of the concept of God which represent his thought and will as immanent in nature. All the discoveries of science are not only of efficient causes, but also of final purposes. All the experiments of science presuppose the reality of final purpose in nature. For, in experiment we combine efficient causes, so far as they are under our control, in definite combinations, *in order that* we may attain a result which has been conceived as a result by the mind before it becomes an actualized result. In all scientific experiments thought precedes, sketches the plan of combination with an end in view ; will follows thought, and accomplishes the combinations. For philosophical theology the whole precedes the parts ; and being a whole of thought it gives conditions to the parts, actualizes them, and makes them means to ends.

¹ Untersuchungen, ii. p. 45.

The objective validity of the theological conception of final purpose, of thought and will at the ground of things, has been illustrated by modern science, as in innumerable other discoveries, so also very curiously by what it has revealed of the *vis medicatrix naturae*. The healing power of nature testifies to the reality of final purpose in a twofold manner. First, it is itself an instance of design; it is a provision inherent in organic life adapted to minister, and actually ministering, to the perpetuity of that life. But second, this healing power of nature seems to have a higher significance than a mere part of one design, in that it manifests a special effort on the part of the organism to maintain its own existence as an organism. The *vis medicatrix* shows — to speak figuratively — a physician's instinct to save, and a comprehension of the relation between the life of the organism as a whole and the different organs of the total organism. The modern sciences have greatly enriched and confirmed the ancient doctrine of thought as an element of the Absolute. That there is no caprice in the Absolute, that there is reason and order in the working of the divine will, is a truth also enriched and confirmed by recent scientific researches.

“Great is Diana of the Ephesians,” the goddess of modern biology. Have we not heard her praises sounded to drown the voice of the apostles of the living God. But both the goddess and her devotees may be turned into unwilling apostles. For, the researches of the modern sciences of nature have enriched and confirmed the conception of God as the ultimate and immanent source of all life. *Life* is, and ever will be (modesty does not forbid such a prophecy), the rock of offence for scientific materialism. This is not simply because all known efficient causes serve so ill to explain its phenomena, but rather because life is the crowning exhibition and abiding seat of final purpose. No enlarged research and discovery can change essentially the state of the case. It is not the introduction of matter into new forms by the mere interworking of efficient causes which needs, *ab ante*, to be explained; it is rather the working up of those efficient

causes by the final purpose so that they serve as means toward an end. The explanation must always be — *intra* and *a post*.

Reference might be made to many other obvious contributions given, however unwillingly, by the modern sciences of nature to the great theological idea. For the present they need not be mentioned. Besides these more obvious contributions, science is giving hints toward the better understanding of some of the obscurest problems of theology; these problems are closely interwoven with the growth of the idea of God. The connection of the unfolding of these sciences with hard questions in anthropology is not rarely recognized; too rarely is their connection with hard questions of theology (proper) brought to view. Yet as long as it remains true that man is made in the image of God, so long will both classes of hard questions be closely interwoven. To conclude that a conception of God, or of any of the elements of divine being, which is a so-called "anthropomorphic" conception, is therefore false, is as unphilosophical as the opposite error of concluding that the anthropomorphic is all necessarily true. The former conclusion shuts the door of truth in behalf of universal scepticism; the latter opens the door of error in behalf of all manner of bigotries and superstitions. Every human conception of God must be anthropomorphic, and criticism must distinguish between the true and the false.

Let me illustrate this work of the modern sciences in furnishing hints to speculative theology. The scientific study of organism may help us in our effort more fully to apprehend the idea of God. This idea has hitherto been largely dependent upon the popular psychology of consciousness. We have to concede to the physiologist that this psychology has itself, to a considerable degree, hitherto been left hanging in the air. But the proposal of materialistic reformers to abandon consciousness and trust entirely to scientific physiology is palpably absurd. They are working in the right direction who are trying to bring the two sets (physical

and psychical) of phenomena together; not for the purpose of identifying the two in one ground, but for the purpose of showing how the two are related as cause and effect, what mediating element (as, for example, the constructive motion of Trendelenburg) can be pointed out, and especially what are those fundamental postulates of matter and mind which are implied in all knowledge.

An author who has done noble work in the right direction¹ says, after speaking of the difficulty of mentally representing the present in time: "Obviously it is here that the office of comprehending consciousness appears with reference to time; the present is that time of which we are conscious, that amount of the mental movement which is grasped at once. Without this measure of consciousness there would be no fixed point of time." With this view the work of the mind in the organism of vision seems to coincide. We see at one time as much as the mind can bind into one by an act of consciousness. But if this view be true, what shall we say of time and the divine mind? The "comprehending consciousness" of the divine mind includes all the events of all time in all portions of space, in every act of consciousness. Shall we say, then, that the measure of the divine consciousness gives the divine mind power to think all things in an eternal now? To be sure when we say an "*eternal now*," we fall back into the self-contradictory weakness of our consciousness. But our experience in time, if it teaches us our weakness in affirming, may also teach us our inability to deny. It is an interesting speculation; what would be the effect upon our notion of time, if the grasp of our consciousness were so enlarged that we could comprehend simultaneously an indefinite number of objects of knowledge taken from present, past, and future, of time? The present is before us vividly, being constantly bound up into moments by comprehending acts of consciousness. In certain states of consciousness the memories of the remote past are grasped almost together in consciousness with the sensations and thoughts of the imme-

¹ Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen*, i. p. 231.

diate present; time is then to our consciousness such that long periods of it seem to make up a now. In such speculation we get obscure glimpses of what the consciousness of absolute and infinite personality may be. Experience itself begins to scorn the bounds of logic; the brain and a spirit not our own seem to do work which mental philosophy is wont to declare impossible. We come to say, my limited personality is acted upon by a power which teaches me how limited it is, but also what may be the possibilities of personality, *per se*. Sceptics may be made less sure that there is any necessary contradiction in the consciousness of the personal Absolute not only, but even in the "eternal now" of his consciousness.

We may look for many hints at the truth concerning the personal Absolute whom faith calls God from the researches of the sciences of nature. Whether these hints are given willingly or not does not concern the doctrine of a self-revelation of God in history. We have already good ground for the conviction that the recent great advances of the natural sciences are preparing materials which God in history will use to enrich and confirm human knowledge of himself as the Absolute, the First and Immanent Cause of the universe. And what these sciences are doing, that are recent developments in philosophy accomplishing as well. Even avowedly atheistic and pessimistic philosophy is unwittingly making contributions to the enriching and enlarging of the idea of God as the personal Absolute.

The critical philosophy of Kant identified the absolute with the unknown. Since Kant a great work of reconstruction has been going on in Germany; some of the work at the hands of believers in a personal God, some at the hands of disbelievers. The latter as truly as, but not as well as, the former have been enriching and confirming the concept of God as the personal Absolute. Schopenhauer, professedly dissatisfied with the vacancy which Kant left at the ground of the universe, thinks he has discovered and proved the essential nature of Kant's unknown. *Will* is the ground of

the universe. This is only, so far as it goes, a fragment of the abiding theological conception of the universe. For theology the ground of the universe is the will of God. But Schopenhauer will admit no freedom for either human or divine will; will admit not even thought in conjunction with all the activities of the divine will. With him, indeed, there is only one will. Schopenhauer does, however, admit that the operations of this one will fall into three divisions; the first, that of movements produced through purely physical causes; the second, that of changes in organism brought about by *stimuli*; the third, that of choices induced by motives. But if, as a matter of fact — granting this one will as the underlying cause, and identifying it with the will of God — the nature of will as shown by its working is not inconsistent with that sort of individuality and self-determined life which we seem to find actually existing in all organism, how will Schopenhauer prove that it is inconsistent with that sort of conscious and self-determined life which we call freedom? Schopenhauer wants his Absolute to account for more than mere force will account for; and yet, as has been truly said, he cannot show how this Absolute of mere will differs from mere force. “Will without presentation, without ground in impulse or final purpose in the eye, whether these are clearly thought or darkly perceived, is no will. Blind will is will in the air.” All of Schopenhauer’s batteries of proof that the Absolute is will may be captured by theology to prove the underlying will which is also thought and love.

Hartmann, over whose Philosophy of the Unconscious the furor is scarcely now cooling, becomes also in turn a servant of this process of enriching and enlarging. He is at vast pains, with use of many curious and instructive phenomena brought to light by the sciences, to show that the Absolute is even more than Schopenhauer will admit. His struggle really is to prove what theology claims, viz. that thought as well as will is at the ground of the universe. Even in the hatching of an egg he would make out that the existence of a spiritual cause is as good as certain; although he wishes the question

as to the constitution of this spiritual cause to be left a perfectly open question. Here again we have the nature of that Absolute whom faith calls God left hanging in the air. But nearly all of Hartmann's first volume of Philosophy goes to the enriching and confirming of the theological conception of God as the Absolute. Other philosophers, who may be counted in the ranks of avowed theists, have done notable service in the work of reconstruction; Trendelenburg in the philosophy of thought and ethics, Lotze in the philosophy of physiology, Ulrici in philosophical theology itself. It is a shame that this work of reconstruction (still left untranslated) is so little known in this country. Meanwhile the greater doctrines of Christianity have many of them received what may be called scientific treatment, as never before since the Christian church began. These discussions all combine to show the devout student that God in history is in this latter day confirming and enriching his ancient revelation of himself.

With this growth of these elements of the great concept which appeal rather to the philosophical faculties of man has gone on a parallel growth of the self-revelation of God as our Father in heaven. That only brief mention is here made of the nature of this parallel growth is not due to underestimate of the value of the fact. The ferment of popular religious thought, the enlarged study of the Scriptures, the intenser effort to reach the multitudes with moral and religious forces, the spread of Christian missions — all those means which are resulting in the widening and deepening of religious faith and practice are parts of the self-revelation of God as a Father and Redeemer. The conception of the divine which these forces, if they could be isolated, would work is, indeed, a different one from that which would be wrought by the unmixed forces of science and philosophy. The latter forces unmixed would work out the conceptions of pantheism or the blank of atheism. The former forces isolated would lack symmetry, breadth, power to win the thoughtful, and due connections with history. The happy

congruity of the good work of the uncultured evangelist with the work of the theistic philosopher may be no more apparent to sight than his evil congruity of doctrine with the doctrine of the pessimist philosopher. But God in history may use the good work to more than counteract the evil doctrine. The same one who makes the wrath of his enemies to praise him, consummates the harder task of making the foolishness of his people to serve the same end. The crude sentimentality which sways such multitudes in the Christian churches—a sentimentality that, as often as anything, attacks the very truths of science, history, and philosophy in whose unfolding God is revealing himself—may be by the divine processes refined into that reasonable and pure emotion which always illumines fully one hemisphere of the entire globe of the relations between the human and the divine. The heart of the race and the brain of the race are meant to work together. Let not man dislocate (professional scientist, avowed atheist, or confessed Christian) what God has articulated. Trendelenburg and Moody seem in work far enough apart; Schopenhauer and Moody as well. But the philosophy and the evangelism of the two former should draw near enough together to leave a great space between them and the pessimism of the latter.

Who, we ask, in conclusion, can contemplate this mighty working of God in history without confirmation of faith and incitement of adoring love? Science and faith cry out together, “the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee.” History and faith unite in declaring, the ages of ages are too brief for thy work; but they are all thine own.