No. 52

The immutability of God

March 26, 1820
James I: 17 - "the F. of light, with whom is none other name as names of the turning."

Malachi III: 6. - "For I am the Lord, Jehovah not."

Such is the sublime declaration of Jehovah to his ungrateful & disobedient people. They had recently been emancipated from a lingering, painful captivity; their pride had been humbled, their ingratitude to God had been sorely punished. The shield of Heaven, which had so long spread over their nation, had been withdrawn; & they had been delivered to enemies, whom proudly exulted in their victory over those who had been deemed the favored people of the Most High. But they had now returned to the land of their fathers; they were now once more in the city of their glory, where kings...
had reigned, & prophets had prophesied:—8 the
what Babylon they had hung upon the wall;
cause they could not sing the L’s song in a stra-
land, might now be the temple of the living
Nave to make our hearts joyful & our views consistent
be tuned to His praise. Yet the Almighty, even we think of the Almighty. Without it our
mouth of this prophet assures them, that if it can’t be shaken, your religious hopes often fall
if they had not been overborne by the calamities of
chains of their conquerors, & were reestablished in
nature land; it was not because they had done me unto you. These names, as the Almighty
made himself known, imply unchangeable & un
existence. He is likewise with on yone creature
is no moment of time but He is, the
one in the ages of past that he is at present &
the day of their punishment had gone
the light of His mercy again shone upon them.
the truth expressed in the words of the l
is not confined to any age or any people. It is

James 1:17 For every spirit...is unchangeable. This
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is not confined to any age or any people. It is
ment on what is meant by the word, God, perceive that it includes within its signification idea of a permanent duration & excellence, liable change of decays." When the Almighty annointed self by the title of "Jehovah", he gave exact notion of the most precise & comprehensive notion, or so can be given of his nature. He is self, absolute, perfect, infinite existence, the fulness of all existence. Now it is manifest with such a Being, there cannot be, as the expression it, the shadow of a change. No impression without can affect Him: no external can exert an influence upon his nature to modify alter it; nor is there any principle of action detached from himself, which can take anything from him or communicate anything to him. Self ex 
being everything in He is by necessity of him it would be a plain contradiction to suppose he can pass successively through different stages of existence. Being already infinite & perfect, he can neither increase nor diminish.
receive nothing, he can lose nothing. — Every change
which we can imagine is manifestly repugnant to the
very idea of Deity; for it is impossible, that he,
who possesses supreme perfection can acquire any new
degree of perfection, wh he had not before, or can
lose any degree of perfection wh already belongs to him;
therefore, he cannot change. — We see, then, that we
cannot from any consistent notion of the Deity, without
allowing him to be essentially and forever immutable;
and we recognise at once the admirable correctness,
as well as the striking beauty of that fine passage of
St. James, in which he represents the divine essence under
the image of a sun, — but of a sun far different from
that which sheds its light upon us, — for unlike the ma-
terial sun, no shadows pass over it, nor is its glory
ever eclipsed; — there is no change in its appearance, no
inequality in its course; "every good gift," says the holy,
"come from the Father of lights, with whom
is no variableness or shadow of
change.

Such is the grand and sublime idea, with which reason
and revelation conspire to furnish us. — While everything
around us is perishing & mutable; God alone is one of the same. But is there anything else in the verse unchangeable? No, all is in motion, all is treating; every thing is change. the marks of mortality is stamped on all. Look at the most steady parts of inanimate nature, the firmness of which seem to promise and almost unceasing duration; yet time has his unerring hand ever there? The earth seems to be rooted so strong & deep, must till fall; the mountains with their heads, till they lost from view far beyond the clouds of heaven, & look down as it were in mockery, on the weakness of man. They shall moulder away; & even now the scars of destruction are imprinted on their surface. The trees of the forest, which man spread their branches for the so green & luxuriant, so blooming & vigorous, fade, wither, & bow themselves down to the dust; their stead shall come a new race, like them, to grow & perish; the lofty edifices which man has reared to please his taste, to provide for his comfort, or gratify his pride, shall soon crumble away; already
fingers of decay have marked their lines on the proud walls; & ruin will soon sit in triumph on the pile. And what is man himself? The being of change, every thing about him is mutable. He is no longer to-day what he was yesterday, & tomorrow he will be no longer what he is to-day. Every moment of his existence carries something from him, & adds something to him. From the simplicity & innocence of infancy he passes to the distracting cares & the toiling ambition of manhood, & from manhood he bends his steps down the vale of years. The compass of his views is continually growing wider or narrower. His pursuits are ever changing with his feelings; what he pursues today he abandons tomorrow. His labours of industry & his works of art are perishing around him; if his effort of genius survive a few years longer, they too at last are forgotten. His greatness is ever tottering & ready to fall; his honours fade, & his name is buried in oblivion. Our fathers have been before us, but they are gone; we are now on the stage of action, but soon our place will be occupied by others, & when after they have toiled their busy hens, will give way...
Of those who have been brought to us by the ties of interest or affection, many hope you will be the grave, or at least the resting-place, of a new race equally treatable and equally frail. All that man calls splendid is with time, even on the empire, empires fall to decay, & nations sink to ruin. And if we rise yet higher, fix our eyes on the heavens, we find that mutability is stamped even on those glorious bodies, as resolved there. They too must change. Their light is often obscured by darkness obscures their splendor, clouds shade intercept their influences, & they vibrate & tremble in their spheres. The sun himself shall grow dim in his age, & the voice which said "let light be," may at any moment quench his beams. The sublime prophet of Hebrews has described a day, when "all the host of heaven shall be dissolved; & the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, & all their host shall fall down as the leaf falleth off from the vine, & as a falling fig from the figtree." As a vesture shall them fold them up, they shall be changed, but then at the same time, their years shall not fail. Thus if we examine through all things we find everything changing & changeable. For the lowest to the highest orders of existence, new forms & scenes are continually springing up, as they again are soon o
There is nothing constant, but change. -- Nor amidst this incessant fluctuation, this universal mutability, God remains the same. He knows no change. Unmoved himself while every thing else is passing away, immutable in his nature, while every thing else is transient, time brings one event or displays no power, wh can for a moment cast a shadow over his eternal brightness. -- Our fathers have gone to their rest, but the same God, whom they worshiped, remains to us, the object of trust & devotion. The earth has brought forth its fruits & they have perished, but the same God continues to smile upon it & other fruits will come forth.

Time has carried away many blessings; -- but the same God who gave them is still here & ready to bless us. -- We are changing, the world is changing, but God changes not. This is a glorious thought. How sublime, how immeasurable, is the superiority of His supreme majesty over all nature & all beings. Whatever we have imagined most permanent or strong, compared with the eternal, unchangeable God, is but weakness & vanity. One individual being, to whom nothing can be given, upon whom nothing can be taken, stands, if we may venture
to use the expression, the centre of a universe so his
revolving & rolling away, such a being is the God we
worship.

But though it be a most ennobling & sublime though
God is unchangeable in his nature, essence, yet there is
point of view, in which the divine immutability is causa
to affect our minds still more deeply; I mean, when it is
considered with reference to his moral perfections, his
promise. When we reflect, that in these respects
is forever unchangeable, we see at once that all
institutions of trust, of dependence, of devotion to Him, stand
immoveable foundation. God is always the same as
moral Governor, a just Judge; therefore we know
measures of his moral government (the rewards of virtue & the punishment of vice) are
certain, as we knew He is immutable. In whatever we
consider the divine character, we know nothing
can alter or affect its attributes. If God is now wise, infinitely good, infinitely just, He always
been so, & always will be so. Thus David tells us
"The mercy endures forever," & the righteousness of
God endures forever. And we are taught of
the Supreme Being, & He alone, possesses moral attri
incapable of change. Other beings are liable to all the
fluctuations of different motives, & different feelings.
If they obey the laws of moral rectitude at one time, perhaps
some adverse influence will pass over their minds, & at
another time they will disobey these laws. He, who is mas-
culine to-day, may be cruel tomorrow. He, who is not just,
may by his conduct teach you, that his love of justice
is easily broken. We all know that the best heart is
liable to a thousand capricious influences, & may at dif-
ferent times be turned in opposite directions. But of
all these motives, no one can have place without
regard to the designs & appointments of God. There is
nothing in the Almighty's plan of operations, nor in
the whole, taking into view the relations of the
universe & the successive ages of time, the best that
could be adopted. Consequently as He, when He designs
it, knew it to be best, no new motive can be brought
to operate on His infinite intelligence to produce any
change. He is therefore imputable in His motives, ...
mutable in his moral perfections.—Moral rectitude in its most enlarged sense our Saviour, perfectly understood. Perfectly approved, by the knowing and thus approving it. Is there that can present an obstacle to this pursuit of moral perfection? I.e., what can induce a change in the mighty march of his moral government? The infinite, infinite ends are the sources of much disorder, ignorance, distraction, and errors. Can have no place in a finite intelligence, which sees the past, the present, and future with all their connections and all their dependencies. In the clear vision of an omniscient mind. The perfections of God therefore cannot change; they are eternal with the Deity, and like the being in whom they reside, are “the same yesterday, to day, and forever.”

But God is not only immutable in his nature and perfections. He is likewise immutable in his purpose and designs. “My counsel shall stand,” says the Almighty. “I will do all my pleasure.” Here too, we see that ways are met as our ways. The designs of man bear no impress of his nature; they are full of selfishness. How can it be otherwise with a being, but the Creator?
faculties are restrained, whose light is dim, & whose power is limited; she is pressed by a thousand wants, agitated by a thousand opposite desires, sometimes the miserable sheet of passion, & always liable to the errors of a misguided judgment? He is like the vessel, which floats at the mercy of the waves, without any determinate course & is rocked from side to side by the winds of heaven. Sometimes the design she has just formed he abandons before it has ripened into action. Now he pursues his object with ardor, but soon he turns away from it with disgust. We often pass one part of our lives in contradiction another part. We change our feelings, & with them we change our plans & purposes. But far otherwise with him, who sitteth in the Heavens. His designs cannot be shaken. They must go on in their high & mighty course, & proceed till they have accomplished all, as He who formed them intended they should accomplish. There can be no defect of knowledge in the Deity; therefore, He always frames his purposes with infinite wisdom; there can be no defect of power; therefore he will always execute his purposes with complete & undeviating success. He is inac-
possible to passion or weakness; caprice cannot drive him aside, necessity impedes him. What his nature has planned, his impiety will carry into effect. As is his might, so unchangeable are his purposes.

And if God is unchangeable in his perfections and regards, he is also unchangeable in his promises. For the sun shall depart, yea, the hills be removed; but my kind shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covert of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath spoken on thee.” — Men promise, and forget it almost as soon as on promises. But frequently without the least intention to perform, frequently to practice deception with success, that they may put to sleep those who repose their confidence. (They promise! — but these ambiguous, equivocal promises, in which there is always a reserve, by which to escape, are but the means with the end to some spreads for the simplicity of others.) But the perfections of the Almighty are firm as the throne of glory. — All the perfections of his nature are fled. It is he only not engaged for their fulfillment. — It is he only not engaged for their fulfillment. — Where he wounds, the earth shall pass away.
word shall not pass away." His eternal veracity is the
inviolable seal of all that he has promised. In the eleva-
ted language of Isaiah, "the grass withereth, the flower
dieth, but the word of our God shall stand forever.
And though everything else should perish and be forget-
ten, though all good faith should cease from the earth,
though the confidence of man in man should be broken
and destroyed, yet the promises of Yahweh shall remain firm
as when He first declared them, to be the resting place of
all our weary feelings and the refuge of all our disappointed
hopes.
I have thus spoken of the immutability of God, as it
respects his nature, his moral perfections, his purposes
and his promises. And having thus employed our thoughts
in it, do we not feel within us all the weight of
the solemn truth, when we hear the voice of God proclai-
ing, "I am the Lord, I change not."
From what has been said the reflector may naturally
be deduced.
1. If it be true, that the Almighty is unchangeable,
does it not bring a lesson fraught with solemn and fearful apprehensions, to the impenitent and discontent? If God is immutable in his love of virtue, so he is the immutable in his hatred of vice. Where can the one hope that his sins can find protection? Can he or the secret belief, that time, when feels the errors of man & erases its record, will efface the remembrance his transgressions from the mind of the Almighty, as that divine abhorrence of them will wear away & be forgot, is that his might will be impaired, or that a time come when he will neglect to punish what he grants adamantly forbidden? Alas, my Sir, if we flatter ourselves with these hopes, the terrors of the Lord will overtake us, from beneath we are crumbling in our false refuges, & the terrors fall over our heads, leave us exposed to the judgment of a just God. No length of time, no atrocity, no after can change after the displeasure of the Almighty sin. "It is impossible that God should change: no one may change & must do so," as hear the dreadful tenor, as he must be pronounced on all the world's of in
The immutability of God is a source of high joy to his creatures. That Being is the object of confidence to the perfect good. He is the object of their love and trust, is the Rock of Ages. The man, who is the friend of God, has that where other friendship can supply. Everyone has lived long enough to know that the nothing here, from which we may not be separated. There are bonds, not crossed our hearts (from the connection between the chain by which God has bound us to himself. The vigor of youth, the strength of manhood may have passed away, and the infirmities of the years of age may be gathering around us. The once lived on the smile of a good name a fair reputation, may meet every where disgrace or breach. The day of prosperity may have gone by, and the dark, heavy weights of adversity may have succeeded. In the midst of all these fluctuations and reverses, how supporting is the firmest mind! Reflect, that God is still the same. The same in him, the self, the same to us. Supreme in power is supreme in wisdom, the fountain of life, our Father, our Friend. Youth may be blighted, health may wear, riches may be lost, friends may become traitors, but he, the Almighty, still.
the bright's as without varible:er or shadow of turnyng, 

declas, 'am the lad. I change not.' - Here, then, is 

only strong held: - would to. g. that we all had the 
quash it with pions confidence, - then we should feel 
though we are transient & every thing about us is half 
away. - yet there is One who cannot change. - & He is 

God. - March.
O thou, who hast established thy throne in the heavens, y whose kingdom outlasts all—thou who art uncontrollable in thy dominion, universal in thy presence, and uncausable in thy nature, of whom, to whom, through whom are all things—we would worship thee as the Supreme Majesty of heaven and earth. We rejoice, that while all around us is full of perplexity and darkness, thou art the same. We rejoice that our hopes may repose on the eternal Rock of Ages, with the confidence, that thou who art now our Guardian, our God, wilt ever be our help and our support. Will they Our Faith, elevate our affections to thee; may we love thee supremely, serve thee with all our soul, with all our mind, all our strength. Knowing that thou art unchangeable, may we repose all our hopes, all our confidence in thee. Thou art the same,
Ohy. of thy years shall have an end, therefore may we raise our souls to thee, and leave behind our guilty ways, that thou mayest become prepared for thy blessing here and thy blessing hereafter through J.C.
At home, March 26th, 1820, afternoon.
At West Cambridge, April 30th, 1820, afternoon.
At Mr. Lowell’s (Bost), May 12th, 1820, afternoon.
At Weston Jan. 20th, 1820, forenoon.
At home, March 24th, 1824, forenoon (new tent).