Whitehead's theory of divinity was, according to his own statement (in conversation) "vague", and it seemed likely to him, and should seem so to us, that it can be further clarified. To achieve this we shall probably need to be more aware than he was of two things: the history of natural theology, and the logical structure of the problem and its possible solutions. Many of Whitehead's critics have not met these requirements. Often they are less aware than Whitehead of these matters. These are, as a matter of logic, two main possibilities for construing the religious idea. Both were more or less elaborately worked out prior to Whitehead. The first way is this: we may identify God with the purely absolute, infinite, eternal, unlimited, selfsufficient, impassible—the list can be prolonged, but the terms are really, as intended, mutually equivalent or synonymous. This has been the usual way. It belongs with what I call "Classical Metaphysics", or the metaphysics which takes Being as the superior form of reality, rather than creative becoming. The other way does not identify God with the absolute or infinite, though it does assert that God has aspects of absoluteness or infinity.

Those who take this view believe, with the late E. S. Brightman, in a "finite-infinite God". They see no contradiction in so thinking, for they are not asserting that God is in all aspects the one or in all aspects the other, but only that in some he is the one, in the remaining aspects, the other. Logic knows no rule against this, unless it can be shown that infinity is not the sort of predicate which could be confined to an aspect. But "Neoclassical metaphysicians" (as I call them) deny this. They think it not only can but must be so confined to make sense. Neoclassical views of deity are found in Socinianism, the later Schelling, Fechner, Pfleiderer, Garvie, Montague, Parker, Varisco, Bergson, Peirce, Ward, W. E. Hocking, C. Hartshorne (in a doctoral thesis written prior to Whitehead's influence upon him); similar views are at least implied or suggested by Hume, and many others. Whitehead is the most systematic and powerful of the defenders of the view.

To say that God is finite or relative, as well as infinite or absolute, is to imply that his reality includes becoming as well as being. For the only ground for denying becoming to God was the supposition that it would mean finitude and relativity). Since Whitehead holds the principle of process, which might be phrased thus, to be is to be either an abstraction from, or an instance of, actual becoming, either his deity is abstract, or there must be a divine form of becoming. When Whitehead called God the "Principle of Concretion", he was thought by some to have meant that God is a mere abstract principle. However, one can scarcely read the last chapter of Process and Reality, and many other passages in that book and elsewhere, in this sense. God is, indeed, the supreme principle
of concretion, but to say merely this is but an epigram about God, not an ade-
quate account of the idea. Like all actual or concrete reality, God is as, and what he becomes. Like all actuality, he perceives or "prehends" actualities independent of the particular prehensions which he has of them. For this is part of the definition of prehension, and Whitehead does not hesitate to apply the theory of prehension to God. It follows that the aspect of God which consists in prehensions of a given set of actualities in the world depends upon those worldly actualities, and not vice versa. God is in this way relative to other things, and indeed to all other things, for he prehends all. He is indeed the sole universally prehending individual. In this aspect he is not the least, but the most, relative of all realities. He is effect of all causes, and not merely the cause of all effects. The term Consequent Nature expresses this universal relativity or derivative character of deity. On this point Whitehead is perfectly clear and consistent. God physically prehends the universe, not in eternity, but step by step, as it comes into being. He cannot prehend events before they occur, for this is contradictory, since as he put it "there are no events in the future." Nor does he prehend them eternally, for they are not eternally real, and since prehension does not create its objects, even divine prehension of this or that object must wait until the object has been provided.

Of course, however, God for Whitehead is not merely derivative or relative; he is also primordial or absolute. He is cause of all effects, as well as effect of all causes. The phrase, Primordial Nature refers to this aspect. Every non-divine actuality prehends God, and hence presupposes him. God as presupposed object for an actuality A cannot be the same as or include that aspect of God which prehends A, for this would make the subject of prehension constitutive of its object, and this is contradictory. Thus God as Primordial, as universal object, cause of all subjects, has to be an abstraction from the full actuality of God as universal subject. God in this aspect is the infinite potentiality of being; but this infinity is not the divine actuality; it is only an aspect of God, not God simpliciter.

So far all is clear enough. But Whitehead makes some statements which tend to cloud the picture. He speaks of the Consequent "Nature" as though it were a second essence, parallel to the Primordial Nature. But if the Consequent Nature is taken as an essence, an abstraction, then we need a third term to express the concrete reality of deity. Two abstractions do not make a concrete actuality. I suggest the term "Consequent State", it being understood that this is not a single fixed essence, but a relative term, just as "the present state" of a man is new each moment, as he is given new objects of prehension. The Consequent State is this state, relative to the universe now, or that state, relative to the universe then. Whitehead has no equivalent phrase. The only third aspect of God which he speaks of is the Superjective Nature, and here again the word nature is suggestive of another fixed essence, and that will not do at all. Three abstractions still do not constitute anything concrete. Superjective State might serve.

Whitehead calls God an "actuality", or "actual entity". But according to the definition of such an entity it always presupposes prior actualities independent of it; and nothing can be simply independent of God, who orders all things into a world. There must be a state of God upon which a given actuality A depends.
by prehending that state, and another distinct divine state which depends upon A by prehending A. There is no room for such a real plurality of states within a single actuality. Again, the Consequent Nature is said to be ever unfinished, in flux beyond any final completion; but a single actual entity must reach its “satisfaction”, its total value, which then is superjectively available for subsequent actual entities. Such an entity cannot be endlessly in flux. My conclusion is that God is a real succession of actual entities, a “personally ordered society” of entities, the universally influential and universally influenced society, the supreme or universal Person.