His attributes and activities already fully realized in the trinitarian life can proceed outwards, not of necessity but of absolute freedom ; or that the whole universe is a manifestation of His triune nature, and all finite spiritual life a reflexion of the archetypal life, self­sustained and self-fulfilled therein. All the more thoughtful trinitarian divines of the present endeavour to make it apparent that the doctrine of the Trinity is not one which has been merely imposed upon faith by external authority, but one which satisfies reason, gives expression to the self-evidencing substance of reve­lation, and explains and supports religious experience. If it be thought that their success has not been great, it has to be remem­bered that they have been labouring near the commencement of a movement, and so at a stage when all individual efforts can have only a very limited worth. To one general conclusion they all seem to have come, namely, that the idea of God as substance is not the only idea with which we can connect, or in which we may find implied, tri-personality. The category of substance is, in some respects, one very inapplicable to God, as the philosophy of Spinoza has indirectly shown. If the theologians referred to be correct, the doctrine of the Trinity is not specially dependent upon it. In their view God cannot be thought.of consistently as, *e.g.,* Absolute Life, Absolute Intelligence, or Absolute Love, unless He be thought of in a trinitarian manner.

While trinitarian theism has thus during the present century shown abundant vitality and vigour, it cannot be said to have gained any decided victory over Unitarian theism. The latter has also within the same period spread more widely and shown more practical activity, more spiritual life, than in any former age. The unitarianism represented by a Martineau is a manifest advance on that which was represented by a Priestley. Theism in its Unitarian form is the creed of very many of the most cultured and most religious minds of our time, alike in Europe and America. In this form it has also signally shown its power in contemporary India. Brahmoism is, perhaps, the most remarkable example of a Unitarian theism which exhibits all the characteristics of a positive faith and a churchly organization. The Unitarian theism of the present age is distinguished by the great variety of its kinds or types. None of these, it must be added, are very definite or stable. Hence Unitarian theism is often seen to approximate to, or become absorbed into, agnosticism or pantheism, cosmism or humanitari­anism. This may be due, however, less to its own character than to the character of the age.@@1

The mind of man has clearly not yet ceased to be intensely interested in thoughts of God. There are no grounds apparent for supposing that it will ever cease to seek after Him or to strive to enlarge its knowledge of His ways. And, if the idea of God be what has been suggested in the foregoing pages, the search for God cannot fail to meet with an ever-growing response. If the idea of God be the most comprehensive of ideas, inclusive of all the cate­gories of thought and implicative of their harmonious synthesis and perfect realization, all thought and experience must of its very nature tend to lead onwards to a fuller knowledge of God. For the knowledge of God, on this view, consists in no mere inference reached through a process of theological argumentation, but in an ever-growing apprehension of an ever-advancing self-revelation of God ; and all philosophy, science, experience, and history must necessarily work together to promote it.

All speculative thought, whether professedly metaphysical or professedly theological, is conversant with ideas included in the idea of God. It deals with what is necessary in and to thought ; and within that sphere, notwithstanding many aberrations, it has made slow but sure progress. The history of philosophical specu­lation is not only, like the whole history of man, essentially rational, but it is, in substance, the history of reason itself in its purest form,—not the record of an accidental succession of opinions, but of the progressive apprehension by reason of God’s revelation of Himself in its own constitution. “There is much in the history of speculative thought, just as in the outward life of man, that belongs to the accidental and irrational—errors, vagaries, paradoxes, whimsicalities, assuming in all ages the name and the guise of philosophy. But, just as the student of the constitutional history of England can trace, amidst all the complexity and contingency of outward and passing events, through successive times and dynasties, underneath the waywardness of individual passion and the struggle for ascendency of classes and orders, the silent, steady development of that system of ordered freedom which we name the constitution of England, so, looking back on the course which human thought has travelled, we shall be at no loss to discern beneath the surface change of opinions, unaffected by the abnormal displays of individual folly and unreason, the traces of a continuous onward movement of mind.”@@2 And this continuous onward move­ment is towards the clearer and wider apprehension of the whole system of ultimate truths which is comprehended in the idea of the Absolute Truth. The thoughts of men as to God are necessarily

enlarged by increase of insight into the conditions of their own thinking. The disquisitions of merely professional theologians on the nature and attributes of God have done far less to elucidate the idea of God than the philosophical views of great speculative thinkers, and would have done less than they have actually accom­plished were it not for the guidance and suggestion found in these views.

The sciences co-operate with speculative philosophy and with one another in aiding thought to grow in the knowledge of God. The greatness, the power, the wisdom, the goodness, of the God of creation and providence must be increasingly apprehended in the measure that nature and its course, humanity and its history, are apprehended ; and that measure is given us in the stage of develop­ment attained by the sciences. “ God’s glory in the heavens,” for example, is in some degree visible to the naked eye and uninstructed intellect, but it becomes more perceptible and more impressive with every discovery of astronomy. Not otherwise is it as regards all the sciences. Each of them has its distinctive and appropriate contribution to bring towards the completion of the revelation of God, and cannot withhold it.

But the idea of God is not one which can be rightly apprehended merely through intellect speculatively exercised or operating on the findings of science. It requires to be also apprehended through moral experience and the discipline of life. Neither individuals nor communities can know more of God as a moral being than their moral condition and character permit them to know. The appre­hension of God and the sense of moral distinctions and moral obli­gations condition each other and correspond to each other. History shows us that sincere and pious men may receive as a supernaturally revealed truth the declaration that God is love, and yet hold that His love is very limited, being real only to a favoured class, and that He has foreordained, for His mere good pleasure, millions of the human race to eternal misery. How was such inconsistency possible? Largely because these men, notwithstanding their sincerity and piety, were lacking in that love to man through experience of which alone God’s love can be truly apprehended. In like manner, it is not only the science of law which cannot advance more rapidly than the sense of justice, but also theology so far as it treats of the righteousness of God. Thus the knowledge of God is conditioned and influenced by the course of man’s moral experience.

The same may be said of the distinctively religious experience. In it also there has been a continuous discovery and a continuous dis­closure of God. It is not long since the ethnic religions were very generally regarded as merely stages of human folly, so many monu­ments of aversion to God and of departure from the truth as to God. It was supposed that they were adequately described when they were called “idolatries” and “superstitions.” This view rested on a strangely unworthy conception both of human nature and of Divine providence, and is fast passing away. In its place has come the conviction that the history of religion has been essen­tially a process of search for God on the part of man, and a process of self-revelation on the part of God to man, resulting in a continu­ous widening and deepening of human apprehension of the Divine. All, indeed, has not been progress in the history of religion either in the ethnic or Christian period ; much has been the reverse ; but all stages of religion testify that man has been seeking and finding God, and God making Himself known unto man.

But, while knowledge of God may reasonably be expected un­ceasingly to grow, in all the ways which have been indicated, from more to more, it is not to be supposed that doubt or denial of God’s existence must, therefore, speedily disappear. Religious agnos­ticism cannot fail to remain long prevalent. The very wealth of contents in the idea of God inevitably exposes the idea to the assaults of agnosticism. All kinds of agnosticism merge into agnosticism as to God, from the very fact that all knowledge implies and may contribute to the knowledge of God. The more comprehensive an idea is from the more points can it be assailed, and the idea of God, being comprehensive of all ultimate ideas, may be assailed through them all, as, for example, through the idea of being, or of infinity, or of causality, or of personality, or of rectitude. Then, in another way, the unique fulness of the idea of God explains the prevalence of agnosticism in regard to it. The ideas are not precisely in God what they are in man or nature. God is being as man or nature is not ; for He is independent and necessary being, and in that sense the one true Being. God is not limited by time and space as creatures are ; for, whereas duration and extension merely are predicates of creatures, the corresponding attributes of God are eternity and immensity. God as first cause is a cause in a higher and more real sense than any second cause. So as to personality, intelligence, holiness, love. Just because the idea of God is thus elevated in all respects, there are many minds which fail or refuse to rise up to it, and which because of its very truth reject it as not true at all. They will not hear of that Absolute Truth which is simply the idea of God ; but that they reject it is their misfortune, not any argument against the truth itself. (R. F.)

@@@1 Goblet d’Alviella, *Contemporary Evolution of Religious Thought in England, America, and India,* 1885.

@@@2 Principal Caird, *Progressiveness of the Sciences,* pp. 27-28, Glasgow, 1875.