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A conception of God, 1917.

the God concept which I am about to present is naturally vitiated by subjectivism and above all by ignorance. I see God, as it were, vaguely and thru a ^{stained} ~~smoked~~ glass. It is a product of much reflection ~~and~~ but of limited experience and insight. With the growing realization of the realities of life, I hope to ^{correct} ~~change~~, modify, enlarge and deepen it.

I feel that my conception is ~~so~~ Jewish and ^{in many instances} ~~yet~~ I have no way of convincing myself on that point. In fact, I doubt whether there is a uniquely Jewish God-idea which is generally accepted and agreed upon. In view of the above ^{two} considerations I cannot be dogmatic or even positive. The following is, at best, an opinion, or rather an effort to define and analyze a truth which, ~~is a mighty force~~ is vague and clouded as it has always been, and, I fear, ^{will be} ~~will always remain~~, has, ~~yet been~~ nevertheless functioned as a mighty impulse in the life of the writer.

I cannot very well treat of  God without discussing the qualities which have generally ^{been} attributed to him and I cannot do this without ^{passing} the territory of the other members of the class. I shall, accordingly, restrict myself to a ^{mere} ~~general~~ survey, presenting in a general way my conclusions and intimating, here and there, my reasons for them.

I shall not attempt to prove the existence of God. ^{Aside} Apart from the metaphysical difficulties involved in such an attempt, the latter is, in general, a bootless task. ^{More} ~~than~~ logical syllogisms is required to construct a God-faith and a theology. Faith is a complex phenomenon, a synthesis of many psychological experiences of which the element of speculative reason is but one and of that not of prime importance. God may be a metaphysical necessity, ~~a sine qua non of cosmology~~. I think he is.

The rationality, the numerous demands, the hypothesis, a

directing intellect. The universal range of universal theories

calls for the postulate of a human creative intellect. But

more so does the inner life of humanity (minor activity)

that God came with his universe with man. God

was when man was not. Before the first breath of life

on the surface of the earth before the first breath of life

animated dead matter, God was there; and God will be

when the last man and heeded the last mind

in this world. Man is not a bird in a cage

as we live, a necessary link in the chain of existence

and yet man is the highest from

evolving organisms. And yet man is the least

with a reality that reaches man to the vast

heaven. Man is the only measure given that human

God and if existence is defunct when conception the

God exists in man, only in so far as man conceives him to

be. God's objectivity cannot be determined and yet it is

God as man desires that is a consequence to man.

And much like as the reason, the deity is essentially

man, the want telling truth in his existence are the

function which it performs in the life of man. Man

finds God in his other and mentally in his intellect

and reason, in his his long and life, in his long and

aspiration.

It is apparent that we say perhaps often a person

is rather than a "deity," God - concept. Religion demands it.

God, then, is necessarily very much anthropomorphic. It is

subject to man's demands upon him. Granted that I were

permitted to have intellect, which is, after all, a mind leading

to arrive at a God - notion, abstract and

abstract from human consideration, a what God would

it be to man? Of what good is a God - concept which

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leaves man out in the cold? If the idea ~~does~~ ^{is} not serviceable, if it does no good to man, it is bad and hence untrue. As far as God, is concerned, the universe will always remain anthropocentric.

We cannot, however, limit ourselves to a purely ethical God-idea. It is true that God is the expression of the highest ideals of the social group. He is the incarnation as it were of the social will and the social demands. The God-idea grows with man's mental and spiritual growth. Each age has its God and each God has his faults. But there is also a need, an intellectual and even an ethical need, for a cosmological God-concept. Man here, man speaks of God in broader terms and of his more objective relations. Here man tries to coordinate himself with or even to subordinate himself to other phases of reality. But it must be remembered that the cosmological view is also man-made; that it is only a live to man's grasp and apprehension. God may not be what we think he is but, after all, it is only what we think he is that really matters. We are thinking for ourselves and in our own terms.

In constructing a cosmology man has always endeavored to make God as distant and as different from ~~himself~~ ^{us} as possible. In this he has inevitably failed. When he speaks of God as pure intellect and means thereby that ~~this~~ ^{his} intellect in no way and at no point coincides with his own, he simply admits, in so many words, that he does not know the nature of God. If he is something of which man has never in any degree ^{whatsoever} conceived, then he is nothing as far as man is concerned. Man has a right to speak of God as intellect, ~~meaning~~ ^{if he means} thereby that God's intellect ~~is~~ ^{is} man's intellect raised to the ~~2nd~~ ^{3rd} power. Because the human species is to-day, as far as we know, the highest manifestation

of nature, and its form principle is intellect. This does not preclude the possibility that other species may come or even exist now who possess a higher form. But man's reasoning cannot vitally be affected by this consideration. Man wants a god concept and he can construct one only in accordance with the data on hand. He knows that intellect is, as far as he is aware of, the highest form principle of nature and, hence, the deity must possess it to the ~~far~~ highest.

This consideration is bound up with the problem of god's transcendence, and that in turn with the problem of Creation, or of being and becoming.

"Transcendence" is an attempt to dehumanize and de-naturalize God as far as possible by reducing, or, if you prefer, by elevating  to a mere abstraction, to a vague something which is neither here nor there, ineffable and incomprehensible. "Transcendence" in a spacial and temporal sense has no meaning, whatsoever. In fact, it is a contradiction in terms. Again, "Transcendence" as implying the inexhaustibility of god's content by this universe, is likewise an impossible view. If this means that as far as man is concerned, god or reality may possess many more phases than is apparent to him, then there may be some justification for it. But the fact still remains that god must be found in toto, in the universe. Where else? God is a functioning principle, an impelling, guiding and determining force in ~~the universe~~ reality. But where can god function if not in the universe? What meaning has form if it is not creative in matter?

more over, & what use is it? God is eminent in the world and is exhausted by the world which is tantamount to saying that God is infinite and eternal even as the universe is infinite and eternal.

Here then is the problem of Creation, of being and becoming. To me the eternity of the world, & of matter, is a fact. I can conceive of no other alternative. The theory of Creation in its boldest form is emptied of all content when one realizes that time is but an accident of motion and, hence, it is meaningless to say that there was a time when the world was not. Again, I fail to conceive of God as the source of reality, if by this is meant, that matter, ⁱⁿ some mysterious manner ~~emerged from~~ ^{emanated} from God. Emanation in successive stages and degrees from God. Emanation has always appeared to me as a wretched makeshift, succeeding in naught but in restating the problem of matter and spirit and making no appreciable headway in solving it. And lastly, Creation in the ~~sense~~ ^{unusually} sense that God can change the order of the universe at will and play the willful tyrant in his little world, that, too, has little significance for me. When God alters the laws of the universe, he

changes his own nature; and setting aside, for a moment, the impossibility and absurdity of such an idea, the question arises, why should God change the laws of nature? Had he made a bad job of his universe at first, and now, having profited from experience, he is ready to improve upon it? and all

that to permit a few members of the human species to get water ~~out~~ of a rock when they are thirsty, or to save them from destruction at the hands of a few other members of the same species, by drying a sea for them!

God functions in matter and manifests himself

in it. Matter may be said to be eternal because God is eternal but then, we would almost be justified in saying that God is eternal because matter is. When I speak of God's eternity and of matter's eternity, I am simply confessing that I am face to face with a problem or a mystery which I cannot solve. When I postulate the eternity of matter along side of God, I am, in reality no dualist. The eternity of matter and form are to me two phases of the same reality, both equally perplexing. Matter is very real and positive to me and so is God.

It appears from the above that I cannot speak of God as pure spirit any more than I can speak of him as being pure intellect. I have no idea of pure spirit. I can conceive of a principle of life, or energy but this, in reality is no distinct entity but merely a function, like intellect and emotion. The functioning principle of the universe is God and God may be said to be the most benevolent being imaginable.

This definition determines to a large extent our idea of God's unity. If God is something distinct from or greater than ~~the~~ universe, a system of emanations may then be necessary to connect the two. Angels and other spiritual entities, such as a soul in man, would then be possible. But if we speak of God as the great creative impulse in the world, then it may well be said of him that he is one, manifesting himself in an infinite number of ways. Man would then be as far as we know, the highest manifestation of the deity, truly a part of him, in being a sphere of his influence and operations and yet differing from him in being subject to ~~temporal and spatial~~ limitations. Man's intellect ceases to exist when it stops functioning but God functions eternally in matter. Man's intellect is a

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spark, which dies out, ~~from~~ a fire which burns on forever. There is no spiritual entity in man to survive him any more than there is a spiritual entity in the universe to survive it. Both endure as long as they act; they cease to be when they are no longer useful. (But the writer on immortality will treat this subject more comprehensively.)

The concept of matter as a positive principle is bound up with the problem of evil, of gods & ethical attributes, justice, mercy etc. and ~~also~~ with the problems of retributions and of free-will.

Evil is. It is very real. In a cosmic viewpoint, it is true, ~~there can be~~ evil as a positive principle, cannot be entertained. ~~God did not create the~~ ^{The world is not run} according to man's plans and specifications nor for his immediate comfort. God's universe is perfect and complete but it takes another deity to appreciate this perfection and to ^{so} order his life, ~~as~~ to be in perfect harmony with the universe. Man cannot do it. To ask why not, is absurd. It is to ask that men should be gods and to arrogate unto ourselves the ability to run the universe in better ^{form} ~~shape~~ than the Almighty. As far as ^{and that, after all, is what matters} man is concerned, evil exists, and because evil exists, retribution has some meaning. We are firmly convinced that every act, good or bad, has its reward in the life of the actor or of those influenced by his acts. ~~Every man~~ Moreover, every man affects his neighbor and is affected by him. Retribution ^{against them} ~~will~~, to a large extent, be of a social nature. Man must be rather free to do good, even when he himself is not immediately benefited by it, or even at the cost of personal pain, because at other times and, in truth, at all times, he receives

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gratuitously, ^{benefit} ~~from~~ society. No man should expect
God to be his private pay teller, doling out his counts on
inverted morality.

Free will is of course, essential to any doctrine of
retribution. But here, too, cosmology and ethics clash.

Man is aware of a certain amount of freedom in the
choice of alternatives, but how is this compatible with
the doctrine of God's omniscience and omnipotence?
I confess that ^{a real} the solution of the problem is ^{as yet} beyond
~~my grasp~~. Freedom ~~in the~~ I am inclined to
affirm man's freedom and to deny God's omniscience,
but this endangers to a great extent, greater by far than
is at first apparent, the personal God-concept. The
question arises if God does not know what choice
^{in a moral situation} man will make, does not this ^{really} imply that he ^{really} does not
care ~~as to~~ ^{what} choice he makes? This puts quite
a chasm between God and morality and makes
God quite an interested party in man's ethical
life; ~~this then that~~ Having once ^{ordained} the laws of
^{it may be said to be permitted} nature which apply also to morality, the individual
man ^{to} has the choice ^{of alternatives} with the assurance
that the ^{retribution} consequences
will inevitably follow. The concept of God's mercy
would ^{then} have little significance; likewise also God's
fatherhood.

To sum up:— If any thing ^{at all} can be predicated
~~at all~~ about God (which is quite doubtful), I would modestly
define my God concept in terms which I am convinced
are anthropomorphic and because of it, ^{it may be of} ~~it~~ some real value
to me, as follows. —

1. God is the eternal principle of becoming in the
universe. — which means —

2. His essence is as far as I know, intellect.

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3. I ascribe unto him.

a - Eternity,

b - Infinitely, (rather in the sense of perfection and completion than of endlessness.)

c - Omnipotence (always remembering that God acts in a rational way, in law and not against law.)

d. Omniscience (fully aware of the difficulties involved ~~the~~ in this concept).

3. I consider him as.

a - Imminent,

b - Just (in his relations with the universe and especially man. This concept is more of a tribute than an attribute.)

