God Unchangeable.

BY REV. J. DENOVAN.

Among the more prominent religious characteristics of the present time is a slim and loose pulpit theology, which studiously avoids subjects that demand close and serious thought or that may offend the natural tastes of average church-going humanity. How long may we wander from church to church even in our own denomination—how long may we sit under an earnest educated ministry without ever once hearing the careful and *thorough* exposition of such passages as these, for example: "I am that I am," "I am Jehovah; I change not," "With whom there is no variableness, or shadow of turning," "I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and, I will do all My pleasure"? Let those who may think I err or am severe in making this statement regarding our pastors and preachers take pains to investigate the matter by conversation with the more intelligent of the present generation of our church members, and thus see for themselves how crude and erroneous their ideas of God are—their ideas of His nature and His principles of government, of His purposes and methods of action; how devoid they are of anything like a truly God-fearing and reverent spirit; how positively rebellious they are against many of His attributes. Let the sermons of the sainted fathers of our denomination either in old England or on this continent be carefully compared with the popular sermonettes of to-day—more especially with "Revival" appeals to the unconverted and with the hymns used in "special services," and I think it will be admitted that three questions such as these are timely and appropriate: 1. Has not our theology undergone quite an important radical change? 2. Are not the basal principles and motives of our religious life altogether different? 3. When professors say they love God, is *that God* they speak of not a deity of new qualities, and are their praises not presented to a creation of their own religious imagination?

May I be indulged with space in your columns to make a few remarks calculated to arouse serious thought on this very serious subject?

1. Those few passages of Holy Writ I have quoted in a preceding paragraph tell us that the one true and living God is not only unchangeable essentially, in nature and person, but that His plans, methods and actions are so also.

Of the profound mystery of *the divine nature*, we can know nothing at all except what God Himself has told us; therefore it is vain to speculate on the lines of any moral philosophy existing in our Theological schools, or to indulge pious imaginations about it. Reason endorses Revelation thus far: *Absolute perfection involves absolute immutability.* Any possible change must be for better or worse. He who dwells above "variableness" and "shadow," dwells in a *Now* which spans all the past, present and future. So much for the personal divine immutability, and these few words are enough. The doctrine belongs to the profound mystery of God head. But the immutability of His purposes and doings touches us so closely that it may be profitable to expatiate a little more fully upon that.

It seems to me very plain that if God be Himself unchangeable, He must do just as the apostle tells us He does—"work all things according to the counsel of His own will." To the simplest understanding it is surely plain enough that if some events transpire which God neither predestinated nor provided a place in His universal plan for, then His thoughts and arrangements must necessarily be changed to suit those events; and if His knowledge be increased and His thoughts changed, He Himself must also be undergoing a process of modification, development, transmutation, just as you and I do in similar circumstances, for no intellectual and spiritual being can possibly receive new ideas and be influenced by them without being *himself changed* to a corresponding degree. And nothing can be more patent than this, that if God has been subject to such changes in His intelligence, purposes and methods, His revealed word (the newest portions of it now 1800 years old) far from being "the impregnable rock of holy Scripture" Mr. Gladstone has called it, can be no longer reasonably depended on. His moral laws, His threatenings, His promises can be no longer binding on Him or on us, but must necessarily, like all human laws, be periodically altered and abrogated in wise adaptation to altered relations and circumstances. Then, there is no such thing as fixed truth in the universe. The Divine and primal fundamental substratum changing everything superincumbent must also change; the mutations of the Divine centre must modify every particle of His surroundings. Any inspired statement like this, "The counsel of Jehovah that shall stand, and the thoughts of His heart to all generations," may be grand poetry, but can have no substantial meaning.

All this we cannot—we dare not admit. However illogical to "advanced thought" the dogma may seem, however irreconcilable with the doctrine of freedom of the human will, however unscientific the idea of the absolutely changeless being the origin and centre of the changeable and the mighty living force impelling all motion, progression and evolution, we must believe, without modification, the transcendent dogmatic mystery enunciated in the declaration, "I change not."

When we consider how frequently and very solemnly God lays claim to the quality of unchangeableness, is it not pitiable to hear the apologetic tone of some preachers when they happen to touch upon any theme bearing relation to this doctrine? Is it not something appalling to hear their presumptuous declarations about the moral rights and independent powers of man, representing the Almighty and Most High as nothing better than the father of a perverse and unruly family, barely competent to keep His seat and maintain His authority, perplexed with the novel peculiarities of the rebellion of His offspring, and ever changing His plans in the hope of meeting, neutralizing and counteracting their incurable waywardness. I often wonder if such good folks have ever read a passage of scripture like this: "Behold the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance. All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity."

I wonder if, after they have sagaciously determined that such language as this is poetic hyperbole and pious exaggeration, they have ever soberly considered the facts of astronomy and the comparative dimensions of our globe. Who with these facts glaring in his face, can indulge the fancy that the God of the stars can possibly alter Himself to suit ephemeras such as we?

Those people who substantially deny Jehovah's unchangeableness, are, I have noticed, addicted to play on four words, namely, "*Circumstances*," "*Contingencies*," "*Providence*," and "*Natural Laws*." Whenever anything goes wrong with their grandiloquent arguments and moving appeals to the omnipotence of human free agency, immediately they take refuge behind one or other of these big words. When in a quiet corner we beg an explanation of these terms, they tell us that "Contingencies" and "Circumstances" comprehend these numerous relations and occurrences which neither God nor man anticipated or intended—events that may be called things of accident or chance. The signification they attach to the third big word, "Providence," is simply God's doing the best He can in those "Circumstances," and unravelling as best He can the complicated tangle of those "Contingencies," somewhat after the manner adopted by the experienced mariner, shifting his sails to make the most of the gale, working his rudder to meet the wild sweep of cross waves, shaping his course to avoid awkward currents, sunken rocks and shifting sand banks. In short, "Providence," according to the popular interpretation of the word, is just God's skilful method of working His governmental way through the perplexing and ever-changing maze of unexpected circumstances and contingencies.

Such a theory demonstrates its own atheistic impiety and refutes itself in the estimation of any one who accepts his Bible as true; it is the theology of hell foisted upon human ignorance under the superficial shelter of two long latinized words, "Circumstances" and "Contingencies;" it takes the crown of true majesty from Jehovah's brow, apologizing for the treasonous insult by muttering these two very indefinite words—"Contingencies, Circumstances." They might as well explain their position and fortify their impiety by turning down the gas and pronouncing the ancient cabalistic Arbacadadcabra, or some other sound equally edifying.

As to the somewhat more rational theory of "Natural Laws" which are supposed to modify and circumscribe the purposes and acts of the Almighty—(laws of the material and moral world), I only beg to say now that "Laws," however necessary and inevitable they may be in all departments of "Nature"—"laws," however originated, are *in themselves dead letters*, lifeless and powerless abstract regulations, utterly inoperative until a living Agent of power sufficient puts them in operation—applies them with the necessary force. For example: "Gravitation" scientists call a law and they theorize about it; but *the active power* of gravitation must be imparted to dead matter by some living agency. The laws of England, of Canada, of heaven—the laws of Nature and Morals are one and all mere mental abstractions, and without a living executive they must forever remain inoperative and totally useless. After the closest thinking I can give to the subject, so far as I can discern or even imagine, there are in the wide universe only three laws that may be called self-acting.

(a) The law of *Total Darkness*.
(b) The law of *Absolute Cold*.
(c) The law of *Utter Immobility*.

And these are three negations; these three constitute the godless Trinity of advanced modern science—dismal, helpless, lawless nothingness; whereas light, heat and motion are certainly the direct effects of a living agency in persistent action. All scientific and philosophical talk about "law" as a final cause is wearisome, empty gabble. The phrases, National Laws, Providential Laws, Moral Laws mean nothing more than the ways in which the almighty and immutable God acts and has declared He will act. No inherent activity, no operative force, no self-sustaining power exists in the laws of nature, providence or morals. *He* is above them. *He* is not amenable to them in any sense. From Him alone they derive all their authority, and they operate entirely according to His pleasure and that "eternal purpose which He purposed in Himself."

Jehovah is unchangeable—from everlasting to everlasting absolutely the same. What an awful and splendid dignity does the belief of this doctrine of divine revelation impart to our conceptions of God!

The substance and forms, the motions, lights and shadows, the evolutions and transitions of suns and systems add nothing to His wealth, His power or His wisdom.

The divine principles and laws are unchangeable. In the development of the physical and spiritual natures of His creatures, His dispensational methods are wisely progressive, but all such methods are but the outgrowth of immutable law—*i. e.*, the ancient divine will in operation.

Sin consists, not in our *conceptions* of good or bad, right or wrong, but of disobedience to this God; and all sin must be a most miserable failure, for it must be ultimately crushed helplessly beneath Jehovah's immutability.

The marvellous scheme of salvation from sin by Jesus Christ is no mere scheme of creature accommodation, no new contrivance—no mere happy thought of Deity to "make the best of a bad job," but is the manifestation of His unchangeable purpose purposed before creation's dawn in Christ Jesus—the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. In Jehovah's unchangeable consciousness in which the past, the present and the future are ever *Now*, the glorious scheme of salvation was, and is, ever a glorious realized fact. The unchangeable One does not accommodate Himself to us in His grace; but rather transforms and raises us *into conformity to and harmony with Him*. What other meaning can we possibly attach to such a statement as this, "God hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which were given us in Christ Jesus before the world began"? O how glorious is this truth, and how inspiring this conviction that our vital union to Christ raises us into God-likeness! And oh, how contemptibly mean, how mad, how utterly vile human rebellion and unbelief appear when seen in the calm light of God's unchangeableness.

Power of a Good Life.

In a volume of sermons by the late David Edwards Beach, D. D., of Marietta College, is one on The Saving Power of Christian Example in which occurs the following passage:

The influence of a Christ-like man is the more powerful and the more difficult to get away from because it is often so indirect, so unseen, stealing into the heart in so many unexpected ways. An argument you may answer, or try to answer, and imagine you have succeeded, but a holy life is a spirit in the air; you cannot fight it, or answer it, or escape from it. It is a savor in the house and on the street; it is like a fragrance from an orchard in spring, everybody breathes it; it is like a breeze from the mountains on an August day, bringing health on its wings to bless hundreds who hardly think where the good breath came from or what it is. We all know there are people whom it is healthful to live with. There is such a thing as a Christian atmosphere, and it is Christian lives that make it. This healthful influence lasts as nothing else in this world lasts, for it enters into the mind itself, it haunts the soul in memory when those from whom it came are far away, or have been for years silent in the grave.

Why cannot the boy who leaves home get rid of the influence of his mother? She is not there; she is hundreds of miles away. You tremble for him when you see him in new scenes beset with temptations. But if we had eyes that could see spiritual forces, and ears that could hear the voices that ring through the chambers of memory, we might know why at the moment of temptation, when just about to yield, he straightens himself into sudden manliness of resistance, and passes by unscathed and triumphant. We might see a radiant angel at his side; we might hear that voice whose tones no other angel voice can equal in the music or the eloquence of love, the form, the voice, of the unforgotten mother, whose presence has become to the unspoiled youth the representative and reminder of the divine purity and love. Her influence surrounds him like a cloud. I wish we could all believe, could realize, how these good influences of good lives last. If we think of it, we see that influences upon the soul are the only works of men that really do last.

Character.

There is a structure which every responsible person is building, whether he intends so to do or not. That structure is character, and every public act and word of our lives is a part of that structure; and when our building is done it will be just what we have made it. If a man has been a drunkard, he will be rated a drunkard; if he has been a liar, people will estimate him a liar; if he has been all his life a man of truth and uprightness, the people will regard him a man of integrity. No man can *permanently* injure our reputation but ourselves.

The first thing in erecting a building is a good foundation. Without this, no matter what may be the quality of materials built, the building will crumble and fall. This foundation to character is honesty. No man can be a *man* who is not honest. But a man may have a good foundation, and still have an inferior building. See that large brick building, placed upon a solid rock foundation, but built of brick which are hard and soft. Soon the building will be regarded inferior, and possibly unsafe, only because of the soft brick laid into the walls.

A man might be regarded upright in his dealings and a good neighbor, but he might have some bad blemishes which would very greatly mar his reputation. And regard should be had to this very early in life. In order to have an unblemished reputation in age, it is necessary that he should have been upright in childhood, youth and manhood. Josh Billings says: "A man may get his reputation broken, and get it mended; but likely the public will keep their eye on the krack!" A man of dissolute habits might reform in after life and be respected, but he will not carry the weight of influence that he would if he had always been upright.

But the blessing of the gospel is that it can eventually *cure all our ills*. Let us then, my brethren, do all in our power to get this "sovereign balm" applied to all the wayward sons of men.—*A. Ellmore, in Christian Leader.*

— Last August there was a fall of manna in Asia Minor, which was baked for bread after the manner of the biblical tradition. It has been examined by Frenchmen of science, and identified as lichen of the family *lecanora esculenta*. Some will doubtless say, no doubt, manna fell naturally for the support of the Israelites. But manna fell six days out of seven, but not on the seventh, through a long period. That manna, when gathered on Saturday, would keep over the Sabbath; on other days it would not. The rain that fell in answer to Elijah's prayers was like other rain: the circumstances under which it fell proved the miracle. It never was pretended that manna was wholly unknown in the East. —*N. Y. Christian Advocate.*

— The great body of our English hymns have proceeded from pronounced evangelicals. The hymns universally popular have come from writers holding evangelical beliefs, and the hymns which are everywhere cherished are those most saturated with such ideas. Why is this? There is but one answer. Such hymns as those of Wesley, Toplady, Newton, and of many more, meet the deepest religious needs of men. They respond to the universal yearnings and cravings of sinful humanity; and hymns are thus, age after age, made to add their powerful testimony to the truth of the evangelical doctrines they embody.—*New York Observer.*

Too Busy to Pray.

Jesus appears to have devoted Himself especially to prayer at times when His life was unusually full of work and excitement. His was a very busy life; there were nearly always "many coming and going" about Him. Sometimes, however, there was such a congestion of thronging objects that he had scarcely time to eat. But even then He found time to pray. Indeed, these appear to have been with Him seasons of more prolonged prayer than usual. Thus we read: "So much the more went there a fame abroad of Him, and great multitudes came together to hear and be healed by Him of their infirmities, but He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed."

Many in our day know what this congestion of occupations is — they are swept off their feet with their engagements, and can scarcely find time to eat. We make this a reason for not praying. Jesus made it a reason for praying. Is there any doubt which is the better course? Many of the wisest have in this respect done as Jesus did. When Luther had a specially busy and exciting day, he allowed himself longer time than usual for prayer beforehand. A wise man once said that he was too busy to be in a hurry; he meant that if he allowed himself to become hurried he could not do all he had to do. There is nothing like prayer for producing this calm, self-possession. When the dust of business so fills your room that it threatens to choke you, sprinkle it with the water of prayer, and then you can cleanse it out with comfort and expedition. — *James Stalker.*

Stay in the Sunshine.

I have somewhere read that the great Swiss writer, Dr. Merle D'Aubigne, was grievously troubled with doubts during his student days. He went to his old experienced teacher for help. The veteran refused to discuss them, and said: "Were I to rid you of these doubts, others would come. There is a shorter way of destroying them. Let Jesus Christ be really to you the Son of God, an almighty Saviour, and His light will dispel the darkness, and His Spirit will lead you into all truth." The old man was right. He saw that the young student was falling into a sinful habit, that would grow worse by tampering with it. To attempt to poke away clouds with your own hand is sheer folly. Your true course is to plant yourself in the clear, broad sunshine of Jesus Christ, and stay there. "Sun of my soul, thou Saviour dear," is a line that ought to be said or sung every hour of the Christian's life.

Some good people are the prey of naturally despondent temperaments. Such need a double supply of grace, and must pray for it. So must they whose digestion is weak, and whose nerves are oversensitive. The worries of business or household cares, the loss of sleep or the derangement of the bodily machinery, put such Christian folk under a cloud pretty often. To day they sing like larks; to-morrow the barometer goes down, and they are in the dumps again. Such people should look after their bodily health as a spiritual duty. Moreover, they should keep their Christian faith where it would not be exposed to every east wind or drenched to death by every shower that falls. Keep a good supply of tonic Bible texts within reach, and take them freely the next time that an ague-fit comes on.—*Dr. T. L. Cuyler, in Evangelist.*

The Story of Neesima.

The romantic and touching history of the Japanese missionary, Neesima, and his chrysanthemums, which have now grown famous, is told by Mr. F. Schuyler Matthews in "The Golden Flower," a book about the chrysanthemum which has lately been issued. It is a story of a great service repaid with flowers—but with flowers which became famous, and have themselves made famous a beautiful life.

Neesima was the name of a Japanese who was born in the city of Yeddo in 1844. As a boy, he was disposed to studiousness, and before he was twenty he received from a friend a small tract, called "The Story of the Bible," which was written by a Christian missionary in China.

The reading of this tract was the beginning of a new life for the young man. He determined to learn more of the "Light which shone in the East," and to this end resolved to find his way to America. This was no easy task in those times in Japan, for the strictest watch was kept over the people to prevent their going to foreign countries.

Neesima left his home, however, and went to the seaport town of Hakodate, where he remained for a season, planning a means of escape. By the help of a friend, he concealed himself in a little boat, laden with supplies that were being taken to an American vessel in the harbor.

As the little boat left the quay an officer caught sight of it and called, "Who goes there?" "*Ore da!*" (It is I!) shouted the boatman, and the craft was allowed to pass.

Neesima reached the vessel in safety, and the captain concealed him in a closet while the Japanese officers made a tour of the boat before she sailed. At Shanghai he was transferred to a ship belonging to the late Alpheus Hardy, of Boston. He told the master of this ship that he wished to go to America to be educated, and was brought across the ocean by the kind-hearted captain. At Hong Kong he supplied himself with money by the sale of his sword, the badge of his social rank in Japan, and bought a Chinese New Testament.

On his arrival in Boston, young Neesima was taken to Mr. Hardy, and told him of his desire to learn more of the "Light in the East." Mr. Hardy assured him that there was indeed a Light in the East, and that it should shine for him and his people. He gave Neesima an education at Phillips Andover Academy, at Amherst College and at the Andover Theological Seminary.

Joseph Hardy Neesima, as he was now called, was ordained to the ministry in Boston in 1874, and went to Japan soon after to found the school of the Doshisha, or "The One Purpose," in Kioto, and he was connected with the school to the time of his death.

In 1887 Neesima sent to Mrs. Hardy, in Boston, a collection of some thirty varieties of the chrysanthemum. These were given by Mrs. Hardy to two gardeners to propagate, and from them came some of the most wonderfully beautiful flowers ever seen, of forms hitherto unknown in this country, whose fame has filled the western world.

In the midst of the celebrity attained by the great white, frosty flower, called the "Mrs. Alpheus Hardy," came the news of the death in January, 1890, of Joseph Hardy Neesima in Japan. With its comrades, the flower was a dying token of light and love from the man whose tongue had often repeated the words:

"The dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."

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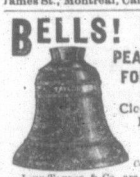

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ALL the right, title ... E. Mallery, late ... Martins, in the Ci... John, deceased, at th... and to: all that lot, ... with the buildings a... on, situate in Fairfi... tish of Saint Mart... owned by the late W... by the said Andrew ... his death, and conve... Robinson and Sara... one hundred and fo...

The above sale wi... of a license to sell, ... Probates for the Ci... John, dated the 8th ... 1891, for the purpose ... by the estate of the ...

Date d the 2nd day ... AMA... Administ... late ... MONT. McDONAL... Solicitor, &c.

NO...

A BILL will be l... sion of the Leg... to amend the act i... Baptist Education ... bership; qualifica... Directors and mode... for holding Annua... By O...

March, 2nd, 1891.