

231  
N9

SEABOARD  
THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL

EXPERIENCE

8075+

**EXPERIENCE AND THE CONCEPT OF GOD.**

by James W. Macdonald

Thesis submitted for Degree of Bachelor of Divinity

May 1, 1913.<sup>al</sup>

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Josiah Royce, The World and the Individual
- F.H.Bradley, Appearance and Reality
- A.E.Taylor, Elements of Metaphysics
- William James, Pragmatism
- William James, A Pluralistic Universe
- F.C.S.Schiller, Studies in Humanism
- F.C.S.Schiller, Axioms as Postulates
- F.C.S.Schiller, Formal Logic
- Arthur O.Lovejoy, Pragmatism and Theology, in the Am.Jr. of Theology  
Volume XII.
- Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution
- Henri Bergson, Life and Consciousness, Hibbert Jr. Vol. X, No.1
- H.D.Lloyd, Man the Social Creator

## EXPERIENCE AND THE CONCEPT OF GOD.

In present day religious philosophy there are in the main two opposite points of view with regard to the concept of God, one honored by long acceptance, the other comparatively new. The older view is that God is perfect, infinite, absolute. This was the position of the scholastic theologians of the Christian Church. They taught that God was perfect in power, wisdom and goodness. He was the omnipotent, omniscient, and all-loving Creator, sustainer and governor of the Universe. Nothing happened without his permission. For the soul that loved him everything was secure because everything was in his almighty hands; everything was right because he was perfect wisdom; everything was good because he was perfect goodness. It could have been said with confidence: "God's in his heaven; all's right with the world"; or, to borrow a phrase of Leibnitz: "God has made all things harmonious in perfection." Owing to the rise of modern science, however, with its setting forth of empiric facts which seem to show imperfection in the universe, and its concept of evolution, which stated that things were not finished, but in process of growth and change, this scholastic idea of God has been somewhat modified. But the essence of the idea is preserved for the English-speaking world in the transcendental idealistic philosophy of such thinkers as T.H.Green, John and Edward Caird, A.E.Taylor, and Josiah Royce. This philosophy has greatly influenced the more studious members of the modern ministry. (fn. 1) And generally those preachers of today who advocate the doctrine of a perfect, infinite, absolute God, in the last resort defend their position on the grounds of this philosophy.

Fn. 1 W. James' Pragmatism, page 17

Fn. 2 A.E. Taylor's Elements of Metaphysics, page 382 (ref. from p.2)

According to this philosophy "all existence forms a harmonious unity". (See fn.2, page 1) In reality everything is eternal perfection. What seems imperfection is temporal and unreal. Prof. Royce says, "The very presence of ill in the temporal order is the condition of the perfection of the eternal order." (fn.1) Reality is perfect; its seeming imperfection must be an illusion of imperfect finite beings. This view of the world as in reality perfect, which view is in essential agreement with the scholastic view that everything is good, is, -according to these philosophers who advocate it, the only view that ultimately satisfies the instinctive demands of men. The human mind and heart, they say, demand that reality shall be a systematic unity, in which all seeming discord shall be harmonized in a perfect system. Now this view of reality as perfect necessitates an Absolute Experience which embraces reality as such. This is why this philosophy advocates the doctrine of a perfect, absolute God. There must be, these philosophers say, an **Absolute Being**, an "absolute conscious life which embraces the totality of existence all at once, and in a perfect systematic unity, as the content of its experience," (fn.2) for to deny the existence of such a being would be to reduce the world to a mere chaos. To a finite consciousness the world may appear to be a chaos, but that is only an illusion of finiteness. For the Absolute Experience this illusion vanishes, rather does not exist. In the words of Professor Bradley: "The Absolute is the richer for every discord and for all ~~the~~ diversity it embraces". (fn. 3) This Absolute God in his timeless existence sees the past, present, and future in an eternal present, an eternal now. He contains the whole of reality as a perfectly harmonious system. There are no discordant elements in his

Fn. 1 J.Royce, The World and the Individual, Vol.2, page 385

Fn. 2 Taylor's Metaphysics, page 60

Fn. 3 F.H.Bradley, Appearance and Reality, page 204

experience. This doctrine of the Absolute God has been put very acutely, if not altogether sympathetically, by Professor Lovejoy. He says, "This is the doctrine, -which has received its most systematic and persuasive presentation at the hands of Professor Royce, but it is to be found also in many other and less coherent forms, -that all which enters or has entered, or shall enter, into the experience of any conscious life is eternally embraced in one Absolute Experience. This all-including divine life, we are told for our comfort, is itself, in its timeless existence, eternally triumphant; the world that is, is the world that the Absolute wills and finds very good; even our suffering and sin and shame are, every single jot of them, indispensable elements in the bliss and glory of this universal self who alone sees and understands the whole." (fn. 1) Such, in brief, is the doctrine, with its ultimate philosophic defence which says that God is an infinite, perfect, absolute Being.

The opposing doctrine, which I said was comparatively new, affirms that God is finite, imperfect, growing. It has close affiliations with the philosophies of such men as William James and Henri Bergson; it finds expression in the writings of such men as George Bernard Shaw, and H.D.Lloyd; and is proclaimed more or less consistently from many a liberal pulpit, and has even found its way into the pages of popular magazines. Let me give some quotations to indicate this.

A statement of the doctrine and its connection with the philosophy of William James is given in the two following quotations: one from Dr.C.F.Dole, the other from Professor Lovejoy, in the article referred to above. Dr.Dole says, "It (this doctrine of the growing God) has come in along with the late Professor James' teaching about pragmatism and pluralism, and it proves very attractive to many young minds.

Fn.1 Article in Am.Jr.of Theol. Vol.12, p.138 "Pragmatism and Theology"

It is all abroad among Unitarian ministers, but not alone among them. It will soon have to be reckoned with wherever men discuss the problems of thought. It may be called the religion of the Coming God. According to this view God is no more perfect than man is, or than the universe is. God, indeed, is in the process of becoming, is growing. According to some the life of God is a venture or experiment as truly as the life of each man is. He may not succeed. He is dependent upon us as truly and as much as we are dependent upon him. Religion becomes a tremendous and chivalrous appeal to all noble men to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty, that is, against the powers and influences that tend to degeneration, moral and spiritual decadence and final death for gods or man." (Fn. 1) Professor Lovejoy says, quoting James' own words in part, "The salvation of the world, according to James, is no absolutely predictable certainty. So far as we have knowledge, it appears to be a world the perfection of which is potential merely, the condition being that each several agent does its own level best. The world's safety is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger, yet it may win through. It is a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done. . . . . God (according to the philosophy of James) must be a God having an existence in the temporal world which alone is real to us, and therefore one having his own perfection of being and his own triumph still to achieve--with us, and through our loyalty in that vast, co-operative work in which we have every reason to think that the universe consists." (Fn. 2)

The relation of this doctrine of a growing God to the philosophy of Bergson is seen in the fact that Bergson's fundamental postulate is that of an original creative, purposive life impulse which does not follow any preconceived design but makes the design and develops

Fn. 1 Christian Register, Aug. 1, 1912

Fn. 2 Am. Jr. Theol. Vol. 12, p. 142

fuller being as it goes along. He says, "I see in the whole evolution of life on this planet an effort of this essentially creative force to arrive, by traversing matter, at something which is only realized in man, and which even in man, is realized only imperfectly." (Fn. 1) Again he says, "God has nothing of the already made. He is unceasing life, action, freedom." (Fn. 2) According to Bergson God is in a process of becoming.

George Bernard Shaw's characteristic expression of the doctrine of <sup>the</sup> growing God is given in the following sentence from an address of his upon Religion. He says, "This tremendous power is continually struggling with what we call external nature, and is getting hold of external nature and organizing it. Needing eyes and hands and brains for the fulfilment of its purpose, it evolves them. We are its brains and eyes and hands. It is not an omnipotent power that can do things without us; it has created us in order that we might do its work; in fact that is the way it does its work--through us." (Fn. 3) According to Shaw, God is an urge, a ceaseless effort, the Life-Force of the cosmos, making towards conscious self-achievement. He depends upon man as his instrument to enable him to arrive at a fuller and completer consciousness of himself. "The cry of God to men, as I hear it," says Shaw, "is: Pity me; help me; stop flattering me; <sup>above all,</sup> stop talking d-- nonsense ~~about~~ ~~me~~ in your superstitious terror of me; for I also am beset with error and burdened with unimaginable labors; and I have created you to be my helpers and servers, not my sycophants and apologists." (Fn. 4)

H.D.Lloyd gives expression to the doctrine of a growing God thus: "In its first reaction against the absurdity of explaining the

Fn. 1 Hibbert Journal, Vol.10, No.1, page 38

Fn. 2 Bergson's Creative Evolution, page 248

Fn. 3 Lecture at New Reform Club, London, March 21, 1912. Reported in New York Call, July 7, 1912.

Fn. 4 Christian Commonwealth, July 3, 1912

imperfect and incomplete creature and creation by a perfect and complete God evolutionary thought would have been glad to abolish God altogether. But it now seems that God must be included in its scheme, but as a God that is evolving. Man is now making God." (Fn. 1)

Again, the doctrine is implied in a poem by O.W.Firkins, which found its way, some months ago, into the pages of a popular magazine. Let me quote it in full:

#### TWO QUESTIONS

How were it if the cleavage that we see  
 Twixt good and ill in man's unquiet race  
 Pushed its deep furrow through all time and space,  
 Entered and clove the heart of Deity;  
 If, as in man, the islet-colony,  
 So in the empire's ddome and market-place  
 Closed soul and matter in that strong embrace,  
 Half love, half warfare, unrelaxingly;  
 If the light ripples that still wax and wane  
 In man's soul answered to a mightier swell,  
 Not to calm levels in a tideless main;  
 If the vast universe wherein we dwell  
 Toiled with us, with us battled, rose and fell,  
 With us shared longing, victory and pain?

They said unto Parrhasius: "Take away  
 The curtain; let our eyes the picture view."  
 The painter smiled; and when they nearer drew  
 The curtain was the picture. Pause and weigh  
 The query, if the dusk that rims our day  
 Veiled but a veil, if yonder midnight hue  
 That rings our outlook hemmed God's vision, too;  
 If the great cosmos strove its ear to lay  
 To its own breast, a token thus to crave  
 If heart beat there or coreless fantasy;  
 If to man's longing the dim future gave  
 No firm assurance, but with hollow cry  
 Echoed his question from its lampless cave:  
 What art thou? Who shall tell thee? What am I?

I have inserted this considerable number of quotations simply to show that the doctrine that God is finite, imperfect, growing, commands the allegiance of some of the foremost thinkers and literary men of the time, and is a point of view that cannot be swept aside with-



out serious consideration. As Dr. Dole says, it will have to be reckoned with sooner or later. The essence of the doctrine is that God is not static, but dynamic; not absolute but processive; not complete, but unfinished. He is not a being whose experience is one of unbroken peace, embracing all reality in a perfect harmonious system, but a being who feels the tug and haul of things, who feels the strain of struggle, whose consciousness is a consciousness of conflict. He is not absolute wisdom; there are some things he does not yet know. His wisdom is growing through his growing experience. He does not see the end at the beginning; it is sufficient that he knows enough for the next step. His experience grows through struggle and achievement. He is striving for fuller life. He has no eternal preconceived plans; his purpose is increasing and he makes his plan as he goes along. Through man, in whom he has realized his highest expression up to date, he is seeking to push out into higher and still higher reaches of being. Such is the doctrine which says that God is imperfect, finite, growing. It stands in direct opposition to the doctrine that God is perfect, infinite, absolute.

I have described two fundamentally opposite doctrines of God; the doctrine of the Absolute God, and the doctrine of the Growing God. I am in general agreement with the latter, and I now propose to devote the rest of this thesis primarily to a defense of it. First, I shall deal with the question; Upon what grounds should the doctrine of the Growing God be accepted or rejected?, and shall explain why I think the doctrine is to be accepted or rejected upon the grounds of an appeal to empiric facts and to religious experience. Then, in accordance with this method of empiricism I shall try to show first, that the doctrine of the Growing God accords with the empiric facts of the objective world, whereas the doctrine of the Absolute God does not; and, secondly, that it harmonizes better than does the doctrine of the Absolute God with the

fundamentals of religious experience.

### I.

First, on what grounds should the doctrine of the Growing God be accepted as true or rejected as false? Now, it happens that the doctrine is advocated in the writings of William James, F.C.S. Schiller, and others, who call themselves pragmatists. Consequently there is a wide-spread conviction that the doctrine of the Growing God stands or falls with the logic of pragmatism. One might agree to that if he knew just what pragmatism is. If pragmatism means that that doctrine of God is true which is in accordance with what outward reality reports to human experience, and with the inward facts of religious experience; in other words, if pragmatism is empiricism, then I should agree that the doctrine of the Growing God stands or falls with pragmatism. But that is just the difficulty. One cannot be sure what pragmatism is. I am not able to get a consistent view of it from James' book on Pragmatism. He seems to uphold two views; one, that reality is what we want it to be, is what we make it, is what our souls demand; the other, that reality is so and so whether we like it or not, and that our theories must conform to what experience reports reality to be. In other words, his so-called pragmatism seems at one time to be something distinct from empiricism, and at another time, to be identical with it. I have a similar difficulty with Professor Schiller's writings. He talks about postulating as true what we want to be true, and making reality conform to our postulates. Reality, he says, is plastic; the world is what we make it. Here the attitude seems to be, not that truth shall correspond to fact, but that fact shall be interpreted in accordance with a priori postulates. On the other hand, however, he says that our postulates, before they can be accepted as true, must be tested by experience, by fact. We must see

if they will work in experience, and if they will not work we must abandon them. In his latest book, "Formal Logic", he says, "Postulates have, of course, to make good their claims to be applicable to the actual course of nature. But this is not a question that can be settled by making postulates however strenuously; it depends upon experience, and ..... must always continue to do so." (Fn. 1) Mr. Bertrand Russell, in reviewing the book, says of this passage, "In this passage pure empiricism is recommended on the question as to how far we are to believe our postulates." (Fn. 2) <sup>in substance,</sup> In spite of these concessions to empiricism by some of the exponents of pragmatism, ~~however,~~ <sup>however,</sup> the tendency of pragmatism <sup>is</sup> to insist that that is true which the human soul feels ought to be true for the satisfaction of its needs; that the truth is what we will to be true.

Now, if this be the view of pragmatism, and I feel that it is, then it seems to me that the doctrine of the Growing God as opposed to the doctrine of the Absolute God can not be defended upon pragmatic grounds because a good case could be made out for the truth of the doctrine of the Absolute God upon the same grounds. The absolutists say that the doctrine of the Absolute is what the human soul demands shall be true because the human soul demands that reality be a systematic unity in which all seeming discord is harmonized. And Professor James himself quotes an anonymous correspondent as saying that the thought of the limitations, failures, and sufferings of himself and others, becomes endurable "only on one condition; namely, that through the construction, in imagination and by reasoning, of a rational unity of all things, I can conceive my acts and my thoughts and my troubles as supplemented by all the other phenomena of the world, and as forming - when thus supplemented- a scheme which I approve and adopt as my own."

(Fn. 3)

Fn.1 Schiller, Formal Logic, page 301

Fn.2 English Nation, May 18, 1912, page 259

Fn.3 James' Pragmatism, page 279

This man really wanted to believe in the existence of an Absolute Consciousness that embraces evil as a necessary part in a total scheme of things which it pronounces good. He really demanded that the doctrine of the Absolute God be true, and, on pragmatic grounds, he could not be refuted, because for him the concept of the Absolute was essentially a pragmatic postulate. This man is only one of many. Many people find great comfort in believing that God is perfect, absolute; that everything is in his almighty hands, and that therefore everything is secure, "all's right with the world". And there are others who would like to believe it if they could. Now if one wanted to believe that God was perfect, absolute, because such a belief seemed necessary to him, to enable him to live his life bravely and to give him peace of soul amid the circumstances of time, and if consequently he demanded that the doctrine of the Absolute God be true, and he lived as if it were true, then pragmatism would have no argument against him if he said that it was true. But if a man said that the doctrine of the Growing God was what he wanted to believe, because it best fitted his soul's needs, and he was going to live as if God were finite and growing, then pragmatism would have no argument against him if he said that the doctrine of the Growing God was true. From this I think it will be clear why I consider that the doctrine of the Growing God, as opposed to the doctrine of the Absolute God, does not stand or fall with the logic of pragmatism.

The question whether God is <sup>a</sup> Absolute or <sup>g</sup> Growing can not be determined by pragmatism, because what one would like to be true and what is true may be two different things. Demanding a theory be true does not necessarily make it true. It must be tested by fact and experience, for our conceptions of what is true must be in accordance with what experience reports, and not merely with what we should like to be true. In other words, it must be tested, not by the method of pragmatism, but

by the method of empiricism. Mr. Thomas Hardy puts this clearly enough in his new preface to 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles,' in which he answers those critics who object that his impressions of life are pessimistic. He says "That these impressions have been condemned as pessimistic - as if that were a very wicked adjective- shows a curious muddle-mindedness. It must be obvious that there is a higher characteristic of philosophy than pessimism, or than meliorism, namely truth. Existence is either ordered in a certain way or it is not so ordered, and conjectures which harmonize best with experience are removed above all comparison with other conjectures which do not so harmonize. So that to say one view is worse than other views, without proving it erroneous, implies the possibility of a false view being better or more expedient than a true view; and no pragmatic proppings can make that idolum specus stand on its feet." So in our discussion; ~~in~~ trying to determine whether God is perfect, absolute, or imperfect, growing, we must ask, -Do facts, experience show that God is perfect, complete, or do they show that God is imperfect, incomplete? Things are so and so or they are not so and so and no matter how much we may wish that God be perfect, if facts show that he is imperfect, then we must believe that he is imperfect, and it is useless for any pragmatic absolutist to demand that for his soul's needs God must be perfect. Many, and I am among them, accept the doctrine of a growing God, although they are fully conscious of a loss. But they say facts and experience demonstrate its truth and the loss can not be helped. They refuse to be lulled into a fool's paradise which their reason rejects. "Truth, though it blast me!" is their cry. Anything is better, they say, than a deliberate and enforced acceptance of comfortable beliefs because they comfort. This must be our attitude. Let us follow truth at all costs. The doctrine that God is perfect, absolute, does seem to bring comfort to the souls of some, but if the doctrine that God

is imperfect accords with fact and experience, must we not accept it, no matter what we have to give up? Let the appeal then be to empiricism.

(Footnote)

## II.

In accordance with this method of empiricism I shall now try, as I indicated above, to show that the doctrine of the growing God accords with our experience of external reality, with the empiric facts of the objective world, whereas, the doctrine of the Absolute God does not.

I. Let us deal with the doctrine of the Absolute God first. That it does not accord with our experience of external reality is, I think, easily seen. My initial proposition is that if the universe is not a complete, perfect, harmonious system, then the doctrine of the Absolute God falls to the ground. The philosophy of Absolutism itself

Footnote: Let me clear up a possible misconception of empiricism in its opposition to pragmatism, as I understand empiricism. It may be thought that because empiricism says that reality is so and so, that therefore empiricism says reality will always be so and so, that it can never change or be changed. There is nothing in empiricism, however, to commit a man to such a position. All that empiricism says is that things are so and so. It does not say that things may not some day be otherwise. For example, empiricism says that the fact of the Balkan War proves empirically that war is, and the fact of children working in factories proves that child-labor is. But it does not say that therefore war will always be and child-labor will always be. What empiricism does say, however, is that if we are to be able to say that war and child-labor do not exist, it will not be by closing our eyes and thinking them out of existence because we do not like to think of them as existing, and then merely believing that they do not exist; but it will be by abolishing them. Empiricism says things are so and so, and tomorrow they may be otherwise, but if tomorrow they are otherwise it will be because they have been made otherwise, and not because they have been merely wished otherwise.

admits this. Its fundamental a priori postulate, -I say a priori postulate advisedly- is that the universe, the totality of things is a perfect, harmonious system which necessitates an Absolute God who embraces it as such as the content of his experience. It follows, therefore, that if the universe is imperfect there would be no reason to believe that there is an Absolute Experience. In other words the doctrine that God is perfect, absolute, depends upon the truth of the statement that the universe, external reality, is a complete, perfect, harmonious system. But before we can believe that the universe is complete, perfect, must we not apply the test of experience, for our conception of reality must be in accordance with what experience reports? This test, however, is just what absolutism does not apply. It begs the question by taking for granted the thing to be proved. It simply makes the statement that the universe, the totality of things, is a complete and harmonious system and when we ask that this claim be sustained by showing that the world really conforms to it, the only answer we get is that we must believe that the world is really perfect, and that what appears to be imperfections is mere appearance and illusion. But such a priorism is not satisfactory. We can believe the world to be perfect only if our experience of empiric facts bears out the belief. We must abide by our experience. What we experience, and only that, is the truth for us. We can say the universe is perfect only if we experience it as such. But the indisputable fact is we do not experience it as such. I need spend no time in demonstrating what is so apparent, because the Absolutists themselves admit it. (Fn. 1) They frankly assert that although the universe is really perfect, human beings do not and can not experience it as such. The reason they give for this inability of ours is that we are finite, that "our experience is fragmentary", that "it is

Fn. 1 See Taylor's Metaphysics, pages 35-36, 58-60, especially page 60.

incomplete in respect to its data," that "there is much in reality which never directly enters into the structure of our experience at all." They affirm that if we were not thus limited, but could see the world as it really is, as it exists for an Absolute Experience, we should see that it is perfect, harmonious, complete. One can only say in reply that so long as a man insists that the universe is perfect, despite the fact that he cannot verify it in experience, he will continue to believe that there is an Absolute God who embraces it as such. But he will believe merely on the basis of an a priori claim, which is not confirmed by experience. He can never demonstrate his belief to be true because he can not show it to be in accordance with one's experience of external reality.

II. Having dealt with the doctrine of the Absolute God and external reality, let us deal with the question, Does the doctrine that God is imperfect and growing accord with our experience of the facts of external reality<sup>with our knowledge</sup> of the objective world? My contention is that it does. It is not necessary to spend any time showing that our experience of the world is that the world is imperfect, unfinished, not completely harmonious, because, as I have already said, not even the Absolutists deny it. We have only to think of the apparent waste in the cosmic process, the struggle for existence among animals, <sup>one</sup> ~~once~~ species preying upon another, the facts of disease, pain, death, shipwreck, earth-quake, famine, pestilence, to agree that the world of our experience is imperfect. The only question, therefore, is: Does this imperfect world of our experience, this world of empiric fact, give evidence of the existence of a Cosmic Power, a God, who is finite, limited, but growing?

(a) The very existence of such a world is presumptive evidence that God is finite and imperfect. Mill's famous argument that



the idea of a perfect God can not be reconciled with the empiric fact of evil in the world, is, to my mind, essentially sound. He said in effect -if God is perfect, then he is all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-loving. If he is all-knowing, he knows that evil exists; if he is all-powerful, he can remove it; if he is all-loving, he wants to remove it. There are two alternatives. One can say that evil does not exist, but that is opposed to our experience; or one can say that God is either not all-knowing, or not all powerful, or not all-loving, but to say any one of these things would be to deny perfection to God. If a perfect God can be conceived he must be placed in some extra-cosmic, monumental vacuity, removed far from this imperfect world-life. If he wants to keep his perfection spic and span, inviolate, he must have no contact with this world; it must not be allowed to touch the pure robes of his perfection, for in that touch would be pollution. The plain inference is just what Hume made, namely, that the world shows God to be imperfect. I shall have more to say on the problem of evil later. Here let me say that for some of us at least, as we look out upon this world and see the imperfections in it, it is more conducive to religion to believe that God is imperfect than it would be to believe that he is perfect. For if he is perfect he could have created a world with less grief and pain in it, a world which exacted a lesser tribute of tears from human hearts. But if he is imperfect, limited, finite, we can believe that he has done and is doing the best he can. So much for presumptive evidence from the empiric facts of the objective world in favor of the doctrine that God is imperfect, finite.

(b) But there is also some amount of positive evidence from the empiric facts of the objective world that the whole world process from primitive nebulae to the life of the humanity of today is an age-long effort of a finite, imperfect, but growing Cosmic Power to gain for himself fuller and fuller being. This positive evidence may be

classed under two heads; evidence given by the conclusions of natural science, and evidence given by the history of the moral development of human society.

1. The doctrine of evolution is a universally accepted theory of modern science. And it is now generally believed by thinking men that the universe, as we have it today, did not suddenly and directly come into being, -a complete and finished thing, but is the result of an evolutionary and developing process which is not yet complete. The question in science today is not as to the truth of the general doctrine of evolution -that is accepted- but as to how evolution occurs. Is it the result of mechanical and accidental forces or is it the result of a vital and purposive power? In the latter half of the Nineteenth Century, owing to the work of Darwin and the Darwinians, the mechanistic theory was predominant. Evolution was said to be the result of chance happenings, accidental variations, and the blind operation of a principle of natural selection. There was no purpose, no vital impulse. But for some years scientists have been turning away from this hypothesis owing to the increasing difficulties connected with it, and are coming to see that facts necessitate them believing in a creative, purposive, Cosmic Power that is working by experiments, creating its design as it goes along, and rising to higher and higher efficiency and conscious purpose. To quote again the words of H.D.Lloyd, "in its first reaction against the absurdity of explaining the imperfect and incomplete creature and creation by a perfect and complete God evolutionary thought would have been glad to abolish God altogether. But it now sees that God must be included in the scheme, but as a God that is evolving." The death blow to the mechanistic theory seems to have been given, and the supremacy of the purposive theory to have been established by Professor Bergson. I do not conceive it to be within the scope of this thesis -even were I qualified to do it- to explain fully the scientific argument for the

purposive theory. I shall quote, however, a number of significant passages from Bergson which set forth some of his conclusions.

"That these two forms of existence, matter and consciousness, have indeed a common origin, seems to me probable. I believe that the first is a reversal of the second, that while consciousness is action that continually creates and multiplies, matter is action which continually unmakes itself and wears out; and I believe also that neither the matter constituting the world nor the consciousness which utilizes this matter can be explained by themselves, and that there is a common source of both this matter and consciousness. But I cannot now enter deeply into this question. Let it suffice to say that I see in the whole evolution of life on our planet an effort of this essentially creative force to arrive, by traversing matter, at something which is only realized in man, and which, moreover, even in man is realized only imperfectly." (Huxley Lecture, Hibbert Journal, Vol.10. No.1, page 37)

"Obviously there is a vital impulse: what I was just calling an impulse toward a higher and higher efficiency, something which ever seeks to transcend itself, to extract from itself more than there is - in a word, to create. Now a force which draws from itself more than it contains, which gives more than it has, is precisely what is called a spiritual force: in fact, I do not see how otherwise spirit is to be defined. But, on the other hand, we are wrong when we fail to take into account, in the explanation of the organic world, the obstacles of every kind which this force encounters. The spectacle of the evolution of life from its very beginning down to man suggests to us the image of a current of consciousness which flows down into matter as into a tunnel, which endeavors to advance, which makes effort on every side, thus digging galleries most of which are stopped by a rock that is too hard, but which, in one direction at least prove possible to follow to the end and break out into the light once more. This direction is the line of evolution resulting in man." (Ibid page 40) (See also Ibid page 38)

"It must not be forgotten that the force which is evolving throughout the organized world is a limited force, which is always seeking to transcend itself and always remains inadequate to the work it would feign produce. .... From the top to the bottom of the organized world we do indeed find one great effort; but most often this effort turns short, sometimes paralyzed by contrary forces, sometimes diverted from what it should do by what it does, absorbed by the form it is engaged in taking, hypnotized by it as by a mirror. Even in its most perfect works, though it seems to have triumphed over external resistances and also over its own, it is at the mercy of the materiality which it has had to assume. It is what each of us may experience in himself. Our freedom, in the very movements by which it is affirmed, creates the growing habits that will stifle it if it fails to renew itself by a constant effort: it is dogged by automatism. (Creative Evolution, p. 126-127)

"From our point of view, life appears in its entirety as an immense wave which, starting from a center, spreads outward, and which on almost the whole of its circumference is stopped and converted into oscillation: at one single point the obstacle has been forced, the impulsion has passed freely. It is this freedom that the human form registers. Everywhere but in man consciousness has had to come to a stand; in man alone it has kept on its way. Man, then continues the vital movement indefinitely, although he does not draw along with him all that life

carries in itself. On other lines of evolution there have traveled other tendencies which life implied, and of which, since everything interpenetrates, man has, doubtless, kept something, but of which he has kept only very little. It is as if a vague and formless being, whom we may call, as we will, man or super-man, had sought to realize himself, and had succeeded only by abandoning a part of himself on the way. (Bergson italicizes this sentence) The losses are represented by the rest of the animal world, and even by the vegetable world, at least in what these have that is positive and above the accidents of evolution. From this point of view, the discordancies of which nature offers us the spectacle are singularly weakened. The organized world as a whole becomes as the soil on which was to grow either man himself or a being who morally must resemble him. The animals, however distant they may be from our species, however hostile to it, have none the less been useful traveling companions, on whom consciousness has unloaded whatever encumbrances it was dragging along, and who have enabled it to rise, in man, to heights from which it seems an unlimited horizon open again before it." (Ibid, page 266-267)

"As the smallest grain of dust is bound up with our entire solar system, drawn along with it in that undivided movement of descent which is materiality itself, so all organized being, from the humblest to the highest, from the first origins of life to the time in which we are, and in all places as in all times, do but evidence a single impulsion, the inverse of the movement of matter, and in itself indivisible. All the living hold together, and all yield to the same tremendous push. The animal takes its stand on the plant, man bestrides animality, and the whole of humanity, in space and in time, is one immense army galloping beside and before, and behind each of us in an overwhelming charge able to beat down every resistance and clear the most formidable obstacles, perhaps even death." (Ibid, page 271)

From these passages of Bergson, setting forth the idea of a ~~growing life-force~~ growing life-force, and from the fact, as I have already indicated, that the purposive theory of evolution is being accepted by an ever growing number of scientists, I believe it is legitimate to make the inference that modern science is giving increasing support to the doctrine of a Cosmic Power who is finite and growing, who, in the beginning of things, possessed only a more or less blind impulse and an <sup>an</sup> unconquerable will to fuller life, who has no preconceived design, but is making the design as he goes along, who has progressed by experiments, in some of them being only partially successful but profiting by his failures, who has created instruments that were useful to him in his earliest stages of development, but are now hinderances to be overcome, and who has achieved only in man, and even there at present only imperfectly, a real measure of freedom and conscious purpose.

2. The history of the moral development of humanity also supports the doctrine of a finite, growing God. The history of humanity from the life of primitive man to our human life of today shows that there has been a ceaseless struggle from lower to higher, a struggle to leave a stage of life that in course of time has been conceived to be wrong for a further stage that has come to be looked upon as right. This process has gone on continually. What was right yesterday becomes wrong today, and the battle between right and wrong, between the forces of progression and life, and the forces of stagnation and death, has been ceaselessly waged. Sometimes right has been temporarily defeated, and when it has conquered it has done so only at the cost of great struggle and sacrifice. And what is true of the moral development of human society is true also of the individual. Individual men have had to wrestle and labor and agonize to rid themselves of their lower passions, to reach a purer and nobler condition of soul.

Now all this gives evidence not of the existence of a God of perfect and complete righteousness, - *If* there be such, why this struggle and pain and temporary defeat? Why has righteousness not advanced steadily and unswervingly in an unbroken line? Nay, why any necessity for advance at all? Why not perfect righteousness from all time to all time? --Rather this history of the development of humanity with its record of ceaseless warfare between right and wrong, between the forces of progression and stagnation, gives evidence of the existence of a Cosmic Power, a God who through struggle and in spite of temporary defeat, is ceaselessly and invincibly making for righteousness in the universe. The life-force, the Cosmic Power of which Bergson in the name of science speaks, after untold ages of effort and struggle through plant and animal life, at last achieved moral consciousness in man. And from the time of the first man till now this Power, who had incarnated himself in man, who

had reached fuller being in human souls, has been always at work purifying and ennobling his great human life. Slowly but surely he has been ridding himself of the physical propensities of his earlier existence, conquering his animal passions, "working out the beast and letting the ape and tiger die," teaching his humanity justice, benevolence, mercy, giving it another law than the law of desire and brute strength. Through the ages he has ever fought onward and upward to higher and still higher reaches of moral being. He has ever been gaining a nobler conception of what ought to be the condition of human society, and has inspired as many men as he could, who thus became chosen instruments of his, with an over-mastering consciousness that they must give their lives to the establishing of such conditions in the earth. And the result has been that on all the pages of history are written the records of moral progress and advancement. This power for righteousness, this God in humanity has ever been leading the souls of men to an increasing realization that they are not self-sufficient beings, but parts of a great organic whole, and he has impelled them with irresistible power to strive to replace the law of the jungle -each for himself- by the law of the human family -each for all.

Thus can history be best explained. Thus can be best explained that increasing triumph of justice over injustice, right over wrong, that has marked the development of the race. Thus can be best explained the imperative voice of duty which compels men to gird up their loins and giving up all thoughts of ease and self-indulgence throw themselves into the combat against the forces of evil in the world. If there is one fact that history witnesses to, it is the fact of the existence of a Cosmic Power who is waging the battle for righteousness. <sup>But</sup> history also witnesses to the fact that this Cosmic Power that makes for righteousness is sometimes defeated and succeeds only at the expense of pain and strug-

gle. What is the explanation of this fact? Must we go back to the old belief that there are two Beings -a good God and a wicked Devil? Hardly so. Is not the correct explanation that in the Cosmic Soul there are two tendencies, a downward pull and an upward pull, just as there are two tendencies in the human souls? The struggle between good and evil, right and wrong, fuller life and decay, is a struggle between contending forces in God's own being. The forces that oppose him in his battle for righteousness, for moral progress, are really the backward tendencies of his own Cosmic Life. They are the reversion to the brute existence out of which he in his human life has evolved. Hence, in his battle for righteousness and purity, he is striving to overcome the lower passions of his own nature. Whenever a man struggles and agonizes to purify his soul, to conquer his lower self, God struggles and agonizes in him. And whenever men and women struggle to advance the cause of righteousness in the earth, God toils and struggles with them. Their weariness, their discouragement, their heart-aches, their defeats, are his, his because they are theirs, and theirs because they are his. Wherever righteousness is advanced a step, whether in the individual soul or in society at large, there does the Cosmic Soul, the power that makes for righteousness advance through struggle and stress and pain. The progress of humanity, of the human life of God, has not been a slide upward; every step of the road has had to be fought for. But the historical fact is that there has been and is progress. The Cosmic Soul does make for righteousness. God is a finite God, but he is also a growing God.

To sum up the discussion in Section II; in accordance with the method of empiricism, I have tried, first, to show from our experience of the world as imperfect, that the doctrine of the Absolute God does not accord with our experience of the objective world. Then from

our experience of the world as imperfect, which is presumptive evidence that God is imperfect, and from the results of natural science and the history of the moral development of humanity I have tried to show that the doctrine of the Growing God does accord with our experience of the objective world. As I see them the facts point to the existence of a Cosmic Soul, a Growing God, who has struggled out of darkness into light, out of chaos into order, who has striven up out of the blind but not mechanical action of Physico-chemical atoms into the instinctive spontaneous, half-conscious life of the plant, and not stopping there, has struggled up to the consciousness of the animal, and from there, with ever-growing power and purpose and will, with the faint stirring of a definitely moral life within him, into the consciousness of the cave-dweller and primitive savage, and from there, with ever widening vision, with an acquisition of mental power and moral will, with an increasing determination to purify himself of those physical propensities which have clung to him since the time of his brute existence, but are now barring his way to the infinite height of righteousness and purity which are his goal, has struggled up and up until he has expressed himself in a Buddha, a Socrates, a Jesus, a Tolstoi, and is today expressing himself most fully in the great souls of his humanity, who are filled with his passion for righteousness and progress. And yet not in these alone. He is expressing himself in every human being, in every man, woman, and child. They are all included in his great Cosmic-Human-Spirit, and he is struggling to carry them forward in his upward march to purity and love.

### III.

We come now to the final section of the thesis, in which, in accordance with our method of empiricism, I shall try to show that the doctrine of the Growing God harmonizes better than does the doctrine of the Absolute God with the fundamentals of religious experience. These



fundamentals, as I conceive them, are as follows:- a sense of communion with a Personal Being whom religion calls God; a consciousness of being called of God to be his fellow-worker; a sense of personal sin and a consciousness of God's forgiveness; a consciousness of the certain ultimate triumph of the spirit of righteousness, purity and love; and, lastly, the possession of a fundamental peace of soul, born out of an immediate assurance that in spite of present evil there will ultimately be no final loss of essential values. (Footnote)

I shall deal separately with these elements of the religious experience which I have named, but **each** of them is so closely related to the others that the discussion of one will not be <sup>altogether</sup> ~~very~~ distinct from that of the others. There will inevitably be some amount of repetition and over-lapping.

(1) First, a sense of communion with a Personal Being who in the language of religion is called God. In the deepest moments of its experience the religious soul feels itself to be in communion with a **Larger Soul** who shares its experience, who knows its sorrow, who feels its weakness, to whom it can unburden its load of grief, who understands its trials and difficulties, from whom it receives comfort and inspiration and strength, with whom it has a sense of comradeship, who loves it with a tender love, who succors and sympathizes with it, who is its great companion and to whom it stands in the relation of a child to its father. **Such** is the essence of the experience of communion.

Now is the doctrine of the Absolute God in accord with it? Is the Absolute God the God of religious experience? I do not think so.

**Footnote:** This analysis of the religious experience, which I believe to be simply a faithful report of experience altogether independent of any theories or explanations of it, is necessarily a report of my own experience. But I deem it to be in essential agreement with the report of the religious experience of other souls, and shall assume as much. With any one whose experience is essentially different from the one here set forth my discussion in this final section will of course have no weight.

According to the doctrine of the Absolute God, God is a Being who knows the end at the beginning. For him there are no struggles to be waged, no failures to be experienced, no grief, no sorrow to be borne, no difficulties to be overcome, no striving after a righteousness that is seen but not yet attained. He can never be discouraged. There is no risk, no uncertainty, for him. Everything is sure. The goal is already reached, has been reached from eternity. All existence for him is eternal harmony, eternal perfection, eternal completeness. To repeat the words of Professor Taylor, "The Absolute is a conscious life which embraces the totality of existence, all at once, and in a perfect systematic unity, as the contents of its experience." (Fn. 1)

From this we must conclude that God, the God with whom we have the experience of communion, can not be as the Absolutists conceive him. For, if he were as they conceive him, the experience of communion which I have described would be a delusion. He could not really sympathize with us in our sorrows, because he could not experience them. He could know nothing of our striving after an unattained righteousness, because for him perfect righteousness would be eternally attained. He could not share our thrill of joy in the battle against wrong, because for him there would be no wrong. He could not be our companion, our comrade, for real comradeship can exist only between those who have similar experiences, but his experience would be one of perfection, while ours is one of imperfection; his would be one of eternal completeness, while ours is one of incompleteness. Between him and us there would be a great gulf fixed which could not be passed. We could have no communion with him.

Professor Royce, realizing this difficulty, connected with the doctrine of the Absolute God, tries to show, in spite of his belief that

God in his eternal experience embraces the whole of reality as a perfect, harmonious order with no discordant elements in it, that there is a sense in which the Absolute God does share our human experience. Indeed, Professor Royce deems it necessary that the Absolute share our experience if he is not to be really inferior to man. He says, "Unless the Absolute knows what we know when we endure and want, when we love and struggle, when we long and suffer, the Absolute ~~in~~so far is less and not more than we are." (Fn. 1) Professor Royce tries to show that the Absolute shares our experience by affirming that there is a sense in which the Absolute does not know any more than finite beings, and therefore does not know reality as an eternally perfect order. He seems to say that God has two kinds of knowledge, a temporal and an eternal knowledge. He says, "God does not temporally foreknow anything, excepting ~~in~~so far as he is expressed in finite beings. .... On the other hand, the Absolute possesses a perfect knowledge at one glance of the whole of the temporal order, present, past, and future." (Fn. 2) To me this suggestion of two kinds of knowledge does not mean anything. I maintain that the Absolutists must make a choice and say either that God possesses a knowledge whereby he sees everything as perfect, or that he does not. If he does, then the possession of such knowledge must make his other kind of knowledge, whereby he has an experience of imperfection and struggle, a mere farce. How can he keep out of his consciousness the knowledge that all is perfect? He can only pretend not to know while in fact he knows all the time that all is perfect. The Absolutists can not have it both ways. If God eternally knows that all is good and harmonious and complete it is idle to say that there is a sense in which he does not know. This talk about God knowing and not knowing is mere quibbling. If God really shares my experience then he does not possess the knowledge that all is eternally perfect and harmonious. But if he does possess such

Fn. 1 Royce's World and the Individual, Vol.2, page 364

Fn. 2 Ibid, Vol.2, page 374

knowledge, then he can not really share my experience of imperfection and struggle. He can only pretend to share, that is all. It is, however, just this knowledge of the world as eternally perfect and harmonious that the Absolutists insist that God possesses. Hence the God of religious experience, the God who, in our moments of communion we feel shares our human experience of struggle and imperfection, is not the Absolute. (Footnote) In other words, the doctrine that God is Absolute does not accord with our experience of communion with God.

But what about the doctrine that God is finite and growing? Does it harmonize with our experience of communion? The doctrine of the Growing God says: God is not a complete, perfect Being, but is ever struggling toward fuller righteousness, toward fuller moral being. He has obstacles to overcome. Difficulties beset his path. He has lower passions to conquer. He has constantly to wage war against the lower tendencies of his nature. He endures stress and pain. He knows what it is to be discouraged, to encounter temporary defeat and to fail in his purposes, when some of his human instruments, to whom he has committed a great cause, fail in their mission. And yet, in spite of failure, he knows what it is to push resolutely forward with patience and hope to achievement and victory. He does not see the world as a perfect order; his knowledge is a knowledge of the world which is imperfect, incomplete—a world which is not what it ought to be, and which can be made better only by strenuous will and effort. His experience is not one of eternal perfection and harmony, but of imperfection and struggle. He does not see the end at the beginning. Everything is not already completed, eter-

Footnote:- Dr. F. H. Bradley, who is thorough-going in his Absolutism, frankly admits this. In his discussion of the Absolute and Religion he says, "If you identify the Absolute with God, that is not the God of religion." "Short of the Absolute, God cannot rest, and, having reached that goal, he is lost and religion with him." (Appearance and Reality, page 447.

nally realized. His purposes are not eternally fulfilled. Nay, he has not even an eternally conceived purpose. His purpose is growing every day. He will know better tomorrow what he wants to do than he does today. He has no absolute knowledge of what the end is to be. At the most he knows enough for the next step. Yet is he not afraid. As he faces the future it is with a resolute will to win for himself fuller life and being.

Now, it is just such a God who can share our longings and aspirations, because they are his also. He can sympathize with us in our struggles to overcome our lower selves, because he has to engage in the same conflict against his lower self. When we are crushed to the earth with despair because of defeat, either in our struggles to purify our own souls, or in our attempt to spread social righteousness, he can inspire us with hope and confidence to arise and conquer, because he himself wrests victory out of failure. He can share our experience of struggle and imperfection, because it is his also, and because of this he can also inspire us with his own indomitable will to face the future without fear and wring out of it more abundant life. He can be the Great Companion of our lives, the Father of our spirits, because he is of like passions unto ourselves. Hence, I believe that the doctrine of the Growing God does harmonize with our experience of communion with a larger soul, a Divine Companion.

(2) A second element in the religious experience is a consciousness of being called of God to be his fellow worker. Regardless of any theory of determinism or free-will to which we may rationally subscribe, we possess in our unreflective moments the consciousness that we have a determinative capacity, that we can determine our conduct, and that our conduct really matters. We feel that we can influence things, can help to push things on or hinder them. Now, in harmony with this feeling, we possess in our periods of definite religious experience a sense that we are

under commission from God. We have a consciousness that God is calling us to cooperate with him, to share in his work in the world. We feel that he is looking upon us as his instruments through whom he is to carry out his purposes and express his will. We feel that he needs us, that he is calling us to be his fellow-workers, that he looks to us to do something to push things on, to help carry the race forward, to further the salvation of the world. In our inmost souls we have a consciousness of God telling us that we have our part to do in ridding the world of evil and sorrow and pain, and in spreading righteousness and love, and that he is depending upon our doing<sup>it</sup>. There are intense moments when we feel that God is urging us to undertake some definite mission, to take some particular stand, and it means sacrifice, loss, hardship. Yet from our hearts there is wrung the cry, Woe is me if I obey not the summons. If our religious experience is anything at all, it is the consciousness that God is calling us to be his fellow-workers in making the world better than it is.

What relation has the doctrine of the Absolute God to this experience? Is the doctrine of the Absolute God, with its conception of the world as eternally perfect, consistent with this experience? I cannot show in any better way that the answer to this question is No, than by pointing out that this answer is implied in the writings of the Absolutists themselves. Professor Taylor says, "In the ethical experience the ideal is apprehended as something which does not yet exist, but has to be brought into existence by human exertion. Hence, for the purely ethical attitude of mind the world has to be thought of as essentially imperfect, essentially out of accord with what it ought to be in order to correspond to our demands on it."<sup>(Fn.1)</sup> And again, "Though God is not truly God until we deny the existence of any independent evil by which his nature is limited, it seems probable that the thought (Fn. 1) Taylor's Metaphysics, page 391.

of ourselves as fellow-workers with God would hardly lead to practical good works unless we also inconsistently allowed ourselves to imagine God as struggling against a hostile power and standing in need of our assistance." (Fn. 1) Professor Taylor here practically admits that our experience of being fellow-workers with God would really necessitate our conceiving the world to be imperfect, and God to be struggling and standing in need of our assistance; in other words would necessitate our believing the world and God to be just what the Absolutists say they are not. And I do not see how anyone, Absolutist or otherwise, could refuse to agree with him. If I feel that I am under commission from God to make the world better, I must conclude that the world needs to be made better. If I believe that God is calling me to be his fellow-worker, I must believe that God needs my help. On the other hand if the world is really perfect, as the Absolutists say it is, why should I feel under any necessity to do anything? If I really believed the world is perfect and that God saw that all was good, then, to be consistent I should have to look upon my experience of being called by God to help him improve the world as a delusion. I should have to say to myself, Let well alone; all is good. What is, is right. If I were consistent I should decide that it matters not what I do, and should feel like saying to myself, Why not have an easy time? Why not go on a perpetual moral holiday? The simple fact is that the implications of the doctrine of the absolute God do not square with our experience of being called of God to be his fellow-workers.

How different when we turn to the doctrine of the Growing God! The doctrine of the Growing God says that the world is imperfect, that it can be and ought to be made **better** than it is, and that God needs our help to make it better. According to the doctrine of the Growing God the world is not complete, finished, static, unchangeable, and perfect,

but incomplete, unfinished, plastic, changeable and imperfect, and because it is imperfect and changeable it ought to be changed. In the world-life there are sores which should be healed; there are cancers which should be cut out; there are tendencies to degeneration and decay, which should be grappled with and strangled before they work their deadly havoc. The world-order must be made purer, sweeter, happier. Sorrow and sighing must be done away with. The cry of little children whose spirits are being crushed out in mill and factory, must be heard and answered, and instead of disease and misery in their faces there must be seen the roses of health and the smiles of innocent joy. The demands of the workers of the earth for justice must be realized. The needs of the poor, the maimed, the sick, must be ministered to. Human selfishness, the downward tendency in the life of God, must be conquered, and human love, the upward tendency in the life of God must be made regnant in the earth. According to the doctrine of the Growing God, the world is not now perfect --- and can never be absolutely perfect, if that means a condition which is so perfect that it can never be improved--- but it can and must be made to advance ever nearer to a condition of practical perfection. This is to be done by the cooperation of God and man. The Cosmic Soul needs the assistance of his humanity, whom he has created to be his fellow workers. God is dependent upon his human instruments. It is through them that he is to realize his will and carry out his ever-growing purposes. If he is to succeed in spreading righteousness and love in the earth it will be through the agency of human individuals. For example, if child labor is ever abolished it will be because God has succeeded in getting sufficient men and women aroused to do it. The life of each man counts. He can help on or hinder the work of God. He can put his shoulder to the wheel of life and help to push it forward along the pathway of righteousness and progress, or he can lend his weight to the forces that are seeking to turn it back. In a word, the salvation of the world de-



pend upon the cooperation of man with God. This, according to the doctrine of the Growing God. Dr. Dole was not caricaturing the doctrine when, speaking of the religion of the Growing God, he said, "Religion becomes a tremendous and chivalrous appeal to all noble men to come to the help of the Lord against the mighty, that is, against the powers and influences that tend to degeneration, moral and spiritual decadence, and final death for Gods or man." Is not such a doctrine, - the doctrine of a God who needs man's assistance in making the world better, - more in harmony with our religious experience of being called of God to be his fellow-workers, than is the doctrine of an Absolute God for whom the world is eternally perfect? I think it is.

(3) A third element in our religious experience is a sense of personal sin, and a consciousness of God's forgiveness. In our religious experience we have a feeling of shame before God because of our wrongdoings, our moral lapses. We are abashed, conscience stricken, before him as we remember our disobedience to the voice of duty, our wilful turning away from the path of purity and virtue, our deeds of selfishness. We have a sense of personal guilt in the sight of God. We feel that the heart of God is grieved and wounded because of our conduct. We feel that we have sinned against him and cry out in anguish, Against thee, thee only, have I sinned and done this evil in thy sight. We feel that our sins really make a difference to him, and our hearts are bowed down in penitence and shame. In this condition we turn to God as a child turns to its father, seeking forgiveness for our sins, and eventually there comes to us a gracious sense of his forgiveness. We feel that out of the great love he bears us, he looks upon us and forgives us. Though we feel that he does not condone our sins he forgives them. We hear his voice saying, Go in peace and sin no more.

The doctrine of the Absolute God is not in harmony with this experience because in the world, as the Absolute God is said to conceive

it, there could really be no wrong-doing, no sin. According to the doctrine of the Absolute God the world, as known to the Absolute, is known as a world that fulfills the Absolute's purpose and cannot be other than it is. For the Absolute, whatever is, is the fulfilment of the absolute purpose. There is no contrast between what eternally is and what ought to be. (Fn.1) The world is really a perfect systematic harmony, and is embraced as such by the Absolute God as the contents of his experience. What relation can such a doctrine of God have to the experience of sin and forgiveness? If the world be, as the Absolutists say it really is, then every action of man is a harmonious part of a perfect whole, and is as necessary as every other. Even those actions which in our religious experience we feel are sinful and grieve the spirit of God, make up a necessary element of the perfect whole. There can be no such thing as a wrong action, a sinful deed. All actions are right and perfect. God embraces them all, and pronounces them all good. The implication of the doctrine of the Absolute God is that our experience of sin and of God's forgiveness of sin,--for if there is no sin there is no need of forgiveness-- is a delusion. Professor Lovejoy well says; "The point of view of the Absolute consciousness transcends and confounds the ethical distinction. The sinner, if he be also a monist, clear-headed enough to see the implications of his own metaphysical beliefs, may always have the consolation of considering that he in his sin, no less than the saint in his virtue is contributing an indispensable ingredient in that strange compound of Being which his God has from all eternity willed and in which is his everlasting delight." (Fn. 2) So much for the doctrine of the Absolute God and its inconsistency<sup>yes</sup> with our experience of the reality of sin against God and of his forgiveness.

Fn. 1 See Royce's World and the Individual, Vol.2, page 341-342

Fn. 2 Am.Jr.of Theology, Vol.12, page 140

Can it be said on the other hand that the doctrine of the Growing God is consistent with this experience? According to the doctrine of the Growing God, God is purifying and developing his moral life through the instrumentality of human beings. God is dependent upon humanity for the expression and development of his moral will. Human souls are free spiritual creators. They are free spiritual powers upon whose voluntary activity and cooperation God's moral and spiritual being depends. God, by his unconquerable will to fuller life has created and incarnated himself in man, and through man has been able to push out into regions of being higher than that of mere physical activity, and it is through man that he is to rise to greater moral and spiritual heights. Hence, when we give ourselves in service to our fellows, when we bring sweetness and love into human relationships, when in obedience to the call of duty, we oppose injustice and wrong, and serve the cause of righteousness, and when we win the victory for purity and virtue in our own souls, trampling under foot the lower passions of our life,--then are we increasing the moral life of the universe, then are we helping to free the human life of God from the limitations of his earlier brute existence, then are we developing, strengthening, purifying the very soul of God. But when we act selfishly, when we act in accordance with the law of the jungle and not in accordance with the law of human love, when we stifle the voice of duty and support the cause of wrong, when we let hate creep into our souls, and when we allow our lower physical passions to gain control of us, and our moral life becomes polluted and stained, --then are we working for moral and spiritual decay in the universe, then are we strengthening the degenerating tendencies in the world-life, then are we tending to pull the life of God back to the level of the brute, then are we weakening, polluting, destroying the very soul of God. Such is the conception implied in the doctrine of the Growing God.

Now does not such a doctrine of God harmonize with our experience of the reality of sin and of God's forgiveness? It affirms the reality of sin; it is in harmony with our sense of shame before God, for our moral lapses, and with our feeling that God is grieved and wounded by our sin, for it affirms that our sins tend to drag back the very soul of God. It harmonizes with our consciousness of God's forgiveness, because it says that God in his human life himself knows what it is to wrestle with temptation. He himself shares in the struggles of our soul for purity and righteousness, and when our souls turn in penitence to his larger soul, and seek his forgiveness for our sins, we are once more in harmony with his essential will to fuller moral being. We are in accord with the upward urge of the life of God, and out of that harmony there is born that peace of forgiveness which is so vital an element in our religious experience.

(4) A fourth element in our religious experience is a consciousness of the certain ultimate <sup>triumph</sup> ~~grounds~~ of the spirit of righteousness, purity, and love. In our religious experience we rise to a sublime consciousness that the will of God is bound to triumph, that the salvation of the world is certain, that the ultimate victory of the Power that makes for righteousness is sure. We look forward with confidence to a time when men shall be the complete masters of their passions and shall never allow their lower natures to gain control of their lives, when impurity and selfishness shall have no place in their souls. We have the consciousness of assurance that in spite of present defeats, and delays to the cause of righteousness, in spite of the present weaknesses and lapses of men, a time is inevitably coming when all wrong shall have been abolished, when selfishness and hate shall be no more, when the hearts of men shall be pure and shall know only how to do justly and love mercy, when all the sons of men shall dwell together in love, and righteousness shall cover the earth as the waters

cover the sea. To put it in a familiar phrase, we are sure of the establishing sooner or later of the kingdom of God.

The doctrine of the Absolute God does not harmonize with this experience, because for the Absolute, what is, is right; the kingdom of God is already established, has been from all eternity. For the Absolute the world is already perfect, though of course, we finite beings, just because we are finite, do not and can not see it as such. But that is just the difficulty. If the world is already perfect, though we finite beings do not and can not experience it as such, then there is no assurance that for us the universe will ever become more satisfactory than now it is, (Fn. 1) and our confidence in the coming of a time when all wrong and injustice shall have been abolished, when righteousness shall be triumphant and the lower tendencies and imperfections of man's nature conquered, becomes empty delusion. Instead of possessing a confidence that righteousness will some day be completely triumphant, the religious soul, according to the Absolutists, ought to believe that righteousness is completely triumphant now and always has been, just as the <sup>present</sup> ~~present~~ subjects of an absolute monarch, groaning under oppression, used to be told that they ought to believe that all was right with them, because the king could do no wrong.

But is the doctrine of the Growing God any more than that of the Absolute God in harmony with this confidence in the ultimate triumph of the spirit of righteousness and goodness? Does not the doctrine of the Growing God, with its conception that there is an evil tendency in God, that God is subject to temptations, that he is dependent, in his struggle for righteousness, upon imperfect human instruments, imply risk, doubt, possibility of final defeat, rather than certainty of victory? It is true that the doctrine of the Grow-

ing God does not imply absolute certainty of victory for the cause of righteousness and progress, but there is nothing in the doctrine inconsistent with a consciousness of its practical certainty. According to the Doctrine of the Growing God there is a theoretical possibility that God will fail, because in his human life he has not yet conquered all the lower passions which he has inherited from his earlier brute existence, but facts give a presumption in favor of the idea that God's will to overcome is practically irresistible and will succeed. The history of the moral development of mankind, and the insistent call to do battle against wrong and purify his own soul which sounds through man's being, show that God is ever growing to fuller life, that his <sup>face</sup> ~~faith~~ is set resolutely forward, that the Power that makes for righteousness in spite of temporary defeat is continually achieving victory and success. On such grounds the doctrine of the Growing God says: it is practically certain that righteousness will eventually triumph, that hate and selfishness will one day be abolished, that the hearts of men will become pure and loving; it is practically certain that the essential will of God to spread righteousness and purify his human life of its evil tendencies will be triumphant. There is therefore nothing in the doctrine of the Growing God incongruous with the confidence of the religious soul in the ultimate triumph of the spirit of righteousness and goodness. What better explanation of this confidence can we have than that the Cosmic Soul is inspiring his human instruments with a practical certainty of ultimate victory which is born out of his indomitable will to possess life ever fuller and more abundantly?

(5) The last element of the religious experience for us to discuss is the possession of a fundamental peace of soul born out of immediate assurance that in spite of present evil there will ultimately be no final loss of essential values. In our religious experience,

and let me say again I am reporting my own experience and assuming that the experience of others is not essentially different from it, - we possess an assurance that in spite of the natural calamities of life, - disease, pain, earth-quake, pestilence~~s~~, bereavement; and in spite of the evil which human beings inflict both intentionally and otherwise, - the evil results of our industrial and social system, 'the pangs of disprized love,' sorrow caused by the estrangement of friends, the wounds to the sensitive spirit caused by harsh words spoken in anger, in a word, "man's inhumanity to man which makes countless thousands mourn" --- in spite of all these things which we generally sum up in the word evil, we possess in our religious experience an assurance that all the values that are worth preserving will be preserved. We feel that there will be no final loss of invisible things, that all the spiritual values and qualities of our human life will be saved, that none of the essential things for which our souls yearn will be destroyed, and that eventually all will be well with us. (Footnote) And because of this assurance we possess a fundamental peace of soul which gives consolation and comfort for all the tragedies of life and rest for weariness of spirit, a peace which nothing in this world can destroy. Beneath the fretting surface of our lives we possess in our moments of deepest religious experience a fundamental calm.

What relation has the doctrine of the Absolute God to this experience? Does it account for it? The experience saves the soul from the despair and black misery into which it might otherwise be plunged when the hand of evil <sup>lies</sup> ~~lays~~ heavy upon it, and gives it a sense of peace and calm through an assurance of the ultimate salvation of those values which are precious to it. Because the doctrine of the Absolute God professes to solve the problem of evil it appears to some

Footnote: I can not describe this experience of assurance any more definitely, because the experience itself is no more definite. But such as it is, it is real.

that only the doctrine of the Absolute God really harmonizes with this religious experience of the assurance of the ultimate preservation of essential values. The doctrine of the Absolute God seems to say that underneath are the everlasting arms, which will carry everything to perfection; that all things work together for good to them that love God; that ultimately it will be well with our human souls. But its voice is deceptive. In truth it says nothing of the kind. What it does say is, everything is well now; things do not need to be carried to perfection, they are eternally perfect now; things do not work together for good--if by that is meant an achieving of future good--for things are eternally good; things can never be any better than they eternally are. The Absolutists' solution of the problem of evil practically amounts to saying, there is no evil; it is completely taken up into and required by, the total plan of things; and this plan is eternally willed and approved and pronounced good by an Absolute God who knows and possesses all the content of it from the beginning. (Fn. 1)

Let us listen to the Absolutists' own words. Professor Taylor says, "Existence appears to be in part evil, because we cannot take it in at once and as a whole in its individual structure" (Fn. 2) "The Absolute contains all finite existence, and contains it as a perfectly harmonious system." (Fn. 3) "Our own moral struggle with the apparent evil of the time series is itself an integral part of the Reality which, in its complete individual character, is already perfect, if we could but win to a point of view from which to behold it as it is." (Fn. 4) According to Professor Taylor, our experience of assurance that in spite of evil final good for human souls will be achieved in time is not true to reality. What is really true is that evil is an integral part, a necessary element of a perfect good that does not need to be achieved be-

Fn.1 Am. Jr. of Theology, Vol 12, page 139

Fn.2 Taylor's Elements of Metaphysics, page 396

Fn.3 " " " " page 394

Fn.4 " " " " page 398



cause it already is. Our struggle with evil, the physical disasters, the human injustice to which we are exposed, are not things to be bravely met in the assurance that although they cause grief and pain, they cannot destroy the essential values of our life, which will be finally preserved; rather our struggles, our griefs and pains, are essential to the totality of a plan which is eternally perfect. All that we need to do, Professor Taylor tells us, is to "win to a point of view from which to behold reality as it is." But he forgets, just here, to add what he has told us earlier, that we are finite and therefore cannot and never can behold it as it is. (Fn. 1) According to Professor Taylor, we must believe things are perfect but we can never experience them as such. Similarly speaks Mr. Bradley when dealing with the problem of evil; "The Absolute is the richer for every discord and for all diversity which it embraces." (Fn.2) He means, the more of what we call evil there is in the world to cause pain to human hearts, the more harmonious is the Absolute's experience; the more conscious of eternal good is he. Professor Royce's characteristic expressions in his chapter on evil, are, "All finite life is a struggle with evil. Yet from the final point of view -(He means eternal; final seems to smack of the sense of time, and Professor Royce does not take the reality of the time process seriously. The use of the word final is an instance of Professor Royce's guile)- from the final point of view the whole is good. The Temporal Order contains at no one moment anything

Fn. 1 See Taylor's Metaphysics, pages 35,36,58-60, especially 60, where he says, "Our finite experiences are not only fragmentary, but also largely contradictory and internally chaotic. We may indeed believe that the contradictions are only apparent, and that if we could become fully conscious of our own inmost aims and purposes we should at the same moment be aware of all Reality as a harmonious system; but we never do, and we shall see later that just because of our finitude we never can, attain this completed insight into the significance of our own lives."

Fn. 2 Appearance and Reality, page 204

40.

that can satisfy. Yet the Eternal Order is perfect." (Fn. 1) "The very presence of ill in the Temporal Order is the condition of the perfection of the Eternal Order." (Fn.2) "God who in me aims at what I now temporally miss, not only possesses, in the Eternal World, the goal after which I strive, but comes to possess it even through and because of my sorrow. Through this my tribulation the Absolute triumph, then, is won. Moreover, this triumph is also eternally mine. In the Absolute I am fulfilled." (Fn.3) "In being faithful to our task we, too, are temporally expressing the triumph whereby God overcomes in eternity the temporal world and its tribulations." (Fn.4) He concludes his discussion of the problem of evil thus; "Our comfort lies in the knowledge of the Eternal. Strengthened by that knowledge, we can win the most enduring of temporal joys, the consciousness that makes us delight to share the world's grave glories and to take part in its divine sorrows--sure that these sorrows are means of the eternal triumph, and that these glories are the treasures of the house of God." When once this comfort comes home to us, we can run and not be weary, and walk and not faint. For our temporal life is the very expression of the eternal triumph." (Fn.5) Professor Royce makes desperate shifts to show that our finite purposes are eternally fulfilled in the Absolute and that therefore we share in the Absolute's eternal triumph. He tells us we can get comfort for our sorrows in the assurance that even they

Fn.1 The World and the Individual, Vol.2, page 379

Fn.2 Ibid, page 385

Fn.3 Ibid, page 409 Professor Royce's idea that finite human souls suffer vicariously for the benefit of the Absolute, suggests the question, Is it not probable that just as men began to worship Christ when they began to think of him as a vicarious sufferer, so they would worship humanity if they became convinced by Absolutist logic that humanity was a vicarious sufferer? It seems that even a belief in the truth of Absolutism might drive men to the worship of a human God.

Fn. 4 The World and the Individual, Vol.2, page 408

Fn. 5 Ibid, page 411

are the means of the eternal triumph of God.

But does such a solution of the problem of evil as the Absolutists offer us really satisfy the soul? Does it grapple with the facts of evil which to us are so real? Absolutism deals with the problem intellectually and thinks that evil is disposed of by harmonizing it in an intellectual scheme, by showing it to be an appropriate shade of dark which harmonizes well with the white color of good, and is an integral part in a completely harmonious picture. But does this stake the sting out of evil? The solution is simply a piece of intellectual gymnastics that is not consistent with experience. Take the Absolutists' experience to a man in the throes of personal sorrow and what comfort will it be to him to tell him that his sorrow is a necessary condition of God's eternal peace and triumph? The solution does not touch the practical problem. It may seem an alluring conception to the intellect when the sky of our life is bright, but when the clouds arise it cannot gain the consent of the heart.

We must conclude that the doctrine of the Absolute God is not consistent with our experience of fundamental peace born out of an immediate assurance that in spite of evil and not because of it, the essential values for which the soul yearns will be finally preserved and made secure, because the doctrine of the Absolute God does not accept evil as a fact and say that God will practically overcome it and in spite of it preserve good, but says rather that for God evil is good, is a necessary part of a perfect scheme which God eternally beholds and in which his absolute purpose is eternally fulfilled. By such a doctrine our experience of fundamental peace because we feel that the things which are precious to our souls will be preserved, is not satisfactorily explained.

On the other hand, does the doctrine of the Growing God square with this experience? The question is very difficult to answer and I am

afraid that at this last point I am unable to say anything that is very definite. The difficulty I feel is due to some extent to the initial difficulty, which I have already noted, of getting a clear comprehension in thought of this experience of assurance of the ultimate preservation of essential values, which experience is nevertheless so real.

In the first place it can be said that the doctrine of the Growing God squares with this experience in its understanding of evil. It does not say that evil is an integral part, a necessary element of a perfect whole. It says rather that evil is something not to be harmonized but to be eliminated, not to be embraced in a perfect scheme and explained away but to be conquered, got rid of, overcome. What we call physical evil, earthquakes, disease, pestilence, cyclones, floods, the doctrine of the Growing God explains as the results of forces and instruments which were developed by the Cosmic Power at a stage in his life when he worked blindly and his life was practically on the plane of mere physical activity, but which today, in his human life he is seeking by the agency of man to control and harness so that they shall minister only to man's good and be rendered incapable of inflicting disaster. What we call moral evil, the evil brought upon<sup>a</sup> man by his fellows or by<sup>a</sup> man himself, the doctrine of the growing God explains as the result of the backward tendency<sup>ca</sup>, the decadent tendencies in the life of God, which God must conquer and eliminate if he is to save himself from degeneration and final moral and spiritual death. By such an explanation of evil I believe the doctrine of the Growing God, so far, harmonizes with our experience of assurance that essential values will be preserved in spite of evil and not because of it.

Moreover the doctrine of the Growing God says that even out of conflict with evil God by the achievement of his indomitable will wrests moral and spiritual good. This again in spite of evil and not

because of it. He refuses to be defeated by it. Physical disasters overtake a man; he is the victim of the injustice and selfish greed of his fellows and his heart is bowed down with grief and pain. Yet is it not a fact that his soul can rise superior to these things, that he can refuse to let them defeat him, that he can use them as means of developing to greater strength the moral will and soul of him? The Titanic disaster, for example, was a terrible instance of the physical calamities to which man is subjected, and, be it admitted, of man's own carelessness, but it furnished glorious examples of the power of man to triumph over these things and to wrest from them moral victory and development of soul. The life of Jesus was an outstanding instance of a man subject to the shameful injustice of his fellows, but it also set forth, in such a way that his life has become an inspiration to all the sons of men, the undeniable fact that the soul of <sup>a</sup> man can rise victoriously above all that human injustice can do. The doctrine of the Growing God says the explanation of this power of the moral will and soul of man to rise above the evil of life and win out of conflict with it increase of spiritual being, is to be found in the thought of a Cosmic Soul who has reached his highest expression in man and whose indomitable will to fuller being is such that even out of the evil with which he is beset he wrests increase of moral and spiritual strength.

Further Further the doctrine of the Growing God asserts that there is no reason to doubt that the personality of man survives physical death, and that therefore there is no reason to doubt that the Cosmic Soul preserves all the moral and spiritual values which he has achieved in the individual souls of men. We can believe that the Cosmic Soul includes and will include every human soul past, present, and to come, in his all-embracing life, and will carry it up and forward in his invincible march to moral and spiritual achievement.

But still it will be asked, Does such a conception satisfactorily

harmonize with our experience of fundamental peace in the midst of personal sorrow born out of an immediate assurance that all the values that are worth preserving for the human soul will be preserved? Does not this <sup>con</sup>cept of the Growing God imply that there are losses that are final, that can never be compensated for, can never be made good? I am afraid that this is so and I can only reply that the doctrine of the Growing God asserts that all values essential for the human soul will be preserved, on the grounds that the human soul will ultimately become reconciled to the loss of those things which are irretrievably lost and will ultimately realize that they are not essential. I admit the inadequacy and apparent arguing in a circle of such an answer, and yet I feel that there is a truth in it. For, is it not a fact that we do in time become adjusted and reconciled to even the severest calamities that overtake our lives? Can we not believe that just as on his physical side the Cosmic Power is constantly recuperating, and repairing the waste of his physical life, so in his spiritual life the Cosmic Soul by some power of spiritual recuperation heals the sorrows and heart-aches of the human souls which make up his Larger Soul? This is all I can say on this last point.

My task so far as I can accomplish it is done. Applying the method of empiricism I have tried to show that the doctrine of the Growing God accords with the empiric facts of the objective world, whereas the doctrine of the Absolute God does not; and that it harmonizes better than does the doctrine of the Absolute God with the fundamentals of religious experience. If I have been successful, then, if we are to be true to experience, must we not think of God in terms of the doctrine which says that God is finite and growing?

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL