The immutability of god

Howe, J. W. A.

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Introduction.

This essay is concerned primarily with the conception of the immutability of God as it bears on Christian faith and experience. Christian thought has its source in the historical fact of the Incarnation of God the Son, and is consequently inseparable from history as a whole, inseparable from the human experience and activity of which history is composed. Thus Christianity can be but poorly understood if considered in isolation, not only from the world of the last nineteen hundred years, but also from the centuries before the birth of Christ. It is, then, essential that the present study should begin with some reconnoitring of the two streams of history which, more than any others, were subsequently to influence the flow of Christian thought, both by the power of their own currents, and also by a mingling of waters. Those two streams are Greek Philosophy, and Hebrew Religion.

PART I. PRE-CHRISTIAN THOUGHT ON IMMUTABILITY.

A. Greek Philosophy and the idea of Immutability.

Heraclitus and Parmenides, men of the early youth of philosophy in Greece, gave opposite accounts of the world. Heraclitus said all things change: Parmenides said change is impossible. Since in their day the idea of God had not

achieved the prominence it was later to attain in philosophical discussion, neither of them considers mutability in its relation to God, yet they serve to mark the extremes from which the subject is capable of approach. Heraclitus built his argument on things immediately experienced - rivers, men, fire. Parmenides took the wider basis of everything that is - the whole of existence. If, he argued, we consider everything that is we cannot conceive it to be changed by the addition of something else; for having started with everything, there is nothing besides to add. Nor can "everything that is" be changed by diminution, since a part taken away would have no place to which it could go, because all places are already comprehended in everything that is. He proceeded by similar arguments to show that any particular element in the universe is likewise incapable of increase or decrease, and therefore of change. The result is a cosmos which is frozen, and of doubtful potentialities.

The contention is contradictory to human experience, which, as Heraclitus saw, is conscious of change on every side. What then is ~~this~~ the change? To Parmenides there was only one answer open - that change is an illusion. In support of this answer Zeno of Elea put forward contentions such as his classic argument of the arrow's flight, to illustrate the truth that nothing moves at all, but only seems to move. Although not readily disproved, the proposals of Parmenides

and Zeno have found only limited support, and it is said that the trend of recent mathematical examinations of conceptions of infinity and movement do not favour them. But an achievement remains. Parmenides has shown that a real immutability is conceivable in relation to a world that suggests change as its most conspicuous characteristic; and that such a conception is most easily arrived at when the ground of investigations is increased from immediate experience, as with Heraclitus, to wider conceptions of reality.

Paradoxically it was Heraclitus who provoked the more significant contentions in support of immutability in ultimate reality. A flaw in his argument was noticed by Plato, and the consequences were immense. Plato saw that if all is in a state of flux there is no possibility of knowledge, for any statement about the nature of things would, as soon as made, cease to be true; for the things would have changed into something different. This would likewise apply to the very statement of Heraclitus itself. If the law is of universal application, then the law itself must be subject to change. Therefore the law itself must change; in which case it would no longer be true that all things change. Clearly this is not what Heraclitus intended. In stating his law he assumed at least three exceptions: knowledge, truth, and the law itself.

Plato's way out of the impasse was in the direction

indicated by Socrates when he refuted the sophistry of Protagoras. Protagoras had held that in such questions ~~of~~ as 'the right', 'the good', 'the just' there were no abiding principles - man was the measure of all things. This made morality a matter of opinion. But Socrates maintained that if 'right' and 'good' were to have any meaning at all that meaning must be constant, and identical in every instance where the terms were predicated. Here was the lead which Plato accepted. He agreed with Heraclitus that all things apprehended by sense were in flux, but beyond that he cut his own path. Things apprehended by the senses could not claim to give knowledge; but the moral predicates of good, right, just, were not apprehended by the senses, and so were not to be included in the sense-realm of flux, but in the realm of conceptual experience, and were permanent and unchanging.

Plato pressed on beyond the Socratic moral predicates to the predicates of knowledge in general. The senses perceive particular things - a particular white object, a (particular horse) a particular tree, but in experiencing these things, he said, we recognize natures that we do not sense, but <u>know</u> and <u>understand</u>. These natures are whiteness, horse-ness, tree-ness. There are then two worlds, the one of the ever-changing things of sense; the other of the permanent things of which we can have genuine knowledge. These last are the 'Forms'. In all experience the knowledge of these Forms is presupposed.

A right act cannot be understood without the Form of rightness; a particular horse cannot be recognised without the Form of horse-ness; to think that a line is straight we must know straightness. Forms are permanent, eternal realities in Plato's philosophy:

> Absolute equality, absolute beauty, and absolute existence, true being - do they ever admit of any change whatsoever? Or does each absolute essence since it is uniform and exists by itself, remain ever the same, and never in any way admit of any change?
>
> It must, said Cebes, necessarily remain the same, Socrates. (Plato; Phaedo, 78D. Vol I. pp 273-5).

Plato had thus found reason for maintaining both the existence of immutable Forms, and also of a changing physical world. From this it follows that the relation which the physical world has to the real world of the Forms is changing at every moment. How is this change to be explained? The movement cannot have its origin in the Forms, for they are the principles of stability; nor by matter itself, for there is nothing in its own nature to give it motion, or to account for any particular participation of matter with the Forms. By experience we see that the only things capable of moving themselves are animate beings, and Plato concluded that such being, which he calls soul, must be working in the universe. The observation of motion in a large field, as in watching the heavenly bodies, shows it to be orderly and regular: in short, it shows the signs of rationality. Thus Plato could go further and say that there is a rational soul working

throughout the physical universe. This he calls God.

Since there is a plurality of perfectly ordered motions there is the possibility of a corresponding plurality of perfectly good souls. For this reason Plato uses the terms 'God' and 'gods' synonymously. In so far as one can generalize of a person whose thought was never static, one may say that Plato's own beliefs were probably monotheistic; but for the sake of convenience he was prepared to use the vernacular.

What, then, is the relation between God and the Forms? To no small degree it is characterised by independence. The Forms exist in their own right, are eternal, and so do not depend on any mind for their creation. They are not derived from God. Nor does Plato call the Forms gods, except by implication in 'Timaeus' 37C, a passage which has gained its significance because it is peculiar, and does not represent the general run of Plato's thought as exposed in the Dialogues. Nor is God the Form of the Good: God is a soul; the Good is a Form. The contention that the Forms are the 'thoughts of God' is now accounted the suggestion of speculation subsequent to Plato. It is to the Forms, and not to God, that Plato ascribes priority as being eternal, and maintains that to some extent God conforms to them. What is right is not right because it is beloved by the gods; rather the gods love what is right, and conform to it (cf. 'Euthyphro' 10A).

This conformity is at once the most rigid there is, because the gods are perfect, and also a demonstration that they are not omnipotent. It also must imply that they are not immutable; a conclusion which is in agreement with the reasons already given for Plato's positing the existence of rational soul in the universe. A passage in the 'Republic'(380E-38IC) which argues for the changelessness of the gods concerns their shapes (μορφή), and is a condemnation of such stories as those of Zeus appearing as a bull or a swan. God is moved, but is moved by his own will: he is the self-moved mover. Such is the nature of soul, and so, pre-eminently, of God; the world-soul.

What is the immediate significance of Plato's philosophy for the study of the immutability of God? It is that the first of the really great systems of thought insists on the existence of both change and immutability. God is not immutable (though Aquinas was later to attempt to prove that Plato's self-moved mover can be identified with Aristotle's unmoved-mover - see pp.77-79); but then it is not the conception of God which is given the supreme position. That is reserved for the Forms, and they are immutable. Nevertheless, God, who is subject to them in that he must conform, and that they are prior to him, is involved only in movement of which he himself is the author. Thus of Plato's three orders - the physical world, soul, and the Forms - immutability is absent

in the first, of restricted reference in the second, and absolute in the third. It, then, is essential in the cosmos, and is to be'located' in those existences which are not subject to the physical world.

Plato's philosophy of God and the Forms was arrived at by argument from visible effects to their causes. Aristotle employed the same principle, but was dissatisfied with the identification of God with a self-moved mover. He thought the question could be taken further. With such self-moving there are discernable, he maintained, two constituent parts - that which moves but is not moved, and the body which is not the mover, but is moved. Consideration of the "heavenly spheres" of his astronomical theory led him to believe that both these constituents could not be predicated to the spheres. They were the bodies moved, clearly enough, but could one ascribe to them the intelligence which moved them? Aristotle thought not. There must then be for each sphere a separate intelligence which was its unmoved mover; and for the complete "diurnal movement" of the stars there must be a supreme unmoved mover postulated. This intellect is the God of Aristotle's philosophy. In distinction from Plato, God and the ultimate immutability are united by Aristotle. What can be said of the nature of God, and of his activity (if such as an unmoved mover can have any)? It cannot be a soul in Plato's sense since a soul is self-

moved, not unmoved. It does not act (πράττειν) or produce (ποιεῖν). What is left?

> Still everyone supposes that they live and therefore that they are active; we cannot suppose then to sleep like Endymion. Now if you take away from a living being action, and still more production, what is left but contemplation? Therefore the activity of God, which surpasses all others in blessedness, must be contemplative; and of human activities therefore, that which is most akin to this must be most of the nature of happiness. (Aristotle, Eth.Nic.X 1178b. Vol. IX)

But in a sense Aristotle is making an exception in excluding contemplation from the realm of activity.

> For that which is capable of receiving the object of thought, i.e. the essence, is thought. And it is active when it possesses this object. Therefore the latter [possession] rather than the former [receptivity] is the divine element which thought seems to contain, and the act of contemplation is most pleasant and best .... the actuality of thought is life, and God is that actuality; and God's essential actuality is life most good and eternal. We say therefore that God is a living being, eternal, most good, so that life and duration continuous and eternal belong to God; for this is God. (Aristotle, Met. Λ, 1072b, Vol.VIII; cf.Ibid.1073a. Brackets etc. as trans.).

The object of God's contemplation is himself:

> Therefore it must be itself that thought thinks (since it is the most excellent of things), and its thinking is a thinking on thinking .... As, then, thought and the object of thought are not different in the case of things that have not matter, they will be the same, i.e. the divine thinking will be one with the object of its thought. (Ibid. 1074b-~~1075a~~ 1075a).

Such is the existence of the supreme unmoved mover. By unmoved Aristotle connotes that which is without potentiality. Motion is the actualisation of what is in potentiality,

though the movement itself cannot be classified either as potentiality or actuality: it is an actualisation in which the potentiality and an incompleteness are both implied. (cf. pp. 74-75 on S.Thomas Aquinas).

The relation of God to the world is very remote. Knowing only himself he is unaware of the world's existence, and certainly of that of individual men. Yet, through the spheres he moves the world. Aristotle explains this as being similar to the influence of the loved over the lover, an all-powerful attraction by one who himself remains at rest. There is no provident care exercised by God, nor is man's love consequent upon a prior love by God for man.

Aristotle did not regard his God as sterile, nor was the postulation of the unmoved mover a stop-gap measure. It was the crown of his system, and was arrived at by what appeared to be the imperative demand of logic when applied to ~~manich~~ man's experience of the world. The immutable God, indeed the immutable God 'par excellence', takes its place in Aristotle's philosophy of sheer necessity. This is a point of no small significance to the present study. Many later philosophers accepted the idea of an immutable deity because they were thus provided with a stable ~~form~~ norm for ethical values. With Aristotle it was not so. His ethics required no appeal to an unchanging existence outside the world.

Lastly it is worthy of notice that immutability and

contemplation , which is, after all, a kind of activity, a functioning, are not regarded by Aristotle as of their very nature, as excluding each other. This doctrine of what might be termed an immutable activity recurs in the thought of Christian philosophers in later ages, and it is important that it first appeared not as an attempt by the Christians to escape from a dilemma by a contradiction, but lies in the thought of Aristotle, and, to a lesser degree, of Plato. It is then not wholly surprising to find that with the fusion of Platonism and Aristotelianism in Aquinas God is expounded as an unmoved mover whose nature is pure act.

B. Ideas of Immutability in the Old Testament.

The passage from Greek philosophy to Hebrew religion involves a change of climate: for whereas the great Greek thinkers approached closely to the scholar's ideal of impartial, detached searching for truth, the Jewish prophets and historians believed in a self-revealing Deity who was for them the source of truth. Except for the questioning and probing of some later writers who were not unaffected by the Hellenic spirit, the interest was always to record the relations and intercourse between God and man. The sources of their writing lie in personal experiences, and as such they take much for granted. The whole approach is

distinct. Thus whereas Plato and Aristotle maintained the immutability of supreme being because they felt that reason demanded it, the Jews, in so far as they tended to regard God as unchangeable, conceived that unchangeability in terms of their own experience of God's constancy.

It would be attractive to trace the origin of this experience to God's revelation of himself by name as "I am" (Exodus III 14), and both Fathers and Schoolmen made free use of the text to illustrate God's fundamental unchangeableness. But it seems probable that the passage, deriving from the pentateuchal source E, was not written until the Eighth century B.C., and it is possible that its origin lies in an attempt to put a meaning to יהוה, the letters of the divine Name. If, for the sake of caution, we allow this to be correct, we still have left the interesting information that an Eighth Century writer, trying to account for the name יהוה believed he was right in interpreting it as an assertion by God of the permanence and independence of his nature (cf.E.R.E.,Art: God - Biblical and Christian, Vol.VI, p.254): the writer was sufficiently convinced of something akin to immutability in God to believe it possible that therein should lie the prime assertion God made about himself when first revealing his Name to the chosen people. The writer may have been

given a lead if the source he was using provided what he himself has recorded immediately after the revelation of the divine name, that is:

> Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, יהוה , the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. (Exodus III 15).

Here there is a clear idea that there is permanence in God which transcends the time and change of the world, he is as he was in the past, and so he will be for all future time. It is possible, on the other hand, that having found his interpretation of the letters of the divine name the writer was influenced thereby to continue to expound the theme. Opposed to this line of argument is a similar reference to Yahweh's past and future activities, together with the names of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the account supplied by the source P of the revelation of the divine name. (Exodus VI 3). Again, it could be that P being a later work has copied E. It is a possibility, but not a certainty, and without sufficient evidence to disprove the main points of the biblical accounts there is no necessity to desert them. It would seem, then, that a conservative judgment allows that the revelation of the divine name was early connected in Hebrew thought with some sort of a revelation of Yahweh's permanence, and to an immutability

in his nature which at least comprises an independence of worldly and mortal change.

Further there is the consideration of the meaning of יהוה . The writer of the E source, if the interpretation is due to him, assumes the name to be derived from the verb היה , a bye-form of הוה , meaning, roughly, "to be", or more precisely "to become". The name then comprises the third person, masculine singular imperfect - a form found in other Hebrew names -, and means "he becomes", or "he will become". Presumably the use of the first person is restricted to God, and the third person is used when he is spoken of by others (cf.H.D.B. ii p 199). S. L. Brown (New Com. p 88) following McNeile prefers "he is wont to be what he is wont to be" as giving the real meaning. The impression then given is that Yahweh is wholly self-determinate, and dependent on his own will, and that future self-revelation will make clear this will for the chosen people. The notion is rather that Yahweh cannot be changed, than that he cannot change.

One may contend that the association of יהוה and the verb היה derives solely from the philological ingenuity of the E writer. But the contrary need not conflict with the archeological evidence for earlier Canaanitish and Babylonian divine names as the source of יהוה . For a God with an entirely new and unfamiliar name would not have been immediately acceptable to the Israelites.

There is no reason why God in revealing himself should not have designed the twofold purpose of associating himself with a name already bearing a divine connotation, and also imparting a truth about his own nature. Moreover there is considerable cause to believe that the early revelation of God should have emphasised his unchangeableness; since it is the perfect preparation for the giving of the Law, and also accounts for that acceptance of God's immutability almost as a foregone conclusion in Hebrew thought of later centuries.

The evidence indicates that comparatively early in the education of the chosen people, perhaps about the time of the exodus, there was a forcible revelation of God as a being whose will is unchangeable by outside influence, and who is not subject to human experience of change; also that in the Eighth Century, at the time the E document was written, there was current a profound belief in a species of immutability in God.

Between the two periods there is little explicit evidence of the belief, but some implicit. In the former category are exerpts from the stories of Balaam and of the humiliation of Saul ~~(Num.XXIII 19, I Sam.XV 29)~~.

> God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?
> (Num.XXIII 19)
> And also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.
> (1 Sam.XV.29).

Both passages were probably recorded by writers of the E school and conform to the style of thought that has already been associated with E. The passages are similar, and are valuable in showing the manner in which the conception of God's changelessness was significant to the Jews. Similar thought subsequently found frequent expression in Hebrew literature. There are three main points:

i. God is faithful to his purpose: he does not repent, he does not change his mind.
ii. God transcends the vicissitudes of men; his course is distinct, superior and unwavering.
iii. And in both passages there is a sense of the reliability of God.

One feels that Balaam, Samuel and the writer all derive confidence fron the certainty of God's ways. Here we ~~ha~~ have an approach to the Greek conception of an immutable being as the fixed point of the universe. The two ways of thought are still far distant from each other, but it is the nearest approach until the time of the later Wisdom literature.

The implicit evidence is principally supplied by the attitude of the people to the Law. In an anarchic state laws lose all force because there is no guarantee of the permanence of the government that should be their foundation, nor of a consistent administrative policy. When laws are held in high regard it is in part because the authority that has established the laws, and the policy

of that authority, are both regarded as being free from changes or caprice. The Israelites' conception of the Mosaic law was that it comprised permanent decrees - it was stable. Hence it is safe to say that they also regarded the authority perpetrating the laws, God, as consistent in his demands, and in his policy with men. There is no proof here of a conception of God as entirely immutable, but there is testimony to a belief that change was not to him as it is to men. He is constant and true to his purpose in a way that men are not.

> There are many devices in a man's heart; but the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand.
> (Prov. XIX 21),

was probably written some while before the exile, and may be regarded as a succinct expression of the idea of God held by all who venerated the law.

In the period of the divided kingdoms there was no cause for special appeal to the faith in God's changelessness. In all probability it was a source of strength and joy to the devout. But when the tragedy of the exile threatened, and oppressed the Jews with a burden of despair, the prophets fought any tendency to desert the old faith by proclaiming the superiority of God to changes wrought by worldly circumstances. The fall of Judah was not the fall of God. Both Ezekiel and Deutero-Isaiah repeatedly call attention to God's immutability as a contrast to man's

vicissitudes; and of the three consequences of this belief already discerned as previously existing it is the second, God's transcendence, that is repeatedly emphasised. Ezekiel stresses it to the almost entire exclusion of the other two, declaring that though the circumstances of the chosen people have altered they are not thereby given licence to forsake loyalty and obedience to God, for he has not altered. Their transgressions will be punished as before - God is still Lord.

> And mine eye shall not spare thee, neither will I have pity: but I will bring thy ways upon thee, and thine abominations shall be in the midst of thee: and ye shall know that I am the Lord.
> (Ezek.VII 4)
> And ye shall know that I am the Lord: for ye have not walked in my statutes, neither have ye executed my judgments, but have done after the judgments of the nations that are round about you.
> (Ezek. XI 12; cf.VI 7,13; VII 9; XI 10; XII 15)

The transgressions to which these chapters refer are the transgressions committed by Judah before the exile. Their punishment will continue into the period of the exile and in the foreign environment of Babylon. God can and will both punish past sins and present. This appeal to God's steadfastness of purpose is at times tempered with words of hope (XXXIII-XXXVII), but it is the tone of ~~the~~ threatening that seems to come most easily:

> I the Lord have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it: I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I repent; according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, shall they judge thee, saith the Lord God.
> (Ezek. XXIV 14).

With Deutero-Isaiah consolation is the more dominant theme. The message of sin and judgment in Ezekiel IV-XXIV has been superseded by a message of hope. God's transcendence is still the most emphasised aspect of his changelessness, but it is emphasised to revive the spirit of trust and confidence in the future. Suffering does not sever a man from God; rather in his suffering his consolation is that those changes which may buffet and deprive will pass even as they have arisen; but God neither rises nor falls, alters nor changes. He is a sure rock of hope.

> The grass withereth, the flower fadeth; but the word of our God shall stand for ever.
> (Is. XL 8)
> Who hath raised up one from the east, whom he calleth in righteousness to his foot? he giveth nations before him, and maketh him rule over kings; he giveth them as the dust to his sword, as the driven stubble to his bow. He pursueth them and passeth on safely; even by a way that he had not gone with his feet. Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the Lord, the first, and with the last, I am he.
> (Is.XLI 2-4; cf.XLII 8-9; XLIII 10-11; XLIV 6; XLVI 10; XLVIII 12)

Deutero-Isaiah further laid significant stress on God's immutability as being of importance as such. This side of his message is distinctly noticeable when the passages referred to above are read together. "I, the Lord, the first with the last, I am he" (XLI 4) is not a testimony in isolation: it is of the theme of his whole message to the Hebrews:

> Dieu éternel est aussi immuable; il ne se fatigue ni ne s'épuise, (Is.XL 28). Il est dès le commencement, et toujours le même (XLI 4)." (D.T.C., Art: Dieu, sa nature d'après la Bible, T. IV, pars I.991).

Nor was the writer innovating, for there is the similar passage in Exodus III (see p.12 ff.); but his enlargement of the conception is important in view of the foretaste he provides of subsequent Hebrew thought which was concerned with the more philosophical considerations concerning God's being.

But for the prophets the metaphysical approach could never become very important in itself. With them the personal relationship held pride of place: If God is unchangeable it is in his purpose for his people, and in his manner of dealing with them. There was never much similarity to the absolute immutability envisaged by Aristotle. "I, even I am the Lord" is not God's whole message: "beside me there is no Saviour" is the complement. There is nothing impersonal or mechanical in his immutability. Thus without any apparent sense of contradiction the prophets can tell of changes in God's methods of dealing with men (cf.Jer.XXXI 31-34,Isaiah XL 2). They thought of God as active on man's behalf; he is working his purpose out, and the activity and purpose are unchangeable by any worldly force or incident. This aspect of Hebrew thought must be given due weight when the thought of Christian theologians comes to be considered, for here is a seed that was in time to blossom again and again.

The classic Old Testament statement of God's immutability, to which compilers of proof texts and text books all refer,

comes from the prophecy of Malachi, belonging probably to the end of the Fifth Century.

"For I the Lord change not (אֲנִי יְהוָה לֹא שָׁנִיתִי)
(Mal.III 6a).

Smith (I.C.C. in loc. p.66) is probably right in asserting that this is not "an abstract proposition that Yahweh cannot be changed in any respect". He points out that its implications are related to the previous verses, and so lead us to group the passage with the many others which emphasise God's faithfulness to his purpose and laws. We have not, then, "an abstract proposition"; but there is here a closer approach to a reason for asserting that "Yahweh cannot change in any respect" than has previously appeared in Hebrew thought. To read the passage as meaning that the matter under discussion, namely God's intention to purge his people, is alone a matter in which God does not change is too narrow an interpretation. The sense seems rather to be that God does not change, so there is no more likelihood of his changing in respect to the present matter than to any other. This is the extension of previous Hebrew thought that might be anticipated, and derives, like so much that is best in Hebrew religion, from the inspired efforts of a prophet to impress the nation with the consequences of neglecting their covenant with God.

> Jahvé jugera les adultères, les perjures et les oppresseurs (vv.3-5), car il n'a pas changé, tandis que les Juifs n'ont cessé de faire le mal (vv.6-7). (D.T.C. ,Art:Dieu, sa nature d'après la Bible, T. IV, pars 1. 991).

By the Second and First Centuries B.C. this clearer idea of unchangeableness as generally applicable to God had become fused with the exilic emphasis on God's transcendence. The future kingdom of the Son of Man in the book of Daniel is characterised by dissimilarity to the changes of earthly kingdoms - it shall be eternal, without end, indestructible - that is, change cannot be wrought in it from outside (Dan.VII 14, 27). The Preacher depicts the same features as characterising all God's activity:

> I know whatsoever God doeth it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor anything taken from it. (Ecc'tes III 14).

They also appear to lie at the root of the conception of the divine wisdom (Wisd.VII 24-27), and they find forcible expression in the words of Judith:

> Do not bind the counsels of the Lord our God: for God is not as man, that he may be threatened; neither is he as the son of man, that he should be wavering. (Judith VIII 16. A.V.).

The writers of these later passages were doubtless acquainted with Hellenic belief in divine immutability, but there is no indication that they were greatly influenced, and certainly they were not carried away. The expression of their thought takes its place comfortably as the latter part of a development of belief which in its origin and whole course is integrally Hebrew. Study of the Hebrew thought

alone gives no suggestion of a sudden twist to accomodate new and alien doctrines of changelessness. This change never happened; and if it were not that we know from separate evidence that it was possible, there would have been no reason to suspect it.

The passages in the Old Testament and Apocrypha which involve ideas related to divine immutability may be classified as follows:

i. Passages where the changelessness in God is related to an emphasis on God's reliability and dependability.
ii. Passages where the emphasis is on God's faithfulness to his purpose.
iii. Passages where the emphasis is on God's transcendence.
iv. Passages concerned to emphasise God as not subject to change.

i and ii are present throughout, but most prominent in pre-exilic thought. (As is to be expected they are also the notes struck in the devotional literature - cf. Pss.XXXIII 11, XLVI 1-5, CII 26-27).

iii has pre-exilic foundations, but is most noticeable in the exilic prophets, and combines with iv in the late Hebrew writings.

iv becomes pronounced in Deutero-Isaiah and Malachi, then with iii is dominant in the First and Second Centuries B.C..

There is here neither a philosophical nor an exact investigation of immutability. There is no definition. But

clearly Hebrew experience of God's revelation led to an understanding of the necessity of a changelessness in God, which is characterised principally in expressions of belief in God's faithfulness to his purpose, and in the impossibility of any external or worldly influence capable of causing him to change.

PART II THE NEW TESTAMENT AND IMMUTABILITY.

Orthodox divinity regards the New Testament as principally a record of the incarnate life of God the Son, and an exposition of the implications of that life. With the acceptance of this position the student of immutability is at once face to face with his most profound problem - God humbles himself, for us men and for our salvation he comes down from heaven and is made man. There seems to be an inescapable change in the manner of the existence of God the Son.

For clearness it will be convenient to postpone the investigation of this problem until consideration has been made over as wide a field as possible of what immutability connotes, and of how it should be applied to the Christian conception of God. It is to this end that the following examination is made of the material which the New Testament can supply.

In general the New Testament writers assumed the theology found in the Old. Just as the ideas of the Second Century B.C. provided the bulk of the foundation ideas of the First Century B.C., so the First Century B.C. served the First Century A.D.. The conception of the immutability of God which has been extracted from the Old Testament provides in essence what was consciously or unconsciously believed by the characters of the gospels. It was assumed by Christ.

As the Law had received strength from the belief that God, who had instituted it, did not change from generation to generation, so Christ's teaching on conduct is based on an appeal to the Father's steadfastness:

> ....that thou be not seen of men to fast, but of thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall recompense thee. (Mt. VI 18; cf. VI 1, VII 21 etc.)

There is, though, a new emphasis that God is unchangingly good.

> ..... For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. (Mt. VI 32)
>
> If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things unto them that ask him? (Ib. VII 11).

This accords with the understanding of God's immutability as being characterised by a personal activity, but is a significant extension of it.

The same implication of divine stability was present in all Christ's teaching:

> Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. (Mk. XIII 31).

While the extent of this assertion is not clear in the context, especially as there is reason for maintaining that this part of S.Mark's gospel is not an exact record of a single speech by Christ, it is true of the attitude of Christ and of his faithful hearers to all his teaching - that it was a divine message, and therefore not subject

to change.

There is no record of Christ directly teaching that God is immutable, but at such times as he witnessed to the divine existence there was never the least indication that he regarded his statement as possibly needing future revision.

> All things have been delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him.
> (Mt. XI 27 = Lk.X 22; cf.Jn.IV 24, X 30).

The clearest ascription of immutability to himself was contained in his striking summing up on behalf of the Jews of his relationship to Abraham:

> Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.
> (Jn. VIII 58).

It is not enough to explain this as testifying to Christ's previous existence, or even as a suggestion that there is that in him which is eterna1. In ἐγώ εἰμι there is almost certainly a reference to the records of the revelation of the divine name. His Jewish audience seemingly took it so. Already there had been a more veiled hint in the same direction which, though obscured in A.V. and R.V., is noted in R.Vm., for the Greek of S.John VIII 24 reads, ' ἐὰν γὰρ μὴ πιστεύσητε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι, ἀποθανεῖσθε ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν. Further weight is added by the close connection of the whole passage with the descent from Abraham: for the revelation

of the divine name in Ex.III 14-15, and VI 3 is joined with the names of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In the former passage from Exodus it is Abraham's fatherhood of the nation that is introduced - the precise subject of Christ's controversy with the Jews. Moreover the LXX of Exodus III 14 reads: καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεὸς πρὸς Μωϋσῆν, λέγων, ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ ὤν.

There can, then, be little doubt that Christ had the Exodus passages in mind, and in that case his statement about himself cannot be severed from a remarkable emphasis on his own eternity and permanence of personal identity.

The Transfiguration bears similar implications: that there is that in Christ which transcends mortal limitations, that is superior to the darkness of the world, and that, moreover, is not subject to the changes wrought by time, for it was with Moses and Elijah that he talked.

The epistles attributed to Paul provide little that is new. When immutability is introduced it is either to reiterate what has been learned from the Old Testament (e.g.Rom.XI 29, 2 Cor.1 18-19, 2TIM. II 9. TIT. I 2.), or to apply those conceptions to Christ (2 Tim II 13). Of the passages coming under the latter head Rom.VIII 38-39 is the most interesting,

with its sonorous assertion of God's unchangeable active relationship with man expressed in terms of the love of God - the note that has already been noticed as first struck by Christ himself:

> For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (loc.cit.)

The New Testament counterpart of Malachi III 6 as a perennial proof-text of God's immutability is

> ..... the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning. (Jas. I 17b.)

The passage, when read in conjunction with the preceding verses, is an appeal to rise above the world and its temptations through a confidence in God's promise of the crown of life, a promise made by God who cannot be turned aside by any influence exterior to himself, and who, moreover, does not deviate of his own will. It is the fullest New Testament statement of the security of the life lived in obedience to the divine will. A similar attitude has been observed in the calls of the prophets for submission to the Law; but where they were content to say God cannot be changed in his purpose, here we have an implication that God cannot himself change from his purpose, that all variableness is foreign to his nature. There is here biblical authority for a fuller connotation of the term immutability as applied

to God, but still without trace of the oriental conception of a passive deity.

Among the books ascribed to the later part of the First Century the attention paid to immutability is more sustained. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, concerned as he was to show Christ as an eternal high priest, and his self-oblation as of an eternal worth, was of necessity insistent upon God's eternity, and beyond eternity he often reached to the kindred attribute of immutability.

> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever. (Heb.XIII 8, cf.1 10-12)

is a statement in sympathy with the thought of the whole epistle. The context which provokes the assertion is a subject similar to Jas.1 17, and there is further similarity in the directness of the assertion. If God never does change it is no great step to say God cannot change. If the writer did not take this exact step he was yet not far from taking it:

> n Wherein God, being mindful to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement....
>
> (Heb.VI 17-18).

The two things, God's counsel and his oath, are both declared to be immutable (ἀμεταθέτον), and immutable not in the sense that they do not change, but that they cannot be changed, ("concerning which it was impossible for God to lie" ἀδύνατον ψεύσασθαι θεόν).

It must, though, be remembered that the passage does not constitute a generalisation about God.

Of S. John's gospel it has been said that it consciously supplies omissions from the biography of Christ as given in the Synoptic tradition. Whether or not this is true, and very likely it is, there is a distinct emphasis laid on eternity, and the eternal identity of Christ, the Word, that is peculiar to the gospel, and consequently has a special bearing on our subject.

While reference is being made to the motives S. John may have had which influenced the form taken by his gospel it is interesting to speculate whether the later years of the First Century provided circumstances which gave the conception of changelessness an apologetic value. The Fourth Gospel, the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Revelation, all ~~usually assigned to the last quarter of the century, each show this same tendency. On the other hand the writings of the sub-apostolic age show no trace of it.~~ show a distinct occupation with ideas of immutability. On the other hand the writings of the sub-apostolic age are silent on the subject.

The significance of S. John VIII 58 has already been indicated. Much else in the gospel harmonises with it. The prologue plainly states that the Word is eternal in that he is from the beginning with God, and that he is God (1 1-2). He is the creator and sustainer, the 'life', of the world (1 3-4). The Word who "came unto his own" in the world was not a new being. One point of the passage is to state that

the Word in the world was the Word whose nature and activity were already established. He was eternal and did not change, but retained his identity - it is the eternal Word who "was made flesh" (1 14). The gospel contains numerous sentences of Christ's, or sometimes a word or two, or an allusion, which by their cumulative effect give to the reader the realization that the Word stands in relation to the world as stability stands in relation to flux (X 28, XI 25); he is as eternal light opposed to a confusion of darkness (VIII 12, XII 46,); as the helper who cannot be assailed by the limitation of those he helps (1V 14,X 7,11); as the transcendent opposed to the transient and mortal (VIII 23, XVII 14). Separately many of these passages do not seem to bear on immutability: collectively they lend impressive weight. Considered with the message of the prologue, and the figure of the Christ who says of himself "I am" (VIII 58) they testify that the eternal, eternally active Word is, by his very unchangeableness while in the world, the world's hope of deliverance from corruption and mortality.

There is one word used in the gospel which epitomises these aspects of the divine nature as seen in Christ. It is the word 'glory' (δόξα). Glory is inseparable from the divine Name (XII 28). The Son glorifies the Father, and the Father glorifies the Son (XIII 31-32,XIV 13, XVII 1). The Spirit glorifies the Son (XVI 14). This is the inner working of God that is opposed to all that is changeable. The writer

comments that the unbridgeable division between the Pharisees and Christ is that the Pharisees preferred the mortal to the eternal - "for they loved the glory (δόξα) of men more than the glory (δόξα) of God" (XII 43). The fate of those who are redeemed "out of the world" is that they are caught up into the life of divine glory/

> ..... that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given unto them; that they may be one, even as we are one. (XVII 21-22).

In assessing the place of S. John's gospel in the study of immutability it is worthy of mention that it raises all three principal difficulties of Christian belief in immutability. They are (a) that the immutable creates, (b) that the immutable is incarnate, (c) that in some way man is introduced into the immutable life.

The Revelation is of a different temper. Chiefly it is important to the subject as witnessing to the timeless stability of God. Here, perhaps more forcibly than anywhere else in the Bible, eternity and immutability, especially in their transcendent aspect, are emphasised for their own intrinsic spiritual value. It is of the essential grandeur of God, a proclamation of his sovereignty, that past, present and future are all one to him:

> Grace to you and peace, from him which is and which was, and which is to come. (Rev.1 4; cf.1V 8, XI 17, XVI 5).

He is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End (1 8,XXII 13). The picture of God in his heaven shows all time as one; change internal and external as non-existent - except for one thing: he who is the first and the last is also he that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore (I 17-18). Again we are met by the seeming contradiction provided by the Incarnation.

If the aim has been to discover a philosopher's discussion of motion and immutability, then the New Testament has left our hands as empty as the Old. If we hoped for an exact definition we are equally disappointed. But if we have been seeking confirmation of Origen's statement that immutability was "Judaeorum Christianorumque doctrina" (Cont.Cels. 1) we have such a confirmation.

The teaching of the Old Testament has been intensified, enlarged and brought to life. The principal augmentations of the Old Testament conceptions are:

i. The unchanging activeness of God in his relationship with man includes active goodness and love. (Synopics & Jn)

ii God is unchangeably active not only in his relation to men, but also in his own existence (δόξα)

iii That God does not change implies not only that he cannot be changed, but that change is foreign to him, and that some change, if not all, is impossible to him (Jas.and Heb.).

iv. The unchanged identity of the Word, and the Word unchangeably active (Jn.).

v. A fuller conception of God as transcendent and eternal (Jn. and Rev.).

PART III. THE GROWTH OF THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF DIVINE IMMUTABILITY.

Divisions of the Subject:

A. The Fathers.
   1. Before 180 A.D.
   2. 180-325
      (a) The East (Saint Clement and Origen)
      (b) The West (Saint Irenaeus, Tertullian and Novatian).
   3. Saint Athanasius.
   4. Saint Augustine.
   5. The Council of Chalcedon.

B. The Schoolmen.
   1. The Scholastic Background.
   2. Saint Thomas Aquinas.
   3. Saint Bonaventure.
   4. Immutability and mysticism.

A. The Fathers.

1. Before 180 A.D.

The influence of the Hellenic world was increasingly felt by the Church as her activities spread to the west in the late First and early Second Centuries, and the environment introduced new factors to shape the manner and purpose of Christian thought. In the main the converts to Christianity were uneducated people familiar with popular Hellenism: the Church was grappling with untutored minds, not with philosophers, and was finding few scholars in her ranks. Discussions of the immutability of God are not to be expected, and did not appear until about 130 A.D.; moreover there were reasons why Christians should be shy of the subject altogether.

Deeply embedded in the Hellenic thought which the Church was in part assimilating, but more consciously trying to repulse, was the idea of God as immortal, impassible, immutable, absolute - a static, impersonal, deity. It may well be that the Christians of the early Second Century having their own beleif in God's unchangeableness, derived largely from the Old Testament, were aware of the difficulty of correlating it with their belief in the divine Jesus who died on the cross, and were inclined to avoid the subject of immutability which, if the Greek teaching became too influential, might set them on the horns of a dilemma, as indeed it was to do with many generations of Christians afterwards. There is then little cause for comment in the total want of any expression of God's changelessness in several of the early patristic writings, e. g. Clement, 1 ad Cor.; Didache; the Epistle to Diognetus. There is, though, the point of interest that the tendency of the later New Testament books has shown itself to be in the opposite direction, namely to an increasing emphasis on immutability. It is difficult to see what reason there was, if any at all, behind this change.

Until the advent of prominent Christian scholars about the year 180 eternity and transcendence were the aspects of God's nature most frequently stressed. The Epistle to Barnabas is an illustration, and Saint Ignatius writes of

God the Father as :

> .... foreordained before the ages to be for ever unto abiding and unchangeable glory.
> (S.Ignatius of Antioch, Eph.proem. Vol.II,p.539)

By the middle of the Second Century the Apologists were increasing this emphasis, and providing a marked similarity to the cruder kinds of Neo-Platonic doctrine of God as beyond intelligence and being. Reaction from Hellenic anthropomorphism was leading towards Hellenic agnosticism. Justin declared that it would be blasphemous to limit God by a name, since there was no prior being to bestow the name, and therefore God must be nameless. The Apology ~~to~~ of Aristides (c.125) includes one of the earliest definitions of God in negative terms: "immortal,without needs,above all passions,... unchangeable, invisible". There is nothing here that orthodox Christians of any age could not approve, but it is of that kind of statement bred from Hellenic stock, which ignores one side of the Scriptural presentation of God as one who is eternally active and personal, and by this limitation adds to the scandal of the cross a scandal of the incarnation itself. Such thought, innocent in itself, had already fostered Gnosticism, and was later to produce such ditheistic heresies as Nestorianism.

Among the first to discern the difficulty were the Logos theologians. Tatian the Assyrian (c.180), and Theophilous of Antioch (c.180) and Irenaeus were all faced with the alternative of so confounding the Logos and the Godhead as to

deprive the Logos of personality, or of drawing such a distinction between the immutable, impassive God and the Logos who was made flesh as would violate the divine unity. They discerned the difficulty, but were not able to resolve it.

2. 180 - 325 A.D.

(a) The East (Saint Clement of Alexandria and Origen).

The School of Alexandria, although so closely related to the tradition of Greek thought, produced in Clement and his pupil Origen scholars whose learning was sufficiently wide to prevent their being curtained in by Hellenism in a way that would obscure the Scriptural conception of God. Their balanced judgment averted the threatening catastrophe. Clement was in line with the Neo-Platonists in saying God was "beyond being" and adequate description; but he avoids any possibility of a conception of God as static and impersonal by restoring in part the active God of Scripture. Irenaeus was doing the same in the west. Probably the growing influence of the books which now comprise the New Testament, and the attempts at the formation of a canon, were in part responsible. Clement (Ecl.Proph.LII 2) asserts God is "impassible and changeless", but impassibility means for him perfect moral freedom, and immutability means perfect consistency of action (Strom.IV 23,CLI 1). God does not

survey creation with Epicurean disinterestedness from a metaphysical insulation, but rather the point is that his will is determined from within, not influenced from without.

Origen, together with Irenaeus and Tertullian, was in the van in using immutability as a weapon against heretics, (e.g. Con. Celsum III 70; cf.D.T.C., Art:Dieu, sa nature d'après les Pères, T.IV. pars 1.1046, referring to con.Celsum IV). His thought is very much that of Clement, and balances the conception of God as "beyond limitation, beyond estimation, beyond sensation" with the conception of God as eternally active, active as love, and as essentially giving and self-communicative. (Note. Origen is notable as using ~~Vios~~ Υἱός in place of Λόγος . Quick in "Gospel of Divine Action" p. 93 fn., records an interesting suggestion of Hoskyns' that the change in terminology from ~~Vios~~ Υἱός to Λόγος was intended to emphasise the divine action.) But though Origen is the more emphatic on both points, he comes very little nearer than Clement to reducing the apparent contradiction. His difficulty became most acute in his treatment of the relation of God the Father and the incarnate Son. The Father is ἀΐδιος αὐτόθεος ; the Son is incapable of change, 'God of God', yet is θεάνθρωπος . Origen was not able to find a solution that would satisfy him. It was in part the difficulty arising from the Hellenic view of immutability when applied to the Incarnation which provoked Origen's subordinationism, ~~*~~ which

which had such unhappy results in the Arianism of the Fourth Century.

(b) The West.(Saint Irenaeus, Tertullian and Novatian.

In opposition to the Gnostic denial that God revealed in Christ, and the God who is supreme Being are identical, Irenaeus insisted on one omnipotent God, not two Gods limiting each other. But this great achievement in respect to immutability, an achievement that was to influence later western thought, and which was in any case due more to Irenaeus's later western environment than to his earlier eastern, was to make the activity of the one, unchanging God predominant. God is:

> ....also truly perfect in all things, Himself equal and similar to Himself, as he is all light, and all mind, and all substance...(Irenaeus,Adv.Haer.IV xi 2, Vol. V, p.406).

He is "always the same" (Ib.), but he is the Maker who is ever the same, the Benefactor who is ever the same. Everything has its origin in God and his active will:

> ... the substance of all things is the will of God. (Ib.II xxx 9).

He brought to the fore the New Testament revelation of God as everlastingly good. Also he made great use of the Pauline conception of incorruption (cf. ἀφθαρσία , 1 Cor.XV 50 etc) as denoting the permanence and stability of all that is divine, in contrast to the mutability and corruption of mortal nature. The word was to be much used in subsequent

Christian writings. Irenaeus consistently expounds God as superior to the forces of corruption, and asserts that the purpose of the Incarnation was to make incorruption possible for man (Ib.V xiii 3): just like God's goodness, God's incorruption exists actively and to the benefit of man.

Irenaeus was again a pioneer of western thought in reviving the Old Testament realization of God's transcendent changelessness as an inspiration to men to seek God that they too may have peace and rest. The unchanging, loving God fulfils the demand of man's craving: ἀφθαρσία is a blessing that derives from the Beatific Vision (ib.IV xx 4; V xiii 3):

> For as God is always the same, so also men, when found in God, shall always go on towards God. (Ib.IV xi 2, Vol.V,p.406)

The immutable God is revealed, perhaps tentatively, as an inspiration to man to live the devout and holy life. God's immutability is active and loving, and its consequences practical.

It is true that Philo was not unaware of a practical value attaching to immutability. In his "Quod Deus immutabilis sit" he affirmed that God is ὁ ἀτρεπτος; then, to point the desirability of the divine existence being such, he tells how:

> even among men .. those who study philosophy in guilelessness and purity... gain from their knowledge

> this as their reward, that they do not change with changing ~~of~~ circumstances. (Philo,"Quod Deus immutabilis sit", l.v.21-22. Vol. III. p.21)

Philo has done no more than draw a parallel between immutability in God and serenity in man. On this the suggestion made by Irenaeus that man profits directly by his knowledge that God is immutable is a great advance.

Tertullian was discouraged from any great exposition of immutability partly by his own Stoical tendency in allowing that a soul is a body, and that God is therefore in some sense corporeal (Tertullian, Adv.Prax.VII), and partly because in his attacks on Monarchianism his occupation with God's simplicity tended to exclude the study of other attributes (e.g. Adv.Marc.1.3). He did though on occasion resort to immutability as a weapon:

> ..... not unequal, because another principle meets us respecting the Supreme Being, that he is capable of no diminution. (Ib.~~§~~ 1 7)
> For the rest we must needs believe God to be unchangeable and incapable of form (informabilem). (Adv.Prax. XXVII, p. 396).

A characteristically terse sentence affirms God's activeness!

> Moreover the nature of God himself knows nothing of inactivity. (Adv. Marc. ~~§~~ 1 22).

God is immutably and essentially active. The idea is more precise than in Irenaeus, but less extensively expressed. In the reference to the "nature of God himself" there is again foreshadowed Aquinas's assertion that God is pure being, and that to be is to act.

Novatian gives the first considerable account of immutability. He is akin to the Alexandrian school in his metaphysical approach, but in all else essentially western:

> Hence God is always like unto himself. He does not change, or transform himself into any shapes. Such change would be a sign of mortality; it would involve alteration, which is a step towards death of some sort. For this reason any addition of parts or of glory is equally impossible to God, for that would imply that at some time he had been short of perfection, nor can there be any question of diminution in him, for that would attribute to him an approach to mortality. On the contrary, what he is he always is, and who he is he always is, and such as he is he always is. Any additions made to a thing show that it had an origin, and any diminution proves its mortality and death. Therefore he saith, 'I am the Lord, I change not' (Mal.III 6).
>
> He maintains eternally his own state of Being; that which did not come into existence cannot alter. Every possibility that Deity possesses must always be in him, in order that he may be always God, upholding himself by his own powers. This explains his words, "I am who am' (Ex.III 14). That which is bears this name because it always preserves the same attributes. Alteration would at once deprive him of the name 'That which is'; for everything that alters is shown by the very fact of variation to be mortal. It ceases to be what it was, and consequently begins to be what it was not. God therefore, and of necessity, is always like to himself, and equal to himself, without the diminution which change would involve. His state of being abides eternally the same. That which did not come into existence, cannot change, since it is only things that are made, or come into existence, that are liable to alteration; things which at one time did not exist, by coming into being experience existence, and similarly by coming into existence experience change. On the other hand, things which do not come into existence, and have no artificer, are naturally exempt from change, as they have no beginning, and beginning is the cause of alteration. (De Novatian, Trin. IV).

It is a narrow statement , and disciple of Tertullian though he was, it shows none of Tertullian's concision and accuracy,

nor, more importantly, of his appreciation of the active aspect of divine immutability. His value to the discussion, like that of Roman theologians in some later controversies, lies not in his advancing the contentions of any one school, nor even in the development of the main enquiry, but in re-emphasising the best attested facts. The effect is to clear the air.

A detailed investigation of the treatment of immutability by Christian writers from Novatian to the time of the early Schoolmen is exceptionally tedious, and only results in a repetative catalogue. A moderately well defined conception of immutability had gained an accepted place in orthodox doctrine, and was accordingly a commonplace of Christian expression; but the majority of the writers add nothing to what has been said already. Two or three illustrations will serve as examples of the kind of statements that were current:

> ..... One who himself remaining quiet, disposeth and ordereth this variety of motions. (Boethius, Cons. Phil. III 12, p. 289)

> Arius declares that the Son of God may change and swerve. How, then, is he God if he is changeable, seeing that he himself hath said: 'I am, I am, and I change not' ?
> (S. Ambrose, De Fide, I xix 131, p.222).

> But because in God changeableness entereth not, 'no shadow of changing' intercepts his light. (S. Gregory the Gt., Moral. XII 33, p.68).

But a minority of sources in the period are of classic importance. They are the writings of S. Athanasius, and

S. Augustine, and the findings of the Council of Chalcedon, and of them considerable account must now be taken.

3. Saint Athanasius.

Saint Athanasius was concerned primarily to establish the immutability of God the Son, rather than of the Godhead, or of the Father alone. The immutability of the Father was so accepted that he was able to employ it as an agreed premise. But the immutability of the Son was a matter of contention in that it was denied by the Arians. Athanasius quotes Arius's 'Thalia' as asserting that the Logos:

> .... is not unalterable (ἄτρεπτος), as the Father is, but alterable in nature (τρεπτὸς ἐστὶ φύσει) as the creatures.
> (Athanasius, 1 Or.III 9, p.311; cf De Synod.XVI, Ad Ep. Aeg. XII.)

If, as the Arians maintained, the Son was subordinate to the Father, and not co-eternal, then clearly he could not be immutable, without beginning or end, without potentiality of change, or incapable of moral change (ἄτρεπτος). If, as Athanasius laboured to prove, with the aid of the teaching of Scripture and tradition, and by dint of a rather giddy logic and a penetrating genius, the Son is immutable, then the Arians were routed. Never before had immutability proved such a weapon to a protagonist of orthodoxy.

Athanasius took his lead from the Creed of the Council of Nicaea which in its closing anathemas condemned τοὺς δὲ λέγοντας... ἢ τρεπτὸν, ἢ ἀλλοιωτὸν τὸν Υἱὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

He affirmed and reaffirmed the equal immutability of the Father and the Son:

> .....after the resemblance (ὁμοιότητα) of the unalterable (ἀτρέπτου) Father, the Word also is unalterable (ἄτρεπτος).
> (1 Or.XI 39,p.329; cf.2 Or.XVIII,XXXVI;3 Or XXXIV; Ad Ep.Aeg.XVIII; De Fug.XIV etc..Cf.S.Cyril,Ad Joan. lines 127-8 in Bindley's text).

Against the Arian argument that one who has all the characteristics of humanity cannot be immutable Athanasius pressed the distinction of the two natures in Christ:

> He says that he has received power, as man, which he ever (ἀεί) had as God. (3 Or.XXVII 38 p.415; cf. 1 Or.XLI, XLII etc.).

This emphasis on the immutability of the divine nature in Christ is an addition to previous thought, though scarcely an advance into fresh fields. But in his early work on the Incarnation Athanasius had included a passage containing an abundance of new wealth. The passage at first reading appears as a collection of splendid paradoxes, and might well be taken for a piece of youthful writing which ignored the obligation of reconciling statements made, and the dangers of dogmatic obscurantism. For the purpose of analysis it is necessary to quote at some length.

> For he was not, as might be imagined,circumscribed by the body; nor while present in the body, was he absent elsewhere; nor while he moved in the body, was the universe left void of his working and Providence; but, thing most marvellous, Word as he was, so far from being contained by anything, he rather contained all things in himself (οὐ συνείχετο μὲν ὑπό τινος · συνεῖχε δὲ τὰ πάντα μᾶλλον αὐτός);

and just as while present in the whole of Creation, he is at once distinct in being from the universe, and present in all things by his own power, - giving order to all things, and over all and in all revealing his own Providence, and giving life to each thing and all things, including the whole, without being included, but being in his own Father alone wholly and in every respect, - thus even while present in a human body and himself quickening it, he was, without inconsistency, quickening the universe as well, and was in every process of nature, and was outside the whole, and while known from the body by his works he was none the less manifest from the working of the universe as well. Now, it is the function of soul to behold even what is outside its own body, by acts of thought, without, however, working outside its own body, or moving by its presence things remote from the body. Never, that is, does a man, by thinking of things at a distance, by that fact either move or displace them: nor if a man were to sit in his own house and reason about the heavenly bodies, would he by that fact either move the sun or cause the heavens to revolve. But he sees that they move and have their being, without being actually able to influence them. Now, the Word of God in his man's nature was not like that; for he was not bound to his body, but was rather himself wielding it, so that he was not only in it, but was actually in everything, and while ~~eternal~~ external to the universe, abode in his Father only. And this was the wonderful thing, that he was at once walking as man, and as the Word was quickening all things, and as the Son was dwelling with his Father. So that not even when the Virgin bore him did he suffer any change (ὅθεν οὐδὲ τῆς Παρθένου τικτούσης ἔπαθεν αὐτός),

nor by being in the body was [his glory] dulled, but on the contrary he sanctified the body also. For not even by being in the universe does he share in its nature, but all things, on the contrary, are quickened and sustained by him. (De Inc.XVII).

The argument is that the Word prior to the Incarnation was:

i. in all things by his own power, but not included in any of them.

ii. that at the same time he was always in the Father.

At the Incarnation the Word was:

i. still containing the universe and manifest in it.
ii. living as man, though not being bound by his body but wielding it.
iii. external to the universe and abiding still in the Father only.

Undeniably there are some unresolved contradictions here, but certain general conceptions of great value can be extracted. Athanasius has expressed divine immutability as changeless because nothing can be added to the divine activity (cf. Aquinas). This is the full development of the conception which appeared in the Old Testament of God as immutably active. The perfect immutable activity is always present in the world, and therefore cannot be changed by increase or extension. Any approach to pantheism, which tends to abnegate immutability, is checked in time by the insistence that the Word is eternally in the Father only - this at the expense of a measure of contradiction.

If nothing can be added to the activity of the Word it follows that he is also immutable in the sense that he is not passive to any influence - he wields all. Therefore if at the Incarnation nothing has been added to the activity of the immutable Word, and no exterior will or influence has intervened, then the Incarnation is a manifestation of the activity that is eternally God - "so that not even when the Virgin bore him did he suffer any change" (supra). Since, then, the Incarnation is a manifestation of the immutable activity that is eternally God, then the God-Child in the manger at Bethlehem is not a special exhibition

prompted by divine humility, the God-Man dying on Calvary is not a 'tour de force' of divine love and compassion: they are the clearest manifestation ever given to man of God as he is - always, eternally, immutably. In a sense it is true to say that the life of Jesus Christ is primarily the manifestation of the immutability of God.

Even assuming one accepts this interpretation of the passage from "De Incarnatione", it seems still that Athanasius has left his defence of immutability weak in that the deeds of the incarnate God imply potentiality and actualization - that is, change. If Christ were man solely then it would be so. Can his being God-Man alter the position and avoid the consequent mutability of the divine Word? Whether or not Athanasius was conscious of the difficulty at the time of writing the "De Incarnatione" is not apparent, but he treated it in later writings by an insistence on the two wills in Christ, one divine, one human. Thus the deeds of Christ as man are the consequence of human willing, but the human will was acting according to the promptings of the divine eternal will, whose purpose in the Incarnation, as in the whole divine activity, is immutable. This doctrine received final form at the Third Council of Constantinople (A.D. 681) which was concerned to condemn the monothelite heresy:

> We also preach two natural wills in him and two natural operations, without division, without change, without separation, without partition, without confusion....and two natural wills not contrary.... but his human will following his divine and omnipotent will, not resisting it nor striving against it, but rather subject to it.
>
> (Mansi, Sacrorum Conciliorum, XI 635, C sqq. trans. Bettenson, "Documents of the Christian Church", pp.128-9).

It is noteworthy that in expressing its definition the Council referred for precedent to "the teaching of the Holy Fathers" in general, and to "the all-wise Athanasius" in particular.

4. Saint Augustine of Hippo.

It has been said that all the philosophy of the past two thousand years is but footnotes to Plato. It might be said with a similar element of truth that all the theology of immutability of the past fifteen hundred years is but footnotes to Augustine. Perhaps it was the restlessness of his youth, perhaps the incessant and wearisome contentions which enveloped his later life, perhaps it was his natural philosophical bent, perhaps his reaction to the overthrow of the eternal city, or perhaps it was all these things, that clothed the conception of God's changelessness with such richness for Augustine that never for long could he exclude it from his thoughts.

> The intellectual and philosophical conception by which Augustine predominantly thinks of God is as the Being that is not subject to change: 'He truly Is, because he is unchangeable' (De Nat.Boni XIX). It was mainly the intellectual necessity he felt for Something Unchangeable as the basis and background of things changeable, that led him, more than anything else, out of Manichaeism into Christianity, and in his search for God he usually represents his mind as passing ever upwards through the grades of things subject to change, till it arrives at that Being 'in Whom there is no variation'.
>
> (Dom Cuthbert Butler, "Western Mysticism" Part I, i. (c) ~~(a)~~ cf. D.T.C., Art: Dieu, sa nature d'après les Pères, T.IV, pars. 1. 1109).

Augustine did not approach immutability as a subject for speculation, but rather it is intrinsic to the thought which he brought to bear on any subject. Because of the almost boundless range of his intellect, his writings provide a more comprehensive treatment of divine immutability, its meaning, implications, validity and worth, than has been provided by any one man before or since. His knowledge of the Scriptures and the earlier Fathers ensured that nothing of the material they provided was foreign to him. And his study, before his conversion, of Plotinus furnished him with an insight into the Platonic tradition. Moreover the school of Plotinus gave serious study to the writings of Aristotle (cf. A.E.Taylor, 'Platonism' p. 16); thus though Augustine was amongst the most instrumental of those who established Platonism in a position of influence in respect to western orthodox theology, he was not ignorant of Aristotelianism.

Augustine's beliefs about immutability were not given in a systematic arrangement, as was to be the Schoolmen's manner. But there is little difficulty in collecting the teaching and setting it in an orderly frame. This will probably provide the clearest presentation of his thought.

i. The Nature of Change.

His conception of change bears similarity to that of Novatian, and to the Aristotelian arguments which Aquinas was to employ: the ability to change implies in an object the potentiality of being other than it now is:

> For that which is changed does not retain its own being; and that which can be changed, although it be not actually changed, is able not to be that which it had been; and hence that which not only is not changed, but also cannot at all be changed, alone falls most truly, without difficulty or hesitation, under the category of Being. ~~De Trin V 2; cf. De Fid, et Symb.IV~~ (Augustine, De Trin. V.2 ; cf. De Fid et Sym.IV.7; in Joann. XXXVIII 10).

All change is then a departure from real being, from the eternal 'is'. 'Esse est immutabilis esse' seems to express the Augustinian view. But the remote supreme immutable being of Aristotle is given no place.

ii. Immutability in relation to Time and Eternity.

Immutability is often synonymous with eternity in Augustine's thought. The fact that all created things had a beginning, and cannot therefore be in the fullest sense eternal, at once classifies them as mutable:

> ....all things that he has made, because he has made them out of nothing, are changeable. (De Nat Boni I 1, p. 351)

Likewise all that has an end is neither eternal nor immutable, but subject to corruption. The emphasis of some of the Greek Fathers on ἀφθαρσία is increased by Augustine. Creation is the beginning of a mutable existence, of which time, the symbol of change, is its extension and corruption its end. They are the contraries of immutability:

> For immortality is true immortality in His case whose nature admits no change. That is also true eternity by which God is unchangeable, without beginning, without end; consequently also incorruptible. (De Trin. XV 5). 'And the truth' He says, 'shall make you free'. From what, except from death, from corruption, from changeableness? Since truth remains immortal, incorrupt, unchangeable. But true immortality, true incorruptibility, true unchangeableness, is eternity itself. (Ib. IV 18).

God as having no beginning and being eternally incorruptible, is therefore not subject to time and change.

> ..... for there was no time before time began, and therefore it did not happen to God in time that he should be Lord, since he was Lord of the very times themselves, which assuredly did not begin in time. (Ib. V. 16).

Even God's knowledge of creation, its changes and its time-bound nature does not involve his knowing in a time sequence:

> He does not pass from this to that by transition of thought, but beholds all things with absolute unchangeableness; so that of those things that emerge in time, the future, indeed, are not yet, and the present are now, and the past no longer are; but all of these are by him comprehended in his stable and eternal presence. Neither does he see in one fashion by the eye, in another by the mind, for he is not composed of mind and body; nor does his present knowledge differ from that which it ever was or shall be, for those variations of time, past, present, and future, though they alter our knowle

knowledge, do not affect his, 'with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning' (Jas.1.17). (De Civ. Dei XI 21 cf. Ib. XII 17).

iii. Precautions to be taken in studying God's Nature.

Aware of the obscurities which discussions of infinte being so easily achieve, Augustine refused on the one hand to consider as manifest what was incomprehensible, and on the other to admit that, because human comprehension is finite , therefore any attempt to understand the being of God is fruitless:

> For things incomprehensible must so be investigated, as that no one may think he has found nothing, when he has been able to find how incomprehensible that is which he was seeking. (De Trin. XV. 2).

The human mind has no better occupation than to try, in the light of faith, to discern the nature of God. (cf.Ib.XV 27).

iv. That God is immutable.

Taking this very subject of the limitations of human comprehension and perfection, together with human awareness of finitude and change, Augustine argues for the infinitude of God:

> For as wisdom is so called from the being wise, and knowledge from knowing; so from being (esse) comes that which we call essence. And who is there that is,more than he who said to his servant Moses, 'I am that I am'; and, 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, he who is hath sent me unto you'? (Ex. III 14). But other things that are called essences or substances admit of accidents, whereby a change, whether great or small, is produced in them. But there can be no accident of this kind in respect to God; and therefore he who is God is the only unchangeable substance or essence, to

> whom certainly being itself, whence comes the name of essence, most especially and most truly belongs. (De Trin. V 2.)
>
> There is, accordingly, a good which is alone simple, and therefore alone unchangeable, and this is God. (De Civ. Dei XI 10.)
>
> Wherefore there would be no changeable goods, unless there were the unchangeable good. (De Trin. VIII 3).

These arguments from the partial goods to a necessary perfect good, and the argument (quoted below, p. 58, ~~De Verb. Dom.~~ Serm. ~~XXXVIII~~ LXVII 3) for an unchangeable Form of all Forms, have a strong Platonic flavour. But there is something nearer to Aristotle in :

> Yet neither would this be the first cause, for that doubtless was a higher cause still, and lay in the unchangeable wisdom itself. (De Trin. III 3).

N.B. God, then, is immutable in substance (cf. also De Trin. I 1; II 10), and is not subject to accident (cf. also Ib. V 16, V 4). Apparent change in God is due to change in the observer, not in the Observed.

> Consequently, when God is said to change his will, as when, e. g., he becomes angry with those to whom he was gentle, it is rather they than he who are changed, and they find him changed in so far as their experience of suffering at his hand is new, as the sun is changed to injured eyes, and becomes as it were fierce from being mild, and hurtful from being delightful, though in itself it remains the same as it was. (De Civ. Dei XXII 2).

Not only is God unchanging, but he is incapable of change:

> nothing happens accidentally to God in time, because he is incapable of change. (De Trin. V. 16).

God alone is immutable being (cf. Ib. V 2, supra p. 53).

> And consequently if he alone is immutable, all things that he has made, because he has made them out of nothing, are changeable. (De nat boni I 1).

The Being of God, since it immutably is, can have no contrary:

> I trust that it is now made patent to spiritual minds that there cannot possibly exist any nature contrary to God. For if he is - and this is a word that can be spoken with propriety only of God (for that which truly is remains unchangeably; inasmuch as that which is changed has been something which now it is not, and shall be something which as yet it is not), - it follows that God has nothing contrary to himself. (De Fid.et Sym. IV 7).

Never does Augustine tire of stressing the practical significance of divine immutability for human life. Nor does he lose sight of the God who is immutably active. But more frequently he chooses to emphasise the restfulness of divine immutability. It is worthy of note that his confidence in God's changelessness is the foundation of his belief in eternal law, which is in turn the basis of his whole theology of moral law.

v. Immutability and the Holy Trinity.

The immutable is which constitutes the perfect being of God is not to be ascribed unequally to the Persons of the Trinity:

> In God himself, therefore, when the equal Son, or the Holy Spirit equal to the Father and the Son, is joined to the equal Father, God does not become greater than each of them severally; because that perfectness cannot increase. But whether it be the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit he is perfect, and God the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit is perfect. (De Trin. VI 8; cf. Ib. LI 17).

The relationship of the Persons is immutable:

> But the only-begotten Son of God, what he is, this cannot be changed; he cannot be changed into anything else, cannot be diminished, what he was he cannot but be, he cannot but be equal to the Father. (Serm.XC. 2, p. 529).

The immutability of the Word:

> For he [the Word] is a certain Form, a Form not ~~the~~ formed, but the Form of all things formed; a Form unchangeable, without failure, without decay, without time, without place...etc... (Serm.LXVII 3, p. 459)

Augustine has missed nothing put forward by his predecessors , and has consolidated, co-ordinated and developed their conception of immutability. Like them he found it a useful weapon ready to his hand in combatting erroneous conceptions of God. He struck with it against the two philosophies of whose falsity he, who had once numbered himself among their ranks, was the most convinced - Neo-Platonism and Manichaeism:

> They [the Neo-Platonists] saw indeed the fixed, lasting and indefectible truth, where abide all the forms of all creaturely things; but they saw it from afar; they saw, but their camping ground lay in error; and so to that mighty, ineffable, and blissful possession they found not the way. (Serm.CXLI).
>
> The Manichaeans would not drivel, or rather, rave in such a style as this, if they believed the nature of God to be, as it is, unchangeable, and absolutely incorruptible, and subject to no injury; and if, moreover, they held in Christian sobriety, that the soul which has shown itself capable of being altered for the worse by its own will, and of being corrupted by sin, and so, of being deprived of the light of eternal truth, - that this soul, I say, is not part of God, nor of the same nature as God, but is created by him, and is far different from its Creator. (De Civ.Dei XI 22).

If there is one point on which Augustine did not do full justice to previous Christian scholarship, it is that his insistence upon divine immutability as an immutable activity is not pronounced. The conception was not foreign to him, nor unwelcome, for it has a place in his thought, (e.g. God is "ever working, ever at rest" Conf.I 4); but never does he emulate the enthusiasm and preoccupation of S.Athanasius. If, as Quick suggests, Scholasticism is starved of the conception of divine activity, the cause probably lies with S.Augustine and the influence he exerted on mediaeval theology.

This partial omission may be intentional, since the Athanasian treatment, though most profitable, seemed to lead to certain difficulties and contradictions - though Augustine was not afraid of difficulties. It is best accounted for by allowing that Augustine was most keenly interested, even preoccupied, in developing another aspect of the subject, a development that was his greatest contribution to the theology of divine immutability, and one of his greatest and most influential contributions to Christian life and thought since his day. Already the Fathers have been observed employing immutability as an incentive to the pursuit of the spiritual life, with argument analagous to Christ's teaching on treasure in heaven. Where there they were scratching the ground, Augustine dug deep foundations and

built a glorious shrine. Not in the immutable divine activity, but in the immutable divine restfulness and peace he discovered his greatest riches. He believed that the end for which humanity yearns in its ceaseless questing is peace, and that the true end of the good life is the perfect peace which is found only in the Vision of the immutable God.

The subject is such that if we are to understand S. Augustine's accomplishment, and to comprehend theological movements of later generations it must be given a fuller consideration.

Immutability, the Good Life and the Vision of God in the thought of S.Augustine.

Any observer of man and his mind is bound to notice the restlessness of humanity, its perpetual desire to attain whatever it considers will yield satisfaction; the repeated disappointments, the continued search. Augustine's writings witness to his shrewd observation of his fellows, and his "Confessions" shew the keenness with which he analysed his own mind. Consequently he was abundantly aware of man's hunger for whatever it may be that can bring contentment and repletion to the human soul. His own experience taught him both where it could be found, and where it could not. The material and sub-rational world could not supply it.

Nor could it be found in the human mind and soul:

> I seek my God in every corporeal nature, terrestrial or celestial, and find him not: I seek his substance in my own soul, and I find it not. (In Pss. XLII 7 = Vulg. XLI 8, p.134).

All that pertains to man betrays him by its falsehood, transcience and decay:

> It seeks to find a truth not subject to change, a substance not capable of failing. (Ibid. 6 = Vulg. v.7. See Appendix III).

The part of our mind which deals with temporal things is the lower part (cf. De Trin.XII 3); the higher is led by its reason to seek ever upwards in the hope of finding that which will appease its craving:

> Then when they go on they look into the nature of life itself, if they find it mere nutrative life, without sensibility, such as that of plants, they consider it inferior to sentient life, such as that of cattle, and above this again they place intelligent life, such as that of men. And perceiving that even this is subject to change, they are compelled to place above it, again, that unchangeable life, which is not at one time foolish, at another time wise, but on the contrary is wisdom itself. For a wise intelligence, that is, one that has attained to wisdom, was, previous to its attaining wisdom, unwise. But wisdom itself never was unwise, and never can become so. And if men never caught sight of this wisdom, they could never with entire confidence prefer a life which is unchangeably wise to one that is subject to change. This will be evident if we consider that the very rule of truth by which they affirm the unchangeable life to be the more excellent, is itself unchangeable: and they cannot find such a rule, except by going beyond their own nature; for they find nothing in themselves that is not subject to change. Now no one is so egregiously silly as to ask 'How do you know that a life of unchangeable wisdom is preferable to one of change?' For that very truth about which he asks, how I know it? is unchangeably fixed in the minds of all men, and presented to their common

> contemplation. And the man who does not see it is like a blind man in the sun, whom it profits nothing that the splendour of its light, so clear and so near, is poured into his very eye-balls. (De Doct.Christ.I 8-9)

So not the material world, nor the animal world, nor the rational world, nor anything that is in man, can supply man with that which he ever seeks to achieve. Having exhausted creation -

> therefore it follows that in no way can life be truly blessed unless it is eternal. (De Trin.XIII 8)

And eternal being is to Augustine the only real being, the being that has no change, and which he believed to exist only in God. It is God, and God alone, that man seeks:

> Let us, then, now seek the Trinity which is God, in the things themselves that are eternal, incorporeal, and unchangeable; in the perfect contemplation of which a blessed life is promised us, which cannot be other than eternal. (Ib. XV 4).

The end of all life, and man's only complete satisfaction, is the Vision of God:

> But when the sight shall have come which is promised anew to us face to face, we shall see this not only incorporeal but also absolutely indivisible and truly unchangeable Trinity far more clearly and certainly than we now see its image which we ourselves are. (Ib.XV 23).

At last the soul's journey is done. Not only has it found the unchangeable Trinity, the eternal redeemer, but in place of its restless pursuit it assumes some part of the divine repose:

> O true piety; thy God endureth, fear not; he doth not perish, and through him, thou too dost not perish. (Serm.LXXIV 3, p.475).

So the soul finds its fulness and its peace. No word was sweeter to the ear of S.Augustine than 'peace'; and who is to criticise such a judgment? The Vision of God meant blessed peace, and to win that priceless reward was worth sacrificing everything.

> The end or supreme good of this city [of God] is either peace in eternal life, or eternal life in peace. For peace is a good so great, that even in this earthly and mortal life there is no word we hear with such pleasure, nothing we desire with such zest, or find to be more thoroughly gratifying. (De Civ. Dei XIX 11; cf. Ib.XIX 20).

Nothing could be more sublime, nothing more severely practical than this aspect of Augustine's thought. It provides the map of life which he lays before his disciples of all ages. All the vicissitudes of the journey through life are readily discounted by the soul that travels the road to the Beatific Vision, which is the consummation of all man's longings, and which provides its supreme satisfaction in participation in the eternal peace of the immutable God.

> For now thou art not without somewhat to say to thyself in answer to those who say, 'Where is thy God?' I have now had the perception of something that is unchangeable. (In Pss.XLII 10 = Vulg.XLI)

Therein lies the whole purpose of the divine plan, the work of redemption, and the existence of man:

> For thou has formed us for thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee. (Conf.I 1,p.1)

Augustine has shown not only the incentive to, and the direction of, the good life, but has made it the foundation of his teaching on the contemplative life. He is the pioneer of Western mysticism; and the influence which he has thus exerted is incalculable. The mediaeval mystical theologians, the counter-reformation doctors and directors, and all who have learned from them, are in deep debt to S. Augustine. He himself owed not a little to the Greek Fathers, and to Greek philosophers, but he gave far more than he received. Central in his thought is the realization of the full significance of divine immutability. From him we learn not only the theological importance and ramifications of the conception, but its value in providing life with a purpose, and as a practical inspiration to Christian devotion - to holy living and holy dying.

5. The Council of Chalcedon

In the Chalcedonian documents the seal is set on much that the Fathers had taught about immutability, especially about the Son.

The "Definition" asserts that the One Christ is one Person acknowledged in two distinct and real natures,

> unconfusedly, unchangeable, indivisibly, inseparably, (ἀσυγχύτως, ἀτρέπτως, ἀδιαιρέτως, ἀχωρίστως) (Def.Fid. apud Conc.Chalc. IV).

It also reveals the Church's conception of her own nature as divine, and so immutable, so that her doctrine can be described as

> unchangeable from the first (ἀνῶθεν ἀδιάλειπτον). (Ibid. III).

Leo in his "Tome" explains that the redemption came about because God had willed that man should have "the dowry of immortality", and, despite the Fall, that had to be accomplished, because God is immutable (incommutabilis), and his will cannot alter, (Tome III).

S.Cyril, who clearly shows the influence of Athanasius, says, in discussing the two Natures in Christ, that even at the Incarnation the Son remained unchanged:

> But since God the Word who came down from above and from heaven 'emptied himself, taking servant's form', and was called 'Son of Man', still remaining what he was, that is, God - for he is immutable and unalterable by Nature. (ἄτρεπτος γὰρ καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος κατὰ φύσιν ἐστίν). (Cyril, Ad Joan).

And there is a similar passage in the "Third Epistle to Nestorius":

> And we do not say either that the flesh was changed into the Nature of Godhead, or indeed that the ineffable nature of God the Word was perverted into that of flesh, for he is immutable and unalterable (ἄτρεπτος γὰρ ἐστὶ καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος παντελῶς), ever abiding the same, according to the Scriptures.

In neither case does Cyril make any real attempt to explain the apparent contradiction incurred in what he has said. He takes us no further than Athanasius; indeed the

passage from which the second quotation is taken was probably written with a fairly exact recollection of Athanasius's "De Incarnatione" XVII in mind.

B. The Schoolmen.

1. The Scholastic Background.

Plato, Aristotle and Augustine were the three chief influences from the past in the mediaeval schools, and, much as their theologies and philosophies may differ otherwise, immutability plays a dominant part in the thought of each. It was inevitable that a similar emphasis should characterize mediaeval thought. Saint Augustine was the initial influence and secured a precedence which was to be rivalled, but, probably, never taken from him. It was largely through the widespread and intimate knowledge of Augustine's works with their Platonic flavour that Plato was made a subject of reverent study. The stress on immutability and transcendent sovereignty thus provided partly accounted for, and was partly intensified by, the system of feudal sovereignty which governed the social life of the age, and therefore the mental climate of the age. Thus it is not surprising to find the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), provoked by the Albigensian heresy with its assertion that there is a distinction between the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament, placing "Incommutabilis" in the list of divine attributes at the

beginning of its declaration of faith:

> Firmiter credimus et simpliciter confitemur, quod unus solus est verus Deus, aeternus, immensus et incommutabilis, incomprehensibilis, omnipotens et ineffabilis, Pater, et Filius et Spiritus sanctus... (Ex I, c.1 (IV Lat.Can.1.)).

When, also, at the beginning of the Thirteenth Century, a new and dynamic influence was introduced into western Christendom with the appearance of the Latin translations of the metaphysical works of Aristotle, the concentration on the divine immutability received further reinforcement, and accordingly the documents of the period show the affirmation of 1215 repeated:

> ... unicum Deum, omnipotentem, aeternum et invisibilem et incommutabilem. (Confessio fidei Michaelis Paleologi ipsi a Clemente IV, 1267. Denzinger 385).

> ... ecclesia ... firmiter credit... unum verum Deum omnipotentem, incommutabilem, et aeternum... (Ex Decreto pro Jacobitis, sive Bulla Eugenii IV "Cantate Domino" 1441. Denzinger 598).

Dr.Quick has contended that in consequence of these influences the balance which had been preserved between Hebraism and Hellenism in Christian thought up to the time of Augustine was then lost, and that an unbalanced, too-Hellenic Christian theology became prevalent. He maintains that the theological systems, and that of Aquinas is mentioned as an example, created a cleavage between, on the one hand, "a conception of God not only as impassive but as inactive", and who "because his nature is changelessly perfect, is conceived as static" (Quick, "Gospel of Divine Action",

Ch.IV, p.94); and, on the other, the soteriological theology of the age, based on the belief in God incarnate and active in a changing world.)

> "The general result was an anomaly in the mediaeval thought of the Incarnation. On the one hand the emphatic affirmation that Jesus Christ was personally one with the changeless, impassible God led to a virtual denial of His human personality and to conclusions which are manifestly inconsistent with the fact of his sufferings as the gospel records them... The idea of the divine act in Jesus, so absolutely central in the New Testament, seems to play no part in the systematic theology of the time." (Ib.p.96).

Clearly the triple influence of Augustine, Plato and Aristotle was responsible for the form taken by mediaeval thought, but it is debatable that the consequences were so harmful as Dr.Quick suggests. The problem of the immutable God who was incarnate was not new: it is indigenous to Christian theology. As has been seen, the Fathers had long known and laboured with it. At worst the Schoolmen may occasionally have let metaphysics overshadow their theology in a way that threw up the paradox of the Incarnation in a harsh light; but there is scarcely ground for maintaining that they conceived of the Godhead as immutable and therefore "static" and "inactive". Aquinas, in line with the Fathers and the Scriptures, conceived the unchangeableness of God as a kind of unchanging activity; not in terms of the sterile, uncaring transcendence of Hellenic thought. The existence of God is "actus purus", an activity devoid of

potentiality. Whether such a contention is rationally conceivable, or whether it is a contradiction in terms, must be considered in the succeeding examination of Aquinas's philosophy; the important point for the present is that Aquinas was satisfied in his own mind that his conception of God did not sunder the natures of Christ, nor banish the creation from the knowledge and care of its Creator. Saint Bonaventure, even more noticeably than Aquinas, was concerned to demonstrate the relationship between the Godhead, the incarnate Son, and the world of sense and change.

Nor is it strictly accurate to assert that the mediaeval satisfaction theories of the atonement were divorced from the idea of God as immutable, and "wholly depend on the idea that Jesus Christ as the perfect man endured the full penalty of human sins, and satisfied the claims of God's justice." (Ib.p.97). Saint Anselm, the prime expositor of the satisfaction theory, writes rather of satisfying the claims of "God's honour", than of his justice, and contends that the very reason why God's honour must be satisfied is because it is immutable:

> We should rather understand that he does this from the necessity of preserving his honour, which necessity is obviously nothing else than the immutability of his honour (non est aliud quam immutabilitas honestatis ejus). (Anselm, "Cur Deus Homo?" II 5).

Anselm does not base his theory only on the passible divine humanity, but also, if less conspicuously, on the immutable divinity.

The influence of Greek conceptions of God led, in the middle ages, to an intense study of the transcendent, eternal and immutable qualities of divine existence; but it was not an exclusive study. Possibly it was excessive theologically, but the Schoolmen were not theologians simply; they were also philosophers.

With Augustine the age of great Christian explorers closed. Theological investigation was less notably inspired by the need to vindicate the faith, to flout schismatics and to wrestle for souls. The Fathers were as hewers of stone, while the Schoolmen were as architects. Christian philosophy and theology were now studied more for their own sake. Whereas the great treatises of the Fathers were for the most part apologetic or expository, the crowning treatises of the Schoolmen were theological syntheses and academic commentaries, and their theses can mostly be found again and again already existing in the writings of the Fathers. But the great mediaeval contribution to the development of the subject is the thorough working out of the precise implications, and the establishment of them in the field of exact thought and dialectic. Theologically they supplied a much clearer

definition and a much stronger equipment for defence. Philosophically the beliefs were thought out in relation to the profoundest known schools of thought, and expressed in current terminology. The strength of the scholastic corpus of arguments was not in its own day tested by any conflict on the grand scale, and in the succeeding centuries the post-reformation philosophers did not allow the mediaeval thinkers to meet them as vital adversaries, but condemned or ignored them from afar. But in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries the Schoolmen have been brought into the lists as protagonists of Christian philosophy, and the sturdiness with which they have been able to repulse a diversity of opponents testifies not only to the faith which they upheld, but also to the quality of the reasoning through which they expressed it. The writings of the Fathers could never have won the success in the arena of modern philosophy which scholasticism is so impressively achieving.

In much of their work they borrowed and stole from each other; thus Peter Lombard reappears frequently in the work of later writers; Saint Bernard's "omnis mutatio quaedam mortis initiatio est" (S.Bernard, Serm.in Cant.LXXX) reiterates Augustine, and many writers after Bernard did no more than reiterate him. Scissors-and-paste was a common method of work, and in consequence the immense output of written work is an inaccurate guide to the

creativity of the period. But this need be no belittlement, since the purpose of a writer was often to correlate, to expound and to compile compendiums that were ingenious and erudite rather than original. For such labours the present age has learned both respect and gratitude. In its own field the original work of the period is nevertheless considerable, and provides most important material. The principal instigation to original thought was the recovery by the west of the metaphysical writings of Aristotle. The new doctrines found there imperilled orthodoxy, and to protect and vindicate it Saint Albert the Great undertook to harmonize the peripatetic philosophy with the doctrines of the Church. The work which he began found its most able labourer in Albert's pupil, Saint Thomas Aquinas. Not only did he accomplish the task, but executed it in such a manner as to establish him as the greatest of all the Schoolmen. A study of his exposition of immutability, and some consideration of the rather different treatment given by Saint Bonaventure, will give sufficient indication of the mediaeval consolidation of the subject.

2. Saint Thomas Aquinas.

Appreciation of the genius of Aquinas mounts as one recognises how deeply indebted he was to Augustine and Aristotle, yet how independent he was of both. If, as is

said, Albert instructed his pupil to go to Augustine for his theology, and to Aristotle for his philosophy, then the pupil did not neglect the authorities prescribed, though occasionally neglecting the distinction. That while re-applying both in a manner essentially original he should have discarded so little out of his treasures things new and old, and the final achievement was wholly his own, and in every way a work of the Thirteenth Century.

(that was fundamental to each was a triumph. Aquinas brought)

For Aquinas immutability had a double claim to prominence. Not only, he believed, could it be rationally proved that God is immutable; but also what was for him the most impressive proof of the existence of God was in reality a demonstration of the necessary existence of a supreme immutable being. The proofs in the "Summa contra Gentiles" lead us first to an immutable being, then apply the name God. We are not first introduced to God, and then shown that he must be immutable.

> Everything that is moved is moved by something else. Moreover, it is evident to our senses that there are objects in motion, as for instance the sun. Therefore such an object is moved by something else. That which moves it is itself also either moved or not moved. If it be not moved we have reached a point where it is necessary to posit an unmoved mover, and this we call God. If, however, it be moved, then its movement must be caused by something else which moves it. Consequently we must either proceed to infinity or posit an unmoved mover; but we cannot proceed to infinity, therefore we must posit a primal unmoved mover. (Sum. con. Gent. lib. I, cap. 13)

The proof is, of course, Aristotelian. (Since our present purpose is not to test the validity of this as an

argument for the existence of God there is no necessity to examine the rather lengthy arguments by which Aquinas proves what he has assumed here - that every moving thing is moved by another; and what he has asserted here - that it is not possible to proceed to infinity.)

Before considering the other approach provided by Aquinas, namely the proof that God must be immutable, it is desirable to consider what is to be understood by motion and change - that which could not exist in an immutable being.

In every change three factors are involved: (a) two extremes, the "terminus a quo" and the "terminus ad quem"; (b) a subject which throughout the occurrence of change remains identical with itself; (c) a transition in which the subject ceases to be conditioned by the first extreme, and begins to be conditioned by the second (con.Gent.lib.II, cap.17). Such an occurrence of change requires that the subject be divisible. The transition from being wholly conditioned by one extreme to being wholly conditioned by the other involves a transference in the course of which the subject is in part conditioned by one extreme, in part by the other. Consequently it must be divisible into parts. Aquinas puts forward this argument in his commentary on Aristotle's "Physics" (Phys.lib.VI,cap.iv,lect.5), and points out that the argument applies only when change is

considered in the Aristotelian sense of local motion. It would not apply to all that Plato, and often Augustine with him, comprehended in the application of the terms, applying motion to the functions of will and intellect, besides simple continuous local motion. (It will be necessary to return to this difference in terminology).

To be mutable a subject does not need to change or move, but only to be capable of change - to be in a state of potentiality. A man in Birmingham is able to travel to Derby. If he does he has been the subject of a change. He is no longer a man in Birmingham, but a man who was in Birmingham, but now is in Derby. The change which while he was in Birmingham was potential has been made actual. But even if he stays in Birmingham, he is still a mutable man, because he is in a state of potentiality; he is <u>able</u> to change into a man who was in Birmingham and now is in Derby. It is merely that a potentiality has not been made actual; but it is none the less real a potentiality for that. He remains equally mutable whether he goes to Derby or not. The essence of mutability is potentiality. The potential is that which does not yet exist, but which, as the consequence of an action by an efficient cause, can come into existence, or actuality.

(The argument for the existence of God already quoted (p.73) is set out in terms of potentiality and actuality in "De Potentia":

> Actuality, strictly speaking is prior to potentiality both in nature and in time; although in a particular instance of the passage from potentiality to actuality the potential may be prior in time, yet since it is necessary that it should be brought into actuality through some being which is already actual, it is also necessary that, strictly speaking, the actual should be prior to the potential even in time. Hence, since every body is in potentiality, as its motion makes evident, of necessity there must be an immobile eternal substance prior to all bodies. (De Pot.q.6,a.6.c,trans. Patterson)).

The potentiality may exist in the subject itself (in ipso), as with the man at Birmingham, or in something else (in altero) which can effect a change in the subject, as would be the case if the man were kidnapped in Birmingham, and conveyed to Derby as a consequence of the activities of his kidnappers. (cf.Summa Theologica I.q.9.a.2.). Potentiality is the hallmark of mutability.

It is with these principles in mind that Aquinas puts forward three arguments to prove that God is immutable:

> ... it was shown... that there is some first being, whom we call God; and that this first being must be pure act, without the admixture of any potentiality, for the reason that, absolutely, potentiality is posterior to act. Now everything which is in any way changed, is in some way in potentiality. Hence it is evident that it is impossible for God to be in any way changeable. Secondly, because everything which is moved, remains as it was in part, and passes away in part, as what is moved from whiteness to blackness, remains the same as to substance; thus in everything which is moved, there is some kind of composition to be found. But it has been shown above (q.3.a.7) that in God there is no composition, for he is altogether simple. Hence it is manifest that God cannot be moved. Thirdly, because everything which is moved acquires something by its movement, and attains to what it had not attained previously. But since God is infinite,

> comprehending in himself all the plenitude of perfection of all being, he cannot acquire anything new, nor extend himself to anything whereto he was not extended previously. Hence movement in no way belongs to him. (S.T.I.q.9,a.1.Vol.I,p.92).

Unless one does not admit previous conclusions to which Aquinas refers, and on which these arguments are constructed, these proofs are convincing. But it now seems necessary to probe further into the matter of just how much Aquinas is implying when he says God is immutable. That he is without potentiality is clear; but is one therefore to conclude that all activity is excluded from the Godhead? In the argument from the "Summa contra Gentiles" already referred to, Aquinas has equated the term God with the Aristotelian term unmoved-mover. Does he, then, wholly reject the Platonic self-moved mover? From the passage immediately following these three arguments from the "Summa Theologica" it is clear he does not. He is there concerned, on the basis of his three arguments, to refute the contention that God is in some way mutable, since Augustine could say of him, "Spiritus Creator movet se, nec per tempus, nec per locum". (S.T.loc.cit.). Aquinas's argument is that Augustine is there speaking after the manner of Plato, who said the prime-mover moved itself: "every operation is called motion, in accordance with which even to understand (intellegere) to will, and to love, are in a fashion spoken of as motion". (Ibid.). From this ~~is it~~ it is

clear that Aquinas, when speaking of God as the unmoved-mover does not normally cover acts of will, intellect and love by the term motion. To him it seemed clear that motion as applied by Aristotle, and as applied by Plato did not have an identical application; but if one bore in mind their different usage, then there was no disagreement between the Aristotelian unmoved-mover, and the Platonic self-moved prime-mover.

> We should note that Aquinas seeks to show.... that there is no real disagreement between Aristotle and Plato. The former, he tells us, meant by motion the act of that which exists in potentiality as such (fn.ref.to Con.Gent.lib.I.cap.13), a conception which applies only to bodies which occupy space and are divisible. Thus, in his commentary on the "Physics" (lib.VIII.cap.vi.lect.12), he observes that Aristotle speaks of the prime mover as being unmoved 'ab omni exterius mutatione' (fn.εἶναί τι τὸ ἀκίνητον μὲν αὐτὸ πάσης ἐκτὸς μεταβολῆς). He does this, says St.Thomas, 'not intending to exclude the type of motion termed operation, which is immanent in the operator; even as intellection is called motion, and the appetite is said to be moved by the appetible. Motion of this sort is not excluded from the prime mover of which he treats.' NB On the other hand, Plato, we are told, used the term 'motion' to signify any operation, so that mental activities, such as knowing and opining, would rank as forms of motion. Aquinas adds that Aristotle himself has referred to this difference of usage in the 'De Anima.' It appears, then, that Aristotle's unmoved prime mover is identical with Plato's self-moving prime mover. (R.L.Patterson, 'The Conception of God in the Philosophy of Aquinas', pp.47-8. cf.D.T.C., Art: Dieu, sa nature selon les Scolastiques,T.IV, pars. 1.1193 seqq. for a general treatment of the Schoolmen's attempts to reconcile and combine Plato and Aristotle).

If this represented Aquinas's thought on all occasions the matter would be clear, but unfortunately, in company

with Aristotle, he at times admits qualitative and quantitative change under the head of motion besides local motion in space. Thus the distinction between Plato and Aristotle is not so easily resolved as we might be led to believe, and it seems that strictly only mental operations are excluded from motion by Aristotle and included by Plato. Consequently Aquinas's position is not wholly consistent, as is admitted by some Neo-Scholastics.

But it would be strange if even in the thought of an Aquinas there were not some obscurities and small fogs. And in this instance the main principles of Aquinas's conception of the immutable God, the unmoved-mover, are out of jeopardy, and readily discerned.

God is the unmoved-mover, but since motion, as used here, does not exclude mental operations there is no implication that the Deity is stagnant. Nor does the absence of potentiality incur a static existence, since potentiality is subordinate to actuality, having no further purpose than to achieve the occurrance of the actual; and also the efficient cause which effects the making actual of a potentiality is a logically and temporally prior actuality. The significance of a potentiality is that it is the potential of an actual. God, in Thomistic thought, is the unchanging fulness of actuality. The actuality neither increases nor decreases, and is subject to no alteration. It is in this sense that

God is immutable as being without potentiality (cf.S.T.I. q.9.a.1. supra pp.76-77).God is 'actus purus'. Clearly for Aquinas immutability does not imply sterility, stagnation or inactivity. Thus in treating of divine operations he is prepared to write of God's "striving". But now it seems that there is the danger of completing a circle. Does not striving imply potentiality and motion? S.Thomas denies the implication, asserting that since God is intelligent his striving is intellectual, that is, an activity of the will (Con.Gent.lib.I.cap.72). But can there be activity of will in an unmoved mover?Aquinas says there can. (S.T.I.q.19.a.1.r.3.; De Veritate q.23.a.1). He admits movement of the divine will, with the divine goodness as its object, but on the score of divine simplicity asserts the identity of both the divine will and the divine goodness with the divine essence; thus, in effect, it is the divine essence which moves the divine essence. God is self-moved, as Plato contended, if we are using motion within the Platonic limits of the term; if we are keeping to the Aristotelian limits there is no motion at all, and God is unmoved.

'Actus purus' is, then, of the divine essence. God is the consummation of act. Is divine actuality or activity in any way comparable with human activity? It cannot be identical, for the very need for postulating

a unique unmoved-mover derives from the realization that ordinary causes are inadequate to account for the whole order of observed movement and change. There must be an ultimate mover of a different kind, or else all would be unmoved-movers, which is both contrary to experience and absurd, or we are back with the infinite series of caused change and motion, the possibility of which we have already seen that Aquinas denies. In short, one could take one's choice between saying all are gods, or that there is no God. If, on the other hand, the difference between divine and human activity is such as to exclude any common ground, then an active God need be no more acceptable than a stagnant deity.

Before we can proceed further some account of the principle of analogy, fundamental to the interpretation of S.Thomas's work, is necessary. He maintained a thorough-going difference between the orders of being - "discontinuity" Gilson has termed it ("Phil.of S.Thos.Aquinas",Engl.trans.p 275). Man is not a diminished version of God, he is altogether distinct. Nor is he of the order of angelic being, but, again, distinct. The lower orders of being do not merely mirror the higher, but each order is proper to itself. Thus a random imputation of the functions and characteristics of one order to a different order is not permissible. The principle for arguing from one to another is not of

identity, but of analogy. Thus in the matter in hand Aquinas argues for a difference, but not a total difference, between divine and human activity. They are analogous, and consequently one cannot either expect to be able to comprehend the whole range of divine activity, or to be able to give a thorough interpretation of it in terms of human activity. Human intellect is finite and limited in accordance with the order of existence to which it belongs, and its experience of activity is of an activity that is limited; therefore full understanding of that which is infinite and perfect is beyond both its powers and experience.

The divine activity is outside human experience in respect of its operation, it is to be known only by analogy, and is incapable of positive definition in terms of experience. An expression in negative terms is inevitable, but it is the most profitable that the circumstances of divine and natural existence permit. S.Thomas, in his discussion of the existence of God, never promised to give more than that:

> Now because we cannot know what God is, but rather what he is not, we have no means of considering how God is, but rather how he is not. (S.T.I.q.3.princ., Vol.8.p.28).

God's existence of pure act is then in some degree comprehensible from our own acquaintance with act, and the whole of that acquaintance can profitably be brought to

bear on the task of understanding God; but if the existence of pure act in an immutable God remains a mystery we are not to be dismayed. Aquinas has shown, even more precisely than Augustine, why we cannot expect more; and the very fact of the persistence of the mystery attests the validity of his exposition. Moreover, having clearly marked the limits to which we can go, he has, nevertheless, shown that the traditional belief in God as both immutable and active is capable of considerable exact rational developments, and has a sure footing in metaphysics as well as in revelation and purely scriptural theology.

In the "Summa Theologica" (I.q.9.a.2.) Aquinas proceeds to show that immutability belongs to God alone, since all the rest of existing things are subject to potentiality. He has thus arrived at an active God whose activity is not wholly unlike that of human experience, and who is at the same time unique in being immutable. These conclusions accord closely with much that is most fruitful in the Fathers' treatment of divine immutability, but whereas they constructed their arguments chiefly on texts and tradition, Aquinas has worked from a more purely philosophical and speculative field. The value of the difference of approach, and similarity of conclusion is considerable.

But there remains one most important problem: how is the unmoved-mover whose existence is unchanging, timeless

and active, and who eternally contemplates his own essence, to be identified with the personal God taught by Christ, with the "Father" of the Lord's Prayer? It is worth noticing why this gap in the divine-human relationship is so marked in Aquinas. It is not, as might be supposed, that he was carried there by an adherence to S.Augustine, who had so emphasised the gulf between nature and God as to expound a complete 'otherness' amounting to virtual contrariness. Aquinas's loyalty was never of the kind that permits of being led where reason is unwilling to go. With Plato, similarly, Aquinas refused to allow what his reason would not support, and it is in part this very fact which led him into his difficulty. Had he adopted the Platonic suggestion of the lower orders being mere shadowy figures of reality a way out was offered, but the price was to give ground towards pantheism and Neo-Platonism. Aquinas's difficulty is the consequence of two of his greatest virtues as a philosopher: his refusal to barter personal rational convictions for primrose paths, and his adherence to his basic principle that man is to be treated as the natural man of human experience, and not as an angel, a brute, a semi-deity or a wraith. It is in accordance with this second characteristic that he gives such place in his works to Aristotelian physics, incorporating the whole as welcome material for the study of truth in the sensible

universe - material provided by an acute and independent observer. Thus with man treated strictly as man the gulf between humanity and deity lies unconcealed, and the difficulty of bridging it unmitigated. But the need of bridging it is all the clearer. Quick would suggest that it is a failing of the Schoolmen as a whole that they failed to bridge it, and were in large part unaware of its existence.

Aquinas was certainly aware of the gulf, and at pains to do the bridging. Already his assertion of eternal loving action in God has been noticed, the love being bound with the will, and so with the divine essence. But further he made a direct attack on the problem.

He knew that Avicenna had faced a similar difficulty in reconciling Aristotle's teaching with the Islamic conception of God, but, though following the line of approach which he had used, Aquinas rejected Avicenna's solution as inadequate for Christian conceptions. He began by accepting the Aristotelian teaching that God ceaselessly contemplates his own essence, knowing only himself; but he then argued that in knowing himself God knows all things, "nam intellegando se, intelligit omnia alia" (Com.Metaphys. lib.XII.cap.ix,lect.18). Thus in knowing himself God does not know only himself. In the same place he argues that an effect is more completely understood as its cause is

completely understood. To know a cause perfectly is to know its effect perfectly, so that for God, the First Cause, to know himself perfectly is for him to know all the resulting effects of the first cause.

In the "De Veritate" (q.2.a.3.c) a similar argument is pursued. The observer of the universe observes order in it. With this as data it has been argued that there must be a controlling intelligence to account for the order; therefore the controlling intelligence cannot be unaware of the things which it controls.

Lest the objection be raised to his arguments that for God to know things is for him to be acted upon, and so, in a sense, changed from without, Aquinas points out that the resemblances of all created things pre-existed in the divine essence. The resemblances therefore cannot be due to the created things.

Another objection he foresaw was that the contention might be made that since nothing is known except through the nature of being, and the creature-nature is more not-being than being, the creation must be more unknown to God than known (Ib.q.2.a.3.ob.16). In reply Aquinas says that being, when spoken of absolutely, refers to divine being alone, and the creature's being increases or decreases as it approaches God or recedes. God being infinite and the creature finite, the creature is infinitely distant from

God. This is the reason for saying the creature is in large part in a condition of not-being. But the being that it has, comes, nevertheless, from God, and is known to God.

Aquinas was at pains to refute one of the chief Averroist contentions also:

> Some have erred on this point, saying that God knows things other than himself only in general, that is, only as beings. (S.T.I.q.14,a.6, Vol.I.p.192).

This constituted a denial that God knew persons and things individually. By appeal to the conception of cause Aquinas argues to the contrary, that God has a proper knowledge of all things in their plurality, not merely a knowledge of all being as a single existence. God in knowing himself, he says, knows himself to be the cause of all other things, since such he is. For, as has been seen, all effects caused by God pre-exist in him, and are wholly known by him since in knowing himself perfectly he knows the causes that are in himself. Such effects may themselves become causes, but since they are wholly known to God as effects they are also wholly known to him when they in turn act as causes, and consequently <u>their</u> effects are wholly known to God, and so on. Thus in eternally knowing himself God eternally knows the whole intricate and multiplying order of causes, and all their effects (Con.Gent.lib.I.cap.50). There is a second argument that a perfect knowledge must

know both general things and the proper, or individual, things; it must know multitude and distinction. Since God's knowledge is perfect he does know all (Ibid.).

Such is the fashion in which Aquinas proves God's intimate knowledge of man, and every detail pertaining to him, to the very number of the hairs of his head, while yet remaining unchanged by his knowledge. If there is one criticism that springs to mind it is that the repeated appeals to causality suggest that man is a machine actuated by a hierarchy of pre-existent causes. We still seem to be just outside the gospel world where man is a free creature, and God a loving Father. This is probably due to the coldness and impersonal severity of the language in which S.Thomas, so rightly, because so impartially, worked out his philosophy. But clearly to Aquinas, the man, the fruits of his reasoning were at one with his personal experience and love of God. He did not divide his life into compartments without intercommunication - a shortcoming he might easily have acquired from Aristotle. His purpose was to knit together, not to segregate; and the God of the Aquinas who is the author of the "Summa" and the "Contra Gentiles" is also the God of Aquinas the student of the gospels, of Aquinas the master of the contemplative life, of the Aquinas who wrote the "Tantum ergo". This, the test to which he himself put his arguments, to which he put his bridge across the gulf, was wonderfully severe.

3. Saint Bonaventure.

Distinct and impressive approaches to the same difficulty, namely of bridging the gulf between an immutable, absolute God and the God who knows and loves man, are provided by S.Bonaventure. Having contended that God is all-intelligent and all-intelligible it follows, he says, that God must know himself, and know himself in totality in one act of knowing. He then makes a short analysis of ordinary human knowledge from which it appears that in knowing an object the subject is in some way increased by the knowledge of the object known. But in the case of God's knowledge of himself no increase or addition occurs, since that which knows is identical with that which is known. The relationship is unique: the thinking subject, in thinking or knowing itself, in some way reflects itself. This knowledge of himself which God has, and which is identical with himself, Bonaventure calls a 'Resemblance'. In this instance alone is the Resemblance identical with the original, and the totality of what it represents. From this it follows that the Resemblance must be God, derived from God, and equal to God; and such is Bonaventure's contention - the Resemblance is God the Son, the Word. "As God knows himself integrally he has expressed himself integrally" (Gilson, "Philosophy of S.Bon."Engl.trans.Ch.IV.p.143).

He then explains that the operation of God includes both that which he wills to do, and that which he could do if he willed: thus all things that are, that shall be, that can be, owe their possibility to the being in whose power it lies to produce them. The possibilities are the ideas, the archetypes, of all that is or could be produced. All these possibilities are expressed by God in the integral image of himself, and therefore exist in the Word. The Word is, then, at once the unique and identical Resemblance of God, and also the source of the models, or ideas, of all things. In him Creator and creation meet:

> Christ is therefore at the centre of everything: God, the perfect resemblance of God, the home of the archetypes of all the partial resemblances of God, He is at the same time the Master who rules in the height of heaven and who speaks in the depths of our souls. (cf.In Hexaemeron. I.13.t.5.).

In a second approach to the subject Bonaventure begins by considering the implications of an act of knowing. He argues that before an act of knowing there is an intelligence and its object. The act of knowing adds a concept of the object. There is, then, conceptivity or creativity in the act. To this concept he applies his words 'resemblance', 'word' and 'expression', implying always a generating activity. When the intelligence knows an object other than, or external to, itself it engenders a resemblance of that object. As has been seen, God, in knowing himself, expresses

himself in a wholly internal act - the Word. The Word having been so produced, or begotten, internally is then known by God externally, and so resemblances of it are engendered. These are the concepts of things known. (The implied time-sequence exists, of course, merely for the convenience of expression, and is not real, since the acts of knowing are of the eternal totality of divine knowledge.) These resemblances arising from the archetypes or ideas existent in the Word are the external realization of those archetypes - are indeed the creatures. (cf.1 Sent.27,2,un. 1.t.1). Thus it would seem that far from the creatures being separated from the knowledge of the immutable God, they are inconceivable without their being known by God in their entirety. In both arguments it is the Word whose existence effects the connection between God and the creation (In Hex.I.13.t.5). Herein we are brought close to a principle underlying Bonaventure's whole approach to the subject:

> To conceive how the multiplicity of creation could be freely originated from a single God, the cause of all things, dwelling in identity with himself, one must follow a path ... which is the doctrine of the Incarnate Word. (Gilson, Op.cit.Ch.IV. pp.141-2).

Although the manner in which Bonaventure bridges the gap has now been briefly observed there is point in following him a little further, especially as he provides material of great importance for the discussion that must

later be made of divine immutability and the creation.

Resemblance, he maintains, is of two kinds. One is where two or more things have a quality in common, as, for example, two men sharing the quality of tallness. Such common qualities do not exist between God and creatures. The second kind is where, of the things resembling, one reproduces features of the other without having anything belonging to it. This is the resemblance between copy and model. The part each plays is wholly distinct: the copy exists in imitation of the model, and the model is exemplary in respect to the copy. This kind of resemblance can exist between God and creatures. Bonaventure, whose exposition of his theory is a little obscure at this point, seems to achieve his end by a double use of this principle of exemplary resemblance. In the first place the archetypes, or ideas, are copies of the divine model, and since they are known by the divine intellect by an internal act of knowledge (supra), God's knowledge of them involves neither addition nor change in the existence of the divine intellect. The ideas are produced directly in the generating act of divine knowledge, come wholly from God, are not distinct from him, and are wholly known by him (Quaest.disp.de Scien. Christi II, Concl.t.5.). In the second place the ideas are the exemplars of which all things are the copies, and thus created things resemble God through their resemblance to the ideas.

But God is the one, and only possible, infinite being. How then does the creation which resembles him manifest multiplicity? The Doctor answers that the perfect simplicity of the infinite makes possible the expression of an infinity of intelligible acts. These expressions are designated by the ideas in relation not...

> ... to God himself, but in relation to things; so a certain multiplicity is introduced not into what they are, or even into what they signify, but into what they connote. It is as though the multiplicity of material things produced by the divine ideas cast a sort of diversifying reflection upon their unity, with the result that we believe by a quite natural illusion that we find already formed in them a plurality which cannot really exist since it implies the presence of matter.
> There lies the only distinction that can be made between the ideas; a distinction of the reason if it is true that there cannot be in God any true relation of things, but a distinction founded in things if one is careful not to hypostatise unduly the real relation of things to God. (Gilson, Op.cit.Ch.IV. pp.152-3 in ref. 1 Sent.35 un. 3.concl.t.1.)

N.P. Thus in knowing himself God knows the ideas and the whole multiplicity of things arising from the resemblance of material things to the ideas. To know things to their last particular detail and potentiality God has only to know himself, that is, to be God unchanged. Immutability has become the very ground of God's knowledge of the mutable. Bonaventure's emphasis on the non-temporal character of divine knowledge is essential to these contentions. God's knowledge of things and changes is not concurrent with their existence and change, but the knowledge is, if the term may

be permitted, 'timelessly anterior'. God is thus conceived as able to condition the change of things without himself undergoing change, and similarly can know their changeability. His knowledge of them is not compelled by them, but rather they are compelled by his knowledge, and their changes have no modifying effect on his knowledge of them.

As with S.Thomas, and as with the early Fathers, the conception of divine immutability expounded by Bonaventure is as distant as possible from an assertion of divine sterility and stagnation. Activity, and with Bonaventure creative and generating activity, is of the essence of immutability. While the conception of pure act in God is different in both Aquinas and Bonaventure from that expressed by Aristotle the two Christian Doctors are themselves distinct in their exposition of it. Nor is this a consequence of Bonaventure being preoccupied with Augustine and Plato to the exclusion of Aristotle. As Gilson has demonstrated, Bonaventure was not disinterested in Aristotle by any means, but was less influenced by him. Thus his exposition of divine 'expression' in terms of productivity is incomparable with Aristotle, and distinct from the 'actus purus' of Aquinas. God's changelessness is not a cold, distant and disinterested changelessness like that of some distant star, but is the great assurance that

what God is he is eternally; and the God of whom the greatest Schoolmen were always aware was the God of the New Testament. Their philosophical writings may lack the glow of the gospel narratives, but only in so far as the philosopher must always deny himself the warmth of the prophet, and the appeal of the preacher.

4. Immutability and Mysticism.

By the end of the Thirteenth Century the main development of the Christian conception of immutability was complete, and its position in Christian theology determined. Thus with a writer from the evening of Scholasticism, Suarez, we find the treatment familiar, and akin to the work that has already been considered.(Suarez, Tom.I.Pars.1.lib.2, cap.3).

But it was in a different direction that the study of immutability continued most vigorously, and it was the mystics who were in control. Its importance ~~is~~ in relation to the devout life and the Vision of God had already appeared, and it reappeared signally in the later Middle Ages and after; though never with quite the prominence it had in the works of Augustine. This was in part because the emphasis given by Augustine, coupled with his equally great influence on the thought of those who came after him, established as generally accepted among later

mystics and ascetics what with Augustine was a glorious discovery. It had become implicit in the mystical theology of the Victorines, Aquinas and Bonaventure, and its presence is felt from end to end of the writings of the author of "The Cloud of Unknowing" and of Ruysbroeck:

> and if we possessed that rest with God, we should be rest itself with him, and should have risen to his loftiness and, beyond all steps of the heavenly ladder, have become with him in his Godhead an essence in repose and an eternal blessedness. (Ruysbroeck, "Seven Steps of the Spiritual Ladder", VII A).

Such a passage is essentially in the Augustinian tradition, but the tone is of assumption rather than of contention.

N.P. After the Middle Ages the torch still burned on. In the great Spanish school of Counter-Reformation teachers on prayer, and in the later schools of the west, always the immutability, the eternity of God, and the beatitude of everlasting rest in God, were thoughts whose power was recognised; they are the dawn beyond the Dark Night, they are the ecstasy of the innermost Mansion, they are the reward of Abandonment. S.François de Sales opens the tenth book in his treatise "On the Love of God" with the famous quotation from Augustine's "Confessions" - "our heart is restless till it finds its rest in Thee". Then he expands the theme, exulting in the immutably blessed existence that the soul in heaven derives from its knowledge of the immutable God:

> In heaven the loving attention of the blessed is strong, constant and inviolable, and can neither perish nor decrease; their intentions are always pure, and free from the mixture of all other inferior intentions. In short, this great happiness of seeing God clearly, and of loving him unchangeably, is quite incomparable. (St. François de Sales, "On the Love of God", X 2).

Belief in God, the same yesterday, today and for ever, is of the very substance of all the great Christian expositions of mysticism and the journey to the Beatific Vision. Its presence is so often assumed that our attention is rarely attracted. But a short reflection on what an impoverished residue of mysticism would remain were the doctrine of divine immutability non-existent is, perhaps, the best assurance we can have of its significance, and practical importance.

PART IV. DIFFICULTIES IN THE CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY OF IMMUTABILITY.

In following the development of belief in divine immutability certain important difficulties in any such conception have several times been noticed, and detailed consideration of them deferred. The principal difficulties have arisen in connection with the Christain beliefs about Creation and the Incarnation. These problems, together with a third - God's immutability in relation to the deification of man - must now be studied.

A. Creation and Immutability.

It is possible to argue that creation involves change in God. Before the creation God existed as a being who had not created, and who was not creating; after the creation he existed as a being who had created and was sustaining creation: therefore creation involves a change in God. Similarly creation itself is a new act. Origen's argument (De Princ.III v 3-4) that there were worlds prior to this, and that there will be others after it, even if it had won general agreement, does not alter the position, since each world, having its own identity, is a new world, and therefore the effect of a new act. He does not argue for a continuous world co-eternal with God - a possibility allowed as reasonable but unorthodox by Aquinas.

One weakness which theologians have indicated in this

argument for change in God is that it assumes that God's existence is in terms of time. There is no meaning, they say, in talking of God 'before' and 'after' creation, because time began with and conditions creation, but does not condition the existence of God. Augustine is the great exponent of God's timelessness:

> For as without any movement time can measure, he himself moves all temporal things, so he knows all times with a knowledge time cannot measure. And therefore he saw that what he had made was good, when he saw that it was good to make it. And when he saw it made, he had not on that account a twofold nor any way increased knowledge of it, as if he had less knowledge before he made what he saw. (Augustine De Civ. Dei Xl 21).
>
> For there was not time before times began, and therefore it did not happen to God in time that he should be Lord, since he was Lord of the very times themselves, which assuredly did not begin in time. (De Trin. V 16; cf. XV 26).

Augustine is insisting on the difference between a creation that is willed in time, and one that is willed from eternity, and designed to occur at a certain point in time, or at the beginning of time. ~~or at the beginning of time.~~ As it has been eternally decreed that the effect should be produced in time, this does not impair the immutability of God. No new act of will independent of, or discordant with, the eternal will has been introduced:

> But in God the former purpose is not altered and obliterated by the subsequent and different purpose, but by one and the same eternal and unchangeable will he effected regarding the things he created, both that formerly, so long as they were not they should not be, and that subsequently, when they began to be, they should come into existence.
>
> (De Civ. Dei XII 17).

The discussion has now been carried back a stage: the difficulties involved in change and time are to be resolved only by reference to the eternal will of God - an existence outside time, and therefore much less comprehensible to man whose whole experience is temporal, "And so they will not cease from asking the causes of causes, until at last you fly to the will of God, the refuge for ignorance." So, with some justification, wrote Spinoza (Ethics. 1, ~~appen~~ appendix). Many a metaphysical problem can be cheaply and unsatisfactorily solved by being wise about the inscrutable. But this is no reason for refusing to attempt deductions about the nature of infinite and eternal being: rather it is a warning against facile assumptions. Aquinas's system of analogy is a precaution against this very danger, but he does not in consequence find all knowledge of the divine will barred to him. Indeed such qualities of eternal and divine existence as are here assumed are among those which Aquinas and many other cautious scholars have found to be the best assured, and the most worthy of acceptance. Better advice than Spinoza's is Augustine's precept (see p. 55 supra) that our human minds cannot be expected to embrace an understanding of the whole of God's being, but that what can be ascertained should be ascertained and used profitably. There is, then, no deceit or sharp practice in pursuing an investigation into the realms of the eternal will of God so long as contradictions are not upheld, and obscurity not passed off as demonstration.

The main point of the argument is that God does not have to accomodate himself to a novel circumstance. The creation in itself need, or need not, be unique, but the change from its being willed to exist and its coming into existence according to the same act of willing is a change from non-being to being in relation to the creation and not a change in the will which has eternally willed the existence exactly as it has taken place. If an underground train begins its journey below ground, but later reaches a point where its journey is continued on the surface there is no cause for saying that the railway controller who ordered the train on its journey has changed, nor is there any reason to believe that he did not know that at that particular point the train would emerge on the surface. But the example must not be pressed too far or it will give eternity the false appearance of being a long period of time. The creation was not willed from the beginning of time, but the creation and the beginning of time were willed eternally - there is neither a long time-lag between the willing and the creation, nor are the two instantaneous, but the whole act of willing is distinct from a time relationship: it is independent of, and superior to, time.

It has been argued that the activity of God being eternally immutable must needs invest the effects which it produces with the colour of eternity, and that therefore the world, as a product of the divine will, must be in some degree eternal. But the argument is faulty in its first

premise, which assumes as necessary what is not. There is nothing to suggest that God cannot eternally will either an eternal or a temporal effect.

We are now confronted with the problem of God's will as existing in a state of absolute liberty, and of God at the same time being immutable. It would seem that the immutability must exclude the freedom; or, on the other hand, that as God is entirely free to create or not to create (cf. Vatican Council, Canon De Deo Creante V), is not immutable. This difficulty is not lightly solved. But it is possible to see indications of a way to solution. First there is the natural tendency to presume a close similarity exists between our own free will and God's; but from the very nature of the case this is not likely - divine nature and human nature bear similarities, but are far from being identical. Human liberty consists of an active freedom enabling a man to choose between alternative courses of action, or to choose between action and non-action: he employs his freedom in subjective acts which relate to existing circumstances or possibilities. God's freedom is subject to the unique, absolutely simple, pure act, and is conditioned only by himself. Thus it seems probable that what in the perfection of pure act and omniscience he wills freely is also immutable since there can be no unforseen contingency which would render possible an improvement of that which was willed (cf. Aquinas, Con.Gent. 1. 82). A second argument is suggested by the first. The immutability of the will of God is

conditioned by the will of God, and is thus freely willed, and so is itself a manifestation of the divine freedom. A third argument based more on the divine infinity than the divine simplicity, is suggested by Fr. Rickaby:

> The difficulty has its foundation in this, that, within our experience, every new effect involves some antecedent change either in the agent or in the matter acted upon. The more powerful the agent, the less change is required, as when a strong man with little or no effort lifts a weight, which a weaker man would have to strain himself to raise from the ground. Hence we may faintly surmise how 'in the limit' an almighty agent would act without being in the least altered by his action from the being that he would have been, had he remained at rest. Not that I take this suggestion to remove the whole difficulty.
> (Rickaby, "Of God and his Creatures" p 62 n.).

It would seem that in pursuing the subject to this relationship of free will and immutability in God we have not arrived at a contradiction, but have travelled as far as it is prudent to go - any further may bring us justly under the indictment of Spinoza.

Thus far the discussion has kept within sight of the path indicated by Augustine. Aquinas offers his answers in accordance with his own style of philosophy. Motion or change is the act of that which is already in potentiality: since creation was from nothing there was nothing to be in a state of potentiality, therefore there was neither motion nor change in creation. The three factors which Saint Thomas held to be necessary to every instance of change have already been noticed (p. 74 supra). In creation none of them is present: there is no "terminus a quo", nor a pre-

existent subject, and without a subject there can be no process, so there can be no transition (Com.Gent.II 19). From this argument Aquinas points out that creation is without change, and therefore without succession,and therefore instantaneous. He gives a second argument in support: in creation, as has been seen, there are no two extremes, though for the purpose of argument non-being might be allowed as an extreme, so that the extremes of creation are being and non-being. But between being and non-being there can be no mean, and therefore no succession (Ibid.). In short,Aquinas refuses to admit that creation is in any way a change.

Saint Bonaventure is in agreement, but differs a little in terminology. He allows changes of two kinds: change with movement, and without movement. He excludes change from non-being to being from the category of movement, just as Aquinas does, but because in creation a form appears where there was none before, Bonaventure calls it alteration, or a change without movement (II Sent.I, i. 3.1.concl.t.2, Gilson,pp 202-3).

These arguments of the Schoolmen are concerned to show rather that creation itself is not a change, than that God is not changed in the act of creation, but the two notions are closely allied. Apart from creation there is God simply. At creation there is God and creation, not God and creation and a change. If there were any such change it must surely relate in some way to God,

since he alone pre-existed, and therefore alone had the qualification necessary for change. Thus appears the importance of the doctrine, fundamental to the thought of both men, of creation "ex nihilo". But both Doctors give further reason for believing God suffered no change in the act of creation. Bonaventure says that creation adds nothing to what God is, and changes nothing, since it is his own action freely willed. Aquinas includes in his work the assertion which amounts not to proving God did not change, but to saying that since it has been said already that God is immutable, and since it has been seen already that creation involves no change, there is no contradiction between the two contentions, and so God's immutability suffers no challenge (De Pot. q.3. a. 1).

To a modern mind, accustomed to think more in terms of relationships than did the earlier thinkers, a significant argument against creation by an immutable God is that creation brings God into relationship with creatures, and that the very introduction of this relationship is an implication of change. God is aware of the activity of creatures, it can be argued, and changes his own operations accordingly. Thus it would appear that such activity as change in creatures reacts in the Creator, introducing change to the divine life. But two factors must be taken into consideration: that the real determining motive is God himself, and he is disposed differntly according to the good or evil conduct of the creatures; and that the difference

of disposition is according to the unchanging activity of God, and such as his being demands of him - otherwise the basic values, good and evil, would be variable. Aquinas says that:

> Thus there is nothing to prevent these names which import relation to the creatures from being predicated of God temporally, not by reason of any change in him, but by reason of the change in the creature; as a column is on the right of an animal, without change in itself, but by change in the animal. (S.T.I.13.a.7).

This does not, as might appear, deny the possibility of any action by God on the world, since "relation" applies to seemingly novel relationships. God's action upon the world is according to the reality of his nature, and not on account of any real relationship by which his nature might be supposed to be supplemented.

A more extreme form of the argument of changing relationship would be of the same family as the Hegelian theory of internal relations - that what everything is depends on its relation with everything else; and if one of those relationships changes, the thing itself changes, so that the Rock of Gibraltar changes every time a newspaper is sold in San Francisco, or that every tim e the tide turns it changes God. In an Hegelian cosmos it might be so, but in the cosmos of orthodoxy it cannot be, since God is expressed as self-sufficient Being, and is not dependent for what he is on the existence of contingent things, and therefore they cannot change him. Further it might be said that the meaning of change as used in this connotation

is so far from any general theological application as to exclude it from the normal connotation of immutability.

Another approach to the problem is possible starting from the distinction of necessary and contingent being. God is a necessary Being; the creation is contingent. God was free to create or not to create as he willed. He willed to create. To say that because of the two contingencies, to create and not to create, he willed one and not the other, and therefore he changed, seems an arbitrary discrimination between the contingencies. It is as if one said of a person who had the alternatives of taking a road to the left or a road to the right and chose the road to the left has changed, whereas he would not if he had turned to the right. Let us suppose, then, that he had turned to the right, that is, that God had willed not to create. We then have God as a Being who was to create and did not - in short, who changed. Thus it is equally arguable that God would have changed if he had <u>not</u> created. We are thus led to the conclusion that an immutable God can neither create nor not create, which is absurd. Or else it means that there cannot be an immutable being unless he is an immutable being who wills not to create and does not, or who wills to create and does. Since we are aware of creation the former cannot be true, so the latter must. Thus it would seem that creation is even a witness to

God's immutability. The only other possible alternatives are that God willed to create and did not - again the existence of creation deprives the possibility of significance; or else he did not will to create, but created. In this case God would either be of insufficient power to fulfil his will, or else would be changed by some power exterior to himself who changed his will. But as the evidence is that God did will his creation, creating of his own will and power, the last alternative is rendered untenable, and we are left with the conclusion that God both willed to create and created, thereby exhibiting not change but changelessness.

B. The Incarnation and Immutability.

The question is, can God who is uncreated, pure spirit, and who is eternally in heaven pass some thirty years in the world as a man, living among men, and suffering passively at their hands, without having himself changed? Clearly the answer would seem to be negative. God cannot remain immutable and also be incarnate: indeed if he was incarnate he cannot be immutable at all. Here is our dilemma - apparently God was either not incarnate, or he is mutable. The Fathers did not see it so, or would not see it so. It is Athanasius and Augustine, the great protagonists of the divinity of Christ, who most frequently

recur to the immutability of the Word:

> God's Word is one and the same, and, as it is written, 'The Word of God endureth for ever' (Ps.CXIX 89), not changed, not before or after other, but existing the same always. (Athanasius, 2 Or.XVIII 36,p.368; cf. 1 Or.XXXIX; 3 Or.XXXIV; De Inc.XVII etc.)
> But the only-begotten Son of God, what he is, this cannot be changed into anything else, cannot be diminished, what he was cannot but be, he cannot but be equal to the Father. (Aug.Serm.XC, p.529; cf.XXXVIII, LXVII,LXXIV).

Denying the dilemma leads to paradox. The contention then is that the Son of God was incarnate and is immutable. How far the paradox was apparent to the writers of the early centuries is doubtful, but they are parsimonious in attempts to deal with it. Indeed it is only in recent studies of kenosis that the problem has been given its due attention. Some writers seem to have been unaware of the contradiction their expositions involved, as Novatian (De Trin.XXII); others were content to treat the matter as a mystery of faith. Athanasius was concerned to drive home ascertained truths, and leave the harmonizing of them till more urgent matters were disposed of, which was not in his lifetime. As has been seen (pp. 47-49 supra) he delighted at times in a sort of perversity which led to a (far from fruitless) revelling in contradiction and enigma, "De Incarnatione" XVII being his masterpiece of this sort. It was late in the Fourth Century before suggestions of solution to the paradox were forthcoming, though plain

statements without comment were still numerous, and are today for that matter, for the last word is still far off. Thus we can find Augustine, one of the first to seek a solution, also content to say:

> ... for 'the Word was God'. So then thy God endureth unchangeable... he endureth, he is born of a woman, but in the flesh. (Serm.LXXIV.3,p.475).

A more recent statement of the kind (1911) comes in the course of a letter by Dom John Chapman. It is an excellent indication of the size of the problem, and the significance of the mystery:

> His love costs him everything, ἐκένωσεν ἑαυτόν He gave up all his glory, all His infinite Happiness, to bestow it on us. In the Holy Trinity the Three Persons give without losing, and refund without being impoverished in the perfect union of their circumincessio - περιχώρησις . But in the Redemption God leaves all - without leaving it - Verbum supernum prodiens, NEC Patris liquens dexteram - that he may win it all for us. (Spiritual Letters, LXXXIII 6. Capitals etc. Chapman's.)

This passage shows the closeness of the subject to the kenotic problem, a problem which it is not the purpose of this essay to investigate further than is strictly necessary. Rather is the essay intended as an investigation of the meaning and implications of immutability, such as would provide a necessary preliminary to kenotic studies. It is, though, of significance to the subject in hand to suggest that too literal an emphasis may often have been laid on the word ἐκένωσεν as it is used in Philippians II 7. S.Paul's purpose in the passage is to draw attention

to the manifestation of humility in the Incarnation. S.Clement of Rome in a passage of similar intent uses the word ταπεινοφρονῶν (I Ad.Cor.XVI 2). The general meaning is the same, and one wonders if Paul's ἐκένωσεν is not the word of a stylist in a passage of high colour, rather than a calculated exposition of a doctrine that the Incarnation involved an 'emptying out', 'a laying aside', by the Word of that which apart from the Incarnation was his. That elsewhere Paul's use of κενόω is always non-literal adds weight to the proposition (cf.Hall, "Kenotic Theory" pp. 57-70).

The scholars of kenoticism are faced with the same paradox that was already clear in the Fourth Century, that God has been incarnate, yet has not changed. One solution they have offered (and increasingly hostile criticism led to increasingly mitigated forms of expression) is that certain divine attributes, immutability included, were 'emptied out', or were no longer actively used by the Son during his incarnate life. Support for these unacceptable theories has dwindled almost away. Something of the sort seems to have occurred also to the minds of the theologians of the Fourth Century, and dwindled away before it ever reached writing. What did reach writing was their reaction - a denial, however unhelpful in solving their difficulty, that the attributes of the Son were

either impaired or limited by the Incarnation:

> And as being the Word and Wisdom of the Father, he has all the attributes of the Father, his eternity, and his unchangeableness, and is like him in all respects and in all things, and is neither before nor after, but co-existed with the Father, and is the very Form of the Godhead. (Athanasius, Ad.Ep. Aeg.XVII, p.232; cf. 2 Or.XVIII; Augustine, De Trin. I 7)

Having refused this escape the Fathers were left with the difficulty, and began to try to find other ways out. Their consideration of the divine attributes had already indicated one alleviating consideration: God is ubiquitous, and therefore his coming into the world does not imply a new field of activity. This was only a small advance, but not to be scorned:

> Now the Word of God... was not bound by his body, but was rather himself wielding it, so that he was not only in it, but was actually in everything. (Ath.De Inc. XVII).

Augustine employs a slightly different form of the argument:

> [The Divinity] changeth not, is not shaken, doth not depart away. For he did not so come to us as to depart from the Father; nor did he so ascend as to change his place. When he assumed flesh, it changed place; but God assuming flesh, seeing he is not in place, doth not change his place. (Serm.XXXVIII 14; cf.16.p.384).

The same thought seems to underlie part of Anselm's "Cur Deus Homo?" (I 6). Obviously the worth of this argument is very restricted; to apply it to the Incarnation in general would be to say either that there always was an Incarnation, or else that there never was one at all.

Of more value is the contention that we should look for the change wrought by the Incarnation not so much in God as in ourselves. Athanasius employs it in his discussion of deification (Ad Adelph. IV.cf.infra appendix, p.168.). Augustine is more emphatic:

> What is 'The Word was made Flesh?' The gold became grass. It became grass for to be burned; the grass was burned, but the gold remained; in the grass it perished not, yea, it changed the grass. How did it change it? It raised it up to heaven, and placed it at the right hand of the Father. (Serm.LXIX. 4, p.466).

——Clearly there is truth here, but it is not all the truth we want. However great the significance of the Incarnation for human destiny, and although 'the gold remained', there is still the fact that God did become man, and that he returned to heaven taking with him a human body. The passage just quoted from Augustine gives us the line by which the Fathers progressed further when it says 'in the grass it perished not', implying that the gold was intact in the grass. In short, the Incarnation is to be looked at not as the Son changing into flesh, but taking, or adding, the flesh to himself. This is the doctrine taught in the 'Quicunque Vult':

> not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking up of manhood into God.

——Chrysostom used this argument in reverse, not to establish the immutability, but from the immutability to demonstrate the distinction of the natures in Christ:

> So when you hear that 'the Word was made Flesh', be not disturbed nor cast down. For the Essence did not change (μετέπεσεν) to flesh... but continuing what It is, It so took upon It the form of a servant... For since there are some who say that all the circumstances of the Dispensation were an appearance... at once to remove beforehand their blasphemy, he has put 'was made'; desiring to show thereby not a change of substance, (away with the thought) but the assumption of very flesh ... If they say that being God he is omnipotent so that he could lower (μετέπεσεν) himself to the substance of flesh, we will reply to them, that he is omnipotent as long as he continues to be God. (Chrysostom, Hom. in Joan XI, pp.90-1)

Augustine uses it as direct witness for immutability:

> They say, for instance, that the Son is less than the Father, because it is written that the Lord himself said 'My Father is greater than I'. But the truth shows that after the same sense the Son is also less than himself; for how was he not made less also than himself, who 'emptied [exinanivit] himself', and took upon him the form of a servant? For he did not so take the form of a servant that he should lose the form of God, in which he was equal to the Father. (Augustine, De Trin. I 7). And if I am asked how the Incarnation itself was brought to pass, I reply that the Word of God itself was made flesh, that is, was made man, yet not turned and changed into that which was made; but so made, that there should be there not only the Word of God and the flesh of man, but also the rational soul of man, and that this whole should be called God on account of God, and man on account of man. (Ib.IV 21; cf. I 13).

The problem is now narrowed considerably. There is no question of change in the divine nature of God the Son. It is now left to decide how the two Natures are united in the one Person of Christ - this is the kenotic problem proper, and lies outside the present field. The aspect that is of importance here is how far the union of natures

implies a novel, and therefore changed existence in the divine nature;' and how can the actual events and limitations of the life of Christ be separated from the divine nature in him. The answer is that there was no change; but explanations of how that can be are incomplete. For example, where the gospels record Christ exhibiting limitations the Fathers account for it as the manifestation of his humanity:

> ... though human things are ascribed to the Saviour in the Gospel, let us, considering the nature of what he said and that they are foreign to God, not impute them to the Word's Godhead, but to his manhood. (Athanasius 3 Or. XXVII 41.p.416)

But though this may be a satisfactory course in some cases, it is not in all. Christ's confession of ignorance of the mind of the Father in Mark XIII 32 is the classic example, and Augustine's attempt to deal with it must be regarded as a failure and rather a shabby failure:

> 'Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven; neither the Son, but the Father'. For he is ignorant of this as making others ignorant; that is, in that he did not so know as at that time to show his disciples [i.e. was about to show them] :as it was said to Abraham, 'Now I know that thou fearest God', that is, that I have caused thee to know it. (Augustine, De Trin. I 12).

And so the paradox of the Incarnation is not solved in the general arguments put forward by the Fathers, although the problem has been limited. But one or two individual arguments put forward by the Fathers are worthy of notice.

Gregory of Nyssa makes an attempt (Cat. Or. XVI) to differentiate between two meanings of 'weakness' (κατάχρησις), as "sometimes used with a proper sense, and sometimes with an extension of meaning". But it is rather a lame attempt.

Augustine, always likely to open an original line, proposes a solution to the whole difficulty with a fascinating analogy:

> Just as when we speak, in order that what we have in our minds may enter through the ear into the mind of the hearer, the word which we have in our hearts becomes an outward sound, and is called speech; and yet our thought does not lose itself in the sound, but remains complete in itself, and takes the form of speech without being modified in its own nature by change: so the Divine Word, ~~though suffering no change in nature, yet became~~ of flesh, that he might dwell among us. (Augustine, De Doct.Christ. I 13).

This is of value, though it cannot be a whole answer, for there is in speech a change: the thought exists in a different manner in the words - or rather, once spoken has a double existence, in the mind and also in the words. Yet it is one and the same thought, and therein lies the value of the analogy. It emphasises the identity of the Son, as existing apart from the Incarnation, and as existing incarnate. It is a more explicit exposition of Athanasius's "Not even when the Virgin bore him did he suffer any change", and, as will transpire, that is probably the most fruitful of all approaches to the problem.

Mediaeval arguments, frequently based on the nature of the divine will, and the meaning of change, are condensed by Suarez:

> From eternity the will of God, in perfect knowledge and unchangeable constancy, ordered all things, which were brought about in time. (Suarez, Sum.Comp. I.1. lib.2.cap.3).

He also insists (Ibid.) that God can will as he pleases, freely, without any addition to his reality. What is the value of this? The previous consideration of creation has shown the importance of an understanding of eternal acts of the divine will and their fulfilment in time; and how the manifestations in time do not give ground for postulating change in God. But the application to the Incarnation is restricted since it is God himself who appears in, and becomes subject to, time. But if eternally foreknowing all, he eternally willed the Incarnation, and all he knew it involved, is not the Incarnation an act in every way consistent with the will of God, and therefore a manifestation of the will and nature of God as it is and unchanged? But what of the human nature? Is it not an addition? Can Suarez be justified in saying there was no addition to the divine reality when God adds to himself a real human nature? In the first place the addition is smaller than might appear. To the attributes which are generally thought of as essentially unchangeable in God, as power, love, long-suffering, truth, nothing has been

added. No one suggests that God incarnate is more trustworthy, more loving, more knowledgeable by the addition of a human nature. It is the nature itself, its subjection to time, to natural laws, its passivity that is the addition. In these respects he seems less - he has humbled himself. The humbling is the novel introduction. Was he then not humble before? Since such humility as is in men is in them by divine grace, and is a virtue of the godly, it must derive from God, and must, therefore be of his essence. Is he then more humble by dint of the Incarnation? No. For then the eternal humility would be of limited degree, imperfect, which is impossible. Therefore the Incarnation did not involve an addition to God's humility. He humbled himself in the sense of manifesting his humility. The humiliation of becoming as a servant did not change him, but revealed him as he is as God. That Christ insisted on men arguing back from their experience of him to an understanding of the Father (e.g. John XIV 9) clearly indicated that his own divinity was unimpaired. We have now arrived again at the all-important truth to which the discussion of Athanasius's ideas on immutability (supra pp.49-50) has already once led us. The Incarnation is a revelation of God <u>as he eternally is</u>, and is not a climax or special feat in the divine existence. The crucifixion is not God's supreme act

of love: but the ultimate revelation of the supreme love of God - of the love that is God eternally. The crucifixion is God in action. There is no increase, no crescendo. The love is eternal and unchanged. It is the revelation that is brief and increased.

But all is not yet answered. On the one hand there is the divine omniscience, omnipotence, eternity: they have not so achieved their supreme revelation, rather they seem to have been displaced. On the other hand there is the human body and blood of Christ, the weariness, the weakness, the dependence on the Father. These are new, they are not revelations of the eternal, though they may be the instruments of that revelation. How can one account for them? In the case of the former, the so-called 'metaphysical attributes', it is clear from the tradition of the Fathers and their successors, and from the evidence accumulated in the present investigation, that they were in Christ, unchanged and unimpaired. (cf. pp 148-149 infra). There is no novelty in this conclusion. But it does nothing to uproot the obstacles which confront the study of the two natures in the Person of Christ.

In the case of the manifest human attributes apparent in the incarnate Son it is possible again to say that they are such as God eternally willed, and that as he wills according to his esse, they have their place in the

eternal esse, the 'actus purus' of God. As with the creation, their coming into existence in time is also according to the divine will.

If it be insisted, as it may by followers of certain secular philosophies, that such additions and acquisitions when they do occur are nevertheless changes in God, it must probably be allowed that they are; but only according to the tenets and terminology of those philosophies. The prime purpose of Christian theologians in saying God is immutable has been to maintain that he is always essentially himself; and the Church is not bound to every extension of the term that protagonists of particular philosophical systems may have advocated.

Much of the difficulty inherent in the idea of the incarnation of the immutable God can be eliminated by accepting the Incarnation for what it most certainly is - a revelation. To determine what God is like, and then apply it to the person of Christ to see if it fits is surely a clumsy treatment. A surer and more expeditious road is to determine what God is like from the revelation of him in Christ. He then appears as the God whose nature is such that, foreknowing all, he would will to create; and who having created, and creation having become needful of a redemption possible by divine incarnation, death and resurrection,would eternally will the incarnation and

redemption. Thus the incarnation sees God in Christ, not as he has become to achieve a recently necessitated redemption, but as he is eternally. "Not even when the Virgin bore him did he suffer any change."

The conclusion reached, then, by this enquiry into the Incarnation is that, "neither the Incarnation nor anything else can involve any change in God himself. God is altogether immutable and impassible." (Mascall, "Christ, the Christian, and the Church", I v, p.14).

C. Deification and Immutability.

Note. Because the meaning and place of deification in Christian theology is often obscure a rather lengthy investigation of the subject was necessary as an approach to this section of the essay. To avoid a disproportionate digression this preliminary investigation has been made into an appendix (Appendix I, p.158 ff.). The conclusions there put forward are assumed in the following paragraphs.

Belief in the deification of man has a definite place in Christian theology. The traditional explanation of deification is that in the ultimate state of beatitude the human soul is united to God, being exalted to a participation to its full capacity in the life of the Godhead, but without being identified therewith. Man becomes divine.

If, then, man enters into the life of God it would seem that not only is man changed, but that God is too, since his life is including a new operation. Thus the divine immutability is challenged.

The problem is, in part, the problem of creation approached from the opposite direction, and in part the solution is the same. There is again the error of imputing time to the divine existence - God cannot enter a new relationship. The great and revolutionary change here is in man, the change from temporal to eternal existence. This was the thought in Hooker's mind when he wrote:

> This admirable union of God with man can enforce in that higher nature no alteration, because unto God there is nothing more natural than not to be subject to any change. (Hooker, Eccl.Pol.V,lib.4).

Even so there is involved a contact between God and time, but just as it was seen that for creation God can eternally will an effect which occurs in time, so, too, with deification he can eternally will the transition of souls from time to eternity. S. John of the Cross points out (see p. 175-7) that deification is part of the eternal plan in creation.

It is here that the importance of denying an identification of God and man is apparent. If man is identified with God he does not reach a higher state of

existence than if he participates in the divine nature, for to be identified with it would be to cease to exist. Nothing can be added to God's nature, so to be identified would imply simply the annihilation of the soul's identity. Further, as the creation of the soul is according to the divine will and plan, its annihilation would involve a change in God's will, which is impossible

Does not God, though, in willing the deification of souls by participation, will a change in his own life - a similar impossibility? In answering this a passage from S.Augustine in which he denies that man's changing relationship with God involves change in God, gives a valuable approach:

> In us therefore some change does take place; for we were worse before we fled to him, and we become better by fleeing to him; but in him there is no change. So also he begins to be our Father, when we are regenerated through his grace, since he gave us power to become the sons of God. Our substance, therefore is changed for the better, when we become his sons; and he at the same time begins to be our Father, but without any change of his own substance. Therefore that which begins to be spoken of God in time, and which was not spoken of him before, is manifestly spoken of him relatively; yet not according to any accident of God, so that anything should have happened to him, but clearly according to some accident of that, in respect to which God begins to be called something relatively. When a righteous man begins to be a friend of God, he himself is changed; but far be it from us to say, that God loves anyone in time with as it were a new love, which was not in him before, with whom things gone by have not passed away and things future have been already done. (Augustine, De Trin. V 16).

The profoundest point of the passage comes at the end when we are reminded that the activity of the divine love does not alter. God's love is an infinite and omnipresent activity. Hence wherever there is the possibility of its existing, it exists. Nothing can be added to it, there is no potentiality, it is the wholly actual. Thus when the purgation of the soul makes the existence of divine love in the soul possible, then the love is there. It is of the nature, the actuality, of love so to be. And so the love of God, and thus the life of God, exists in the soul. Were the love to act otherwise it would be accepting limits, and so changing from the infinite love it is.

Again we encounter the importance of understanding God as being exactly what he has revealed himself to be. God is such that he lets his perfected creatures participate in his divine nature. So he has revealed himself, and as he has revealed himself so he immutably is.

Is nothing, then, added to God by the deification of many human souls? What could be added? Presumably the sharing of his life with the souls. But is such addition possible with an infinite being? Plurality is of no significance. We must allow, then, that the addition of one postulates no more than the addition of many. And in order of cause, being and time the first human soul so to

share the divine life without identification is the human soul of Christ. So we are led back to the Incarnation, and the discussion in the previous section. In so far as there is change in the Son by his taking a human body and soul, so far is there change in God by the deification of man; and since the evidence indicated strongly that the Incarnation involved no change in God, one is in a position to uphold a similar immutability when God deifies his creatures.

PART V. IMMUTABILITY IN POST-RENAISSANCE THOUGHT

In the centuries following the Renaissance philosophy acquired an independence of the western Church such as had not existed for a thousand years. Students became increasingly engrossed with the immediate world and man's knowledge of it, and decreasingly with the less immediately perceived realities. Metaphysics, and with it the study of the being of God, lost the centre of the stage, and science, epistemology, humanism, ethics and politics were all, as time went by, to jostle for its place. Theology too was a changed study. Intense interest was directed in turn on particular beliefs which were under dispute - justification, atonement, the papacy, contemplation, social action; and the rest were either disregarded, or unconsciously accepted in their traditional form. The divisions of Christendom localised energy, fostered parochial theology, and dissipated ability in rivalry and statesmanship. It was not an era for a new Augustine or Aquinas, and the ~~meta~~ metaphysical attributes of God seemed hardly an urgent study for anyone; and in any case for the Christian the Fathers and the supposedly unenlightened Schoolmen had done so much already.

Thus as far as the study of the immutability of God is concerned we do not find ourselves on new ground. With some thinkers, as the early Cartesians, a position similar to Augustine or of the Schoolmen was accepted with little criticism.

> By the name of God, I understand a substance infinite, eternal, immutable, independent, all-knowing, all-powerful, and by which I myself, and every other thing which exists, if such there be, were created. (Descartes, Med.III. See Appendix IV.).

Perhaps the new age was less free of tradition than it thought. With other thinkers an interesting re-enactment takes place. Having acquired an independence not unlike that of the Greek philosophers, they are found to have imitated them in seeking a fixed point, an unchanging reality, as the pole on which the universe turns, and to which appeal can be made for confidence in truth and the assessment of values. To investigate the significance of the inclusion or omission of some such notion of immutability in the various conceptions of God offered by the post-Renaissance philosophers would be unprofitable, for the name God became variously applied, as denoting that part of a philosopher's hypothesis to which the author thought it most appropriate. It is the persistence with which some conception of immutability appears as an almost inescapable concept in the thought of one philosopher after another that is significant.

One might expect the pantheistic explanations of the universe to be the least liable to include an immutable existence, both because the usual appeal is from the changing world to an immutable entity 'outside' (an argument which postulates a double order of existence, one of which is transcendent, such as is excluded by the very nature of pantheism); and also because an identification of God (or whatever term is applied) with the universe where change is so abundantly manifest would seem, ipso facto, to postulate change in God. If the pantheists had been given the task of including immutability in their systems by hook or by crook, one can believe that they might have found a way; but the fact is that they did include it while under no such obligation, and therefore, we must conclude, because they found it necessary to a rational exposition of the universe. The first of the great pantheists of the period, Spinoza, is a remarkable example. For him nothing exists outside God, whose being embraces everything, each human mind being a constituent part of God's nature. And yet God is not confounded with the change and variableness of that which his nature embraces. He is timeless reality, he is perfect freedom, not because he can act arbitrarily, but because he acts solely from the laws of his own nature, and there is nothing external to him

that can determine his actions. Thus he is constant, and cannot be changed, he is "immutable and eternal" (Spinoza, Ethics V 20, schol.p.268). The delicate reasoning by which this conclusion is reached is not important here, but it is important that it was reached by dint of sheer unprejudiced, conscientious reasoning.

In Hegel's pantheism the Absolute occupies a position roughly corresponding to the God of Spinoza. It is the ultimate reality about which, Hegel claimed, we can know something by the use of reason, and from knowledge of the concrete facts of life, history and religion. Thus Hegel initially concentrates attention on human experience and what it can tell us. It is, then, of no small interest that again we are led in the direction of immutability. It is no more than in the direction, for plainly immutability in the full sense cannot apply to a being of whom it is affirmed that the course of history is not only the process by which man comes to a consciousness of this being, but is also the process by which the being comes to a consciousness of itself. Hegel also has an argument that every truth asserted involves the contrary untruth. Thus, for example, belief in free will is opposed by the belief in determinism. Though each appears true from the arguments for it, neither can be wholly true because

of the existence of the other. There is, then, a wider truth involving both partial truths. This likewise has its contrary truth, and leads to a further synthesis, and so on, until the final truth is reached under which all partial truths are subsumed. The final truth is the whole truth about everything. This final truth, a mental existence, is the Absolute. Thus Hegel has argued to a truth to which nothing can be added nor anything taken away. In short we have an unchanging existence of a kind - a single unified reality, comprehending within itself all distinctions and changes. Again dispassionate reasoning has indicated that ultimate reality is stable.

From these brief considerations of the two leading pantheists, the tendency of whose philosophy one would anticipate as being hostile to immutability, the possibility is suggested that rejection of a conception of the cosmos as a capricious conglomeration of fortuitous events is conducive to a philosophy in which whatever is accounted most real is to be imparted with some degree of impregnable stability. It remains to see if, and how far, the thought of other post-Renaissance philosophers bears out this hypothesis.

Among the theists Leibniz is of special interest as expressing theism according to a theory novel to Christianity. Did he escape the idea of immutability that characterised previous Christian theism, or did it

still appear essential? Having proposed his world of monads, each individual and self-contained, he had to account for their apparent interaction and co-ordination. This he accomplished by proposing a pre-established harmony. The course of each monad is originally determined with the existence of all other monads in view, so that each, in fulfilling its course, although subject to no outside interference, parallels and reflects the development occurring in the other monads. Thus the world is an harmonious order and not chaotic. All depends then on the pre-established harmony and its unalterability, and for this God is the assurance. So it would seem that God himself is changeless. Leibniz also maintained that necessary truths cannot be changed, even by God. If by this it is implied that there is power superior to God's (and it is not a necessary implication), the consequences are unimportant for the present discussion, since Leibniz's contention is still that the ultimate reality is invested with stability. Thus far, then, the hypothesis is unimpaired: Leibniz having accepted the principle of order in the universe is led on to infer an ultimate invariable.

At this point, and while considering theism, it is convenient to mention the Deists, who in maintaining 'par excellence' the divine order in the world, banished

God to an abstract immutable existence, in which divine activity was more or less reduced to saying the "Go!" that started the universe.

The epistemology that characterised the period from the end of the Seventeenth Century to the latter part of the Eighteenth was so far removed from metaphysics as to bear little on concepts of divine attributes, though parts of Berkeley's writings included the study of theism. The increasing scepticism about the possibility of reliable knowledge did, of course, from the time of Locke onwards, react on the ideas of knowledge of ultimate being, until the radical scepticism of Hume made doubt more assured then credence. Yet Hume himself contended in the "Dialogues concerning Natural Religion" that there was a clue to the divine existence in the presence of constant and uniform laws in the universe. Again it is the appeal from order in the world to a reliable promoter of the order.

The most persistent form of this argument occurs in treatises on ethics, where the need for a stable norm of good and evil, right and wrong, and of value, has repeatedly led thinkers to God, or some superior reality, as a sufficient ground for the permanence of the norms and values associated with conduct. Thus Locke made God the anchor of his ethics. But it is not to be assumed that

such recourse is inevitable. Hume found goodness to reside in that which gives to the spectator a pleasing sentiment of approbation. And later Huxley, Spencer and Mill were to show other alternatives; though none of their theories has shown the resistence to criticism which must be allowed to ethical theories founded on the stability of divine values.

Kant himself, whose philosophy was both a direct product of and reaction to, the position reached by Hume, was led, solely by his study of the moral law, to postulate an unknowable being, whom he calls God, as the assurance that the law in safeguarded. From his investigation of reason he maintained that for a concrete act of knowledge not thought only, but thought and sense are required. From this it followed that beyond the phenomenal realm of sense knowledge could not go, and excursions into the noumenal world of pure intellect (should it exist) can only lead to invalid conclusions. Thus if God exists he is unknowable. Is there any reason for believing that the noumenal world exists at all? Kant thought there was. In the phenomenal world all is determined, but an act could be free in the reality which it might possess in the noumenal world. Thus freedom is possible only on the assumption of a noumenal world; and freedom is necessary as the absolute precondition of the moral life. Without freedom

the moral law, whose existence Kant insistently upheld, would be devoid of meaning. Therefore the noumenal world exists. Although the desire for happiness is wholly distinct from the content of the moral will, yet, as man is now known to be of the noumenal as well as of the phenomenal world, happiness must have some place in the highest good - it must also, and in union with virtue, exist noumenally. And since it cannot be attained in this world an endless life must be postulated for its real achievement. But what assurance is there of the permanence of the moral law, and the reality of happiness in eternal life which it brings in its wake? Kant answers, God.

> Consequently we must assume a moral World-Cause (an author of the world), in order to set before ourselves a final purpose consistently with the moral law; and in so far as the latter is necessary, so far (i.e. in the same degree and on the same ground) the former also must be necessarily assumed; i.e. we must admit that there is a God. (Crit. of Judgment, B377-380).

N.P. The idealist content of Kant's philosophy largely occupied the minds of Fichte and Schelling, and in turn of Hegel, of whose thought notice has already been taken. The later Nineteenth Century found much of its inspiration in Hegelianism, and in Darwinian theories of evolution and development. In the consequent actions and reactions humanism, attended by liberalism, prospered on the one hand, and materialism, attended by agnosticism and

atheism, prospered on the other. With the exception of some of the agnostics each in its way sought to establish some universal law or process as the assurance of underlying stability. One reaction came in the shape of renewed concentration on traditional catholicism in both the Roman and Anglican communions. There was the introduction of neo-scholasticism, the revival of study of patristics, and, at the turn of the century, the wider realisation of the significance of the Christian mystics. All these, in the theological spheres which they influenced, re-emphasised the traditional metaphysics, and the traditional doctrine of God.

In the Twentieth Century the movement continues. But it is of interest to consider one or two of the newer and more widely received secular philosophies. Bergson found the conception of ultimate reality to be a "vital impulse" from which the world process springs. Physical life is inseparable from, even identical with, time; and time and duration means invention, creation, the continuous alteration of the absolutely new. Thus existence is change. The universe consists of many ever-changing things, and the creative life-stream is itself subject to spasmodic accelerations and declines. Bergson attacked conceptions of change which postulated in a changing thing two parts, one changing, one remaining unchanged. He denied the second part's existence, on the ground that when all the elements

which are changing in a changing thing are eliminated there is literally nothing left. There are not, then, in the universe things which change, there is only change. The fundamental reality, which is a unity, is to be conceived as a stream of change.

Here is the conception of reality least akin, at first sight, to the orthodox idea of a God who is immutable as the fundamental reality. But if the stream of change is to remain a stream of change (as it does with Bergson), it has some mark of the invariable upon it. The position is analogous to that of Heraclitus, who must allow his law that all things change to be itself unchanging-or invalid. If Bergson were going to deny all permanence he must needs make the whole of reality and existence capricious, so that his philosophy would not be an account of existing entities, but merely an account of the state of things at one particular instant, and with no reference to anything beyond that instant, for by then an entirely different system, or no system at all, might have arisen as a caprice of change. Bergson does not say this, and has no intention of saying it. He maintained that there is order even amid the change, and with his retention of order goes a retention of certain invariables, such as the existence of the erratic stream of change itself, or Bergson's philosophy and its laws of change. This might be regarded as a test case of the proposed hypothesis that any

assertion of order in the universe implies a stability, if not an immutability, responsible for the order.

Consideration shows that from all the philosophical discussions three alternatives seem to offer themselves: the universe is either chaos unconfined, in which case all is changing, and there is neither order nor anything unchanging; or the universe is a chance concatenation of purposeless events, which again excludes the unchanging; or else the universe has some order and reliability, in which case there is something stable - a law, a process, a being - which underlies the world-field. In general terms it seems fair to suggest that of these three alternatives the first has never been seriously upheld, not even by the pessimists, and belief in it would in all probability be incompatible with sanity; the second has been proposed by a few, notably extreme Darwinians; and the third covers all the other philosophers and their philosophies.

Of the philosophies of the present day that of Whitehead is the most prominent. Unfortunately the inherent difficulty of his thought is increased by an extensive terminology peculiar to himself, and an indigenous aptitude for obscurity. He divides the world of space and time into a plurality of 'processes' of an organic conception. Particulars are replaced by 'actual entities' or 'actual occasions': these are sometimes described as 'drops of existence', and they are

integral to the whole order of process, being a definite achievement arising from phases of process, and the forerunners of further process. They are the reality of the spatio-temporal universe, and are ever changing. There is clearly a similarity here between the thought of Whitehead, Bergson and Heraclitus, Bergson's stream corresponding to Whitehead's process. But the likeness must not be taken too far, for Whitehead proceeds in a manner more resembling Plato's reaction to the state of flux proposed by Heraclitus. If all is flux, or change, or process, there is no possibility of knowledge: truth itself is in flux. Plato's answer was the Forms. Whitehead's is 'eternal entities'. He explains that besides the change and endurance experienced in the world there is a further fact, namely 'eternality', and this is characteristic of all the eternal entities. For example, a certain colour, perhaps a tint of yellow, may be present in a flower, and depart when the blooms die. When the plant blooms next year the tint will be there again. It will be the <u>same</u> tint. Although it has not endured in the society of actual entities which made up the flower it has in no wise ceased to exist. Similarly shapes recur in actual entities. Their existence is independent of the actual occasions in which they appear. Colours, sounds, geometric characters, these are the eternal objects or entities. Whitehead defines them thus:

> Any entity whose conceptual recognition does not involve a necessary reference to any definite actual entities of the temporal world is called an 'eternal object'.

They are eternal and do not lose their identity by ingress into actual occasions, even though the actual occasion may involve a real union between many eternal entities. In short, they are fundamentally unchangeable, and correspond to universals, and to Plato's Forms.

Having explained the order and recurrence manifest in the world with the eternal entities, Whitehead still felt the need to seek an entity that would constitute the metaphysical stability of the universe. This entity he calls God. Briefly his argument is that there are certain limitations in the process of the universe, as that the creative process is that which it is and no other, though it might have been. Also there have emerged standards of value. (In this he approximates to the ethical appeal to immutability). From these two considerations it seems that the whole course of events has developed under the direction of a principle composed of conditions and standards of value.This is God. No reason can be given for the nature of God, since he is the ground of rationality; but as the ground of limitation in the ultimate activity he is the assurance of stability of the process and its values. In one respect God appears to be distinctly mutable, in that in "Process and Reality"aWhitehead makes an addition to the concept of God's primordial nature. This is the &consequent nature' which arises from his reaction to the world, and is an integration of physical feeling,

derived from the physical world, into his primordial nature: "God, then, is to be conceived as originated by conceptual experience with his process of conception motivated by consequent physical experience initially derived from the temporal world."

Thus above the flux of the spatio-temporal world of actual entities Whitehead maintains the existence of eternity and immutability in the order and identity of the eternal entities, and finds the assurance of stability in the entity he calls God. This, the most recent of philosophical systems in the grand manner, makes a direct appeal for the necessity of immutability, and the conservation of order, in the superior realms of existence. Its mark of identity in this respect is the sharing of them between the conceptions of eternal entities and God, whereas the general tendency has been to allocate all to one reality only.

Whitehead's philosophy was thought out against the background of modern mathematical and scientific research, amd in that sense is foreign to traditional Christian thought. Thus the sympathy which is seen to exist between them is the more impressive. Christian theology relies for its premises on reason and rationally acceptable revelation, and it has often been claimed that the rational has been devoured by the revealed until nothing remains but the smile on the face of the tiger. How is it, then, that the most thorough of

modern rational philosophies is not at loggerheads with this old and corrupt survival of past ages? How is it that Whitehead and all the other post-Renaissance philosophers to whom ~~er~~ we have turned have found their steps going either a little way or far in the direction of the Hebrew-born Christian conception of an immutable God? Is it not that the theology is not so warped? That the rational has not been forgotten? and that the revelation has accorded with and advanced that which is first seen in the half-light of human experience? Once allow that God reveals, and there is no cause to wonder that the revelations of an immutable God accord with deductions and syntheses founded on experience of the phenomena of his creation.

On the other hand, if it appears to the Christian that immutability is a profitless attribute to ascribe to God, let him recall that the majority of thinkers of the last 400 years have spent no small part of their time trying to find some reality, some being, to which they could ascribe the ideas of stability and of the assurance of order, and of an ultimate unchangeable, from which their experience and reason would not permit them to escape.

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PART VI. THE NATURE AND VALUE OF IMMUTABILITY.

A. Belief in Immutability.

The foregoing investigations have shown that belief in some sort of immutable being or norm, usually identified with ultimate reality, is fundamental in most philosophies. Plato and Aristotle both found it esential; and its remarkable persistence through systems of every kind among post-Renaissance philosophers led to the conclusion that either one admits an invariable, or one forfeits any absolute standards or guaranteed order in the cosmos. A few philosophers have upheld the latter position: an imposing majority the former.

This is sufficient evidence to show that Christianity, in postulating immutability as characterising its conception of ultimate reality, God, is not trying simply to honour certain biblical texts, nor to deck its deity with absolute attributes as a consequence of over-enthusiastic and ill-considered piety. Nor has it disregarded reason, nor been subject to a capricious revelation. The Christian position certainly appeals to revelation but it also employs reason to maintain the acceptability of the revelation, and to support its implications. A plain testimony to this was seen in the work of Aquinas, who both argues for immutability from the Scriptural record of divine revelation, and who previously, in stating his arguments for the very existence

of God, had shown first the necessity of postulating the existence of an immutable being as ultimate in the order of existence.

The reasons, excluding revelation, for which philosophers and theologians have asserted the necessity for an immutable factor in the cosmic order, ~~though~~ though various in approach and expression, are basically few. Plato, and many after him, grasped the need of an assurance that truth is constant, for without that knwoledge is impossible. Every philosophical system really assumes this, in that it professes to be exposing the truth. It was noticed as a weakness in Bergson that he seemed not to appreciate this fully. Both Plato and Aristotle employed forms of cosmological argument, asserting the necessity of an uncaused principle of order to account for a cosmos which experience showed as characterised by causation and order. With the argument for order are allied all the suppositions of permanence of natural laws. The scientist makes the inference when he assumes that the fundamental principles by which natural phenomena are governed are stable. It is the escape from chaos, and a bastion to the appeal for the validity of knowledge.

Closely related is the last great reason - the need for postulating the validity of right and the laws of conduct. This is the ethical approach, and, as has been seen, very few exponents of ethics have been able to avoid it, and the few who have, such as Hume, have a very small following in the matter. Its potency was most notably

seen in the part it played in the thought of Kant. Either one must allow that goodness, justice and holiness are essentially and permanently nobler than, and contrary to, that which is evil, unjust, diabolical, or else allow some conception in which it would be possible for the distinction to be lost, or the values inverted - in short, in which right and wrong conduct were virtually meaningless terms, and in which any true assessment of values was ruled out.

Such are the principal reasons for which the existence of an immutable reality has most frequently been proposed. It remains to consider what has been implied by the term immutability, and especially what it should imply in Christian theology. The first meaning that comes to mind is usually of an unchanging, and therefore completely inactive and static existence. But no philosopher who has ascribed immutability to a being rather than to some such inanimate existence as a law, has ever meant quite this. The nearest approach to it was the God of Aristotle; but as has been seen, Aristotle allowed self-contemplation as compatible with that immutable existence, and later Aquinas showed just how much could be developed from that concession. But concession is the wrong word: limit, or extreme, would be better. Thus Aristotle was yielding nothing in postulating self-contemplation as pertaining to his immutable God; he was expounding what he meant by an immutable God. The most extreme form, then, of pagan and secular philosophy witnesses to activity, without change in an immutable God.

In Old Testament and Christain theology there appeared from the very beginning an insistence on activity in God as compatible with belief in God's changelessness. In the Fathers the treatment developed from bare statement in the early centuries, to elaboration, and then contention and exposition by the time of Athanasius, and fuller exposition in the days of the Schoolmen. With the aid thus provided, and with the tenets of the Christian faith as data it is now necessary to attempt an exposition of what it would seem the Christian is to understand by immutability when he ascribes it to God.

In the first instance the exclusion of change, and the inclusion of activity appears contradictory. But two considerations make for reconciliation. The first is that we are concerned with an infinite absolute being. (cf.Mascall, "Christ, the Christian, and the Church", l v,p.14.) The second is that the Christain conception relates to a personal God, and not to a metaphysical abstraction. There is truth in the statement that:

> The immutability of God, as religion conceives it, is more like the steadfastness of a good man than the unalterable properties of a triangle.
> (Matthews, "God in Christian thought and experience' p. 255),

but Dr. Matthews has overstated the case, because, as has appeared, the Christian theology includes the metaphysical approach, and it may not be disragarded. Error arises not from allowing metaphysics their traditional place, but from

isolating them; for treated alone the metaphysical approach tempts one to propose a hypothesis as to what God must be like~~////(etc)~~ and that leads to the difficult task of fitting the hypothesis to the established beliffs about God, and the facts of the Incarnation. With the other approach one is able to assemble the beliefs and facts, and know that they present, without any guessing or intricate reasoning, what the immutable God is like. It will then remain to discover how such activity is compatible with immutability. Discussion on these lines has already been made on pp 49-50 and 118-9 which need not be repeated beyond insisting again that the Incarnation and crucifixion do not constitute a divine 'tour de force' in humility and love, but are a supreme revelation of divine humility and love as it eternally is. God is such a being as eternally wills to be incarnate and to die to redeem creation if creation so needs redemption. A comparison, necessarily crude, could be made with water flowing in a channel. If at one point the channel widens the water will fill the wider space, increase its surface area, and so on; but the water has not changed its nature. It has acted <u>according to</u> its nature. Had it continued in a narrow stream identical with that it maintained in the narrow channel, in defiance of the laws controlling the flow of liquids, then it would have chamged, by remaining, apparently, the same. So God wills to act in all circumstances according to ~~the~~ his nature. The circumstances are not imposed

upon him, and cannot compel him. All depends on his will, and therefore his essence - that which he immutably is. Were he not to be incarnate he would be remaining apparently the same, whereas actually he would have changed in the will and love that are his essence. Thus there is in God's activity no actualisation of a potentiality, for nothing in his nature has become actual; his essence has been revealed as it is eternally. The potentiality and contingency is in the revelation, not the thing revealed, and that God can eternally and immutably will the potential and contingent has already been seen in the discussion of creation. Thus in the Incarnation, or in any other revelation, God suffers neither actualisation nor potentiality; instead there is revealed that which is already (or, more accurately, eternally) actual - the 'actus purus' - God's activity as it is.

The key lies in the statement of Athanasius, already overworked in this essay, that "not even when the Virgin bore him did he suffer any change". If this is taken as consisting of two truths in apparent contradiction it is of small profit. If it is taken as a premise for all discussions of immutability, especially in relation to the Incarnation, its value is great, for -

> As God is his existence, so is he his action. And his action is his existence." (Maritain,"Pref.to Metaphysics",IV 2, p. 112).

It is by examination of the action that we understand the existence rather than vice versa. The immutability of God,

then, might be defined as an eternal, unchanging, divine activity which could be manifest in revelation, especially in the Incarnation and life of God the Son, in exactly that manner in which it was manifested, and no other.

One does not pretend that on the basis of this definition all difficulties involved in the Christian belief in immutability are eliminated, only that some are eliminated, and most are diminished. The greatest difficulty of all concerns the metaphysical attributes of God in Christ - his impassibility, omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience. In respect to them God would seem to have changed in being incarnate, for they are not obvious in Christ, and seem by his very acceptance of the limitations of flesh to be excluded or concealed rather than revealed. The possibility that they were laid aside has already been discredited (pp.11-16). Of Impassibility it may be said that in the Incarnation nothing was imposed on the divine will, whose purpose was exactly accomplished. If Christ was subject to the will of men, it was by a voluntary act on the parts of both Father and Son. God was never the unwilling object, and therefore in the strict and proper sense, never passive. Omnipresence loses most of its difficulty when considered as being an attribute of Christ as God, and not as man. Surely this is not an unacceptable belief, any more than the assumption that God was absent from the whole of creation when his presence was

cf Quick on p. 115

in one sense localised in the burning bush. Similarly omnipotence can be restricted to the divine nature in Christ. With omniscience we are in a much thicker wood. As Gore perceived, for God in Christ to be immutably omniscient and for Christ to be possessed of a truly human limited knowledge, is as deep as any mystery of the Incarnation. Here the approach advocated in considering immutability, that is, arguing from the attribute as revealed in Christ to the full character of the attribute, is less effective. We can say that the immutable activity of God is as revealed in the activity of the incarnate Son; but can we say that the omniscience of God is as revealed in the ignorance of the incarnate Son? Obviously not. The way out most ready to hand with this, as with other metaphysical attributes lies in the distinction of the natures in Christ, remembering at the same time that any wholesale parcelling out of apparently incompatible attributes between the two Natures only pushes the question back to how the Natures can be united in the one Person. This is conspicuously true of omniscience. To assert then that that is a matter for the ~~kenotic~~ kenotic scholar to settle may be convenient, but it is an evasion, not a solution.

B. The Value of Immutability to Christianity.

To the Church and her theology the belief in immutability

has all the values which we have just seen it bears for the philosopher, and much more besides. There is the same worth derived from the confidence in purpose, stability and order as underlying the cosmos and its laws - their only possible variation being in miracles and in the ultimate ending of the world, events subject to the same good and immutable will on which the established order depends. Fundamental fortuitousness and caprice, those stimulants of despair and anarchy, are ruled out. The certainty of the reality of truth and the good, with the consequent making absolute of the moral law, so that right and wrong, good and evil can never be interchangeable, and that the assessment of conduct is not a matter of opinion, and that the principles of the Judgment are unalterably declared, all this is necessary for the Christian life to exist rationally at all. Thus man knows how he stands in relation to God, and that change in that relationship can come only from himself - God will not change. For one effect of immutability is that it immediately excludes any anthropomorphic conception of God, since being immutable he is necessarily superior to the human and mundane. He is immortal and transcendent. It was this aspect of immutability that was underlined in the revelations of the Old Testament days. And with it, for the Christian, goes the confidence that God is eternally all he has shown himself to be in the greater revelation of the Incarnation. The love and patience, the care for individual souls, the assistance

to the repentant sinner, the sympathy with the meek and broken-hearted - these were not the glories of one shining hour, they were the epiphany of the immutable God.

The incarnate life continues in the world in the Church, the Body of Christ, its nature depending solely on the immutable will of God. Thus the Church herself is invested with a changelessness. Her existence is founded on Christ's victory over evil, a victory that as being divine is eternal, and thus the Church, her life inseparable from that of the immutable Victor, is herself inviolable and eternal. Likewise as the Body of Christ, and indwelt by the Holy Ghost, she partakes of the immutability of the divine nature. The grace and blessings mediated by the Church to man cannot be undone. The Sacraments can never change in their power. Sins forgiven through the Church are forgiven eternally. The officially pronounced doctrines of the Church are not subject to variation or alteration.

What appears at first as a rather technical and abstract conception is now appearing again, as it has already appeared from time to time in the course of this study, with a pronounced practical importance. There is its significance for the moral law and all conduct, for the Church and its ministrations, and equally forceful is its bearing on personal devotion, and each individual's framing of his own life. Man seeks the satisfaction of the desires and longings of which his experience

of his own nature makes him aware. The course of his life is largely the course he chooses as the most likely, or the most attractive, or the most accessible, for the attainment of that satisfaction. In seeking satisfaction among the rewards the world has to offer, man finds only the transitory, and seeks in vain:

> Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. (Mt.VI 19-20).

What man is seeking is the permanent fruition of all his desires, attainable only in the immutable existence of heaven. His satisfaction in this life lies in the hope of eternal bliss in the life to come, the fulness and peace of eternal life. Never did Bishop Frank Weston show his understanding of man's nature, destiny, and need better than when he began a retreat with the words: "Think of God as Eternal Quiet - the Still One - the Changeless One. Let us offer all our restlessness, our unquiet hearts to Him." ("In His Will" p. # 9).

High in the list of man's daily needs is the confidence in God's immutability, and of his own possible end in the perfection of divine satisfaction and peace. To every devout and prayerful soul, as well as to religious, it is the pearl of great price.

The truth of this showed plainly in Nineteenth Century England. It was an age of continual and rapid change economically, ecclesiastically, intellectually, socially. It may have been prosperous, and in the field of international politics comparatively tranquil, but the established custom and manner of life was subjected to innumerable new tides and currents. Man, naturally desiring peace and stability, was unsatisfied by the restlessness of his environment. The result among the religiously minded was an increase in the appreciation of the immutability and reliability of God, and of eternal life with God. As a factor this played its part in the resurgence of the religious life in the Anglican Church, and, at the end of the century, in the growing appreciation of the works of the mystics. But its most distinct effect is on the hymns of the century. From about 1830 , when the agitation for social reform was at its height, God's changelessness and faithfulness assumed a prominent place, especially in those hymns which quickly acquired a wide popularity. H.F.Lyte (1793-1847) wrote such lines as

> Change and decay in all around I see;
> O thou who changest not, abide with me. (Eng.Hym.363 v.2, Il 3-4),

and

> Praise him still the same for ever.(E.H.470 v 2,l.3).

To Newman (1801-1890) in what was a poem by design rather than a hymn we owe

> So long they power hath blessed me, sure it still
> Will lead me on. (E.H.425 v 3,11.1-2).

(1824-1908)

W. Chalmers Smith has:

> We blossom and flourish as leaves on the tree,
> And wither and perish - but nought changeth thee.
> (E.H. 407 v.3,ll.3-4).

(1825-1906)

And Bishop Bickersteth ends the hymn "Peace,perfect peace" with:

> It is enough: earth's struggles soon shall cease,
> And Jesus call us to heaven's perfect peace.
> (E.H. 468,v.7.).

There are others, e.g. E.H. 375 v. 5,381 vv.4-5, 426 v.3. And so we see the belief in the immutability of God playing a prominent part in a people's daily expression of their hopes and needs.

The same thing is to be found, too, in the literature of the period, as when Mrs. Dean says,

> 'I don't know if it be a peculiarity in me, but I am seldom otherwise than happy while watching in the chamber of death, should no frenzied or despairing mourner share the duty with me. I see a repose that neither earth nor hell can break, and I feel the assurance of the endless and shadowless hereafter - the Eternity they have entered - where life is boundless in its duration, and love in its sympathy, and joy in its fulness.' (Emily Brontë, "Wuthering Heights", Ch. XVI. Pubd. 1847).

And then there is Sydney Carton's speech on the scaffold.

CT The Value of Immutability for the World Today.

In considering the value of immutability to the world today we pass from the rapidly changing scene of the Nineteenth Century to the more profound dislocations of the Twentieth. Unlike the Victorian age devastating war and

the fear of catastrophe are not only not absent, but comprise the actual environment of the lives of the people. Also interest in religion has dwindled and decayed. Concern at change and restlessness has given place to an unwilling desperation, and a widespread want of assurance in the permanence of values- indeed, in the permanence of anything. Man's experience is of perpetual dissatisfaction, and he is bewildered at frustration and the absence of real hope after years of effort and endeavour. He is uncertain what is worth having, and is sometimes inclined to believe in nothing at all beyond the nearest transitory pleasure the moment can provide. This has accounted for the rapid rise to popularity of the present subjective, and almost hedonistic version of existentialism.

Just as it was the hymn-writers of the Nineteenth Century who expressed the feeling of their age, it is the dramatists and poets who have laid bare the mind of the Twentieth Century. T. S. Eliot's portrayal of the frustration and sense of emptiness is the outstanding example, and a few lines must serve to indicate his diagnosis:

> The endless cycle of idea and action,
> Endless invention, endless experiment,
> Brings knowledge of motion, but not stillness;
> Knowledge of speech, but not silence;
> Knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word.
> (from "The Rock".)

——But Eliot is not alone. Never was such an abundance of poems about purposeless life and death, tombs, empty houses and despair:

> You are dead, you are dead, and all the dead are
> nothing to us,
> There's nothing, nothing, nothing, not a breath beyond:
> O give up every hope of it, we'll wake no more,
> We are the world and it will end with us:
> The heart is not a clock, it will not wind again,
> The dead are but dead, there is no use for them,
> They neither care, nor care not, they are only dead.
> (Sacheverell Sitwell, "Agamennon's Tomb", last 7 lines).

> Yet time trundles this one to the rag-and-bone man,
> While that other may
> Reverberate all along
> Man's craggy circumstance -
> Naked enough to keep its dignity
> Though it eye God askance.
> (Day Lewis, from "Few things can more inflame").

——There could be no end to such quotations. Even the very form of much of the poetry tells its tale.

But the poets are not unaware of what is wanting. They have ideas of what they seek; and it is that which we have seen is found in conjunction with a faith in the immutability of God. It is stillness, confidence in some reality or existence transcending the chaos of the Twentieth Century world:

> Let all these so ephemeral things
> Be somehow permanent like the swallow's tangent wings:
> Goodbye to you, this day remember is Christmas, this morn
> They say, interpret it your own way, Christ was born.
> (MacNeice, end of "An Eclogue for Christmas").

> Round twists old Earth, and round,
> Stillness not yet found.
> (R. Hughes, end of "The Walking Road").

And of course much of Eliot's work shows the same feeling.

In such an age the value of the Christian belief in God's immutability, and its consequent implications for the Church, truth, science, the laws of conduct, and the hope of the beatified soul sharing the divine life, is not easily under-estimated. The belief can have no better advocate than S.Augustine who, himself living in days of world upheaval, with the old order changing and doubt on every horizon, himself beset by successive storms of care, responsibility and loss, but realizing better than any other man the richness for humanity in God's immutability, saw not despair and frustration as the end of all things, but rather life in the kingdom of God's changelessness, with its eternal corollaries of peace and rest:

> The end or supreme good of this city [of God] is either peace in eternal life, or eternal life in peace. For peace is a good so great, that even in this earthly and mortal life there is no word we hear with such pleasure, nothing we desire with such zest, or find to be more thoroughly gratifying. (De Civ. Dei XIX 11).

John W. A. Howe.
August 14th, 1948

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX I.

The Deification of man (referring to page ~~80~~ 121 of thesis).

There are passages in the New Testament, and in the Fathers, which imply that the last state of beatified man is, in some sense, to 'become God'. Exactly what is meant, and precisely what is the interpretation put on such passages by orthodox divinity, is not readily apparent. Discussion by scholars seems generally to be confined to footnotes in treatises on other subjects. As any sharing of the divine nature by human souls must raise the question of a change in God, some attempt must here be made to determine any general trend that may exist in Christian thought on deification. This appendix is aimed to do that in preparation for Part IV, Section C. p.121 by collecting passages which are of value for the discussion of deification, and to provide a brief commentary upon them.

(a) Deification in Pagan Thought.

"For a Greek the explanation of a thing must always be sought in what is above it, not in what is below." (Inge, in "Philosophy", Vol. X, 1935, p.150). This characteristic of Hellenic thought led to various conceptions of deification. The Stoic writer Herophilus is quoted by Origen (Com. in Pss. frag 1) as defining God as "an

immortal rational being" - a definition which leaves the door wide open for man to enter into the divine life. Plotinus teaches deification plainly:

> All our activity is directed upon the stage next above us. We become that object; we offer ourselves to it as a 'matter' which it informs; we are only potentially ourselves. (Quoted by Inge, loc.cit.p.147).
>
> It is also true that, especially in the sixth 'Ennneads', he insists on the ultimate identity of ourselves with the universal Being, and speaks of separate individuality as an illusion from which we should free ourselves. (Inge, loc.cit.p.148, cf.p.151).

The Hermetic writings, part Platonic, part Oriental, obscure in their origin, coming from Egypt about the beginning of the Christian era, are characterised by a bold insistence on man's divine end:

> He that is born by that birth is another (person); he is a god and son of God. (Corp.Herm.XIII 2, p.241).
>
> This is the Good; this is the consummation for those that have got gnosis, [to become divine.] (Corp.Herm. I 26a. See appendix V.)

Philo marvels at the notion of deification, but none the less, expounds it definitely, if cautiously (de pot.ins.,24). He writes of a divine spark put in man by God and ever increasing until it joins with the nature of God. This mention of a spark in the human soul is in agreement with the thought of many writers. Later Hellenism, influenced by contact with Oriental dualism, became increasingly disquieted by a distrust in matter, in the body and its passions, as

being evil, and subject to evil and fate. The only alternative to evil and matter was God, and in at any rate some people there was believed to be a divine spark that could return to God taking the soul with it. On this line of thought some conception of deification was almost invariably arrived at; the Gnostics had many varieties to offer. The divine spark was to find a place in Christian theology too (cf. Inge, "Christian Mysticism", appendix C).

Roman polytheism lent itself readily to an increase of the immortals from among the ranks of the greater mortals. The whole conception here is rather different from the Hellenic, but of significance as witnessing to popular familiarity with ideas of deification: the age of the New Testament writers was one which embraced, or at least tolerated, emperor worship. Tertullian did not restrain his sneers:

> I shall shew that Jupiter also was as well a man as born of a man, and so, in order, that the whole swarm of his descendents were as mortal as they were like the seed whence they sprung. (Tertullian, Apol. I 10,cf 11)

But even this is eclipsed by Vespasian's deathbed gibe:

> Vae, puto Deus fio!

Cicero gives a scholarly treatment, and regards the most blessed state as attainable in this life, but as always being distinct from that of the gods by remaining mortal:

> ...a life of happiness that vies with and resembles the divine existence and leaves us inferior to the celestial beings in nothing else save immortality... (Cicero, De nat. deorum II lxi 153, p.271).

Ideas of deification were, then, familiar to the world in which Christianity first grew.

(b) The Old Testament.

In a few instances, notably in the Psalms, the title 'gods' seems to be given to men:

> God standeth in the congregation of God; he judgeth among the gods. (Ps.LXXXII 1; cf. 6; L 1).

The Hebrew has אלהים for "gods", a word which can also mean judges. The LXX has θεός in each case. Whatever the original meaning the interpretation familiar to early Christianity, dependent principally on the LXX, is clear. As will appear, those scholars who find the meaning of אלהים as understood by the LXX translation incredible, and therefore wrong, are some way from the mind of the Fathers, who did not seem to find the expression surprising at all.

(c) The New Testament.

The 'locus classicus' is 2 Peter I 4:-

> that ye may become partakers of the divine nature (γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως).

The directness of the passage is impressive, though it is too brief to explain itself much. The emphasis on 'may become' makes the participation a future, ultimate possibility; it is by grace (vv.2-3) and not by any human right or present fitness - indeed all depends on the

increase of virtue in this life (vv.6-7). κοινωνοί is a strong word in this context, and the writer clearly means at least a real and considerable sharing. Thus while the passage alone would be insufficient to justify, say, some of the more oratorical expressions used by Athanasius, it could only be denied as a witness to deification by distortion. S. John of the Cross says of it that the implication is simply,

> for the soul to have participation in God (Spir.Cant.XXXVIII 4).

That seems an acceptable interpretation.

At the same time the passage is a 'locus classicus' because of its singularity - there is nothing else quite like it in the New Testament. But brief consideration reveals an affinity with much of the Johannine theology (e.g. Jn.I 12-13; 1 Jn.III 2, XVII 21-22 cf. pp.31-33 supra), and of the Pauline (e.g. his treatment of σῶμα Χριστοῦ, and the life ἐν Χριστῷ). And it is far from being discordant with the whole New Testament conception of the Incarnation and its meaning for mankind.

(c) The Fathers.

The expression of the earlier Fathers tends towards blunt assertion without discussion of implications. Theophilous (c.180) says:

> [man] should receive as reward from him [God] immortality, and should become God. (Theophilous, Ad Autol. II 27, p.92).

Pseudo-Justin (2nd century ?) states that the power of God leads mortals to immortality, humans to deity (Or. ad Gent. V), though a more wary note had been struck earlier by Justin (Apol. I 26). Irenaeus gave a fuller treatment: man progresses towards God, but

> For we cast blame upon him, because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, then at length gods. (Irenaus, Adv.Haer, IV xxxviii 4),

and:

> ... man receives advancement and increase towards God. For as God is always the same, so also man, when found in God, shall always go on towards God. (Ib.IV xi 2).

Thus Irenaus justifies the Scriptural application of the term 'gods' to men:

> And we have proved that no one else is called God in the Scriptures, but the Father of all, and the Son, and those who have the adoption. (Ibid. IV pref.).

Already a characteristic word has appeared - 'adoption'. Irenaus never allows all barriers of difference between God and beatified man to be removed; he never asserts identification, but allows the great gulf between God and man (IV 38 4,IV 11 2) to narrow until man achieves his highest as an adopted son:

> So that he would become the Son of man for this purpose, that man also might become the son of God. (Adv. Haer. III x 2).

The difference between God and the adopted sons is the difference that exists between God and the Church:

> ... those who have received the adoption (adoptionem perceperunt); but these are the church (ecclesia). For she is the synagogue of God, which God - that is the Son himself - has gathered by himself. (Ib. III vi 1).

But it is a difference that does not exclude man from incorruption and immortality, and permits speaking of him as 'commixtus' with the Word:

> For the Word became man, that man united with the Word (commixtus Verbo Dei), and receiving his adoption, might become the Son of God. (Ibid.III 19 1).

Apart from the word "commixtus", which is not pleasant to the ears of a later age, all Irenaeus wrote is founded on our generally accepted interpretations - the Johannine idea of sonship, the ideas of the Incarnation that Nicaea was later to ratify, the scriptural idea of immortality. Irenaeus has only underlined the implication that a son shares the father's life, but that they are not identified thereby. To achieve that beatitude is the goal of man's life in the Church, and whether the Old Testament chooses to call him god when he gets there is of small moment, since it is as obvious that the term is in some degree suitable, as it is obvious that the Deity has not been deposed or rivalled. The evidence indicates that some kind of change in God is by no means ruled out. Possibly it is even implied.

In the West where close acquaintance with emperor worship probably acted as a deterrent, the subject was, until Augustine, given no more than secondary consideration. Tertullian (supra) scorned the pagan conceptions, but seemed to approve the Christian. With Tatian he is responsible for the introduction of the doctrine of a divine spark in the human soul into Christian thought. As Dr. Inge has shown, the doctrine gained considerable support among Latin writers up to the Reformation. (Eckhart was to be condemned for saying,

> There is something in the soul which is both uncreated and impossible of creation: were this true of the whole soul that would be uncreated and increatable. That something is the intellect.

—Mediaeval orthodoxy was not afraid of ideas of deification, as will appear, but would not allow that man at creation was already possessed of something divine and uncreated. If such were ever his it was acquired by virtue of the Incarnation.) Emphasis was laid by some on the possibility of man's immortality, an attribute which they asserted implied divinity:

> For thou (wilt) have become God ... because thou hast been made divine, since thou has been begotten immortal. (Hippolytus, X 34 Vol. II, p.178).

Novation (De Trin.XV) asserts similarly that Christ bestows immortality, and through that, divinity. Hilary plainly seemed aware that too much might be read into these

unqualified statements, and with an eye on the errors of heathendom, stressed that the immortality in virtue of which men are called gods, sprang not from a divinity of their own, but from God, to whom all immortality belongs.

The Greek writers who succeeded Irenaeus gave deification a more considerable place in their work than the Latins. It was less startling in an Hellenic and oriental environment. Clement says that by divine aid the soul seeks to become God, and is never separated from him. (S. Clement of Alexandria Strom. VI 14, p.370), Again immortality and incorruption are mentioned by him:

> To be incorruptible is to participate in divinity (φθείρεσθαι θειότητος μετέχειν ἐστί); but revolt from the knowledge of God brings corruption. (Ib. V 10, Vol. XII, p.259)

Origen's teaching is similar:

> They see that from him there began the union of the divine with the human nature (θεία καὶ ἀνθρώπινη συναφαίνεσθαι φύσις), in order that the human, by communion with the divine (τὸ θειότερον κοινωνίᾳ) might rise to be divine, not in Jesus alone, but in all those who not only believe, but enter upon the life which Jesus taught, and which elevates to friendship with God and communion (πρὸς τὸν θεὸν φιλίαν καὶ τὴν πρὸς ἐκεῖνον κοινωνίαν) with him every one who lives according to the precepts of Jesus. (Origen, Cont. Cels. III 28, Vol. XXIII, p.110).

If there is any inclination to put a moderate interpretation on Irenaeus's words, as those of an early and exuberant writer whose scholarship was limited, Origen compels a change of estimate; for instead of toning down what Irenaeus had said, he surpasses him. He does not appear

even to restrict the divine communion to the adopted sons, but admits all "who enter upon the life which Jesus taught". Elsewhere (Origen, Comm. in Joan. II; III 19) he says many become gods, and further, (Ibid. XX 29) advises mankind to stop being men, and set about becoming gods.

How much does Origen wish to convey? That man has full participation in the Godhead? No. He directly denies that man is ὁμοούσιος τῷ πατρί (In Joan. XIII 25). Equally clearly he believes that man is capable of sharing some part of that which is proper to God and not to creation, sharing to an extent that works a great change in man, and would, therefore, it seems, indicate a change in God.

Deification is given its most persistent and enthusiastic treatment by Athanasius; there is scarcely one of his writings in which it does not find a place. His life-long study of the Incarnation is felt, and it led him to develop the teaching of Irenaeus and Origen that the Incarnation of the Word implies inevitably some degree of divinity for man. The Son is united to the Father: by the Incarnation the Son shares our nature, so we enter into a relationship of sharing with the Father:

> ... for as the Lord, putting on the body, became man, so we men are made gods (θεοποιούμεθα) by the Word as being taken to him through his flesh, and henceforward inherit life everlasting. (3 Or.XXVI 34, p.413; of XXV 23).

> He is the Father's Wisdom and Word of which all things partake (οὗ μετέχει τὰ πάντα), it follows that he, being the deifying and enlightening power of the Father (ὢν τὸ θεοποιὸν καὶ φωτιστικὸν τοῦ πατρός), in which all things are deified and quickened (ἐν ᾧ τὰ πάντα θεοποιεῖται καὶ ζωοποιεῖται), is not alien in essence from the Father, but co-essential. (De Syn. LI, p.477).

> And we are deified (θεοποιούμεθα) not by partaking (μετέχοντες) of the body of some man, but by receiving the Body of the Word himself. (Ad Max. II, pp.578-9; cf. 3 Or. XXXIV).

Occasionally he speaks of deification by partaking of the Spirit (3 Or. XXIV), but probably he means the spirit of the Son (De Dec. Syn.Nic. XIV). In the same passage there is an insistence that the very purpose of the Incarnation is the deification of man. This is to be found elsewhere, too, in his writings:

> He was incarnate that we might become divine (αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηνθρώπησεν ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν) (De Inc. LIV 3; cf. 1 Or. XXXVIII; Ad Adelph.IV).

The term for deification which Athanasius nearly always uses is θεοποιέω , and he clearly means it in no figurative sense. God the Son shares the life of men, so men share the life of God, they are "made divine" - or can be. They are freed from the confines of mortality and corruption. Was it not for that the very purpose that the Son took flesh? Is not that the essence of the New Testament message? To Athanasius the answer was clear as daylight. Who should wish to disagree? Approaching the subject with Athanasius we find nothing to frighten us.

"He was incarnate that we might become divine" - of course! Then why is it that the epigram in isolation strikes us as, at least, unguarded? Why is 2 Peter I 4 always a little surprising? Partly, perhaps, because, loath though one be to admit it, one rarely wears the thought of Athanasius; but chiefly because the words 'deification', θεοποιέω and the like, seem to outrun the normal bounds of orthodoxy and Scripture. But as is becoming apparent, the Fathers use the word with a restricted connotation: it is more to derive life from God, a limited but sufficient participation, than any kind of identification. It is the Son who is at the Father's right hand, not the sons of Zebedee. Athanasius may say we are

> "... sons of God because of the Word in us (3 Or.XXV 25),

but "gods" to him who was familiar with patristic handling of the LXX was a less notable word than "sons". To have the "Word within us" is not an attribution of equality:

> 'As Thou, Father, are in me... etc.', does not signify that we were to have identity with him. (3 Or. XXV 25).

The impetuousness that sometimes characterised the Cappadocian Fathers led them to extravagant expositions of the Athanasian theme. Gregory of Nazianzus writes,

> ... in order that I too might be made God so far as he is made Man. (Greg. Naz., Or.XXIX 19, p.308).

Gregory of Nyssa is not over-cautious with the term συναπο θεωθείσης (Cat. Or. XXXV [illegible]); Basil writes of "being made like to God, and highest of all, the being made God (θεὸν γένεσθαι)." (Basil, De Sp.Sanct. XXIII, p.16) in a sense that implies rather more than a limited participation. This exceeds regular patristic expression, and was not taken up generally; indeed Cyril saw fit to recall that the name "gods" is applied to man [illegible] by grace, not by right, and does not exalt him to a sphere above his nature (De Trin. Dial. IV 520 C); and Chrysostom scarcely concerns himself with deification at all.

Augustine is at pains both to preserve a proper belief in deification, and also to protect it from excesses. His attitude shows a combination of excitement and caution:

> Lovest thou the earth? thou shalt be earth. Lovest thou God? what shall I say? thou shalt be a god? I dare not say it of myself, let us hear the Scriptures: 'I have said, Ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High'. (Augustine, In Ep.Joan. Hom.II 14, p.475.).

He carefully protects the real Athanasian contention that beatified man partakes of the being of God - "we shall be full of him" (De Civ. Dei XXII 30; cf. in Pss. CXVIII); and that deification is consequent upon, and inseparable from, the Incarnation:

> The Word himself was pleased first to be born of men, that thou mightest be born of God... that he should make [men] immortal. (In Joan.Hom. II 15.p.30.)

He further supplies what his predecessors had not, namely exact expression:

> It is one thing to be God, another thing to be a partaker of God. God by nature cannot sin, but the partaker of God receives this inability from God. (De Civ. Dei XXII 30).

Emphatically man does not become identical with God:

> The soul itself, too, though it be always wise (as it will be eternally when it is redeemed), will be so by participating in the unchangeable wisdom, which it is not; for though the air be never robbed of the light that is shed abroad in it, it is not on that account the same thing as the light. (Ibid. XI 10).

Augustine rebukes the pride of those who think otherwise:

> ... that whereas God was made man for us, man may acknowledge himself to be, not God, but man. For whoso wisheth to appear God, when he is man, does not imitate him, who, being God, was made Man. (Serm. LXXXVII 4 p.518).

He also maintains (De Trin. V 16) that man's attainment of full beatitude does not incur any change in God. (For discussion of this see text, pp. 123-4.)

In the succeeding centuries deification became a commonplace in Christian belief, as is shown by the Scotists basing one of their arguments for the certainty of an Incarnation, even if there had been no Fall, on 2 Peter I 4; for by no other means, they said, could man be brought to share the divine nature.

As the belief grew in familiarity, so it attracted suitably less attention. At the same time it found its way into the Church's liturgy. One of the offertory prayers of

the Mass, derived from the Leonine Sacramentary for Christmas, a document variously ascribed to each century from the fourth to the seventh (cf. Fortescue, 'The Mass', pp.118-9, 306), asks as the wine and water are mixed in the chalice, that:

> we may be made partakers of his divinity, who vouchsafed to share our humanity.

The post-communion collect for S. Cyril of Jerusalem is concluded in the words of 2 Peter I 4; and the Mattins office which Aquinas compiled for the Feast of Corpus Christi contains this:

> There is not, nor ever was, a nation so great that has gods so nigh as our God is present to us. For the only-begotten Son of God, wishing to make us partakers of his divinity, took upon himself our nature, that being made man he might make men gods. (1st lesson, 2nd nocturn = Aquinas, Lesser works, No.57)

The general discussion of the subject was carried into the middle ages by such important figures as John Scotus Erigena (De Nat. Dei III 9), but with the wider acceptance, and after the steadying influence of Augustine, the study of it becomes less adventurous. In discussions of beatitude the Schoolmen generally preferred such terms as contemplation of God, union with God, or knowledge of God, to deification. But the belief in a real sharing of the divine life was carefully retained. Gilson, in expressing Bonaventure's exposition of beatitude, writes,

> The total union of the soul and God cannot then be achieved here below: yet somewhere it must be achievable, unless the divine work is doomed to eternal incompletion; and it will be achieved in an enjoyment of God in which the knowledge acquired by the intellect will make possible and complete the joys of the will. ("Phil. of S. Bonaventure", XIV, pp. 465-6).

Among the mystics of the middle ages the excitement is less suppressed. The author of "The Cloud of Unknowing" writes in "The Epistle of Privy Council",

> It mattereth not now to thee, but that thy blind beholding of thy naked being be gladly borne up in hastiness of love to be knitted and oned in grace and in spirit with the precious Being of God in himself only as he is, without more. (Ch. II).

In "The Kingdom of the Lovers of God" Ruysbroeck has similar passages (e.g. Cap. XXVI), but in his amazing discourse on the Seventh Step in "The Seven Steps of the Ladder of Spiritual Love" he writes with a boldness or recklessness, unparalleled. Having spoken of the "fruition" of the soul in beatification, meaning by fruition God's possession of the soul, and the soul's possession of God, he continutes:

> In fruition, indeed, we are at rest; for it is only God that acts when he ravishes from themselves his loving spirits, transforms them, and perfects them in the unity of his Spirit. Therein we are all a single fire of love, which is greater than all that was ever created by God. Each single spirit is a glowing coal which God has lit from the flame of his infinite charity; and all of us are gathered up in one burning and inextinguishable fire with the Father

> and the Son, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, where even the divine Persons are, as it were, rapt from themselves in the unity of their essence into a bottomless abyss of simple beatitude. Therein is neither Father nor Son, nor Holy Spirit, nor any created thing, but only one eternal essence which is the substance of the Divine Persons. There we are all created anew; it is our supersubstantial essence. There all fruition is consummated and perfected in essential beatitude... Then from the Father and the Son proceeds in unity of nature the Holy Spirit, third Person of the Trinity. He is the infinite love of both, wherein each in love and fruition eternally embraces the other, and also all of us, forming, as it were, but one life, one love, one fruition. (loc. cit.).

Ruysbroeck is indeed upholding the deification of man, but in his treatment he seems to have destroyed the Trinity, and obliterated human identity. (The statements about the Trinity are discussed by Taylor, intro. pp.4-8). On both these scores the passage must be accounted irregular; but it serves to make clear the confidence with which the doctrine of deification was accepted, and also, by contrast, the extent to which the majority of exponents did <u>not</u> go.

After the Reformation it was still principally the mystics who furnished expositions of the doctrine. A much clearer understanding of it than Ruysbroeck's is given in the exact scholarship of S. John of the Cross. His characteristic term in the matter is "participation" - man in the beatified state participates in God. By

participation he means a life united with that of the Holy Trinity:

> For since God grants [the soul] the favour of attaining to being deiform and united in the Most Holy Trinity wherein she becomes God by participation ... (S. John of the Cross, Spir. Cant. XXXVIII 3).

The participation, then, is such as to enable deified men to be called gods: life is derived wholly from sharing the divine life, and S. John can speak of souls as,

> truly gods by participation, equals of God and his companions. (Ibid XXXVIII 4).

But never does he teach identification of men and God, as the word "companions" shows. God and man; each retains his identity. The ultimate distinction is that:

> souls possess these same blessings by participation as he possesses by nature. (Ibid).

> That which God seeks to do is to make us Gods by participation as he is God by nature. (Points of Love No. 28).

Man is exalted by God to be equal with all that God is by nature. (Here S. John is following Augustine closely; cf. De Civ. Dei, XXII 30, supra, p.171). This is possible because it is part of God's eternal plan - "that which God seeks to do" - and the manner of its accomplishment is readily explicable in terms of S. John's psychology. Such an explanation is to be found in "The Dark Night of the Soul", II iv 2. There the Saint, assuming points that he has already contended, as that the soul's proper journey

is an ascent to God, and that one of the first stages of the journey is to cease seeking satisfaction through the senses and to seek it in God alone, tells how the soul forsakes its "own human way and operation" for the "operation and way of God". This expression he then explains in terms of the three parts of the soul, as scholastic terminology gives them - understanding, will and memory.

(a) Understanding. It is fundamental to S. John's whole psychology that once the soul is purged in the Dark Night of the Senses of sensual domination of the soul, it is then capable of subjection to domination by God alone. This is already the beginning of a union between God and the soul, since they are identified in purpose. Thus of the soul's understanding he can say it "no longer comes through its natural light and vigour, but through the Divine Wisdom wherewith it has become united". God's understanding and man's are becoming the same, having their common source in God.

(b) Will. The will, similarly purged, is now compelled solely by the Divine Love, "it no longer loves with its natural strength after a lowly manner, but with strength and purity from the Holy Spirit." Thus the work of the Holy Spirit in man is no longer confined by the sensual

in the human will, and so can have free course: the will and love in man is therefore solely God's and the same as God's.

(c) Memory. The memory likewise is concerned not with worldly data, but only with the divine and "has become transformed into eternal apprehension of glory", apprehension, that is, of that which God apprehends.

Thus with logic and lucidity S. John explains how the soul enters upon union with God, a union which reaches fruition in the life of the world to come (cf. Sp.Cant. XXXVIII 4). As an explanation of how the union can exist, and how it comes about, this passage from the "Dark Night" is without parallel in Christian literature. His main points are:

1. That union is possible.
2. That union is with the Holy Trinity.
3. That it is a complete union of life and operation, but not of identity.
4. It is by participation - roughly what we have elsewhere called sharing.
5. That the change is in the soul that participates; whereas God continues according to his nature.
6. Any change there is in God is of relationship (with man) only.
7. That in any case that relationship accords with the eternal divine plan in creation and redemption.
8. That rightly approached from the right premises it is all logical and commonsense.

If there is any point under-emphasised it is the importance of the Incarnation for deification through the union of the two natures in Christ, and the divine adoption of men as sons and heirs through Christ. But that is because we have concentrated on one paragraph only in

S. John's writings, and not on the theses which underlie his whole work.

There is little more to be said. The theology of divine union has expanded little if at all in the last 500 years. The mystics have still maintained their place as chief expositors, and often it has provided their finest passages (cf. de Sales, "Love of God", X 5-7). Among recent writers should be mentioned Dom Columba Marmion, and Dom John Chapman (esp. "Spir. Letters", LXXXVII), and useful references, and in the latter case discussion, are to be found in Westcott's "Epistles of S. John," and Inge, "Christian Mysticism", appendix C.

One is led, then to conclude that the deification of man is integral to Christian theology. It has its origins in the Old Testament (or more certainly in the LXX) and New Testament, and its parallels in the pagan beliefs of educated Greece, Rome, and Egypt. The Fathers, from early unquestioning assertions progressed to discussions and definitions. Their evidence was based on Scripture, and on reasoning about the Incarnation and redemption. By pointing to the immutability, incorruption and immortality of the beatified soul in eternal life they confirmed their belief in a true sharing of the divine nature. But they did not in the main say, or intend to say, that man is identified with God. The relation is that of adopted sons,

or of God to his Church. The beatified life is derived from God, and man is not ὁμοούσιος with God (Origen). The extravaganoes of the Cappadocians were not followed up; Eckhart was condemned, and Ruysbroeck is isolated, and, if he is taken literally, has involved himself in heresy by his lack of caution.

Cautious the theologians were, but not timid. Their point is clear. The ultimate state of the redeemed soul is deification. Athanasius showed that its achievement was the purpose of the Incarnation; Augustine showed its necessary place in Christian theology; S. John of the Cross showed the wherefore and commonsense of it all.

Man, then, is capable of deification. And deification is participation, not identification with God. As Origen showed, this is a great change in man: does it imply a change in God? Little has been said on that subject, except that Augustine said, "No" (De Trin. V 16).

APPENDIX II.

The Archbishops' Report on the Doctrine of the Church of England (1938).

Concerning the activity of God the Report states:

> It is an essential feature of the Biblical Revelation that it presents God as indeed the living God .... this conception stands in contrast with the leading conceptions entertained by Greek philosophers or Indian sages, who alike tend to conceive God as a Being of static perfection, abiding for ever in the fruition of his own blessedness. The Biblical conception is greatly to be preferred.
>
> (Report, I.A.II, p.42).

This statement could be misleading; for it implies that the Biblical Revelation does not express the divine existence at all in terms of changelessness, and it assumes that immutability and living activity cannot exist together in God. The present investigations favour the suggestion that neither is true. The Biblical Revelation, as recorded in both Testaments, does express God's existence as changeless (though not static) as well as active. And the whole course of Hebrew and Christian theology witnesses to the co-existence of changelessness and eternal activity in God. The Christian conception is certainly distinct from the Greek here, but scarcely in contrast; thus the great theologians were able to profit from Greek thought without jeopardising the integrity of the Hebrew-Christian tradition. Whereas the careful avoiding on pages 41-2 of the Report of the word "immutable" does desert the tradition.

APPENDIX III.

Saint Augustine, "In Psalmos" XLII 6 (= Vulg. XLI 7), E (quoted on page 61 of thesis).

"Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers" Vol. VIII omits part of the commentary on this verse, and so could not be quoted. The Latin reads:

> Aliquam quaerit incommutabilem veritatem, sine defectu substantiam.

APPENDIX IV.

Descartes, "Meditations" III (quoted on p. 127 of thesis). In the first and second Latin editions of the "Meditations" (1641 and 1642) the attributes eternal and immutable were not included in this passage. They first appear in the original French translation made by the Duc de Luynes in 1647, while Descartes was still alive. The inclusion of the attributes probably had the assent of Descartes himself; and in any case it shows the mind of his early followers.

APPENDIX V.

"Hermetica" I 26 (quoted on page 159 of thesis).

In Scott's edition the word θεωθηναι is put in single square brackets, indicating that in his opinion it was not in the original text (see his introduction p.24). There seems ~~to~~ no good reason at all for excluding the word; Dr.Kirk describes Scott's action as "wilful" ("Vision of God", p.53, fn. 2).

APPENDIX VI.

Contractions and Translations.

Contractions. The following contractions are used in the thesis:

A-N.L.	Ante-Nicene Library.
D.T.C.	Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique.
Denzinger	H.Denzinger, Enchiridion Symbolorum et Definitionum.
E.R.E.	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
H.D.B.	Ed. Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible.
L.F.	A Library of Fathers.
N.P-N.F.	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.

Translations. The following is a list of translations used in quotations in the thesis. Their use of Capital letters for pronouns has not always been followed. Where page references are given in the thesis they are to these texts.

S.AMBROSE		
De Fide	N.P-N.F.	Vol. X
S. THOMAS AQUINAS		
Summa contra Gentiles	R.L.Patterson,'The Conception of God in the Philosophy of Aquinas'.	
Summa Theologica	Edn.by Fathers of the English Dominican Province,2nd Edn.,	
ARISTOTLE		
Works	Ed.Smith and Ross.	O.U.P.
S. ATHANASIUS		
Ad Adelphium	N.P-N.F.	VOL. IV
Ad Episcopos Aegypti et Lybyae	N.P-N.F	VOL. IV
Ad Maximum	N.P-N.F	VOL. IV
De Decretis Synodi Nicaenae	N.P-N.F.	VOL. IV
De Incarnatione	A.Robertson.	
De Synodis	N.P-N.F.	VOL. IV
Orationes adversus Arianos I,II,III	N.P-N.F.	VOL.IV

S. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO

Confessiones.	Works, Dods's Edn.	Vol. XIV
De Civitate Dei	" " "	Vols. I-II
De Doctrina Christiana	" "	Vol. IX
De Fide et Symbolo	" " "	Vol. IX
De Natura Boni	N.P-N.F	Vol. VI
De Trinitate	Works, Dods's Edn.	Vol. VII
Enarrationes in Psalmos	N.P-N.F.	Vol. VIII
In Epistolam Joannis	N.P-N.F.	Vol. VIII
In Joannis Evangelium	L.F.	Vol. I
Sermones	N.P-N.F.	Vol. VI

S. BASIL

De Spiritu Sancto	N.P-N.F.	Vol. VIII

BOETHIUS

Philosophiae Consolationis Works, Loeb Edn.

S. BONAVENTURE

All from E. Gilson, "Philosophy of S. Bonaventure" Eng. trans.

BREVIARUM ROMANUM

Trans. by Benedictine Nuns of Stanbrook.

CHALCEDON, Council of

Oecumenical Documents of the Faith, Ed. Bindley.

CICERO

De Natura Deorum	Works, Loeb.Edn.	
S. CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA		
Stromateis	A-N.L.	Vols. IV & XII
S. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM		
Homilies	L.F.	Vol. XXVIII
DE SALES, FRANÇOIS		
On the Love of God	W.J.Knox Little.	
DESCARTES		
Meditations.	Works, Ed. J. Veitch.	
S. GREGORY THE GREAT		
Moralia	L.F.	Vol. XXI
S. GREGORY NAZIANZEN		
Orationes	N.P-N.F.	Vol. VII
HERMETICA	Ed. Scott.	
HIPPOLYTUS		
Philosophumena	Ed. F. Legge.	
S. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH		
Ad Ephesios	Apostolic Fathers, Ed. Lightfoot.	
S. IRENAEUS		
Adversus Haereses	A-N.L.	Vols. V & XI
S. JOHN OF THE CROSS		
Points of Love	Works, Ed. E.A. Peers, 1943 Edn.	Vol. III
Spiritual Canticle	" " "	Vol. II

(In the Spiritual Canticle the First Redaction has been followed, Peers, pp.23 ff.)

S. JUSTIN MARTYR		
Apologia	A-N.L	
KANT		
Critique of Judgment	Works (Selections)	Ed.T.M.Greene.
MISSALE ROMANUM	'The English Missal', Pub. Knott, 1933.	
NOVATIAN		
De Trinitate	Ed. H. Moore.	
ORIGEN		
Contra Celsum	A-N.L.	Vols.X & XXIII
PHILO		
Quod Deus Immutabilis Sit.	Works, Loeb Edn.	Vol.III
PLATO		
Phaedo	Works, Loeb Edn.	Vol.I
RUYSBROECK		
Seven Steps of the Ladder of Spiritual Love.	Ed.F.Sherwood Taylor, 1944.	
SPINOZA		
Ethics	Ed. White and Sterling.	
TERTULLIAN		
Adversus Marcionem	A-N.L	Vol. VII
Adversus Praxeam	A-N.L	Vol. XV
THEOPHILOUS		
Ad Autolycum	A-N.L	Vol. III.

Note.

The chapter on Saint Bonaventure is almost wholly dependent on the English translation of Gilson's book "The Philosophy of Saint Bonaventure". The thesis was written in West Africa where it was sometimes impossible to collect all the books one desired.

John W.A. Howe.

August 14th, 1948.