

THE
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NOTES ON SPINOZA'S CONCEPTION OF GOD.

THE authoritative and final presentation of Spinoza's teaching in regard to God is to be found mainly in the first parts of the *Ethics*; but for its thorough understanding and adequate valuation the student must of course keep in view the whole of the *Ethics* and the other works, more especially the Correspondence and the treatise *De deo et homine*. Difficult though this first part is found to be when we try to elucidate all its details, and to correlate the different conceptions which it brings together, yet as regards the treatment of its main subject-matter and the general trend of its reasoning it is the simplest and clearest of the divisions of the great work to which it belongs. A very brief *résumé* of the subject-matter will be sufficient. God, or substance, is that which is one, absolutely infinite, indivisible, self-caused, eternal, conceivable through itself alone; and by virtue of this, its nature, it possesses attributes infinite in number, and, therefore, each infinite after its kind, eternal, and indivisible. Through two of these attributes, thought and extension, is substance apprehended by the finite intelligence of man, and its "modes," or finite presentations are perceived by the senses and imagination as individual things or ideas, the mode being always, in contradistinction to substance, finite, divisible, transitory, and dependent. Within this threefold schematism, of substance, attribute, and mode, Spinoza includes everything—consciousness itself and all that enters or can enter into it.

For Spinoza the two terms, 'God' and 'substance,' are practically equivalent. The most casual reader sees at a glance that