

desire of eternity for ever points the worker in time to an unfathomable mystery of the Divine purpose beyond time. Man knows or feels that he is linked with eternity and surrounded by it. This deep mystery in his inmost soul gives him desires and anticipations that transcend time and space. Sometimes this sense of the infinite or of the eternal seems for a season to annihilate the succession of his thoughts, and his contemplation of God raises him above all limitation. From this sublime ecstasy, however, he evermore awakes; but not without a dim presentiment of what time will be when it is swallowed up, without being lost, in the abyss of eternity.

Selfsufficiency.

THE SELFSUFFICIENCY OF GOD.

No notion we can form of God is more important in its meaning and in its issues than that He is selfsufficient, or that of His necessary eternal *αἰράρκεια*.

Causa Sui.

1. We use our own feeble words when we say that it is a necessity of thought that the Being who is the ground of all existence should be Himself an eternal necessity. All things have their cause and their end in Him: He can have no cause nor end out of Himself. He is the one, sole, selforiginated, independent, unconditioned and absolute Being. Here the eternal name

- Ex. iii. 14.** JEHOVAH, I AM, again comes in. The idea of causation carries us to One Essential Existence; but cannot go behind that. It is a very loose employment of the term to add that He is Causa Sui, His own cause: He simply, purely, and eternally is. *Before Me there was no God formed!* To all the best thoughts and instincts of our created nature He may say: *Ye are even My witnesses, Is there a God beside Me? I am the First, and I am the last, and beside Me there is no God!*

All Possibilities.

2. Although this immanent and absolute attribute by its very name shuts out the creature, and points to a Being Who needs nothing to complement or complete His perfection, it nevertheless implies that in the infinity of His resources are all the possibilities and potentialities of the created universe. When we exchange the terms Necessary, Independent, Selfexistent, for that of Allsufficient, we begin to think of the eternal resources that

are in the Deity; of *His eternal power and Godhead*. The word *Nothing* vanishes before both His essence and His power. His sufficiency knows no limit but what He Himself by word or act assigns to it. Of an eternal creation we dare not think; but we may speak of the eternal possibilities of creation: of which more hereafter. *From the creation of the world His invisible things have been clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made:* these postulate an infinity of the invisible things behind. Rom. i. 20.

3. By selfsufficiency we understand all that philosophy means by the notions of the Absolute and the Unconditioned. No relation in which the Supreme may place Himself—He only becomes the Supreme by relation—throws any limitation around His being. No relation is a necessary relation: in saying this we say all that is needful. Some current definitions of the Absolute have literally no meaning. The philosophy which admits that the finite cannot comprehend the Infinite, yet asserts that the Infinite cannot be a Person, cannot be conscious of a self, because it cannot have an object over against itself as subject, is philosophy falsely so called. It must issue either in Pantheism or in Atheism. It has never been proved, it can never be proved, that selfconsciousness necessarily implies consciousness of something not self. Even granted that it is so in the creature, the leap in the inference from the creature to the Creator is as unreasonable as it is certainly unscriptural. The Divine I and Thou are heard both in eternity and in time. But this leads to the next consideration. The Absolute.

4. The selfsufficiency of the Eternal is not fully acknowledged unless we bear in mind that within the dread sphere of His being there is a plurality of Persons. The personal Subsistences in the Godhead are eternally related to each other: and this of itself banishes the term Unconditioned. The distinction of I and Thou goes up to and enters the original Fountain of life. And here emerges the central and most glorious application of the term all-sufficiency. The Infinite Being is not the vast and unrelieved monotony of existence that Pantheistic mysticism defined as the abstract Nothing. It has in it infinite life, and, if such language be lawful, infinite variety of life, in the mutual knowledge, love, and communion of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. It was so—to use human words—before the creature existed; and The Interior Trinity.

- John xvii. 21. it is so now that the creature exists: to this our Lord bears witness when He says, *As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee!* And when He adds *that they also may be one in us*, He raises our minds to the thought that the communion of the creature with the Creator is the reflection in time of that communion which subsists among the Persons of the Godhead in eternity.
- Majesty and Blessedness. 5. Here, then, we locate the attributes which, when creatures begin to exist to name them, we call Majesty and Blessedness. By the former we ascribe to Deity the glory of perfections which are essentially above the creaturely excellence: not placing Him at the summit, but above all; as Michael, the highest creature, by his very name cries, *Who is like unto God?* By the latter we ascribe to Him the most absolute freedom from all that can impair well-being and the infinity of that which by its communication makes the creature blessed. *Who is over all, God blessed for ever* / expresses both, assigning most emphatically both to the Second Person in the Unity of the Three.
- Rom. ix. 5.

Immutability.

THE IMMUTABILITY OF GOD.

After what has been said few words are necessary on the unchangeableness of the Divine essence. The Word of God makes few references to it save as it is implied in the eternal name: its allusions to the subject are generally connected with the steadfast perpetuity of the Divine counsels, and will be considered elsewhere. But there are some points of theological importance arising out of it for which this is the appropriate place.

- Being and Phenomena. 1. There are sublime passages which lift our contemplation to the thought of the unchangeableness of the Eternal as contrasted with the fleeting phenomena of the universe; and therefore must be interpreted of the absolute Divine essence. These combine the infinity, eternity, and immutability of God in their glorious aggregate. One only need be quoted, the peculiarity of which is twofold: first, that it most expressly marks the beginning or the very earliest foundations of all created phenomena; and, secondly, that it is quoted from the Old Testament in the New and assigned to the Son of God Who became incarnate. *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are*
- Heb. i. 10, 11, 12.