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## ARTICLE III.

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD.<sup>1</sup>

DR. DORNER'S ESSAY, TRANSLATED BY DR. D. W. SIMON.

GOD is an unchangeable and a living God. This is the corner-stone of the religion of the Bible — the corner-stone, indeed, of all true religion. Neither an unchangeable God without vitality, nor a living God without unchangeableness, can awaken that trust which is the first and simplest normal expression of man's religious nature. Not a few, indeed, are disposed to maintain that God cannot be at once unchangeable and living. He may have unchangeableness to the exclusion of vitality, or vitality to the exclusion of unchangeableness, but not both together.

Those who accept the revelation recorded in the Bible believe in God as at once unchangeable and living; and the religious history of the world proves the need, if not the truth, of such a conjunction. But theologians, as well as philosophers and scientists, agree in the position that though the two may be *believed*, they cannot logically be *thought* together. Is this so? If the conception hitherto formed of the divine unchangeableness be correct, it would seem to be so. But is this conception correct? We think not; and we propose, in the following pages, to show that it is not so, and to endeavor to substitute for it one that shall combine the truth, whilst avoiding the difficulties, in the hitherto

<sup>1</sup> In the following pages an attempt is made to reproduce in an English dress, the substance of a paper published by Dr. Dorner, of Berlin, in the *Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie* in 1856, '57, '58. With the full consent of the Author, who occasionally gave his advice, the reproducer has abbreviated, omitted, and transposed wherever it seemed advisable. Intentionally he has never changed Dr. Dorner's meaning. In one case he has made an addition, in the historical portion, viz. the section on Charnock. Our readers must also bear in mind that Dr. Dorner's discussion does not claim to be exhaustive, — much less, therefore, this English reproduction, which is a mere abstract of the original.

received doctrine of the unchangeableness and vitality of God. We shall divide our discussion into three parts—a historical, a critical, and a constructive one.

### I. THE HISTORY OF THE DOCTRINE.

Before proceeding to review the history of the doctrine of the unchangeableness of God in the Christian church, it will be instructive to inquire for a moment how far it was recognized in heathenism, and then to cast a glance at the teachings of the Old Testament on the subject.

§ 1. *Heathen View of the Unchangeableness of God.*—If unchangeableness and vitality are, as we have affirmed, the two main pillars of all religion, then wherever there has been a religion, however false, we must expect to find them recognized in some form or other. Nor will a careful examination of heathen religions disappoint this expectation. By way of example, let us take the religion of the ancient Greeks. There we find both unchangeableness and vitality, but in such a form that the one neutralizes rather than complements the other. The former is represented by the *Μοῖρα* or *Fatum*; but it is both disjoined from, and incompatible with, vitality. The gods are essentially living gods; but they are as far from being unchangeable as their worshippers. There is no trace of an unchangeableness which is living, or of a vitality which is unchangeable. It is true, the *Μοῖρα* is sometimes spoken of as if capable of volition; but on closer examination we find that it can will nothing that must not inevitably come to pass. If we ask why is this or that decreed by Fate, we receive for answer, "It is decreed." Characteristically enough, therefore, the *Μοῖραι* are described as the "Daughters of Night." Fate, in a word, though sometimes personified, was merely another expression for fixed, inexorable law. Accordingly, we never find that the *Μοῖραι* were the objects of prayer or sacrifice; for immutability by itself is the death of worship. The gods, on the other hand, were living gods, and as such approachable; but lacking immutability, they were unfitted to attract that absolute

trust which is both the beginning and end of religion. It is true, they were conceived to be immortal and far superior to men in knowledge and power, if not omniscient and omnipotent; but they were also changeful—subject to passion, whim, partiality, and egoism. In fact, the ultimate root of heathenism is fatalism, and in endowing its gods with life it ungodd them.

We may well ask, therefore, In what sense do heathen religions deserve the name? If absolute trust be the fundamental element of religion, how could religion be possible to a Greek, or, indeed, to any heathen? Relatively to fate, such an emotion were absurd; relatively to changing gods, impossible. We may reply that as Christians are less religious, so heathens may have been more religious, than their creed. Will not charity permit us to suppose that to simple-minded heathens, in moments of forgetful rapture, one or another of their partial deities may have seemed to possess the absoluteness of the one true God, and that thus a self-surrender, devotion, and trust have been enkindled, very illogical, indeed, but still genuine? Such feelings, indeed, could not but be transitory. The disjunction of the two elements vitality and unchangeableness was, and always will be, fatal to the existence of a piety permanent and deep enough to mould the life. Fate, instead of awakening confidence, inspired despair, defiance, or self-pity, according to the temper of the believer; vitality that was changeable and unjust produced selfishness. The heathen were either religious against, or irreligious through, their belief.

§ 2. *Jewish View of the Divine Unchangeableness.*—How different an atmosphere do we breathe the moment we set foot in Judea. From Genesis to Malachi the Old Testament represents God as at one and the same time a living and yet absolute and immutable Person. Everywhere this is presupposed; frequently it is distinctly expressed. How significantly do the two poles meet in the words, "I am that I am," or, as some render the Hebrew, "I am that I shall be; I AM hath sent me unto you" (Ex. iii. 14). This, the primal self-revelation of God, conjoins absoluteness and personality,

vitality and unchangeableness, in a manner that shows that each requires, rather than excludes the other. So also in Ps. cii. 27, "Thou remainest as thou art, and thy years have no end"; Isa. xlvi. 12, "I am the first and the last"; Ps. xc. 2, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God"; Mal. iii. 6, "Far from me are variableness and change"; compare James i. 17, "Without variableness or the shadow of a turning." Thus the God of whom thought, feeling, activity, — in short, vitality, personality, — are so frequently and distinctly predicated that many charge the Bible with anthropomorphism, is also declared to be absolute, self-existent, self-sufficient, immutable.

Besides passages like the above, which seem to relate predominantly to the being of God, there are others which affirm his unchangeableness in a moral respect. Indeed, if we look at the latter carefully, we shall see that it is rooted in, that it is an application of the former. Holiness, justice, truth, faithfulness are simply unchangeableness taken in an ethical sense. That God is just, true, and faithful towards men, as we are so frequently informed in the Old Testament, is grounded in his being just, true, and faithful to himself; in other words, in his remaining identical with himself, i.e. unchangeable. Nor, unless God were self-sufficient and unchangeable could he be pure, unmixed goodness — could he be love. So closely connected with each other are that early, sublime, and profound utterance, "I am that I am," and that most human, most tender, and (if one may so say) most anthropomorphic utterance, "God is love."

According to the Bible, therefore, — New as well as Old Testament, — God is immutable in being, and true, holy, just in character. This is the corner-stone of all religion; on this corner-stone was built the church of Christ.

§ 3. *View of the Early Church.* — The first teachers of the church, in the post-apostolic age, seem to have paid little attention to the unchangeableness of God as a doctrine. They did not, indeed, call it in question; on the contrary, they unconsciously took it for granted; but so new and mar-

vellous did Christianity appear to them, and so profound was the impression it had made, that they unsuspectingly fell into modes of representation by which the divine immutability was logically endangered. At two points, in particular, was this the case — the creation and the incarnation, where obviously such a mistake is difficult to be avoided even now; how much more then! No sooner, however, was it found that Gnostus, Manichæus, and teachers of error within the church itself were basing systems on, and thus bringing to light, the dangerous consequences — consequences whose fruit would be the heathenism which had just been renounced — involved in those representations, than endeavors began to be made to rectify the mistake. The lofty and authoritative utterances of the Old Testament were, in particular, called to mind. Indeed, so deep an anxiety was awakened to ward off everything that savored of the changeableness characteristic of heathen deities, that representations began to be adopted logically endangering all that was distinctively new in Christianity. Out of Scylla the church fell into Charybdis. With a tenacity almost amounting to infatuation the church has clung, down even to the present day, to the latter error — an error out of which have grown some of its fiercest conflicts, and which would long ago have imperilled its very existence, but for a happy inconsistency to which I shall have another opportunity of more particularly referring.

No two writers did more to purge the mind of the church from representations of God that savored of heathenism than Augustine and Dionysius Areopagita; and till within a recent period the entire doctrine of the divine nature and attributes bore the impress they gave it.

§ 4. *Augustine's View of Immutability.* — Augustine opens his treatise, “*De Natura Boni contra Manichæos*,” with the following words: “*Summum bonum, quo superius non est, Deus, ac per hoc incommutabile bonum est, ideo vere æternum et vere immortale.*” Such is God alone. Everything else is “*ab eo*,” not “*de eo*,” and is therefore “*mutabile.*” He is “*spiritus immutabilis.*”<sup>1</sup> “*Sola illa natura [the triune*

<sup>1</sup> Tom. x. ed. Venet. p. 601; Tom. vii. 872; Serm. 182 on 1 John iv.

God] immutabilis, incommutabilis, nec defectui, nec profectui obnoxia; nec cadet ut minus sit, nec transcendit ut plus sit, perfecta sempiterna, omnimodo immutabilis sola illa natura." The same idea he expresses also as follows,<sup>1</sup> God is the "solum bonum simplex," and therefore "incommutabile." For that is simple which *is* what it *has*. Where the *having* has become *being*, there is it imperishable; where not, perishable. But in God "non aliud qualitas, aliud substantia ejus." From this he deduces the conclusions: that God cannot be part of another nature<sup>2</sup>; that he *is* his attributes, — for example, he is omnipotence, and not merely omnipotent, — and that no one of his attributes is other than the rest.<sup>3</sup> In God there is no "accidens"; all is "substantia"; For this reason he alone is "immutabilis essentia," and to him pertains "esse" in an absolute sense. All change is a species of death.<sup>4</sup> God has "esse" in an absolute sense, because nothing in him is accidental; in other words, because he neither does nor can undergo change. This is the secret of his elevation above time and space. "In dei natura non est aliquid quasi nondum sit, aut fuit quasi jam non sit; sed est tantum id quod est et est *ipsa aeternitas*."<sup>5</sup> God is everywhere entire, "non mole distenditur nec partitione minuitur." His "natura est nunquam divisa."<sup>6</sup> He does not, indeed, dwell in all saints alike; and yet he is "ubique totus," to wit, "in se ipso." Any difference in his indwelling arises from a difference in the creature; "quia alii plus eum capiunt, alii minus." Consequently "non parti rerum partem sui praesentem praebet, et alteri parti alteram partem"; but "universitate creaturae" as "cuilibet parti ejus totus pariter adest."<sup>7</sup> The divine will too undergoes no change. Any apparent change takes place solely in the things which God

<sup>1</sup> De civitate Dei Lib. xi. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., x. 840.

<sup>3</sup> De Trinitate, vi. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., v. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Tom. xiii. 333; v. 66. With Augustine's view of eternity coincides the often quoted definition of Boethius: "Interminabilis vitae tota simul et perfecta possessio."

<sup>6</sup> Tom. ii. 442, 526, 647; iv. 694, 710; vii. 1119, 1122; viii. 307, 314; ix. 315.

<sup>7</sup> De praesentia Dei, Ep. 187; Tom. ii. 890.

moves; and he changes them according to his "consilium incommutabile."<sup>1</sup> And that God "scit incommutabiliter et vult incommutabiliter" follows from the identity posited by Augustine between the divine volition and wisdom and the divine being. "Essentia tua scit et vult incommutabiliter; et scientia est et vult incommutabiliter; et voluntas tua est et scit incommutabiliter." "Apud te rerum omnium instabilium stant causae et rerum omnium mutabilium immutabiles manent origines et omnium irrationabilium et temporalium sempiternae vivunt rationes."<sup>2</sup> How, on this supposition, it is possible for anything to pass away, he does not explain. Elsewhere, however,<sup>3</sup> he confesses the difficulty of separating time from the divine creation of the temporal. By way of answer to the question, How far has God already created things that are yet to come? he refers at one time to predestination; whilst at another time he asserts that God once for all "realiter" created everything, inasmuch as he implanted in the things that existed the germs of the things that were to come.

§ 5. *Dionysius Areopagita*.<sup>4</sup>—In the writings of the so-called Dionysius Areopagita the divine attributes are, without exception, resolved into the absolute identity and simplicity of the *ὑπερούσιον*, even more strictly than by Augustine. So completely, indeed, is this done that to form a distinct and clear conception of God is pronounced impossible, and nothing remains but a kind of holy gloom. The negative (*καταφρατική*) theology, from a fear of trenching on the divine infinitude, and through confounding the infinite with the indeterminate, goes even so far as to deny to God (distinct) existence; and Scotus Erigena says: "Deus nescit se quid est, quia non est quid." The same mistaken view of infini-

<sup>1</sup> Tom. x. 722; vi. 526, 892.

<sup>2</sup> Confess. Lib. xiii. c. 16; and Lib. i. c. 6.

<sup>3</sup> De Gen. ad let., i. c. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Opera Dionysii Areopag. cum scholiis S. Maximi et paraphrasi Pachymerae, published by Balth. Corderius in 1634. Dallaeus in his "De scriptis quae sub Dionys. Areop. et Ignatii nominibus circumferuntur," Genev. 1666, proves satisfactorily the spuriousness of these writings. This, however, does not affect the question of their influence.



tude had previously led Origen to deny the omnipotence of God out of regard to his self-consciousness. Such a theology obviously secures the unchangeableness of God, his elevation above everything finite; but it is at the cost of healthy piety; though, singularly enough, the writings of the Areopagite were the favorite study of the mystics of the Middle Ages. If God be thus absolutely transcendent, and without a true revelation of himself to the world, the creature that yearns for union with him has no alternative but to aim at absorption, at ecstatical self-transcendence, at the loss of distinct individuality,—in short, at transubstantiation into Deity; and this was actually the goal of the above-mentioned mystics.

We see, accordingly, that a false view of the exaltedness and immutability of God leads to his identification with mutable man; that an exaggerated fear of applying to God predicates derived from creatures betrays into the error of making him egoistic and exclusive, or, in other words, a creature; and that, consequently, heathenism expelled at the one side entered with additional vigor at the other. Another positive result of this view of unchangeableness we shall notice further on.

§ 6. *Anselm.* — Augustine's main positions are repeated by Anselm; above all, the position that because God is not compounded his attributes are not several, but all absolutely one—each being every other and all the rest taken together. Whereof the reason is, that God *is*, not merely *has*, his attributes.<sup>1</sup> Strictly speaking, says Anselm, we can predicate of God solely essence, not quality—solely the “quid,” not the “quale” or “quantum.” If “accidentia” could be predicated of him, he would be capable of change.<sup>2</sup> Hence, also, God is eternal and omnipresent; which signifies, on the one hand, that he is in no single part of time or space so far as it implies limitation; on the other hand, that he is with them as their creative principle, though without undergoing change himself. This immanence in time, however, does not war-

<sup>1</sup> Anselm. Monolog. c. 17 ff. Compare Hasse's “Anselm von Canterbury,” Vol. ii. p. 132 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Monolog. c. 25, — “God is substantia nunquam a se diversa ullo modo vel accidentaliter.”

rant us in predicating duration of him; for, as duration involves present, past, and future, God would then no longer be the Absolute. That which was, is, for that very reason, no longer; it has not remained the same, but has become an "aliud et aliud." Of God, therefore, we can only predicate "est," not "fuit" or "erit." Time and space are in no sense predicable of God himself. God is, for example, truth. Now what has truth to do with time and space? We cannot speak of a time and place of truth. We say, indeed, of God, "He is here"; but it is only true so far as he is also everywhere else; and if we say, "He has been," or "He will be," it cannot denote either that he is no longer, or that he is not yet. Speaking precisely, he is not in, but with, time and space, in a "non labile præsens." In eternity there is no "erit," and no "fuit," but merely "est." This "est," however, is not to be conceived as a temporal present,—for what we now call present is a mere moment of time,—but as embracing all time in one vast simultaneity. In eternity (to wit, in the divine knowledge) all things are eternal, even those which on earth are liable to change; but they are eternally known as that which they really are, namely, as subject to time and change.

According to Anselm, further, we cannot distinguish in God between knowledge and volition, volition and operation, both being one; a position from which the dangerous conclusion might obviously be drawn, that evil is the work of God. He evades this conclusion, however, by viewing evil as a mere negation, that is, as *nothing*. But how, on this theory, human freedom which expresses itself in willing *nothing*, can itself be something, Anselm does not explain.<sup>1</sup>

§ 7. *Thomas Aquinas*. — The most prominent feature of Aquinas's doctrine of the nature of God is, also, that absolute simplicity which renders a manifoldness of attributes objectively distinct an impossibility, and which excludes not merely possibility and matter, but also everything of the nature of

<sup>1</sup> Origen, Athanasius, and Augustine took the same view of evil — the private or negative. This accounts for Aquinas treating it on several occasions as well-nigh an article of faith. — See *De Casu Diaboli*, c. 8; cf. c. 15.

potentiality and change.<sup>1</sup> He arrives, accordingly, at the natural conclusion that God wills himself and everything else *by one and the same act*;<sup>2</sup> that the divine understanding and the divine will are not potencies, but "actiones"; nay, more, that God himself is pure "actus," because there is nothing potential in him. Not even to the distinction between understanding and will can he allow reality, although it is the basis of his doctrine of the Trinity. Strictly speaking, it would follow from all this that for God nothing is contingent, nothing transitory, nothing a goal; that he acts and works eternally in the like absolute manner; and that we cannot allow even what Thomas is willing to allow, to wit, that in God there is the "potentia" to act, although we cannot speak of a "potentia" to be. For, according to the principles laid down before, if God actually is from eternity all that he can be, he must also have been actually *working* from eternity all that he can work.

These positions and the similar ones of Augustine and Anselm are the legitimate outcome of the exaggerated view of the simplicity and unchangeableness of God.

§ 8. *Modifications of the afore-mentioned View of Immutability attempted by various Divines.* — The line of thought already expounded predominated during the Middle Ages: but yet elements of a different character are also discoverable. Even *Thomas Aquinas* betrays a feeling that he had gone too far. For example, he elsewhere speaks of God as the principle of the universe, although the universe is not eternal; as the principle, too, of the separate parts of the universe; and allows that, inasmuch as many of these parts have arisen in time, that quality of God in virtue of which he is their principle must be predicated of him not "ab aeterno sed ex

<sup>1</sup> Compare Ritter's "Geschichte der christl. Philosophie," iv. 273 ff. Besides the "Summa theologiae," reference should also be made to the "Summa contra Gentiles."

<sup>2</sup> Ritter, iv. 278. At the same time he tries to keep hold on the distinction between the *habitus dei ad se*, which is "necessaria et naturalis"; and the "habitus dei ad alia," which is "voluntaria," although the divine "voluntas" is determined by the "cognitio intellectus."

tempore." He also says that God *knows* some things which relatively to his power are mere possibilities.

*Bernhard*, also, with the same feeling, explained the old principle that God is the being of all being and the life of everything that lives, as meaning that God is their "Esse causale," not their "Esse materiale." If God be the substance, the reality of the world, the world can of course have no being, no substance, no reality of its own; but in saying that God is the cause of the world, we so distinguish between the cause and its effect that the two have not one and the same being.

*Duns Scotus*, however, was the first to attribute such an independence to the world as to find himself compelled to undertake the modification of his doctrine of the nature and attributes of God. It is true, he too says, God is "simpliciter simplex"; but still he makes the divine dignity to consist not in his alone having true being, whilst other creatures can only be said to be so far as they participate in him, but in his being free and capable of choice, so that he is self-determinant, and is not determined either by his knowledge or by his nature. God is, of course, under the necessity of willing himself; but he possesses also freedom of volition, so far as he is able to will other things. The ultimate object, therefore, of the volition which we just described as necessary to God is, in reality, his absolute freedom. This absolute freedom is the characteristic feature of the divine essence. In his freedom God is able to will what is other than himself. He can will the world to be so or otherwise; but as he wills it it is good. He is able also to reabsorb the present world into himself, and substitute another in its place; but one thing he cannot do—make the world equal to himself, communicate to it absolute freedom. For by its very idea it is dependent on and bound to him, and yet, once willed, has being,—and, indeed, being of its own,—as truly as God himself; otherwise, God could not be said to be its absolutely free cause. But as the being of the world is contingent, a reflection of contingency is cast into God. He is the contin-

gent cause of the world ; that is, in creating the world at all, and in creating it as it is, God was moved solely by his own sovereign good pleasure. God himself does not thus undergo any change ; for whatever he may will he still remains absolute freedom. But inasmuch as he wills all things eternally — eternally, however, as when and where they make their appearance — there must be something answering to the gradual growth and variety of the world in the divine will. At the same time, seeing that the being of God as it is in itself may be distinguished from his being as the ground of the existence of the world, his will, from another point of view, may be said to be unchangeable. Duns Scotus concedes also other real distinctions in God, as, for example, the persons of the Trinity and a variety of attributes.

We see thus that Duns Scotus modifies the previously current doctrine of the unchangeableness of God by recognizing distinctions in the divine nature. But is the method pursued by him the right one? Let us examine. Though God is the absolute cause of the world, he has not communicated himself to it. There is no resemblance between him and his handiwork. We can therefore draw no conclusion from the nature of the world to that of God. God willed the world to be such as it is because it was his good pleasure, not because of any deeper necessity of his nature. If it is good, it is good because he made it so ; he did not make it because it was good. The good for us is what God wills to be good. Even the moral law might have been different ; for it has no inner connection with the divine essence. From all which it follows, first, that man can never rise to a free knowledge and love of God and the good, but must always remain a bondman ; and secondly, that God cannot communicate himself in any form to the world, that is, an incarnation is impossible. That these consequences were not merely theoretically, but also practically drawn, might be shown from the history of the church. Indeed, we shall endeavor to show that either they or others equally disastrous did find embodiment both in theoretical and practical forms.

§ 9. *The Doctrine of the Divine Unchangeableness at the Era of the Reformation.*—The central feature of the Reformation was the doctrine of justification by faith—a doctrine which involves a view of the relation between God and man fundamentally different from that which we have had occasion to consider. Strictly speaking, so long as God is held to be the being of all being, the life of all life, the essence of all that exists, it is impossible logically to allow free personality to man. The doctrine of justification by faith raises us above this point of view; it tells us that man was eternally the object of the divine love, and that consequently the personality of the individual has an inherent worth and significance for God. Herein lie obviously the germs of a new doctrine of the nature and attributes of God. It ought to have led in particular to modifications of the doctrine of his unchangeableness. Important changes were actually introduced at the Reformation into other parts of the doctrinal system of the church—into those parts, namely, which bore more immediately on the grand principle whose revival requickenened the world; for example, into the *loci* treating of the person and work of the Redeemer, of the conversion and justification of the sinner, of the means of grace, and so forth. But, unfortunately, the stem out of which all other doctrines ought as branches to grow remained untouched; and accordingly, ever since the Reformation, systems of theology have been marked by a fatal discord—their groundwork being Roman Catholic, or, in reality, to a large extent Neo-Platonic; their superstructure evangelical, that is, scriptural. Various causes contributed to prevent the germ referred to above from shooting up into strength. One of these causes was the prevalence of absolute predestinarianism—a doctrine to which thoughtful minds were naturally led when they reflected on the unbelief of the age and the unconditioned free grace of God in the light of the received doctrine of the divine immutability.

The twofold “*decretum absolutum*” of this age is not reconcilable with the absolute unchangeableness from which

it was derived ; for it presents God to us as acting differently or unequally towards those who were equally sinners — to the one merely justly, to the others also compassionately. This lack of moral self-consistency arose from another defect, to wit, the loose relation established between the freedom or power of God and his moral nature — a defect inherited from Aquinas, Scotus, and the theology of the Middle Ages. Protestant theology, however, though chargeable with this fault in the *locus de decreto absoluto*, introduced consistency into another *locus*, where the Middle Age theologians had left room for changeableness and contingency, namely, in that relating to the atonement. The latter had treated the atoning work of Christ as a matter of *fitness*; the former treated it as a requirement of *justice*. In another very important point, also, Protestants advanced beyond their predecessors ; namely, in maintaining that what God prescribes for men as good is good in itself ; than which few principles are more thoroughly biblical or more weighty.

§ 10. *Johann Gerhard*. — According to Gerhard, the divine attributes are “*realiter unum*,” both with each other and with the nature of God, and are ascribed to him merely *ἀνθρωποπαθῶς*.<sup>1</sup> As authorities he refers to Dionysius Areopagita, and the passage from Augustine’s “*De Trinitate*” quoted above. Neither the creation nor the sustenance of the world, nor the affections attributed to God in the Scriptures cause any change in him. Creatures alone are subject to time and change ; consequently the divine volitions must always remain the same.<sup>2</sup> We are accordingly warned against concluding that time and change are predicable of God, because he made a *beginning* of creating. The change involved in creation affected *the world alone*. “*Ex parte creaturæ ad Deum est relatio realis, non ex parte creatoris ad creaturam*,” because the work of creation added no new perfection to God in time ; but he is “*merus et purus actus in se ipso, varians operum effecta, ipse in se ipso invariabilis*

<sup>1</sup> *Loci Theol.*, Tom. i. loc. iii. c. 7 ; Tom. iii. loc. i. c. 7 (ed. Cotta).

<sup>2</sup> *Loci Theol.*, Tom. i. §§ 47–58.

permanens.”<sup>1</sup> One would suppose, indeed, that what has as yet no existence can undergo no change; but Gerhard meets the difficulty by terming the passage from non-entity to entity a change. This, however, is plainly to attribute to the creature a pre-existence in God after the manner of the Platonic ideal world, and to describe the change as consisting in the passage from an intelligible (*intelligibilis*) to a real existence. Now, this change must have been brought about either by the creature itself or by God. In the latter case, either a new act was performed or the eternal divine volition of the transition had been prevented from taking effect by hinderances that afterwards gave way—which would be substituting for a change in the divine *will* a change in the divine *power* to carry out its will.

He then goes on to say, in God there is no distinction of substance and accident; such distinctions exist only in human language. The divine perfection was not increased by the creation of a world; that only one world was created does not cause it to be less. By the creation nothing but the divine “*habitus ad creaturam adaugetur.*” When God creates new things it is by an eternal will, not by a new will. Not merely is his counsel eternal; but, so far as he wills and acts at all, he wills and acts eternally. Not even the incarnation gave rise to a change in him; for the Son communicated of his fulness, but did not pour it out.<sup>2</sup>

Gerhard demonstrates the impossibility of change in God the following way: God is absolutely *simple*; his attributes considered “*realiter,*” are so completely one with his essence that he cannot be described as in any sense compounded of substance and accidents. Now, none but composite beings are liable to change.<sup>3</sup> God’s eternity assures us that as he is without beginning and end, so he is free from succession and change; nay more, that he is incapable of change in relation both to his essence, his moral attributes, his *knowledge*, and his volitions.<sup>3</sup> For, says he again, with Thomas Aquinas,

<sup>1</sup> Loci ii. c. 7; Tom. iii. 86.

<sup>2</sup> Tom. i. l. c. § 53; cf. Tom. iii. p. 88.

<sup>3</sup> c. x. § 80 f., and Tom. iii. Loc. 2. c. 8, pp. 99 ff. <sup>4</sup> Tom. i. l. c. cap. xi. § 88 ff.



“Deus est purus actus, omne autem quod mutatur est aliquo modo in potentia.” Concerning whatever undergoes change it may be said, “Partim manet, partim transit.”<sup>1</sup>

Further, as God’s power and presence are *realiter* one, his omnipresence is an omnipresence of his nature, and not merely an omnipresence of his power. There are, indeed, different degrees of the divine omnipresence—the “*presentia potentiae, gratiae, gloriae, incarnationis*”; and Gerhard further distinguishes species of these four genera. All this, however, produces no change in the “*presentia*,” but merely in the “*effectus*” of the divine essence. But as a difference in the effect implies a difference in the cause, this explanation leaves us where we were, especially as regards the incarnation; for Gerhard did not, after all, mean to say that it was to God a matter of indifference in what creature he became incarnate, and that he selected Christ solely because he possessed the fullest measure of susceptibility.

§ 11. *Quenstedt*.—Quenstedt, who in many respects treads in Gerhard’s footsteps, describes the unchangeableness of God as consisting in the constant identity of the divine nature and its perfections; an identity which excludes every species of physical and ethical movement.<sup>2</sup> Of the five modes of change to which spiritual beings are liable, no one is predicable of God. As to existence, he is eternal; as to space, omnipresent; as to knowledge, omniscient. As his being is simple, no change can arise from the distinction between substance and accidents; and the counsel of his will is without repentance. So that the unchangeableness of God both follows from and expresses itself in his eternity, omnipresence, simplicity, omniscience, and the fixity of his counsels.

§ 12. *Charnock*.<sup>3</sup>—The view of the divine unchangeableness expounded by Charnock, in his classical work on the “*Being and Attributes of God*,” is identical in every im-

<sup>1</sup> c. xii. 93, 95.

<sup>2</sup> System. Tom. i. p. 288; Thes. xx.

<sup>3</sup> The reproducer of Dorner’s *Essay* is alone responsible for this paragraph on Charnock. It is inserted with Dorner’s full consent. He thought it would interest English readers to see that this classical old English divine differed in no respect from his theological predecessors and contemporaries.

portant feature with that of Augustine, Gerhard, and all the principal theologians of the Protestant churches. Like the rest, he regards the simplicity of God as the ultimate root of his unchangeableness. In the sermon on "God is a Spirit," we read, "If God were not a Spirit, he were not unchangeable. His immutability depends on his simplicity. He is unchangeable in his essence, because he is a pure and unmixed spiritual being." "He is a pure act." Charnock too carries simplicity to the point of identifying the nature with the attributes and the attributes with the nature. For example, he says in the sermons on the Omnipresence and the Wisdom of God: "There is no distinction between the divine essence and attributes. His power and wisdom are his essence." "God is more truly said to be wisdom, justice, truth, power, and so forth, than to be wise, just, true, or powerful; as though he were compounded of substance and qualities." He establishes the various aspects of the divine unchangeableness as follows: He is unchangeable in *essence*, because otherwise he would neither truly be, nor be blessed; because if mutable he must either increase or diminish; and because he is from himself ("a se."). In *knowledge* he is immutable, because he knows by his essence, and his understanding is his essence; because he knows all things by one intuitive act; because his will and knowledge are the cause of all things and their successions; and because past and future make no change to God; for he knows all from eternity, and in eternity there is no succession — no past, no future. He is unchangeable in *will* and *purpose*, for his will is the same as his essence. "God hath not a faculty of will distinct from himself; as his understanding is nothing but 'Deus intelligens,' so his will is nothing but 'Deus volens.'" "Our weakness makes us consider it a faculty." Further, his will and understanding concur in everything. "As God knows all things by simple vision of his understanding; so he wills all things by one act of volition." He is unchangeable in *place*. "He cannot be changed in time, because he is eternity; so he cannot be changed in place, because he

hath ubiquity." "He who hath no cause of his being [save himself] can have no limits of being; and though by creation he began to be in the world, yet he did not begin to be where the world is, but was in the same imaginary place from eternity; for he always was in himself by his own eternal 'ubi.'" "Therefore, when God is said to draw near to us when we draw near to him, it is not by local motion or change of place, but by special influences." "He draws us to himself who is an immovable rock, by a change of mind, will, and affections in us." But how *special* influences are compatible with the utter immutability predicated of the divine will, Charnock does not explain.

§ 13. *Schleiermacher*. — We pass at once from Quenstedt and Charnock to Schleiermacher, because no modification of importance was introduced into the doctrine under consideration during the long period intervening between them, and we include Schleiermacher, first, because on this one point he deviated no whit from his most orthodox predecessors, and secondly, because by bringing clearly to light the consequences involved in the old views of the divine nature, he paved the way for the important changes which the mind of Christendom is beginning to see to be necessary. Augustine, Dionysius Areopagita, Anselm, Quenstedt, were his special favorites as far as this subject is concerned; and, in fact, he did little more than translate their ideas into modern German modes of thought and expression.

His fundamental assumption is that the divine nature must be absolutely simple, and that God is exalted above possibility and the conditions of time and space, — by this principle he tests the correctness of all teachings on the subject of the divine attributes. Starting thus, he arrives at the conclusion that in God there is not a plurality of attributes or powers; that the distinction of attributes exist solely for our finite minds; that the so-called natural or metaphysical and moral attributes are identical. There is no distinction between passive and active attributes, because God as the living God is all activity (*actus purus*). There is none, in particular,

between his knowledge and volition ; for if volition preceded knowledge God would be to that extent conditioned, and if knowledge preceded volition he would to that extent undergo change. Nor is the ability of God distinct from his volition ; for whatever is really possible, that is, good, is as such brought into existence by the will of God. We cannot even distinguish in thought between God's *volition of himself* and his *volition of a world* ; for in willing himself he wills himself as Creator, and therefore implicitly wills the world. Further, God's volition of himself is really nothing but God's being under the form of will. We must deny, therefore, not only any distinction of attributes, but also any difference in the divine relations to the world. Whilst then he is its eternally living spiritual cause, his own relation to it remains eternally one and the same. Any differences in the relation between God and the world arise from a difference in the divinely ordained degree of susceptibility to his one self-same omnipresence. For God is present everywhere alike, and his eternity is eternally identical causative activity.

In short, there is no " *potentia* " in God which is not eternally " *actus* " ; there is not a multiplicity of divine decrees or functions and deeds ; God embraces all things eternally and undividedly in one and the same unchangeable thought ; and this thought is as inseparably one with his will as his will is with its operation. So that whatever attains actuality was contained from eternity in the world, whether it came forth directly or through the medium of another second cause. God, however, willed and worked all he ever willed and worked by one eternal volition and act ; and after having once eternally willed the world his causative activity ceased.

From this very brief sketch it will be seen that as far as the doctrine of the divine unchangeableness is concerned, Schleiermacher was thoroughly orthodox, that is, he agreed with his principal predecessors. But whilst this is true, it is also true that there are numerous traces in his works of his having found it impossible to rest satisfied with positions such as those described. They are also clearly inconsistent

with his definition of religion as the sense of absolute dependence, which implies that the world is for God what God is not, namely absolutely dependent, with his recognition of an historical process in the world, and with his antagonism to Pelagianism.

## II. CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE TRADITIONAL DOCTRINE.

The root of the traditional view of the unchangeableness of God is the conception formed of the simplicity of his nature. This is true relatively to every great divine from Augustine to Schleiermacher. In point of fact, too, this was the right course to pursue. If the divine nature were compounded, instead of being simple, we could not predicate of it absolute unchangeableness. But the view taken of simplicity was an exaggerated one. It was supposed to exclude every sort of distinction whatever,—whether between matter and form, or essence and accident, or being and existence, or general and special, or potency and actus, or nature and spirit. What more natural accordingly than that God, being thus reduced to a mathematical point or Daltonian atom, should be pronounced unchangeable in a sense incompatible with all that we understand by life and movement. Some of the distinctions referred to must, indeed, be denied of God; for example, those between matter and form, essence and accident, being and existence (*essentia Dei involvit existentiam*), general and special. The others, on the contrary, rightly understood and limited, may, nay, must, be affirmed of God. To be non-compounded is by no means identical with the absence of all distinctions. Such absolute simplicity would obviously exclude the divine aseity, self-knowledge, blessedness, love, and, above all, the Trinity, the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Holy Spirit. The platonic *ὄν* does, indeed, exclude every sort of distinction; but the God of the Bible, the God of Christianity, is more properly described as an organism, comprising an infinite fulness of living powers than as a mere point. As space prevents our attempting to sustain all the positions laid down above, we shall

confine our attention mainly to a corollary directly deducible and repeatedly deduced from the identification of the attributes of God with his being, and of the attributes with each other — the corollary, namely, that *God eternally wills and knows himself and the world of his counsel by one and the same eternal act*. This position — a position common to all the theologians we have passed in review — we propose to examine in its relation to the idea of creation, to the natural world as the subject of a process of growth, to the ethical world of humanity.

§ 1. *The Eternal Identity of the Divine Volition and Knowledge in Relation to Creation.* — A doctrine of the divine nature that excludes all distinction and movement is incompatible with the idea of creation. The proposition referred to above seems logically to imply that the conception of God as he is in himself is covered by the conception of God as the *cause* of the *world*, that his knowledge and volition of himself as such are identical with his knowledge and volition of himself as the cause of the world, which is pantheistic. God must be something in and by himself independently of the thought of a world. His knowledge and volition of himself are the logical *prius* of his knowledge and volition of the world. The first belongs to the necessity of the Divine Being, the denial of which would be the denial of his vitality. The second is rather a manifestation, than a necessity of the perfection of the Divine Being.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, the one divine thought, in which God thinks himself in his self-sufficiency, freedom, blessedness, and as the Creator of the world, consists of two essentially different thoughts, which, though they may converge into *one* thought, cannot converge into one *simple* thought. It is one thing for God to think and will himself; another thing for him to think and will himself as the Creator of a real world. Condescending love, for example, is present as a motive in the latter; not in the

<sup>1</sup> When treating of the metaphysics of theology the old divines drew a similar distinction between the *actus primus* and the *actus secundus*, — inconsistently enough, it is true.

former. Further, the world could not have been the *end* of the divine volition, unless God had willed to constitute himself the *means*, the loving instrument of its production; he would not have willed its existence unless it were a good, not merely for the human, but also for the divine mind; and it is a good only so far as in his love he designs it to participate in his life and spirit,—in a word, so far as he makes himself its *goal*. Thus God thinks and wills himself as the beginning, the means, and the goal of creation,—three things which are no more indetical for God than they are for man.

§ 2. *This Identity and Motionlessness incompatible with the Existence of a World subject to Growth.* — No one denies that the world had an eternal existence in God, as a *thought*; which is equivalent to saying that the world (as thought) was a determination given to his mind by God. This is its first form of existence. Now God must have conceived the world as fluctuating and changeable; otherwise he would not have conceived and willed it as the world it actually is. Consequently the divine understanding contains (primarily, of course, by its own act) an element of change, and that not merely as contemplating, but also as ideally producing. It is true, this element of change is merely an object of thought; and thought itself is no more mutable because its objects are mutable, than mutable things are immutable, because of being thought by an immutable intelligence. Still the divine thought must be allowed to be interwoven with change, if God really thought the world as it is. Nay, more, it is impossible to understand how he could be the cause of changing things,—and to the action of his will alone do they owe their existence, however brief that existence may be,—unless we acknowledge that, notwithstanding his eternal *knowledge* even of things that change or pass away, notwithstanding his immoveable *volition*, not merely of laws, but also of the world, his will ceases to be active relatively to things past whilst his knowledge remains unaltered, so far as we can speak of knowing things that are past. If the passing

away in question takes place as the result of the production of other things, then this same production is the change in the divine activity which we desire to see recognized. To ascribe this production of other things to finite causalities, or as some have done, to the angels, is a deistic evasion of the difficulty, and does but remove the problem a step backwards. Is not the real truth that although God eternally knows and wills that which gradually arises in time, his active, really productive volition of these things is by no means so eternal as his idea of them. Either we must deny altogether that God produces new objects; we must attribute their rise solely to nature, assuming that God created it once for all complete, self-sufficient and self-productive; or, if we believe that God is directly and actively concerned therewith in another than the deistic sense, we must allow that his creative activity progresses with time and suffers itself to be conditioned by the creatures already existing in space — always of course in harmony with the order of his counsel.<sup>1</sup> Were the world merely a circle of existences mutually conditioning and eternally reacting on each other, it might be enough to limit God's relation to it to one single, self-same act. In that case, however, we must either deny that anything either arises into, or passes out of, existence; or treat both birth and death as mere seeming. Those who place the essence of the world in its fundamental substances, — whether we call them atoms, molecules, or otherwise — and who are indifferent to everything that constitutes it the *Κόσμος*, may be willing to pursue this course. But if we hold that the world has had a progressive history of its own;

<sup>1</sup> This distinction between the volition of a world in general, and the active, creative volition of a real world, is regularly disregarded by the old theologians. Especially is this the case when they try to rebut the charge that their doctrine of a creation in time, — that is, non-eternal, introduces change, the change in particular, from rest to activity into God, by appealing to his eternal counsel or will to create. As though it were a new thing not for God himself, but solely for the world, that it should pass from non-entity to entity, from ideal to actual existence. They reason as though this passage were not traceable to special divine activity, but as though the eternal idea of the world could have given itself reality without him.



if we attach the least importance to the *form* of the world ; and if we refuse to exclude God therefrom, feeling that we should thus be excluding him from that which, having ideal significance, is of chief moment, we shall be compelled to acknowledge that mundane successions and changes do cast their reflection into the divine activity.

§ 8. *This Identity and Motionlessness still less Compatible with the Existence of the World of Humanity.*— We arrive still more plainly at the result in question, when we consider the words, “ In him we live and move and have our being,” in connection with those other words, “ I will dwell in them and walk in them.”

(1) *Man as an Individual.*— Man was not created to be independent of God after attaining being outside of his Creator. Even the world rests eternally in God as its centre. It has, indeed, actual being no less truly than God himself. But why ? Because God the primal being continues to be the principle that wills its being and sustains and encompasses its existence. True, however, as this is, man is also destined to become an independent causality of a secondary sort and not merely to be enveloped by, and to rest in, the divine power as a child rests in the bosom of its mother. Indeed, a being posited by another, and absolutely destitute of self-activity, totally lacking power or force of its own, utterly passive, would be dead, would be nothing, would lack reality ; so that the divine causality must be denied the name of causality, must be denied to have caused anything, if it had not produced a being capable of maintaining and manifesting itself. In positing living beings God posits beings that are self-positing ; effects that are themselves efficient ; acts that are themselves active. And so far from limiting his own causality by conferring actual causative power on that which is not he himself, this very self-limitation, as it is termed, which in reality is a manifestation of his power, and a widening of his dominion, first constitutes him in the full sense an operative efficient cause.

The highest causes in creation are those which are free,

whose destiny it is, in a moral respect, to posit themselves, and to act with liberty. Now precisely because God endows these causes richly, lets them go free, and constitutes their freedom a factor in their self-formation, therefore are they the highest revelations of his omnipotent causality. It is not his will, however, to stand to them in the relation either of a purely determining force or of a mere objective law. On the contrary, as they live and move and have their being *in him*, whether they will or no, so does he desire to dwell and walk *in them*, — in them, to wit, as beings who will and know themselves to be such as according to God's eternal idea they ought to be. Now without participating *in* God, man can never realize the idea formed of him *by* God ; nor can God dwell in man, unless the susceptibility of man to God has been developed into full actuality. If the divine relation to man were merely that of a law or of an eternally and absolutely determining force, we should have said all we need to say, if we predicated of his power, unchangeableness, and holiness. But as man only gradually, historically grows to be such that God can *dwell* and *live* in him, it is clear that God, so far as he makes his dwelling in man, must also have an historical life in the world ; that he must come into contact with time, and that his life must acquire an ever wider and wider expansion ; not, indeed, in the manner of a natural force, but by continuous deeds regulated by the susceptibility of the individuals to whom they relate. To say that God's activity remains ever the same, and that any difference in the results arises from differences in the world itself, is essentially Pelagianistic ; and we must, therefore, teach that God produces changes in the world by working upon it in different ways ; in other words, we must relinquish the position to which these criticisms refer.

(2) *Man as part of a Moral Cosmos.* — If, in view of the natural cosmos, with its gradual development in time, — notwithstanding that this development wears the appearance rather of a revolving cycle than of a straight line, — we are compelled to represent the one volition of creation as being

broken up, so to speak, into a series of acts, teleologically connected, but each marked by some new feature ; in other words, of succession and change casting their shadow into God ; how much more necessity is there for assuming a multiplicity of divine acts in the world of humanity, in the ethical cosmos. This, it is true, is the arena of the activity of the highest earthly causalities, to wit, of free agents ; but it does not, therefore, stand less in need of divine acts than nature. On the contrary, *free* agents need the divine activity above all others ; and such activity is a pledge of their dignity. Man is the only creature capable of loving intercourse with God ; but being capable of it he needs it to a degree that we find in no other sphere ; and such loving intercourse is inconceivable save on the basis of *acts* of the divine love. The world of humanity is intended to form a moral cosmos, of which nature, including also human nature, is a preliminary condition. This destiny can only be realized in and through a free history ; and the essential condition of the healthy progress of such a history is that God communicate and interweave himself ever more and more completely with it. And what is this but to say that God lives in the world a historical life, — a life conditioned to some extent by man's use of his freedom ? As the possibility of such influence on the part of man is grounded in the divine consent, we may, of course, quite as correctly say that God conditions himself as that he is conditioned. It is when we contemplate the world of free powers and the destiny they are called to fulfil, that we first see clearly that God could not have brought into existence the world of his counsel by one omnipotent word spoken at the beginning. For if the work assigned to these powers could and would have been accomplished without them what was the use of their freedom ? But it could not be accomplished without them. Supposing then God's action were restricted to his first creation and subsequent sustainment of the great complex of nature, everything that comes to pass must be as much the work of nature as of God. In this case freedom

would lack the nourishment necessary to its vigor, even if it were not swallowed up by the iron necessity of nature. If a free being is to be able to maintain its freedom against mere nature, it must not only be derived from above, but also have God as its constant and faithful nourisher. Nay, more, although man is absolutely dependent on God every moment of his existence, mere omnipotence can never bring him into the relation which he was destined to hold to his Creator. This relation, as we have already observed, is one of love; and the love in whose service omnipotence is wielded can never be content with a love enkindled by an irresistible determination. We must judge, therefore, that the divine omnipotence by the mightiness of its working brings into existence free beings capable of resisting its will; because, unless they are able freely to resist, they will not be able freely to surrender themselves; and unless they freely surrender themselves, they cannot be regarded by God as a new and valuable good. If we acknowledge this to be the nature of the freedom conferred on man, and assume that God designs to establish a free, ethical cosmos, a cosmos of love, a divine family; we must also concede the necessity of his entering into a relation of reciprocity to man, for love without reciprocity does not deserve the name.

If we deny that human freedom involves the possibility of resisting the ethical will of God, and by consequence assume that that highest good, love, might have been implanted in man by mere power, we shall have to allow that Adam might have entered on existence animated by complete and perfect love. For why should not the Creator at once confer the best of all gifts on his creature? There is but one explanation of the helpless position and ethical poverty of new-born man, and of his subjection to the law of gradual development, to wit, that over him and his being neither divine omnipotence nor divine love holds undivided sway; but his own freedom is a co-operative factor, and his own acts condition both the operations and communications of God.

There is profound truth in the distinction drawn by Luther,

Calvin, and Schleiermacher between the productive and the passive will of God; for God does not at once produce the good which he commands and constitutes our goal. Unfortunately, however, the distinction was inconsistent with the old doctrine of the nature of God which they taught.

By creating man a free, that he might be a moral, being, God has brought into existence a being, in a certain sense of like nature with himself, which as such is capable of resisting him. Such resistance can never be overcome by mere force. Indeed, God would contradict himself were he to attempt a compulsory vanquishment of human opposition. Having made man free, he must suffer him to use his freedom, even when the use is abuse. He may annihilate *him*; but he cannot will his existence as *free*, whilst annihilating his freedom. This is the secret of our immense responsibility for the use of freedom. Here is the root of the sense of guilt.

If what has now been advanced is true, it is very clear that many current, or once current, views of the divine omniscience and decrees, of the divine relation to past and future, of the divine omnipresence and immensity, must undergo considerable modifications. Let us briefly indicate the scope of these modifications.

§ 4. *The Divine Omniscience.*—There must be an element of growth in the divine omniscience. If there are free beings in the world, there must also be free determinations, which owe their *possibility*, indeed, to God, but their *actuality* to man. If this be the case, though God may have a prior knowledge of these determinations as possibilities in virtue of his eternal knowledge of himself, his self-knowledge cannot include the knowledge thereof as actualities. His knowledge of human acts as actual occurrences must therefore, in some sense or other, be gradually acquired, as they pass out from the sphere of the possible, constituted by the divine will, into the sphere of the actual, of which the human will is a determining factor.

§ 5. *The Divine Counsels.*—It follows from what was advanced in the last paragraph that the divine decrees, so

far as they relate not merely to the general goal of the world, but also to particular persons, cannot be so simple as they are frequently represented. In and from himself God derives merely the knowledge of his own volitions and of the innumerable possibilities open to the free beings whose existence he wills ; the knowledge of the possibilities actually realized by these free beings he draws, of course, from history. Without this latter knowledge how could he decide on the decree which in each case finds realization. The knowledge of the free acts of the creature is, as it were, the woof in the warp of the divine decrees. We are quite justified, notwithstanding, in speaking of such decrees ; for, in the first place, as God knew all the possibilities open to the free world which he created, nothing can happen contrary to his expectation ; and, in the second place, he decides on that which is necessary to the attainment by the world of its goal, with constant reference to the free acts of his creatures. Accordingly, an interaction takes place between God and man ; and the divine decrees are the outcome of this interaction. This is the only true position, whether we accept or deny the divine *fore-knowledge*. At the same time, we must be careful not to confound God's knowledge of the acts of free beings with our empirical knowledge. Our knowledge is passive, whereas his is grounded on his own volition of the possibilities open to freedom, — which could not be possibilities apart from his will, — and as such must of course precede their realization. In a word, we must recognize two species of knowledge in God ; one unconditioned, directly and eternally drawn from himself ; the other conditioned by the free action of the causalities which he has brought into existence.

§ 6. *Past, Present, and Future.* — Is there for God neither past nor future, but solely one eternal, identical *now* ? We cannot accept this position ; for, apart from the consideration that eternity would thus be set in opposition to past and future, and as such acquire the character of time, on such a supposition God would know neither past nor future as such, that is, as they actually are ; his knowledge would therefore

be to this extent inaccurate. To evade the difficulty by saying that whatever was essential in the past is still as present as ever, and that the divine knowledge relates to this essential element, would be to limit its compass, and, strictly speaking, necessitate the reply: What will be essential in the future is now present; the divine knowledge of the future relates solely to what is in this sense essential; consequently, not only is there no foreknowledge of what is future; but there is nothing future worth knowing; in other words, we should be landed in an anti-teleological, docetical estimate of the real world.

The truth in the position to which we are referring is, that to God the past is so unforgotten and the future so clear that each is known as though it were present—the past, however, as past, the future as future. In other words, God knows the past and future as not present. If this were not so, how could he know human knowledge, in which past, present, and future play so important a part? We must, accordingly, allow that the form of the divine knowledge is constantly undergoing change; for present objects become past, and future become present. This involves movement and change in God's knowledge, and implies that it is interwoven with history and time.

These may seem very unimportant points; but our recognition of the living relation of God to the world is essentially dependent on them. Neither intellect nor heart can be satisfied with a view of God which represents him as remaining eternally the same for past, present, and future, instead of his position and feelings assuming a form correspondent to man's character. On that view he would be little more than an eternal law, once for all condemning the evil and approving the good. We shall have to go farther than this, even, if we merely regard him as the living law; for as such he must surely be supposed, in individual cases, actively to interfere with the present; whereas, if his relation to the present is identical with that to the past, which cannot be changed, and to the future, which is not yet real,

we must either assume the present to be as unalterable as the past, or, in the manner of Deism and Pelagianism, find the principle of its onward movement entirely and exclusively in itself. God's relation to the world would then be an essentially deistic one, however apparently exalted. We must, accordingly, conclude that though he has eternally determined what he will do; and though his knowledge of the present never dates from to-day, he still lives in the present, and suffers himself to be influenced and partially conditioned by it.

§ 7. *The Divine Omnipresence.* — The old theologians were undoubtedly right in teaching that God's "adessentia" is co-extensive with the world, and involves "operatio." For, first, the divine idea is a perennial factor in the actual world; and as it is eternally in God, God must be eternally with it. Further, with the divine conception of the idea was conjoined the volition to give it reality; and though, as we have seen above, this reality includes a certain power of independent activity, God's presence is absolutely necessary to its subsistence; he is the eternal ground both of its possibility and actuality. Whilst allowing this, however, we must also maintain that God is present in different parts of the world in different ways; in other words, that his omnipresence is marked by change, or, at all events, by variety. He is present in inorganic nature in one way, in organic nature in another way; so with regard to man in general, and to good and bad men in particular. In himself, indeed, he remains the same. But his being *for* the world is not identical with his being *in* it. Now, unless we reduce this to mere action from a distance, or reduce the variety that is in the world — that is, the world itself — to mere seeming, or dualistically assume that there are differences in its degree of susceptibility to the eternally identical divine activity which have not originated in the will of God; we must recognize the fact of differences in his omnipresence. The divine omnipresence, therefore, is not to be represented as monotonous extension, but, like the divine activity, is char-



acterized by infinite variety. It is of one kind in objects just arising into being, of another kind in those which are passing away; although, under one form or another, it encompasses all existence. Not merely does the world live and move and have its being in him, but he also lives in the world. For this reason the physical world is never a limit for him. Space exists, indeed, for him, but not as a limit. It is a limit solely so far as it is filled — filled, that is, by things which are a limit to each other. God, who sustains all things, is present and works in each in the manner conformed to the character eternally assigned to it in the divine idea. This, indeed, is the ultimate root of their differences; and as it is not his will that anything should be at the same time itself and the opposite of itself, as on any other view it would be, his “*adessentia operativa*” is marked by as great variety as the creation itself. But as there exists no limit for his being and operations, so also is there no separation between his being and operations in one creature and his being and operations in another creature. On the contrary, all his various modes of being and operation have their centre of unity in himself.

§ 8. *The Divine Immensity.* — God is omnipresent in the entire actual world. Empty space, however, is not actual world; it is merely the boundary line of the real creation, which is not absolutely immeasurable. Empty space is, in fact, simply and solely the limit of what is real and the beginning of what is possible. In the sense just described, therefore, we cannot speak of an omnipresence in empty space; for an “*adessentia operativa*” in the domain of the merely possible is an absurdity. Instead, therefore, of representing the divine immensity as infinite extension in space, seeing that space is not a primal existence outside of God, we must rest contented with attributing to him an inner, infinite creative power, that contains within itself an unexhausted fulness of possibilities, which have not yet acquired actuality, and which do not need all to have reality at any one moment. This domain of possibility is the proper essence

of space when considered prior to and apart from the existence of objects that actually occupy space; in other words, of ideal, as opposed to empirical, space. On the other hand, the entire real world, not being infinite, but bounded by the domain of the merely possible, is sustained and pervaded by the divine omnipresence. It is, consequently, an error to speak of the omnipresence as a necessity of the infinite φύσις of God — involved, that is, in the divine immensity. God is, indeed, everywhere present throughout the entire domain of the actual, for reality is inconceivable apart from his being and action; consequently, to say that a reality exists, is to say that God is present in it. But as realities everywhere owe their being to the *will* of God, so also must the divine presence be dependent on the divine will. In other words, the omnipresence of God is a matter of volition, not of physical necessity.

(To be continued).