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THE

BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD.

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

III. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE RECONCILIATION OF VITALITY AND IMMUTABILITY.

§ 9. *Introductory Remarks.* — Religion and science alike call for the reconciliation of the divine unchangeableness and the divine vitality. Until the two are seen to be not only reconcilable with, but also necessary to, each other, no mere eclecticism, no mere addition of antitheses, will preserve us from falling now into the one extreme, then into the other; now into mere immutability, then into mere vitality; now into pantheism, then into deism. What is needed is a higher principle, which by combining both vitality and immutability shall enable us to retain our hold on the truth and eschew the errors into which there is constant danger of falling.

The notion is very current, indeed, that man is necessarily doomed to inadequate, or even incorrect, representations of God, because in his religious intercourse with his Creator he cannot but reduce him to finitude and conceive him in the likeness of man. Whereas logical thought compels us to cast aside what is added by pious emotion, and that which remains is more like the *caput mortuum* of an abstract idea than the God of religion. But to accept an essential contradiction between the real God and the God of faith, between knowledge and the heart, would involve the ruin not only of religion,

but also of science; for how vain and restricted must the efforts of science be, if it stand in necessary antagonism to the most essential — yea, central — element of man's spiritual organization. It is, accordingly, one of our fundamental moral duties to hold fast by the belief in the essential harmony of intellect and heart, of man's thought of God and what God veritably is; that is, to regard apparent dissonances as the fruit of sin, and eradicable with their root. And what is this but to say that Christianity has in principle redeemed us from these dissonances? Such confidence becomes alike the Christian and the theologian. The fundamental fact of Christianity — that is, the incarnation of God — is the matter-of-fact solution of the problem of the union of immutability and vitality. The likeness of man to God is not merely confirmed by the God-man, but brought to full reality; and it cannot have full reality without including a knowledge of God. Humanity in union with Christ knows God truly; and, so far from desiring to keep this knowledge to himself, the God-man yearns for men to whom he can reveal what he knows by the Spirit. As the Christian church believes Christ to be not merely a new and higher, but the final, complete, consummating revelation of God, it is right to utilize this article of its faith in the *locus de deo*, and inquire whether he who revealed the Father's heart cannot also furnish us with the charm by which to break through the magic circle of the natural life with alternations between deism and pantheism. The depths of God, indeed, are unsearchable, and the recognition of this unsearchableness must ever form part of our knowledge of God. No theology can be healthy which overlooks the distinction between faith and vision. But this is not inconsistent with the requirement of Christianity that we believe in the possibility of a reconciliation between the heart and the intellect. Indeed, the apostle Paul teaches us that the germ of such a reconciliation is implanted in the hearts of Christians, when he speaks of "the eyes of our hearts being enlightened" (Eph. i. 18) by faith. The great aim of Christian theology should be to give

ever clearer and more scientific expression to that which faith contains within itself, to that which the eye of the believing soul sees, in order that we may arrive increasingly at a doctrine of God which by harmoniously combining all the heights and depths of the divine nature shall be fitted to cast to the moles and the bats as intellectual idols all unchristian views. Surely the Spirit of the Son which we receive must be able, on the one hand, to free our minds from every element of false anthropomorphism, and to show us where and how far it impedes the divine life in our souls; whilst, on the other hand, he will teach us to recognize those anthropomorphisms on which the religious mind may and must retain its hold, as something divinely rational. As Jacobi said, "God theomorphized when he made man, and therefore man anthropomorphizes when he conceives God."

§ 10. *The True Seat of the Divine Immutability.* — God is not unchangeable, as we have seen, in his relation to time and space, in his knowledge and volition of the world, in his counsels. On the contrary, in all these respects, he undergoes movement and change, and suffers himself to be conditioned, — without detriment, however, to that immutability which is required by religion and science. What, then, is the essence, what is the centre of the divine unchangeableness which we are compelled to ascribe to God, and which is the norm — nay, more, the source — of the changes whose shadow is cast into him by the world? Wherein consists, further, the divine vitality? Not in his taking upon himself the "fate of finitude," not in his being or becoming a mere potence which restlessly gives itself reality. A vitality purchased at the price of such a self-finification would be the opposite of the absolutely actual vitality which we need; it would be partial slumber. Where, then, shall we seek the essence, the centre, of the divine vitality?

We answer, the divine immutability and the divine vitality have one and the same centre. This centre we must seek not in the being and life of God as such, — for these in themselves are but physical categories which logically con-

duct us alternately either to deism or pantheism, — but in his ethical nature. His moral nature is the true copula of eternal rest and eternal motion, of unchangeable self-sameness and of the most intense vitality. Here we have, on the one hand, the irremovable norm of that which is eternally abiding; on the other, the principle of the changes by which the spiritual life of God is capable of being affected.

§ 11. *God Ethical in Himself.* — Is God ethical in himself? And if so, how far does such a conception of his nature secure both his immutability and vitality?

We must here touch upon the old and yet ever new Platonic question, Is the good good because God wills it? or does he will it because it is good? Let us consider,

(1) The first alternative, that is, the good is good because God wills it. Those who, like Duns Scotus, take this first view, say that good owes its goodness solely to the divine *beneplacitum*, to the divine sovereignty. The omnipotence of God is the source of the ethical, and if God had willed he might, without self-contradiction, have constituted morally good the opposite of what we now deem to be good. On this supposition, God would, of course, not be ethical in himself; the ethical would lie, as it were, outside the divine.

The present is not the place to follow out this view into all its consequences; but still it may be well to call attention to one or two of the dangers which it involves. It is, first, incompatible with true gospel freedom; the root of which, in contrast to mere legalism, is insight into the inner essential goodness of the good — an insight which is of course impossible if good is good simply because it pleased the *liberum arbitrium* of God that it should be so. Secondly, the apparent elevation of God above the ethical thus secured is in reality an abasement under it; and the moral idea becomes the legitimate object of scepticism. Further, if the will of God is absolutely undetermined by anything but itself, it is mere caprice. That good is good and evil is evil is then pure accident; and consequently both alike are indifferent to God.

(2) The second alternative, namely, that God wills the good because it is good. By accepting this alternative we should secure the inner goodness of the good; the good would then be recognized as something absolute in itself; but we should also fall into new, or rather, rightly considered, the old dangers. If God wills the good because it is good, its goodness must be independent of him. God, therefore, might be God without the good; or, in other words, the good or the ethical would be assigned a place outside the divine essence. We should thus fall back substantially on the first alternative; for if God might be God without willing the good, the good must be something non-essential to him, and in endeavoring to account for its origin we should be tempted to recur again to the unsatisfactory explanation given by Scotus.

(3) The only course remaining open to us is to assign the good an original primal position in God himself. It is neither a mere law above God, nor a mere something sanctioned by God for the world, but a constitutive element of the very nature of God himself, without which he would not be God. God must be defined as ethical in himself. He is the primal principle of all morality. This follows, indeed, from the bare idea of the ethical as possessed of essential and absolute value; for if conceived at all, it cannot be otherwise conceived. And it is impossible to suppose that anything possessed of absolute worth should not form an original factor of the being of God.

§ 12. *The Mode of conceiving God as Ethical.* — How, then, shall we conceive of the ethical in God? And how is God to be conceived as a moral being? Is he ethical because it is his *will* to be ethical? or because it is his nature? These are obviously, under another form, the alternatives touched on in the last paragraph.

One thing must unquestionably be taken for granted: The ethical as possessed of absolute dignity and worth lays claim to a real and not merely an ideal existence in God; in other words, it claims to form part of the divine being, and to exert

an all-determining influence on the divine life. An existence consisting merely in its recognition by the divine mind as true in itself — an existence in thought — would not suffice. For mathematical truths, indeed, it is a matter of indifference whether they have real or merely ideal existence. The mathematical circle, for example, is all it claims to be, whether it exist really, or merely in thought. But to ethical truth, though not less essentially true than mathematical truth, it is essential that it attain reality, that it have veritable being. It would seem, therefore, that God must be termed good, because it is his nature to be good, and because his will and life, yea, he himself, is determined by his nature.

At this point, however, we are met by the just objection that it is essential to the ethical to be the result of volition; it can nowhere have reality *immediately*, that is, without the intervention of the will. In other words, though a being may be called a moral being in virtue of its moral capacities, it cannot really possess morality, it cannot *be* moral, — that is, it cannot be termed good, — without first having willed to be so. The ethical, therefore, cannot possibly have an absolute and real existence in God immediately, but solely on the ground of being eternally willed by the divine will. Strictly speaking, we can form no conception of innate human virtue; nor can the divine goodness be the mere outflow of a good nature. Were this the case, divine goodness would be a fatalistic necessity, instead of the product of free volition. God would no longer be the God of love, whose image it is our destiny to become.

And yet this is not the whole truth. In some sense or other, the ethical must precede, as well as be the result of volition. Unless this be recognized, we fall back into the error of Scotus. A will whose volitions are in no sense determined by the ethical — and in such case it must plainly have a prior existence — would be mere arbitrariness, and a will that wills the good from mere caprice can never acquire the character of goodness.

Whilst, therefore, it is wrong to represent the divine

nature as the sole primary source of the ethical in God, it is equally false to trace it exclusively to his will. Whether God be viewed exclusively as ethical substance or as ethical will, is a matter of indifference, as far as the result is concerned. In either case, we remain fixed in the category of the physical, instead of advancing on to that of the ethical. In some way or other, therefore, necessity and freedom, will and nature, must be combined.

But how is it possible to unite two apparently opposite things? That deity must be conceived as the absolute realization of the ethical we are convinced; but our inquiry into the *how* has thus far only taught us, first, that a mere ethical nature is a *contradictio in adjecto;* and secondly, that it is inconsistent with the idea and essence of the ethical to trace it solely to the will. The two aspects in question — to wit, the eternal production of the ethical by the divine will, and the equally eternal presence of the ethical in the divine essence — can only be combined on the supposition that the one ethical principle has in him several distinct and yet closely connected modes of existence.

Let us now examine and endeavor to establish this position — that God is a moral being, first, by necessity of nature; secondly, by his own free act; and thirdly, that on the ground of both together he is eternally self-conscious, free, and holy love.

§ 13. *God as Ethical by Necessity of Nature.* — The ethical in its character of necessity cannot be supposed to fall outside of God; for inasmuch as there cannot be a law of the good above God, he must be the law himself. Nor can this ethical necessity exist in God merely in the form of a categorical imperative, in the form of mere obligation without actual being, in the form of a necessary thought without vehicle; but must be an eternal mode of the divine being — nay, more, its primary mode. If God is to be conceived as ethical, we cannot begin with the divine will as free. Taking freedom alone, completely unconditioned and undetermined by moral necessity, as our starting-point, we

shall arrive neither at that which is good in itself and truly necessary, nor at the volition thereof; for such freedom is caprice, and caprice can only generate caprice; whereas volition is good solely when its object is the good because it is good, and not evil; and that which is in itself ethically necessary and possessed of absolute inherent worth cannot be dependent on caprice. We have no alternative, therefore, but to commence with the view of God as morally good by necessity of being or nature. In other words, God cannot but be morally good; the ethical is in him a holy and necessary power, which neither can nor will renounce itself. This first mode of the being of God as ethical we designate, in analogy with the usage of the church and the New Testament, the *Father*. Such is the aspect under which the Scriptures set forth the Father even relatively to the world of revelation. He is the foundation of all ethical necessity; the law of conscience and the law of Sinai alike point back to him; even the Son himself recognizes in the Father his ethical δεῖ.

§ 14. *God as Ethical by His Own Free Choice.* — But this necessity under which God lies of being morally good is not to be conceived as a fatality hostile to freedom; nor does it give a complete account of the moral constitution of deity. It must not be forgotten that we are speaking of *ethical* necessity, which demands that the good be actual, and therefore points of itself to freedom as the only adequate form under which it can be realized. It is not God's will to have an ethical being of which he is in no sense the producing cause, and which works, as it were, fatalistically, like the laws of nature. The ethical necessity which he himself is cannot but will the free; because freedom alone can give to the necessarily good — the good in and of itself — the form of existence which it seeks. Moral necessity is a lover of liberty, and goodness has no pleasure in any realization of itself. Naturalism in representing the actual will of God as directly and simply determined by a nature of which he is not himself the originating cause is the death of the ethical. This, in fact, becomes clear enough the moment

we speak, as we then must, of God being and cherishing love by natural necessity. So that whilst we are compelled to confess, on the one hand, that God would not be ethical at all if he were not so by a necessity of his nature, we are equally compelled, on the other hand, to acknowledge that he cannot be content to have an ethical nature of which he is not the eternal, living, free cause. Without freedom there is no love. After the analogy of the New Testament and of the church, we assign this second free mode of the existence of the ethical in God to the *Son;* the Son being the divine principle of the kingdom of freedom and of the domain of the historical — the principle of movement on the ground of a given basis. In the world, as truly as in God, ethical necessity is the condition of all genuine freedom. The incarnate Son described himself as making free (John viii. 32), and as the Son of the house, in distinction from the servants or bondsmen.

There now remains the question how these two apparently contradictory modes of existence — the necessary and the free — can be combined without either being sacrificed to the other.

§ 15. *The Union of the Ethical Antitheses of Necessity and Freedom.* — With its primary mode of existence as a necessity alone, the ethical cannot be satisfied; its very character as ethical, and its consequent essential distinction from mere nature impels it to seek a second mode of existence — a mode of existence originating and rooted in freedom. This second form of existence, though apparently the direct antithesis of the first, is in reality the only truly adequate form of the ethical, the only form that fully expresses its essence (*χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ*, Heb. i. 3). It is true, freedom considered in itself is merely the possibility on the ground of which the ethical can eternally give itself actuality. Now, as it is impossible to suppose that freedom can be destined to realize the good of which it is the possibility, to be filled with the good as the content of which it is the form, by physical necessity, we must assume that

primal freedom — to wit, the possibility of good — derives material freedom — that is, actual good — from the conscious action of the will; in a word, that freedom produces the good not by physical necessity, but by spiritual volition. Though divine freedom is not mere unethical caprice, our security for the attainment of the eternal result aimed at would be but slight, if we were to suppose the divine will to be determined solely by the knowledge of what is ethically binding and necessary. If the good instead of being as truly posited by as posited for the free will, or if freedom did not recognize and will the necessary as its own true essence, as its own true self, the good would always remain for freedom a foreign, an alien element, to which it voluntarily subordinates itself. But if freedom recognize itself, its own proper essence, in the unchanging objective ethical idea, it is possible that what is ethically necessary should attain free, joyous, and loving realization. This union of ethical necessity and ethical freedom is realized in the Godhead by the *Holy Spirit*, whose office it is to show that the one involves the other, and by reconciling the antitheses to constitute the ethical personality of God an eternal absolute reality.[1]

What has been now advanced will suffice to show that the ethical, so far from involving the alternative of unchangeableness or vitality, really combines both unchangeableness and vitality; that it cannot have the absolutely real existence in God which is eternally its due, unless it be both a thing of necessity and a thing of freedom. If this be granted, and if we further allow that both exist in eternal concord and union in God, a fixed point is secured outside and above the arena of the conflict eternally waged between pantheism and deism, and such a combination is effected of the truths for which each darkly yearned that we can overcome the aimless vitality of the one and the rigid lifelessness of the other.

God, therefore, is both an unchangeable and a living God, that is, from an ethical point of view. On the one hand, his

[1] It is scarcely necessary to warn our readers that we have no intention of exhaustively discussing the doctrine of the Trinity in this connection.

ethical unchangeableness requires eternal vitality; that is, the necessity he is under of being morally good involves the action of freedom; on the other hand, his vitality, that is, his freedom, is inwardly and essentially connected with ethical necessity, ethical unchangeableness.

Let us examine these two points more closely in order to convince ourselves that the ethical conception of God secures both the unchangeableness and the vitality required by religion and science.

§ 16. *The Ethical Conception of God secures the Divine Unchangeableness.* — The apostle John tells us "God is love" (1 John iv. 8). The ethical in God is God in the Godhead. Rightly viewed all arguments for the existence of God converge in, and are preludes to, the ontological argument. But this argument cannot acquire full force till it is treated ethically; for the ethical although neither a merely physical, cosmological, nor logical necessity, is still a necessary conception of the human mind, and once conceived is necessarily conceived as having real existence, because being possessed in itself of absolute worth it alone has its ground and end in itself, it alone is its own absolute end. The true meaning and true root of aseity are first seen in connection with the ethical conception of God. God wills and posits himself eternally, because being love, he so fully takes up that which is in the highest sense necessary into his will, that his own freedom becomes completely indentified with moral necessity. Whatever else may be, or be conceived to be, in God exists in him for the sake of love; so that not only is the divine goodness (as Plato taught) the pledge of the stability and harmony of all things *outside* of God, but also the supreme absolute pledge of the stability and harmony of everything *in* God, of everything that can be described as an attribute of his being. The so-called physical attributes of God do not exist for their own sake; as though their being and actuality were an inherent and absolute necessity. In God there is that which is supra-ordinate and subordinate; his ethical nature is supra-ordinate, his physical attributes

are subordinate, are meant to serve and obey the ethical nature. In like manner, the so-called logical attributes also exist not for their own sake, but for the sake of the absolute love of God and its eternal process of self-generation. In one word, the divine attributes have the end of their existence not in themselves but in love, and are designed to be the instruments of its will.

We see thus that the ethical conception of God leaves room for vitality and movement; nay more, that it even permits change to cast its reflection into the divine life, provided only that it remain ethically one and unchangeable. As to his moral nature God must remain unharmed and identical; nay more, that nature must have existed from eternity in full actuality; it never can have been either partially or wholly a mere potence; in other words, the inner personal divine realization of the ethical must always have had, and can never cease to have, a continuous and identical, not an intermittent existence. In himself God can never either be or become the mere potence of love. Neither in his φύσις nor in his logical nature is there anything that could give rise to such a self-depotentiation (Selbstdepotenzirung). If it took place at all, therefore, it must be the work of love itself. But how could love turn against itself? — love which is the supreme good, and which constitutes the proper absolute essence of God? How can love be moved by love to give up that which is highest, even itself? To affirm this would be equivalent to saying on the one hand, that love which can only be conceived as an actuality, is the absolute good — that it is *sensu eminenti* its own end, apart from which everything else would be tottering and uncertain. On the other hand, that it is possible for love to cease regarding itself as the highest end and aim, and to give itself up, at all events for a time, in order to become the instrument and servant of love. *But if I destroy the things which I build up I condemn myself.* Such a self-surrender on the part of absolute actual love, endeavor as we may to represent it as the highest pitch of love, would be essentially unethical.[1] Love that could cease

[1] Dr. Dorner has here the Kenosists in view.

loving for love's sake, even though only for a moment, would be no love. Such an idea of love has its proper place in pantheistic systems; for knowing nothing of true love, they can easily allow the possibility of a potential love, of a sleep of love, of a self-destruction of love. But the God of the Old and New Testaments bears a different character. He maintains his ethical nature intact; he is righteous to treat and guard that which possesses absolute worth as such. Self-maintenance or self-love so far from being egoism, is necessarily immanent in self-devotion or self-communication. The honor of God requires this righteous self-maintenance. Hence the stress laid on the honor of Jehovah by the Jewish religion, whose central feature was the idea of righteousness. The fiery zeal with which Jehovah guards his holiness and honor, and in the service of which he employs his power and might (Ex. xx. 5) is in no sense egoistic, for it is in no sense enkindled by what may be termed exclusively divine interests. In maintaining and asserting himself, in jealously guarding his own honor, in condemning and punishing those who despise his holiness, — as Jehovah by virtue of his ethical aseity does, — he pays the honor which is its due to the holy and the good in general; for he himself originally is true holiness, the necessarily moral. Not that they can exist alone in him; on the contrary, it is the nature of the holy and good to take up their abode wherever a seat is open to them. But the free-will of God has so absolutely laid hold of and identified itself with goodness and holiness that his assertion and love of himself are the assertion of the majesty of holiness and goodness in general.

From this it appears that the absolute love of God is primarily centered in itself; it is self-conscious; it possesses itself; it wills itself. Having goes before giving; self-possession conditions self-communication. None but a personal, self-conscious being can love; no being has perfect love unless its volition of itself is the volition of the good. Some maintain that to speak of God as a person is to make him finite; we on the contrary maintain that the personality of

God is the only adequate form of the existence of that which is everywhere and essentially good; that it is the good expressed in will and consciousness without which, in fact, good is not ethical good.

§ 17. *The Ethical Conception of God secures the Divine Vitality.* — The self-maintenance or righteousness, in other words, the *true ethical immutability* which we have shown to be necessary to God as Love, as a moral being, instead of excluding, includes self-communication, that is, vitality. We have seen above that in himself as ethical absolutely spiritual vitality, God is neither mere law nor mere substance or nature. The same thing is clear also from his relation to the idea of the world. His absolute ethical self-possession, self-maintenance, self-assertion, keeps indeed intact the eternal distinction between God and all that is not God, — the divine righteousness is the bulwark against Pantheism. At the same time, however, we must remember that his self-maintenance relates also to himself in his character as Love, in his character as a self-communicating being. His love of himself being identical with the love of holiness and goodness as such or in general, and not the love thereof merely because it is his particular holiness and goodness, there is no trace in him of that jealousy (φθόνος) which heathens attributed to their gods, because they neither knew nor believed in the divine self-sufficiency and absoluteness. The jealousy of God is jealousy for the good, and relates to his own personality solely because it is the one absolute form under which the good has an actual existence. It is the will of God to be and work for this universal good, for this holy life of love; in loving himself, therefore, whilst self-love secures him against the loss of self, he seeks the universal prevalence of the good; in other words, he desires that other beings should participate in him and his blessedness. The self-love or self-maintenance of God is the very principle which permits and impels his love to will the existence of a world of personal beings which may be the objects of its self-communication. It does this because within the Godhead itself

there are no objects towards which the divine love can in the strict sense go forth in full purity and disinterestedness. The glory of love is to give where it cannot expect to receive (Luke vi. 3); whereas in God himself absolute love receives an absolute return. Not that in communicating himself to the creature God in any sense loses or gives up himself; for it is the nature of true love to be with itself whilst it is in other beings, and to be in other beings whilst it is with itself.

§ 18. *The Harmony of this View of the Divine Nature with the Teachings of Scripture.* — The Old Testament lays great stress on the unchangeableness of God, but it is very far from furnishing any warrant for reducing him, after the manner of the old systems of theology, to the immovable, absolutely simple Neo-Platonic ὄν or to the Ἐστώς of certain religions. It treats the other and opposite aspect of his being — the aspect which brings him into contact with the world and interweaves him with its history — to wit, his vitality, as intimately concerning both his personality and his honor. God is not merely the immutable amid the changes of time; he is also the Lord of the ages, acting in and moving through time and space (*Βασιλεὺς τῶν Αἰώνων*, 1 Tim. i. 17). His name, Jehovah, teaches us that he stands in a living relation to men and their history. He is not merely exalted above, but holds a positive relation to time and space.

Even the world in general which God has called into existence possesses worth in his eyes; it is to him a "good" (Gen. i. 31) which he had not before. His relation to the world created is different from his relation to the world of his purpose; his creative activity is one, his sustaining activity another (Gen. ii. 1–4). He gave the earth to the children of men, and till Christ came the history of Israel was the centre of the history of man. But the history of Israel was the arena of a divine history in which God was the actor, and whose design was to bring down heaven to earth. This would seem, indeed, to be unnecessary, if God be omnipresent;

but we must remember that notwithstanding his veritable omnipresence the earth is still in an important sense merely his foot-stool, whereas heaven is his throne and sanctuary (Isa. li. 16). The divine acts recorded in the Old Testament are as far as possible from producing the impression that God himself has always been the same, and that any apparent change in his volition or activity, is the result of changes in man. On the contrary, unmistakeably one and irremovable as is his goal, his methods of reaching are marked by variety and even by elasticity. God adapts his redemptive means to the changing needs of man. The divine self-consistency is not that of a natural mechanism, of a blind natural law, but winds its way through apparent inconsistencies. Human freedom is permitted to exercise a conditioning influence on the divine activity. In the Old Testament, indeed, God is so forcibly and frequently represented as taking a living part in the course of the world, as regulating his procedure completely according to the requirements of the moment, without suffering it to be prematurely modified by what he knows of the future, that one may with equal justice or rather injustice deduce either the rigid unchangeableness or the anthropomorphic and anthropopathic mobility of the divine activity.[1] But even when God is said to change his action, and for example, omits to fulfil a prophecy which when uttered was designed to be fulfilled, because the conditions on which its fulfilment depended have changed — a case which may occur in the prophets more frequently than many suppose — the Old Testament still speaks of him as remaining morally the same. Nay more, his ethical self-sameness and unchangeableness are the very cause of the variations which occur in his conduct and feelings towards men. Both the Old and New Testament teach clearly, for example, that sin has affected not merely our relation to God but also God's rela-

[1] Compare, for example, the following passages: Gen. vi. 6; Amos vii. 3, 6; Gen. xviii.; Ex. xxxii. 10–14; Num. xi. 1 ff., 10 ff.; Zech. x. 3; 1 Sam. xv. 11; Joel ii. 13; Jonah iii. 9, 10; iv. 2; Ps. xviii. 26; v. 6; cvi. 40; Prov. xi. 20; xii. 22; xvi. 5; Jer. iv. 28; xviii. 8, 10; xxvi. 3, 19; xxxvi. 3; xlii. 10; Isa. i. 11–15; xliii. 24; xliv. 22.

tion to us. In one respect, indeed, his relation to men is invariable, that it always bears a truly moral character; but in view of the moral changes constantly undergone by men, the moral immutability of God would scarcely deserve the name if it did not both admit of and require corresponding changes in his own mode of feeling and acting towards the human race.

ARTICLE II.

THE CHERUBIM.

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THE subject of the present Article is one which has hitherto attracted but little attention from the best scholarship; yet, one might reasonably suppose that the "Cherubim of Glory" would afford no mean theme for Christian contemplation; but, on the contrary, one which would amply repay the most painstaking and devout investigation. Doubtless, the chief cause of this indifference has been the many wild and discordant interpretations which have been advanced upon the subject. Scarcely two interpreters agree on what these strange symbolical figures represent.

Bähr, and after him, Hengstenberg, who wavers, however, in his views, make the Cherubim "a representation of creation in its highest grade, an ideal creature. The vital powers, communicated to the most elevated existence in the visible creation, are collected and individualized in it."

Barnes says of the four living creatures (Rev. iv. 6), that "they are evidently like those which Ezekiel saw, symbolical beings; but the nature and purpose of the symbol is not perfectly apparent." And yet, a little farther on, he ventures an interpretation: "The most natural explanation to be given of the four living beings is to suppose that they are symbolical beings, designed to furnish some representation