

EVOLUTION OF THE DIVINE.

BY A. E. BARTLETT.

IN discussing the great problems which involve the infinite and eternal, we meet with objection from two opposite sources,—from the ultra-orthodox partisan and from the materialist.

Scientists and theologians alike would circumscribe our speculations by emphasizing the finiteness of human reason and its incapacity to realize the infinite. Without denying what element of truth there may be in these limitations upon the intellect, without claiming the power of the mind to comprehend fully the infinite and eternal, we can still assert that the infinite and eternal is the only thing that the mind can really conceive. The mind cannot focus itself upon the purely finite. The world of the finite belongs to the domain of the senses; and that world cannot, except through the element of the infinite pervading it, be brought within the cognizance of the intellect. Attempt in thought to imagine space as finite, as having a limit beyond which no space exists; attempt to think of duration as finite, as terminated either in past or future,—and you will realize how necessary to our thought is the conception of infinity with reference to space and time.

In all the great generalizations of science this intuition for the infinite finds gratification. “Every particle of matter *in the universe* attracts every other particle.” The mathematical relations, the laws of motion—all the great principles of science are universal principles. The daily sustenance of the intellect is derived from the infinite and the universal. Whenever a great generalization is made, we regard its universality as a measure of its truth. The universe must submit itself to the critical review of the human intellect.

As the senses, quickened into existence by the properties of matter, are for that reason reliable interpreters of matter, so the intellect, developed by contemplation of relations, is a genuine interpreter of relations, and its demands can not be gainsaid. The divine

essence, by reason of its very infinitude, makes appeal to the intellect; therefore must the intellect be adapted to investigate and apprehend the divine.

In this study we propose to combat the static conception of the divine. The modern recognition of divine immanence, together with the modern acceptance of evolution, implies a recognition that evolution takes place in the divine itself. The evolution of matter is but the outward manifestation of force-evolution; and force-evolution is but another term for evolution of the divine.

Evolution is an unfolding of the fundamental force-entity of the universe in an effort to realize the ideal personality. But this ideal personality which is the goal of evolution must also be looked upon as the potential cause of evolution. Since the universe and all its parts have arisen from the fundamental entity, all phenomena in the universe must be involved in that entity. Whatever we find in nature we can predicate of that entity. But in nature, as the crowning phenomenon, as the supreme reality of creation, we find the great fact of personality, with its trinity of feeling, will and thought. Shall we not then conclude that the same trinity is also not merely a characteristic, but even the essential characteristic, of the creative entity?

But what we have shown deductively we can also show inductively. Does not the creative entity possess latent feeling? Whence, otherwise, that beneficence of nature which adjusts organisms to environment and invests us with joy and affection? Does not that essence possess will? Whence then those august laws that sway the universe and guide its progress ever into higher orbits of harmony and peace? Does not that essence possess latent knowledge and thought? Whence then that great principle whereby our most secret deeds of right or wrong are inevitably registered to bring us in due time an appropriate return? If the creative essence hears not our petitions, wherefore is it that our aspirations invariably set in motion forces that gradually work out in our character the results for which we long?

Point, if you will, to the imperfections of the universe; point to sin, that sign of immaturity; claim, if you will, that this divine personality has not attained to perfect consciousness or perfect mastery of its own dominion; nevertheless the fact remains that such personality must be involved in the fundamental essence, and that slowly but surely this personality is transforming the universe, re-creating ever more nobly its own creation.

This personality is real because it is implied in the fundamental

essence and in every stage of its development; it is real because it is creative, unfolding the wonders of being with more precision and perfection than could ever be accomplished by conscious design. It is divine because it is real, because it is personal, and because from the very nature of the laws of evolution this ultimate goal of evolution is ethically perfect, satisfying all our ideals. Through process after process this result is slowly approached, but the perfect consummation is in the infinite future. Thus the divine may be conceived of under three aspects, in all of which it is worthy of our reverence: first, as cause—infinite force; second, as process—finite forms of life; third, as result—infinite personality.

But just as in the individual the monistic basis of life is represented not by any approach to the fundamental homogeneity but only by a growing harmony of adjustment; so in the evolution of the divine personality there is no approach toward the eradication of the distinct individuality of persons, but the oneness of the divine is expressed in the growing oneness of feeling evinced in noble personalities. Development is characterized by ever-increasing variety combined with ever-increasing harmony. The personality of God is perfect unity of perfected individual personalities. The universe is a democracy, not an absolute monarchy.

For this opinion that the personality of God finds its sole embodiment in its progressive manifestation through nature there are two main reasons: First, the presence of evil in the world shows that the universe is not completely organized, that perfection, though implied in nature, is not fully realized; second, the tragic purposefulness of nature is best accounted for on the theory that evolution is a solemn struggle of the divine for self-realization rather than an unnecessary, a comparatively meaningless, and an only partially successful reproduction of a divine entity already possessing a fully organized existence.

The fallacy of popular theism lies in supposing a God who is infinite and yet engaged in a conflict with his creation—the whole at war with the parts. Now in a perfect organization the parts must be in perfect harmony with the whole and with one another. Just in proportion as the parts withdraw from such harmony, they withdraw from the whole and leave it proportionally circumscribed and further removed from the infinite. If God be infinite all things must be part of him, but if all things be part of him they must be in harmony with him and partake of his divinity. Since this harmony does not exist but is only in process of development, it follows that the universe is not yet fully organized and that the divine still re-

mains an ideal. The universe still contains chaotic elements; some of its quantities are still negative, subtracting from its infinite oneness and leaving it an inharmonious and finite universe.

If such difficulties are involved in the conception of a divine person as immanent, still greater are the objections to a transcendent deity; for if God rules the universe from without like an earthly autocrat, he must, like the autocrat, be held responsible for the evils of his government, and he cannot plead the human autocrat's excuse of impotence. The divine despot must have in his nature a strain of wickedness.

If, however, we frankly acknowledge that the divine principle is itself in process of evolution, if we invest even the divine with the pathos of struggling aspiration, we clear it from all reproach of guilt, making it appeal with equal power to heart and intellect. The statement previously made that to the divine essence belong all attributes which are manifested in the universe does not imply that to it belongs any evil; for under an evolutionary system evil is not a reality but only an imperfect stage in development. On the other hand, from the orthodox view-point according to which the divine nature is a finality, evil must also be a finality and therefore real. If the divine were actually embodied in a person it would be blamable for even the negative flaws in creation, while under the evolutionary theory here expounded the less pretentious divine essence escapes responsibility for evil and is all the more effective as an ideal.

Under our system, then, evil is not an essential attribute of nature, and evil is not abiding. Moreover, to this transient evil in the world there is no possible alternative. The omnipotence that lies at the basis of nature is conditioned by the natural law of inertia; even omnipotence must work by processes. In other words the divine element is omnipotent not in time but in eternity, and in eternity it must vindicate itself.

Moreover, a universe free from all pain and evil, a perfect universe in finite time, is a solecism, a contradiction in terms. A universe of life and action implies of necessity a process, a perpetual movement, implies strife and adjustment, friction and collision. The only conceivable perfection is the perfection that we actually find in our universe—the perfection that manifests itself as a perpetual progress toward ideal good implied in the process. To the mind that realizes this deep and sufficient perfection of the universe, this happy destiny reserved for all being, doubt and rebellion become

almost impossible. Only to him who worships an anthropomorphic deity will the problem of evil remain a problem still.

But when I speak of this divine principle as in process of evolution, I do not look upon it as unreal, or as possessing no present existence. If it were not a present fact, how could it thus be drawing up the phenomenal world toward the ideal? If nature is evolving God, God must be already involved in nature.

If force is latent will, and if will when organized in the personality directs its activities with reference to remote purposes, we are justified in taking a general teleological view of nature; but if the will-element latent in force can become conscious and definite only in personality, a late development of the evolutionary process, it is evident that we must find many details in nature at variance with teleological requirements.

"Infinite succession of causes," we say; but how account for the increment? When there is increase in velocity, a deepening of the volume of life, that significant fact implies some constant influence in addition to the succession. The creative element has not died in evolving life, but, like the embryo, has gained vitality through the differentiation of its constituent elements. This divine exists positively in the world, pervading and glorifying every lowliest form, and through all these forms striving to manifest itself in an ideal personality.

DISCUSSIONS.

QUESTIONS OF A PLURALIST RAISED BY THE REV. DR. JAMES
G. TOWNSEND.

I HAVE long been an admirer of your splendid work, but have been unable to accept your philosophic views; and knowing your willingness to receive criticism, I hereby send my objections in brief, and the statement of my own view. I know in doing this I express the feeling of many others.

Your philosophy, if I correctly understand you, makes the universe one unit of absolute reality, unchanging, ungrowing, entirely complete. Thus you make the imperfect, the ugly, the cruel, the evil parts as essential as the best. In your view, then, evil, ugliness, sin, have their foundation in this primal unit of fact,—that is in God.

Do you not, in this monistic conception, have the same difficulty which has always confronted scholastic theism?

I see no way of escape from this dilemma than the view I have long held—to free ourselves from the tyranny of the idea of monism and consent that the universe existed in more than one form, composed of different powers, principles or entities rather than one infinite and eternal energy as Mr. Spencer and Dr. Carus affirm. And from this conception it follows that evil is not an eternal necessity, but may in time be eliminated.

It follows from this view also that God is not omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient—an eternal monotony—but is “finite” as Professor James says; that he has his problems as we have ours, and that like us he may have his difficulties, his defeats, his victories!

I wish also to say a word respecting your “philosophy of form.” Do I understand you to mean that organic form is the cause rather than the creation of life?

Is it not rather true that life is behind all organism as its cause and architect? (I do not affirm that life is the creator of energy.) And does not the poet Spenser suggest (whom you quote with

approval) that it is the soul which forms even the body itself? Did not Kant affirm that all form, all empirical reality, was as the unfolding of a spiritual principle, a *mind* universal?

And is not this view now most common in biological and psychological speculation? I refer to the theories of Sir Oliver Lodge and others. That "life" may be a real and primal form of reality, of existence, is also an accepted hypothesis.

In making these criticisms, Dr. Carus must not think that I do not recognize his great work in the field of religion, science and philosophy.

Editorial Reply.

In reply to Dr. James G. Townsend's remarks I would say that though I claim the universe to be one I would not use the term "absolute reality," I would not say that it is a "unit," nor would I characterize it as "unchanging, ungrowing and entirely complete." The universe is constantly changing before our eyes, and its very character is growth. The oneness of the universe is not external but intrinsic or immanent. I would characterize it as a unity but not as a unit. The unity of the universe manifests itself mainly in the harmony of its laws; all truths form a system, a great hierarchy of norms, and all uniformities observable in nature are variations or special cases of a general consistency which corresponds exactly with the consistency of our mental constitution as it has been developed in the formal sciences, especially logic and mathematics.

Whether the universe is also materially one large whole, whether all masses are bodily connected and interrelated, whether they are in touch by an all-pervading ether and whether all existences influence one another by the universal law of gravitation, is a problem which our present knowledge cannot solve. It is possible that there are worlds outside of this large stellar universe of ours which are not related with it, but it may be that all the many universes within and without the range of telescopes are an interconnected whole. I do not believe that this problem is of any consequence whatever for our thought, so I leave it alone and am satisfied to know that the immanent unity of the world is an established fact. The latter, the intrinsic oneness of the universe is of much more vital importance than the former, its probable external unity.

I understand by God the normative factor of the world; God in this sense is the former, the monlder, the creator. The work which he performs (to speak humanly of God as "he") is formulated by scientists in natural laws, and appears in the moral development

of social events as Providence, as the curse of sin and the blessing of the right mode of action. In this sense Fichte defined God as the moral world-order.

It will be noticed that my conception of God is not pantheistic. I do not identify God with the *Pan*, the All of nature. He is that part of nature which dominates its development and determines its destiny. I grant that God and nature are inseparable, but they are not identical; they are two aspects of the same reality of which God is the higher one.

Evil accordingly is not a part of God. Evil is an intrinsic and necessary part of nature. It is true that nature is a revelation of God, but the revelation of God is not one in which his divinity blazes up in all its perfection, but in its manifestation it gropes after the ideal and is everywhere limited in its exertions. God considered in himself as the normative factor of existence, is indeed eternal and unchangeable, but God as his own realization in nature appears in particulars, and every particular is one aspect only. Materiality is characteristic of concrete existence while law is universal. Every concrete existence is in a definite space and flourishes at a definite time. It is a creature, *ein Geschöpf*, i. e., a thing shaped, as the Germans call it, a fleeting form. It is limited in space, it is limited in time, it originates and it passes away, and its life is a constant struggle involving hardship, disease and final dissolution. These are conditions of all material existence and there is only one way to overcome them, which is by accepting the conditions, by not over-estimating or clinging to the transient, and by gaining the eternal aspect of existence.

The ills of life are indispensable and inherent in all temporal existence; but in addition to the ills of life we have evil, and evil is still less a feature of God than the ills of life. Evil is a moral taint and is a product of our own making. There need be no evil if we possess the right attitude, if we do not cling to selfhood and are always ready to surrender to death what is mortal. While the path of evolution is straight and narrow, while there is always but one solution of a truth, there are innumerable alluring by-paths sometimes very pleasant to look upon, and to every right solution there are a great many errors, some of them very attractive and plausible. These aberrations are evil; they lead astray, and in following them we meet with ills of all kinds which could have been avoided.

It is impossible to discuss the problem of evil without touching on the problem of free will. Philosophical schools are commonly

divided into two hostile camps, the determinists and the supporters of the theory of free will. I take a middle ground. I accept unhesitatingly the theory of determinism, but I would not for that reason deny that man is possessed of free will. The issues have been confounded by a wrong definition of free will. Both schools understand by free will the arbitrariness of chance decisions which is not free will but would be like a haphazard game of dice. The decisions of a free will are just as definitely determined as any resultant of mechanical forces, but they are plans of action in which the ultimate determinant is the character of the acting person, and such actions as are the results of a free decision alone possess moral value. If they were arbitrary they would, morally considered, be worthless.

Strictly speaking, all nature is possessed of free will; the flash of lightning takes place according to the nature of the electric tension in the clouds, and if the lightning could speak it would declare that its discharge is made because such is its free will and determination. In this sense all parts of nature act according to their constitution of their own free will, and they do so of necessity. What is like in character will act alike, and the samenesses of natural activity are formulated in what is called natural law. Things do not act because they are compelled or forced to act in this way, but because such is their intrinsic nature. The law of causation is not a ukase or tyrannical rule; it is simply a general description of a mode of action. In man the conditions are more complicated because his organism is a multiplicity of many different and often contradictory tendencies, but the general formula holds just the same, except that man must choose between several possible volitions. The choice is predetermined by his character, but if his will is free to act, is not compelled by threats, by compulsion or by outside forces, his decision will be determined by his character.

In other words, determinedness does not contradict free will. The opposite of free will is compulsion. The man who is compelled by a robber to give up his purse does not act by free will, but a man who hands his purse to a beggar because the latter appeals to his compassion acts of his own free will. His act characterises him, he is responsible for it, while in acts done under compulsion he cannot be held responsible.

This exposition of free will is indispensable for an explanation of evil. The general world-order is not responsible for the evils which we do. The evil deed is the work of poor mortal man straying away from the straight path, but the curse of evil, the punish-

ment that follows it, that, I grant, is the work of the divine dispensation of the world.

The quotation from Spenser does not say that "it is the soul which forms the body itself," but "For soul is form and doth the body make." Here Spenser identifies soul with form and says that the soul is the formative principle. In other words, mind is the product of organizations, not its cause, and if we speak of God as a mind we view him under an anthropomorphic allegory. By mind I understand an organism which has the faculty of deliberation, but God does not stand in need of deliberations. His thoughts are the eternal laws of nature, all of which constitute a spiritual organism like a personality but far superior to anything that is like a human mind. God is not a person but the condition of personality; therefore I characterize God as superpersonal.

Life in my opinion is indeed intrinsic in the universe. The potentiality of life is contained even in inorganic nature, and life is actualized by organization. In other words, organization is life and any substance in which the process of organization takes place we call an organism. That life should be a principle, or faculty, or power by itself outside of its own manifestations, appears to me as impossible as to assume that electricity is prior to electric currents and is a power which produces the currents.

I have answered Dr. Townsend's questions briefly but with sufficient clearness to indicate my solutions of these several problems, and I have given them a careful consideration because in these days of pluralistic tendencies there may be more readers of my writings who would naturally share the opinions of my kind critic.

Rejoinder of Rev. Dr. Townsend.

A word about your "reply."

Your speculations about the universe and God are very interesting and striking and may be true, but they are not knowledge. All truth which is known is part of knowledge, and all knowledge is *verifiable* and *communicable*.

How can you say *evil* is but a part of God? I mean with your definition of God. You aver that God gropes after the ideal, and is everywhere limited in his exertions. What is this but my idea of the limitation of God, his imperfection? That he has his problems as we have ours?

You say: "The general world-order is not responsible for the evil which we do, that the evil deed is the work of poor mortal man, but the *punishment* is the work of the divine dispensation of the

world." Whether this teaching is true or not, certainly it is not modern science, it is not monism, and it surely is dualism or pluralism.

Nor do I see how, in your definition of determinism, which seems to me scientific and true, you can make man free. Man acts according to his character and his environment. How can he do otherwise as you affirm?

I aver the differences in men are not made by their choices, by themselves, but by their endowments, their natures, their education, their environment. But it is a great theme.

Editorial Comments.

Dr. Townsend's criticism seems to be based on a misunderstanding of my definitions. He reads my explanations in the sense in which he uses similar expressions, and he does not correctly reword the ideas which he quotes from me. In doing so he supplants my conceptions by his own.

I define God as "the normative factor of the world." The norm is always the same. The norm is formulated by scientists as a law. It means "If you do this, a definite result will come about; if you do that, there will be other consequences. Whatever you do the result will be determined. The determinant is God. God is the universal norm; man is a definite concrete creature." Dr. Townsend quotes me as having said that God "gropes after the ideal, and is everywhere limited in his exertions." God, the eternal norm, does not grope. God is always like unto himself. Therefore God is not subject to limitation. Dr. Townsend will notice that I did not say that "God gropes," but that the divinity of God in its manifestation gropes after the ideal, and I hope I have expressed myself clearly. In evolution and especially in the history of mankind God appears as that power which makes for righteousness. He appears in the progress of civilization, of science and an increasingly nobler conception of life. Here God does not grope but we, created in his image, are groping after God.

Dr. Townsend says "What is this but my idea of the limitation of God?" and we will answer that in one respect Dr. Townsend is right. God is perfect if we take the absolute view of God, if we consider the ultimate norm by itself. But God manifests himself in the concrete world, and in his manifestation in this actual world of ours we see the divine unfolding itself in the process of evolution from the lower to the higher, and the course of evolution is naturally limited at every step. This manifestation of God, if we use the

language of religious symbolism, is the second person of the Trinity; it is God the Son; and though it is everywhere divine, though it is an incarnation of God, though it even may be pursuing the right path of the straight line of progress, it is everywhere hampered by conditions, it is imperfect by being of a particular kind, and therefore, as Dr. Townsend says, limited. In this sense and this sense only, God has limitations; however, it is not God in the eternal aspect of his being, but God as his revelation, God as he incarnates himself in his own creature.

My conception of God, when rightly understood, disposes of the criticism that evil must be part of God. If God is the norm and the result of infringing upon the norm is evil, evil is not part of the norm. Evil may be unavoidable, and I do not hesitate to say that it is. Evil may be part of existence, but according to my definition of God it is not part of God. I have expressly denied that I accept pantheism but I notice that Dr. Townsend tacitly assumes that my God is pantheistic. In my conception of God, God is not identical with the All; he is one feature of the All. God is the normative, the most important, the dominant feature of existence. He is not the sum total of existence, nor is he the totality of all conditions; he is their determinant and their ultimate *raison d'être*. Thus it happens that the old paradox of the ancient Greek sages becomes true that "the part is greater than the whole."

By monism I understand that all is consistent; all is subject to one rule. There are no contradictions in the rule, and thus all truths are different aspects of one and the same truth. But with all the consistency there are contrasts. We are confronted everywhere with opposites. There is rising and sinking temperature; there is heat and cold; there is action and reaction; there is inwardness and outwardness in man's experience; there is soul and body; there is matter and mind; there are always two possible standpoints in every proceeding and the details of the world are split up into an infinitude of particulars. If this is called pluralism let it be, and if the contrasts in existence are to be called dualism, I would have to be counted among the dualists. However, dualism is generally understood not to be a mere contrast of aspects or standpoints, but a contradiction of two independent realms, of two separate existences; and according to dualism, the world is a combination of two radically different factors. Dualism in this sense I reject, while the duality of contrasts is in my opinion an undeniable fact. Further, if pluralism means that the world consists of a plurality of concrete particulars, I would be the last to oppose pluralism;

but if pluralism denies the consistency and unity of the world I oppose it. The decisive feature which makes the world one is again its normative determinant which in the language of religion has always been called God, and this normative determinant manifests itself in the rigidity of form, of formal law and all formative agencies. Its result is the cosmic order of the world, what on former occasion I have called its "lawdom,"* and this alone makes reason possible; it alone constitutes the rationality of reason; it makes science possible and on its account alone can we speak of the divinity of man.

Evil has been the stumbling block in all philosophical and religious systems, but it seems to me that in the Philosophy of Science which simply formulates the facts it finds its proper place. Wherever life stirs, particular beings endeavor to actualize their aspirations. Life is everywhere struggle, and struggle is impossible without exertion, without conflict, without competition, without wounds and occasional defeats. There is the one straight line of progressive movement, but there is also the possibility of innumerable aberrations on all sides and the various paths of aberration are tried. They lead astray and involve aspiring creatures into error and the consequences of error, into evil. Troubles and evils are therefore indispensable features of existence and we must not expect that this life is a millennium where we can reap without sowing, where we enjoy pleasures and have no pain, where we can celebrate triumphs without gaining victories. In a word we must make up our minds to face the truth that evil is part and parcel of existence, and he who does not recognize this fact will meet with disappointment.

My position concerning determinism and free will is simply this: If a man can act according to his character he is free; an act which he performs without let or hindrance is called an act of his free will, and this act is rigidly determined by his own character, by himself. Accordingly an act of free will is as much determined as an act of compulsion. Any conception of a free will which is undetermined and is the result of arbitrariness, in which a man could will and act against his own character, is to me merely a confusion of thought and has produced much unnecessary discussion. I do not affirm that man acts otherwise than "according to his character and environment."

* See especially "The Nature of Logical and Mathematical Thought," *Monist*, XX, 36; also "Truth on Trial" (Chicago, 1910), pp. 75 and 100.

THE GOD PROBLEM. IN COMMENT ON A. E. BARTLETT'S
"EVOLUTION OF THE DIVINE."

Mr. A. E. Bartlett's article on the "Evolution of the Divine" attempts to solve the problem of the shortcomings of the world, especially the existence of evil, by conceiving God as "a principle in the process of evolution." The author goes too far when combating the theory of "the static conception of the divine." God is both static and dynamic. He is the eternal and he is also the principle of evolution. This is a contrast but need not be a contradiction, and a synthesis of these two opposites furnishes the third characteristic of the deity, going far to justify the old trinitarian conception.

Our author uses many expressions which appeal to the average reader, though when closely considered they are but glittering generalities. Such are the terms "infinite" (as here used, which is not always in its strictly scientific interpretation), "divine essence," "fundamental essence," "creative energy" and "the absolute." The author's conception of evil follows the popular trend of to-day when he says "evil is not an essential attribute of nature," and "evil is not abiding." This point of view is untenable. Evil, with all that is implied thereby, pain, disease and death, is unavoidable, and in addition to physical ills there are moral aberrations which will crop out under the most favorable conditions as necessarily as weeds will grow wherever there is a chance. This principle was enunciated for the first time by the great founder of Buddhism, Gautama Siddhartha, called by his adherents the Buddha. Evil may be limited. Many of its most dastardly forms may be overcome, pain may be reduced more and more, but that evil could be absolutely removed is as unthinkable as the hope that death can be eliminated. According to the argument of Buddha it lies in the very nature of corporeal existence that things are compounds and compound things originate by combination and will in time be dissolved. Life is change; it involves both the building up and breaking down of organized forms, and thus occasional pain and finally death are inevitable.

Our author is carried away by a modern notion of God which has not yet been matured by a rigid scientific critique. Thus the idea of personality slips in and attributes to God "latent feelings," whatever that may mean, and the "trinity of feeling, will and thought."

There are many striking comments which our author makes by the way, such as "the universe is a democracy not an absolute mon-

archy," and "the divine despot must have in his nature a strain of wickedness." Further we would call attention to the appreciation of the infinite as the indispensable background of the finite. The finite is the object of the senses while the infinite is the mental frame in which sense-perception is set.

Our own method of approaching the problem of God is twofold: partly it is historical, partly philosophical. We try to understand what people meant by God, and we find that whatever superstitions are connected with the idea, they always think of God as that something which determines our duties; or, briefly stated, God has always been the authority of conduct and this authority of conduct is an actual fact of our experience. The question is not whether God exists or no, but to investigate and to determine the nature of the authority of conduct with which we are confronted. Since I have devoted a book of over two hundred pages to this problem I can simply refer my readers to my own solution (*God, an Enquiry and a Solution*, Open Court Pub. Co., 1908); and will now sum up by stating that the God whom science must recognize is an omnipresence governing the world with the unfailing dominance of natural law. He is not a personality like man, but he is a super-personality, the prototype of man's own personality. Further, God, or to use another term the cosmic world-order, is like logic or arithmetic, immanent in nature and yet at the same time supernatural, for the principle of the world-order is independent of nature and would exist even if nature were non-existent. P. C.

A THING AS THE UNITY OF SEVERAL SENSATIONS WITH REFERENCE TO F. D. BOND'S "IMMEDIACY."

The current number of *The Open Court* contains a thoughtful article by Frederic Drew Bond, entitled "Immediacy," in which he explains the immediacy of the meaning of vision and generally of sense-perception. The editor of *The Open Court* has discussed a kindred subject when dealing with the problem of the inverted picture on the retina, stating in this connection that the problem is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of vision.

The truth is we do not see the picture on the retina, but the picture on the retina in connection with its brain structures in the center of vision sees the object. Thus the direction in which the object lies is laid down in seeing. Points which we look for above naturally appear on the lower part of the retina. What we see is not a speck on the lower part of the retina but a direction which, passing through a point on the lower part of the retina, turns our eyes up-

ward. To repeat, the picture which an outsider could see on the retina is not the object seen but is the function which performs the act of seeing in cooperation with other sensations, among them the sensed muscular motions of the eye.

The same is true of the interpretation. We do not feel the sensation but the sensation is the feeling itself and this sensation culminates in its interpretation. We look for the purpose of our sensation and have grown accustomed to think of this our aim upon which our sensation is concentrated. We are interested in the result and this flashes into consciousness. Here all our attention is concentrated. A number of subconscious states coalesce into a unit and this unit, this product of a number of physiological activities, is lit up by consciousness. The cooperation of a number of feelings creates a new unit. Our attention is not focused in the several parts but in their combination, which as such is called perception.

Thus the immediacy of perception is due to the origin of a higher unity, and the unity becomes conscious, not its several subconscious elements. We are here confronted with the complicated problem, one portion of which is the problem of the one and the many discussed in our recent little book on *Personality* (page 31 or 36).

It is a mistake which is met with quite frequently even in the philosophies of great thinkers, to look upon the elements of existence, or as in our present case the elements of perception alone, as actualities and to overlook the actuality of the unities which are produced by a combination of parts.

The truth is that these unities, and not the elements, are the actual facts. The elements are stable, they persist if a unity has been dissolved, but the unity is the actual thing and the living presence. A unity originates and passes away. It may reappear according to the laws of formation. Its nature is determined by the eternal laws of causation, and causation depends on the laws of form, static as well as dynamic. Hence the enormous significance of the laws of form which reveal to us the nature of becoming and furnish us with the key to the explanation of the world problem.

Mr. Bond condemns the theory that perceptions are projected into the world of space, and as he means it he is right. There is an interpretation superadded to sensation and this interpretation is immediately perceived. It appears as the result of sensation in consciousness projected into space. We do not contradict Mr. Bond on this point, but we wish to say that if Clifford speaks of things perceived as "ejects" and if others in the same way speak of pro-

jecting our interpretation of retinal sensations into the outside world, physiologists and philosophers make use of figurative speech which is quite allowable, for our interpretation locates the cause of certain sensations in outside space, and we may very well call this operation a projection.

Mr. Bond concentrates his attention mainly upon the interpretation of vision, as in the meaning of printed pages when read. We actually read the sense and overlook or rather neglect the elements from which sense originates, and here again the real explanation must be found in the significance of the unity which is worked out in our interpreting the combined figures of letters, or figures of any kind. The problem of the one and the many, together with the significance of the origin of new unities by a combination of parts dimly followed by Plato and discussed with great vigor in his "Pythagoras," has a much greater significance than to our knowledge has ever been noted by any philosopher.

We sum up. Several sensations combine into a unity and this combination is the perception of a thing. Our attention is concentrated in the unity; while the details, the elements of the sensation and the parts of the thing are not specifically noted. Thus the thing itself, the result of a number of sensations, flashes up in consciousness in a wonderful immediacy; the object seen is the work of our own mind and it comes to us like a mysterious revelation, while the data from which we construct it, or, perhaps better, from which it rises, remain unobserved.

P. C.