

By Richard Watson (from his Theological Institutes) from  
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## CHAPTER IV. ATTRIBUTE OF GOD.-Omniscience.

THE omniscience of God is constantly connected in Scripture with his omnipresence, and description of that as God is a spirit, and therefore intelligent, if he is every where, if nothing can exclude him, not even the most solid bodies, nor the minds of intelligent beings, then are all things "naked and opened to his eyes of him with whom we have to do." "Where he acts, he is, and where he is, he perceives." "He understands and considers things absolutely, and as they are in their own natures, powers, properties, differences, together with all the circumstances belonging to them." (Bishop WILKINS'S Principles.) "Known unto him are all his works from the beginning of the world," rather *ap aiwno*~ from all eternity-known, before they were made, in their possible, and known, now they are made, in their actual existence. "Lord, thou hast searched me and known me; thou knowest my down-sitting and mine uprising; thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.-The darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day.-The ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings; he searcheth their hearts, and understandeth every imagination of their thoughts." Nor is this perfect knowledge to be confined to men, or angels; it reaches into the state of the dead, and penetrates the regions of the damned. "Hell, hades, is naked before him; and destruction (the seats of destruction) hath no covering." No limits at all are to be set to this perfection. "Great is the Lord, his understanding is

INFINITE."

In Psalm xciv, the knowledge of God is argued from the communication of it to men. "Understand, ye brutish among the people; and, ye fools, when will ye be wise? He that planted the ear, shall he not *hear*? He that formed the eye, shall he not *see*? He that chastiseth the heathen shall not he correct? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he *know*?" This argument is as easy as it is conclusive, obliging all who acknowledge a First Cause to admit his perfect intelligence, or to take refuge in Atheism itself. It fetches not the proof from a distance, but refers us to our bosoms for the constant demonstration that the Lord is a God of knowledge, and that by his actions are weighed.

"We find in ourselves such qualities as thought and intelligence, power and freedom, &c, for which we have the evidence of consciousness as much as for our own existence. Indeed, it is only by our consciousness of these that our existence is known to ourselves. We know likewise that these are perfections, and that to have them is better than to be without them. We find also that they have not been in us from eternity. They must, therefore, have had a beginning and consequently some cause, for the very same reason that a being beginning to exist in time requires a cause. Now this cause, as it must be superior to its effect, must have those perfections in a superior degree; and if it be the first cause, it must have them in an

infinite or unlimited degree, since bounds or limitation, without a limiter, would be an effect without a cause."

"If God gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to men of understanding, if he communicates this perfection to his creatures, the inference must be that he himself is possessed of it in a much more eminent degree than they that his knowledge is deep and intimate, reaching to the very essence of things, theirs but slight and superficial; his clear and distinct, theirs confused and dark; his certain and infallible, theirs doubtful and liable to mistake; his easy and permanent, theirs obtained with much pains, and soon lost again by the defects of memory or age; his universal and extending to all objects, theirs short and narrow, reaching only to some few things, while that which is wanting cannot be numbered; and therefore as the heavens are higher than the earth, so, as the prophet has told us, are his ways above their ways, and his thoughts above their thoughts." (*Tillotson's Sermons.*)

But His understanding is *infinite*; a doctrine which the sacred writers not only authoritatively announce, but confirm by referring to the *wisdom* displayed in his *works*. The only difference between wisdom and knowledge is, that the former always supposes action, and action directed to an end. But wherever there is wisdom, there must be knowledge; and as the wisdom of God in the creation consists in the formation of things which, by themselves, or in combination with others, shall produce certain effects, and that in a variety of operation which is to us boundless, the previous knowledge of the *possible* qualities and effects inevitably supposes a knowledge which can have no limit. For as creation out of *nothing* argues a power which is *omnipotent*, so the knowledge of the *possibilities* of things which are not, a knowledge which, from the effect, we are sure must exist in God, argues that such a Being must be *omniscient*. For "all things being not only present to him, but also entirely depending upon him, and having received both their being itself, and all their powers and faculties from him, it is manifest that, as he knows all things that are, so he must likewise know all possibilities of things, that is, all effects that can be. For, being himself alone self-existent, and having alone given to all things all the powers and faculties they are endued with, it is evident he must of necessity know perfectly what all and each of those powers and faculties, which are derived wholly from himself, can possibly produce: and seeing, at one boundless view, all the possible compositions and divisions, variations and changes, circumstances and dependencies of things; all their possible relations one to another, and their dispositions or fitnesses to certain and respective ends, he must, without possibility of error, know exactly what is best and properest in every one of the infinite possible cases or methods of disposing things: and understand perfectly how to order and direct the respective means, to bring about what he so knows to be, in its kind, or in the whole, the best and fittest in the end. This is what we mean by infinite wisdom."

On the subject of the Divine ubiquity and omniscience, many fine sentiments are found, even among pagans; for an intelligent First Cause being in any sense admitted, it was most natural and obvious to ascribe to him a perfect knowledge of all things. They acknowledged "that nothing is hid from God, who is intimate to our minds, and mingles himself with our very thoughts;"<sup>[1]</sup> nor were they all unaware of the practical tendency of such a doctrine, and of the motive it affords to a cautious and virtuous conduct.<sup>[2]</sup> But among them it was not held, as by the sacred writers, in connection with other correct views of the Divine nature, which are essential to give to this its full moral effect. Not only on this subject does the manner in which the Scriptures state this doctrine far transcend that of the wisest pagan Theists; but

the *moral* of the sentiment is infinitely more comprehensive and impressive. With them it is connected with man's state of trial; with a holy law, all the violations of which, in thought, word, and deed, are both: infallibly known, and strictly marked; with promises of grace; and of mild and protecting government, as to all who have sought and found the mercy of God, forgiving their sins and admitting them into his family. The wicked are thus reminded that their hearts are *searched*, and their sins *noted*; that the eyes of the Lord are upon their ways; and that their most secret works will be brought to light in the day when *God the witness*, shall become *God the Judge*. In like manner, "the eyes of the Lord are said to be over the righteous ;" that such persons are kept by him "who never slumbers nor sleeps ;" that he is never "far from them," and that "his eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in their behalf;" that foes, to them invisible, are seen by his eye, and controlled by his arm; and that this great attribute, so appalling to wicked men, affords to them, not only the most influential reason for a perfectly holy temper and conduct, but the strongest motive to trust, and joy, and hope, amidst the changes and afflictions of the present life. *Socrates*, as well as other philosophers, could express themselves well, so' long as they expressed themselves *generally*, on this subject. The former could say, "Let your own frame instruct you. Does the mind inhabiting your body dispose and govern it with ease? Ought you not then to conclude, that the universal mind with equal ease actuates and governs universal nature; and that, when you can at once consider the interests of the Athenians at home, in Egypt, and in Sicily, it is not too much for the Divine wisdom to take care of the universe? These reflections will soon convince you that the greatness of the Divine mind is such, as at once to see all things, hear all things, be present every where, and direct all the affairs of the world." These views are just; but they wanted that connection with others relative both to the Divine nature and government, which we see only in the Bible, to render them influential; they neither gave correct moral distinctions nor led to a virtuous practice, no not in *Socrates*, who on some subjects, and especially on the *personality* of the Deity, and his *independence on matter*, raised himself far above the rest of his philosophic brethren, but in moral feeling and practice was as censurable as they.[3]

The foreknowledge of God, or his prescience of future things, though contingent, is by divines generally included in the term omniscience, and for this they have unquestionably the authority of the Holy Scriptures. From the difficulty which has been supposed to exist, in reconciling this with the freedom of human actions, and man's accountability, some have however refused to allow *prescience*, at least of contingent actions, to be a property of the Divine nature; and others have adopted various modifications of opinion, as to the knowledge of God, in order to elude, or to remove the objection. This subject was glanced at in part i, chap. 9, but in this place, where the omniscience of God is under consideration, the three leading theories, which have been resorted to for time purpose of maintaining unimpugned the moral government of God, and time freedom anti responsibility of man seem to require examination, that the true doctrine of Scripture may be fully brought out and established.[4]

The Chevalier Ramsay, among his other speculations, holds "it a matter of choice in God, to think of finite ideas ;" and similar opinions, though variously worded, have been occasionally adopted. In substance these opinions are, that though the knowledge of God be infinite, as his power is infinite, there is no more reason to conclude that his knowledge should be always exerted to the full extent of its capacity, than that his power should be employed to the extent of his omnipotence; and that if we suppose him to *choose* not to know some contingencies, the infinite-

ness of his knowledge is not thereby impugned. To this it may be, answered, "that the infinite power of God is in Scripture represented, as in the nature of things it must be, as an infinite *capacity*, and not as infinite in act; but that the *knowledge* of God is on the contrary never represented there to us as a capacity to acquire knowledge, but as *actually* comprehending all things that are, and all things that can be. 2. That the notion of God's choosing to know some things, and not to know others, supposes a *reason* why he refuses to know any class of things or events, which reason, it would seem, can only arise out of their nature and circumstances, and therefore supposes at least a partial knowledge of them, from which the reason for his not choosing to know them arises. The doctrine is therefore somewhat contradictory. But 3, it is fatal to this opinion, that it does not at all meet the difficulty arising out of the question of the congruity of Divine prescience, and the free actions of man; since some contingent actions, for which men have been made accountable, we are sure have been *foreknown* by God, because by his Spirit in the prophets they were *foretold*; and if the freedom of man can in these cases be reconciled to the prescience of God, there is no greater difficulty in any other case which can possibly occur.

A second theory is, that the foreknowledge of contingent events, being in its own nature impossible, because it implies a contradiction, it does no dishonour to the Divine Being to affirm, that of such events he has, and can have no prescience whatever; and thus the prescience of God, as to moral actions being wholly denied, the difficulty of reconciling it with human freedom and accountability has no existence.<sup>[5]</sup>

To this the same answer must be given as to the former. It does not meet the case, so long as the Scriptures are allowed to contain prophecies of rewardable and punishable actions.

That man is accountable to God for his conduct, and therefore free, that is, laid under no invincible necessity of acting in a given manner, are doctrines clearly contained in the Bible, and the notion of necessity has here its full and satisfactory reply; but if a difficulty should be felt in reconciling the freedom of an action with time prescience of it, it affords not the slightest relief to deny the foreknowledge of God as to actions in general, while the Scriptures contain predictions of the conduct of men whose actions cannot have been determined by invincible necessity, because they were actions for which they received from God a just and marked punishment. Whether the scheme of relief be, that the knowledge of God, like his power, is arbitrary; or that the prescience of contingencies is impossible; so long as the Scriptures are allowed to contain predictions of the conduct of men, good or bad, the difficulty remains in all its force. The whole body of prophecy is founded on the certain prescience of contingent actions, or it is not prediction, but guess and conjecture-to such fearful results does the denial of the Divine prescience lead! No one can deny that the Bible contains predictions of the rise and fall of several kingdoms; that Daniel, for instance, prophesied of the rise, the various fortune, and the fall of the celebrated monarchies of antiquity. But empires do not rise and fall wholly by immediate acts of God; they are not thrown up like new islands in the ocean, they do not fall like cities in an earthquake, by the direct exertion of Divine power. They are carried through their various stages of advance and decline, by the virtues and the vices of men, which God makes the instruments of their prosperity or destruction. Counsels, wars, science, revolutions, all crowd in their agency; and the predictions are of the combined and ultimate results of all these circumstances,

which, as arising out of time vices and virtues of men, out of innumerable acts of choice, are *contingent*. Seen they must have been through all their stages, and seen in their results, for prophecy has registered those results. *The* prescience of them cannot be denied, for that is on the record; and if certain prescience involves necessity, then are the daily virtues and vices of men not contingent. It was predicted that Babylon should be taken by Cyrus in time midst of a midnight revel, in which the gates should be left unguarded and open. Now, if all the actions which arose out of the warlike disposition and ambition of Cyrus were contingent, what becomes of the principle, that it is impossible to foreknow contingencies?—they were foreknown, because the result of them was predicted. If the midnight revel of the Babylonian monarch was contingent, (the circumstance which led to the neglect of the gates of the city,) that also was foreknown, because predicted; if not contingent, the actions of both monarchs were necessary, and to neither of them can be ascribed virtue or vice.

Our Lord predicts, most circumstantially, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. If this be allowed, then the contingencies involved in the conduct of the Jews who provoked that fatal war—in the Roman senate who decreed it—in the Roman generals who carried it on—in the Roman and Jewish soldiers who were engaged in it—were all *foreseen*, and the result of them *predicted*: if they were not contingencies, that is, if they were not free actions, then the virtues and vices of both parties, and all the acts of skill, and courage, and enterprise; and all the cruelties and sufferings of the besieged and the besiegers, arising out of innumerable volitions, and giving rise to the events so circumstantially marked in the prophecy, were determined by an irreversible necessity. The 53d chapter of Isaiah predicts, that Messiah should be taken away by a violent death, inflicted by men in defiance of all the principles of justice. Time record cannot be blotted out; and if the conduct of the Jews was not, as the advocates of this scheme will contend it was not, influenced by necessity, then we have all the contingencies of their hatred, and cruelties, and injustice *predicted*, and therefore *foreknown*. The same observations might be applied to St. Paul's prediction of a "falling away," in the church; of the rise of the "man of sin;" and, in a word, to every prediction which the sacred volume contains. If there be any predictions in the Bible at all, every scheme which denies the prescience of contingencies must compel us into the doctrine of necessity, which in this place it is not necessary to discuss.

On the main principle of the theory just mentioned, that the prescience of contingent events is impossible, because their nature would be destroyed by it, we may add a few remarks. That the subject is incomprehensible as to the *manner* in which the Divine Being foreknows future events of this or of any kind, even the greatest minds, which have applied themselves to such speculations, have felt and acknowledged. The fact, that such a property exists in the Divine nature is, however, too clearly stated in Scripture to allow of any doubt in those who are disposed to submit to its authority; and it is not left to the uncertainty of our speculations on the properties of spiritual natures, either to be confirmed or disproved. Equally clear is it that the moral actions of men are not necessitated, because human accountability is the main pillar of that moral government, whose principles, conduct, and ends, are stated so largely in Divine revelation. Whatever, therefore, becomes of human speculations, these points are sufficiently settled on an authority which is abundantly sufficient. To the objection of metaphysicians of different classes, against either of these principles, that such is not the sense of the Scriptures, because the fact "*cannot be so, it involves a contradiction*," not the least importance is to be attached, when the plain, concurrent, and uniform sense of Scripture, interpreted as any other book

would be interpreted, determines to the contrary. It surely does not follow that a timing cannot be, because *men* do not see, or pretend not to see, that it *can be*. This would lay the foundation of our faith in the strength or weakness of other men's intellect. We are not, however, in many cases, left wholly to this answer, and it may be shown that the position, that *certain* prescience destroys *contingency*, is a mere sophism, and that this conclusion is connected with the premise, by a confused use of terms.

The great fallacy in the argument, that the certain prescience of a moral action destroys its contingent nature, lies in supposing that *contingency* and *certainity* are the opposites of each other. It is, perhaps, unfortunate, that a word which is of figurative etymology, and which consequently can only have an ideal application to such subjects, should have grown into common use in this discussion, because it is more liable on that account to present itself to different minds under different shades of meaning. If, however, the term *contingent* in this controversy has any definite meaning at all, as applied to the moral actions of men, it must mean their *freedom*, and stands opposed not to *certainity*, but to *necessity*. A free action is a voluntary one; and an action which results from the choice of the agent, is distinguished from a necessary one in this, that it might not have been, or have been otherwise, according to the self-determining power of the agent. It is with reference to this specific quality of a free action, that the term contingency is used, *~it might have been otherwise*, in other words, it was not necessitated. Contingency in moral actions is, therefore, *their freedom*, and is opposed, not to *certainity*, but to *necessity*. The very nature of this controversy fixes this as the precise meaning of the term. The question is not, in point of fact, about the *certainity* of moral actions, that is, whether they *will* happen or not; but about the nature of them, whether free or constrained, whether they *must* happen or not. Those who advocate this theory care not about the *certainity*<sup>[6]</sup> of actions, simply considered, that is, whether they will take place or not; the reason why they object to a certain prescience of moral actions is, that they conclude, that such a prescience renders them *necessary*. It is the *quality* of the action for which they contend, not whether it will happen or not. If contingency meant *uncertainity*, the sense in which such theorists take it, the dispute would be at an end. But though an *uncertain* action cannot be foreseen as certain, a free, unnecessitated action may; for there is nothing in the knowledge of the action, in the least, to affect its nature. Simple knowledge is, in no sense, a cause of action, nor can it be conceived to be causal, unconnected with *exerted* power; for mere knowledge, therefore, an action remains free or necessitated, as the case may be. A necessitated action is not made a voluntary one by its being foreknown: a free action is not made a necessary one. Free actions foreknown will not, therefore, cease to be contingent. But how stands the case as to their *certainity*? Precisely on the same ground. The certainty of a *necessary* action foreknown, does not result from the knowledge of the action, but from the operation of the necessitating cause; and in like manner, the certainty of a *free* action does not result from the knowledge of it, which is no cause at all, but from the voluntary cause, that is, the determination of the will. It alters not the case in the least, to say that the voluntary action might have been otherwise. Had it been otherwise, the knowledge of it would have been otherwise; but as the will, which gives birth to the action, is not dependent upon the previous knowledge of God, but the knowledge of the action upon foresight of the choice of the will, neither the will nor the act is controlled by the knowledge, and the action, though foreseen, is still free or contingent.

The foreknowledge of God has then no influence upon either the freedom or the certainty of actions, for this plain reason, that it is *knowledge*, and not *influence*;

and actions may be certainly foreknown, without their being rendered necessary by that foreknowledge. But here it is said, If the result of an absolute contingency be certainly foreknown, it *can* have no other result, it *cannot* happen otherwise. This is not the true inference. It *will* not happen otherwise; but I ask, why *can* it not happen otherwise? *Can* is an expression of potentiality, it denotes power or possibility. The objection is, that it is not possible that the action should otherwise happen. But why not? What deprives it of that power? If a necessary action were in question, it could not otherwise happen than as the necessitating cause shall compel; but then that would arise from the necessitating cause solely and not from the prescience of the action, which is not causal. But if the action be free, and it enter into the very nature of a voluntary action to be unconstrained, then it might have happened in a thousand other ways, or not have happened at all; the foreknowledge of it no more affects its nature in this case than in the other. All its potentiality, so to speak, still remains, independent of foreknowledge, which neither adds to its power of happening otherwise, nor diminishes it. But then we are told, that the prescience of it, in that case, must be uncertain: not unless any person can prove, that the Divine prescience is unable to dart through all the workings of the human mind, all its comparison of things in the judgment, all the influences of motives on the affections, all the hesitations, and haltings of the will, to its final choice. "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for us,*" but it is the knowledge of Him who "understandeth the thoughts of man afar off."

But if a contingency *will* have a given result, to that result it *must* be determined. Not in the least. We have seen that it cannot be determined to a given result by mere precognition, for we have evidence in our own minds that mere knowledge is not *causal* to the actions of another. It is determined to its result by the will of the agent; but even in that case, it cannot be said, that it *must* be determined to that result, because it is of the nature of freedom to be unconstrained; so that here we have an instance in the case of a free agent that he *will* act in some particular manner, but that it by no means follows from what *will* be, whether foreseen or not, that it *must* be.

On this subject, so much controverted, and on which so much, in the way of logical consequence, depends, I add a few authorities.

Dr. S. Clarke observes, "They who suppose that events, which are called contingent, cannot be certainly foreknown, must likewise suppose that when there is not a chain of necessary causes, there can be no certainty of any future events; but this is a mistake, for let us suppose that there is in man a power of beginning motion, and of acting with what has, of late, been called philosophical freedom; and let us suppose farther, that the actions of such a man cannot possibly be foreknown; will there not yet be in the nature of things, notwithstanding this supposition, the same certainty of event in every one of the man's actions, as if they were ever so fatal and necessary? For instance, suppose the man, by an internal principle of motion, and an absolute freedom of mind, to do some particular action *today*, and suppose it was not possible that this action should have been foreseen *yesterday*, was there not, nevertheless, the same certainty of event, as if it had been foreseen, and absolutely necessary? That is, would it not have been as certain a truth yesterday, and from eternity, that this action was an event to be performed to-day, notwithstanding the supposed freedom, as it is now a certain and infallible truth that it is performed? Mere certainty of event, therefore, does not, in any measure, imply necessity. And surely it implies no contradiction to suppose, that every future event which, in the



nature of things, is now certain, may now be certainly known by that intelligence which is omniscient. The manner how God can foreknow future events, without a chain of necessary causes, it is indeed impossible for us to explain, yet some sort of general notion of it we may conceive. For, as a man who has no influence over another person's actions, can yet often perceive beforehand what that other will do; and a wiser and more experienced man, with still greater probability will foresee what another, with whose disposition he is perfectly acquainted, will in certain circumstances do; and an angel, with still less degree of error, may have a farther prospect into men's future actions: so it is very reasonable to conceive, that God, without influencing men's wills by his power, or subjecting them to a chain of necessary causes', cannot but have a knowledge of future free events, as much more certain than men or angels can possibly have, as the perfection of his nature is greater than that of theirs. The distinct manner how he foresees these things, we cannot, indeed, explain; but neither can we explain the manner of numberless other things, of the reality of which, however, no man entertains a doubt."

Dr. Copleston judiciously remarks:--

"The course indeed of the *material* world seems to proceed upon such fixed and uniform laws, that short experience joined to close attention is sufficient to enable a man, for all useful purposes, to anticipate the general result of causes now in action. In the *moral* world much greater uncertainty exists. Every one feels, that what depends upon the conduct of his fellow creatures is less certain, than what is to be brought about by the agency of the laws of matter: and yet even here, once man is a being of a certain composition, having such and such faculties, inclinations, affections, desires, and appetites, it is very possible for those who study his nature attentively, especially for those who have practical experience of any individual or of any community of men, to foretell how they will be affected, and how they will act under any supposed circumstances. The same power (in an unlimited degree as before) it is natural and reasonable to ascribe to that Being, who excels the wisest of us infinitely more than the wisest of us excels his fellow creatures.

"It never enters the mind of a person who reflects in this way, that his anticipation of another's conduct lays any restraint upon that man's conduct when he comes to act. *The anticipation indeed is relative to himself, not to the other.* If it affected *him* in the remotest degree, his conduct would vary in proportion to the strength of the conviction in the mind of the thinker that *he* will so act.. But no man really believes in this magical sympathy. No man supposes the *certainty* of the *event* (to use a common, but, as I conceive, an improper term,) to correspond at all with the *certainty* of *him* who foretells or expects it. In fact, every day's experience shows, that men are deceived in the event, even when they regarded themselves as most certain, and when they would readily have used the strongest phrases to denote that certainty, not from any intention to deceive, but from an honest persuasion that such an event must happen. How is it then ? God can never be deceived-his knowledge therefore is always accompanied or followed by the event- and yet if we get an idea of what *his* knowledge is, by our own, why should we regard it as dragging the event along with it, when in our own case we acknowledge the two things to have no connection?

But here the advocate for necessity interposes, and says, True, *your* knowledge does not affect the event, over which you have no power: but God, who is all-powerful, who *made* all things as they are, and who *knows* all that will come to pass, must be



regarded as rendering that *necessary* which he foreknows-just as even you may be considered necessary to the event which you anticipate, exactly in proportion to the Share you have had in preparing the instruments or forming the minds of those who are to bring it about.

"To this I answer, that the connection between *knowledge* and the *event* is not at all established by this argument. It is not because I *knew* what would follow, but because I *contributed toward it*, that it is influenced by me. You may if you please contend, that because God made every thing, therefore all things that happen are done by him. This is taking another ground, for the doctrine of necessity, which will be considered presently. All I maintain now is, that the notion of God's *foreknowledge* ought not to interfere in the slightest degree with our belief in the *contingency* of events, and the *freedom* of human actions. The confusion has, I conceive, arisen chiefly from the ambiguity of the word *certainly*, used as it is even by learned writers, both in its relation to the mind which thinks, and to the object about which it is thinking." (*Inquiry into Necessity, &c.*)

To the above I add a passage from a divine of much older date, *who* has stated the argument with admirable clearness:--

In answer to the common argument, "As a thing is, such is the knowledge of it: future contingencies are uncertain, therefore they cannot be known as certain," he observes, "It is wonderful, that acute minds should not have detected the fallacy of this paralogism. For the major, which is vaunted as an axiom of undoubted truth, is most false unless it be properly explained. For if a thing is evil, shall the knowledge of it be evil? Then neither God nor angels could know the sins of men, without sinning themselves! Again, should a thing be *necessary*, will the knowledge of it, on that account, be also necessary? But many things are necessary in the nature of things, which either are unknown to us, or only known doubtfully. Many persons doubt even the existence of God, which in the highest sense is *necessary*, so far are they from having a *necessary* knowledge of him. That proposition, therefore, is only true in this sense, that our knowledge must agree with the things which are known, and that we know them as they are in reality, and not otherwise. Thus I ought to think, that the paper on which I write is white and the ink black; for if I fancy the ink white, and the paper black, this is not knowledge, but ignorance, or rather deception. In like manner true knowledge ought to regard things *necessary* as *necessary*, and things *contingent* as *contingent*: but it requires not that necessary things should be known necessarily, and contingent things contingently; for the contrary often happens.

"But the *minor* of the above syllogism is ambiguous and improper. The things about which our minds are exercised, are in themselves neither *certain* nor *uncertain*. They are called so only in respect of him who knows them; but they themselves are *necessary* or *contingent*. But if you understand by a *certain* thing, a *necessary* one, and by an *uncertain* thing that which is *contingent*, as many by an abuse of terms do, then your *minor* will appear to be identical and nugatory, for it will stand, 'Future contingencies are contingent,' from which no conclusion can be drawn. It is to be concluded, that certitude and incertitude are not affections of the things which are or may be known, but of the intellect of him who has knowledge of them, and who forms different judgments respecting them. For one and the same thing, without any change in itself, may be certain and uncertain at the same time; *certain* indeed to him who knows it certainly, but to him who knows it not, *uncertain*. For example, the

same future eclipse of the sun shall be certain to a skilful astronomer who has calculated it: uncertain to him who is ignorant of the laws of the heavenly bodies. But that cannot be said concerning the necessity and contingency of things. They remain such as they are in their own nature, whether we know them or not; for an eclipse, which from the laws of nature must necessarily take place, is not made contingent by my ignorance and uncertainty whether it will or will not happen. For this reason they are mistaken who say that things determined by the decree of God, are necessary in respect of God; but that to us, who know not his decrees, they are contingent; for our ignorance cannot make that which is future and necessary, because God hath decreed it, change its nature, and become contingent. It is no contradiction indeed to say, that one and the same thing may be at once *necessary* and yet *uncertain*, but that it should be *necessary* and *contingent* is a manifest contradiction. To God, therefore, whose knowledge is infinite, future contingencies are indeed certain, but to angels and men uncertain; nor are they made necessary because God knows them certainly. The knowledge of God influences nothing extrinsically, nor changes the nature of things in any wise. He knows future necessary things as necessary, but contingencies as contingencies; otherwise he would not know them truly, but be deceived, which cannot happen to God." (*Curcellaeus, De Jure Dei*, 1645.)

The rudiments of the third theory which this controversy has called forth, may be found in many theological writers, ancient and modern; but it is stated at large in the writings of Archbishop King, and requires some notice, because the views of that writer have of late been again made a subject of controversy. They amount, in brief, to this, that the fore. knowledge of God must be supposed to differ so much from any thing of time kind we perceive in ourselves, and from any ideas which we can possibly form of that property of the Divine nature, that no argument respecting it can be grounded upon our imperfect notions; and that all controversy on subjects connected with it is idle and fruitless.

In establishing this view, Archbishop King, in his Sermon on Divine Predestination and Foreknowledge, has the following observations :- "It is in effect agreed on all hands, that the nature of GOD is incomprehensible by human understanding; and not only his nature, but likewise his powers and faculties, and the ways and methods in which he exercises them, are so far beyond our reach, that we are utterly incapable of framing exact and adequate notions of them.

"We ought to remember, that the descriptions which we frame to ourselves of God, or of time Divine attributes, are not taken from any direct or immediate perceptions that we have of him or them; but from some observations we have made of his works, and from the consideration of those qualifications, that we conceive would enable us to perform the like.

"It doth truly follow from hence, that God must either have these, or other faculties equivalent to them, and adequate to these mighty effects which proceed from them. And because we do not know what his faculties are in themselves, we give them the names of those powers, that we find would be necessary to us in order to produce such effects, and call them wisdom, understanding, and foreknowledge; yet at the same time we cannot but be sensible, *that they are of a nature altogether different from ours, and that we have no direct and proper notion or conception of them.* Only we are sure, that they have effects like unto those that proceed from wisdom,

understanding, and foreknowledge in us; and that when our works fail to resemble them in any particular, it is by reason of some defect in these qualifications.

"Thus our reason teaches us to ascribe these attributes to God, by way of analogy to such qualities as we find most valuable in ourselves.

"If we look into the Holy Scriptures, and consider the representations given us there of God or his attributes, we shall find them plainly borrowed from some resemblance to things, with which we are acquainted by our senses. Thus when the Holy Scriptures speak of God, they ascribe hands, and eyes, and feet to him: not that we should believe he has any of these members, according to the literal signification; but the meaning is, that he has a power to execute all those acts, to the effecting of which these parts in us are instrumental: that is, he can converse with men, as well as if he had a tongue and mouth; he can discern all that we do or say, as perfectly as if he had eyes and ears; he can reach us as well as if he had hands and feet; he has as true and substantial a being as if he had a body; and he is as truly present every where, as if that body were infinitely extended.

"After the same manner, we find him represented as affected with such passions as we perceive to be in ourselves, namely, as angry and pleased, as loving and hating, as repenting and changing his resolutions, as full of mercy and provoked to revenge. And yet on reflection we cannot think, that any of these passions literally affect the Divine nature.

"And as the passions of men are thus by analogy ascribed to God, because these would in us be the principles of such outward actions, as we see he has performed; so by the same condescension to the weakness of our capacities, we find the powers and operations of our minds ascribed to him.

"The use of foreknowledge with us is to prevent any surprise when events happen, and that we may not be at a loss what to do by things coming upon us unawares. Now inasmuch as we are certain that nothing can surprise God, and that he can never be at a loss what to do; we conclude that God has a faculty to which our foreknowledge bears some analogy, therefore we call it by that name.

"But it does not follow from hence that any of these are *literally* in God, after the manner they are in us, any more than hands or eyes, than love or hatred are; on the contrary we must acknowledge, that those things, which we call by these names, when attributed to God, are of so very different a *nature* from what they are in us, and so superior to all that we can conceive, that in reality there is no more likeness between them, *than between our hand and God's power*. Nor can we draw consequences from the real nature of one to that of the other, with more justness of reason, than we can conclude, because our hand consists of fingers and joints, therefore the power of God is distinguished by such parts.

"So that to argue, 'because foreknowledge, as it is in us, if supposed infallible, cannot consist with the Contingency of events, therefore what we call so in God cannot,' is as far from reason, as it would be to conclude, because our eyes cannot see in the dark, therefore when God is said to see all things, his eyes must be enlightened with a perpetual sunshine; or because we cannot love or hate without passion, therefore when the Scriptures ascribe these to God, they teach US that he is liable to these affections as we are.

"We ought, therefore, to interpret all these things, when attributed to God only by way of condescension to our capacities, in order to help us to conceive what we are to expect from him, and what duty we are to pay him. Particularly, the terms of foreknowledge, predestination, nay, of understanding and will, when ascribed to him, are not to be taken strictly or properly, nor are we to think that they are in him in time *same sense* that we find them in ourselves; on the contrary, we are to interpret them only by way of analogy and comparison."

These views have recently been advocated by Dr. Copleston, in his "Inquiry into the Doctrines of *Necessity* and *Predestination* ;" but, to this theory, the first objection is, that, like the former, it does not in the least relieve the difficulty, for the entire subduing of which it was adopted.

For though foreknowledge in God should be admitted to be something of a "very different nature" to the same quality in man, yet as it is represented as something *equivalent* to foreknowledge, whatever that *something* may be; as, in consequence of it, prophecies leave actually been uttered and fulfilled, and of such a kind, too, as relate to actions for which men have in fact been held accountable; all the original difficulty of reconciling contingent events to this *something*, of which human foreknowledge is a "kind of shadow," as "a map of China is to China itself," remains in full force. The difficulty is shifted, but not removed; it cannot even be with more facility slid past; and either the Christian world must be content to forego all inquiries into these subjects,-a consummation not to be expected, however it may be wished,-or the contest must be resumed on another field, with no advantage from better ground or from broader daylight.

A farther objection to these notions is, that they are dangerous.

For if it be true, that the faculties we ascribe to God are "*of a nature* altogether different from *our own*, and that we have no direct and proper notion or conception of them," then, in point of fact, we have no proper revelation at all of the nature of God, and of his attributes, in the Scriptures; and what we esteem to be such, is a revelation of *terms*, to which we can attach no "*proper notion*." if this conclusion be well founded, then it is so monstrous that the premises on which it hangs must be unsound and anti-Scriptural. This alone is a sufficient *general* refutation of the hypothesis: but a more particular examination will show that it rests upon false assumptions; and that it introduces gratuitous difficulties, not called for by the supposed difficulty of reconciling the foreknowledge of God with the freedom of human actions.

1. It is assumed that the descriptions which we frame to ourselves of God, are taken from the observations we have made on his works, and from the consciousness of those qualifications which, we conceive, would enable us to perform the like. This might be, in part, true of heathens left without the light of revelation; but it is not true of those who enjoy that advantage. Our knowledge of God comes from the Scriptures, which are taught to us in our infancy, and with which, either by reading or hearing, we become familiar as we grow up. The notions we have of God, so far as they agree with the Scriptures, are, therefore, not those which we have framed by the *process* assumed by the archbishop, but those which have been *declared* to us in the Scriptures by God himself, as descriptions of his own nature. This makes a great difference. Our own modes of forming conceptions of the Divine nature would have no authority higher than ourselves; the *announcements* of Scripture are the word of

God, communicating by human language the *truth* and *reality* of things, as to *himself*. This is the constant profession of the sacred writers; they tell us, not what there is in man which may support an analogy between man and God, but what God is in himself.

2. It is assumed, that because the nature of God is "*incomprehensible*," we have no "*proper* notion or conception of it." The term "*proper* notion" is vague. It may mean "*an exact and adequate* notion," which it may be granted without hesitation that we have not; or it may mean a notion *correct* and *true* in itself though not *complete* and *comprehensive*. A great part of the fallacy lies here. To be *incomprehensible*, is not, in every case, and assuredly not in this, to be *unintelligible*. We may *know* God, though we cannot *fully* know him; and our notions may be *true*, though not *adequate*; and they must be true, if we have rightly understood God's revelation of himself. Of *being*, for instance, we can form a true notion, because we are conscious of our own existence; and though we cannot extend the conception to *absolute* being or self existence, because our being is a dependent one, we can yet supply the defect, as we are taught by the Scriptures, by the negative notion of *independence*. Of *spirit* we have a true notion, and understand, therefore, what is meant, when it is said, that "God is a spirit ;" and though we can have but an imperfect conception of an *infinite* spirit, we can supply that want also, to all practical purposes, by the negative process of removing all *imperfection*, or *limit* of excellence, from our views of the Divine nature. We have a *true* notion of the *presence* of one being with other beings, and with place; mid though we cannot *comprehend* the mode in which God is *omnipresent*, we are able to conceive without difficulty the *fact*, that the Divine presence fills all things. We have true notions of *power* and *knowledge*; and can suppose them infinite, though *how* they should be so, we know not. And as to the *moral* attributes, such as *truth*, *justice*, and *goodness*, we have not only true, but comprehensive, and for any thing that appears to the contrary, *adequate* notions of them; for our difficulties as to these attributes do not arise from any incapacity to conceive of what is *perfect truth*, *perfect justice*, and *perfect goodness*, but from our inability to show how many things, which occur in the Divine government, are to be reconciled to these attributes;-and that, not because our notions of the attributes themselves are obscure, but because the things, out of which such questions arise, are either in themselves, or in their relations, but partially understood or greatly mistaken.- Job and his friends did not differ in abstract views of the *justice* of the moral government of God, but in reconciling Job's afflictions with it.

3. It is assumed that the nature of God is *essentially* different from the spiritual nature of man. This is not the doctrine of Scripture.- When it says, that "God is a *spirit* ;" we have no reason to conclude that a distant analogy, such a one us springs out of mere *relation*, which, in a poetic imagination, might be sufficient to support a figure of speech, is alone intended. The very argument connected with these words, in the discourse of our Lord with the woman of Samaria, forbids this. It is a declaration of the *nature* of God, and of the worship suited to his *nature*; and the word employed is that by which both Jews and Samaritans had been taught by the same inspired records, which they each possessed, to designate and conceive of the intellectual nature of man. The nature of God, and time nature of man, are not the same; but they are *similar*, because they bear many attributes in common, though on the part of the Divine nature in a degree of perfection infinitely exceeding. The difference of degree, however, cannot prove a difference of essence,-no, nor the circumstance that one has attributes which the other has not,-in any sense of the word *djfference* which could be of service to the advocates of this hypothesis. But if a total difference is proved as to the *intellectual* attributes of God and men, that

difference must be extended to the *moral* attributes also; and so the very foundation of morals and religion would be undermined. This point was successfully pressed by Edwards against Archbishop King, and it is met very feebly by Dr. Copleston. "Edwards," he observes. "raises a clamour about the moral attributes, as if their nature also must be held to be different in kind from human virtues, if the *knowledge* of God be admitted to be different in kind from ours." Certainly this follows from the principles laid down by Archbishop King; and if his followers take his conclusions as to the intellectual attributes, they must take them as to the moral attributes also. If the faculties of God be "of a nature altogether different from ours," we have no more reason to except from this rule the *truth* and the *justice*, than the *wisdom* and the *prescience* of God; and the reasoning of Archbishop King is as con elusive in the one case as in the other.

The fallacy of the above *assumptions* is sufficient to destroy the hypothesis which has been built upon them; and the argument from Scripture may be shown to be as unfounded. It is, as the above extract will show, in brief this, that as the Scriptures ascribe, by *analogy*, hands, and eyes, and feet to God, and also the passions of love, hatred, anger, &c, "because these would be in us the principles of such outward actions as we see he has performed; so, by the same condescension, to the weakness of our capacities, we find the powers and operations of our *minds* ascribed to him." But will the advocates of this opinion look steadily to its legitimate consequences We believe not; and those consequences must, therefore, be its total refutation. For if both our *intellectual* and *moral* affections are made use of but as distant analogies, and obscure intimations, to convey to us an imperfect knowledge of the intellectual powers and affections of the Divine nature, in the *same manner* as human hands, and human eyes, are made to represent his power and his knowledge,-it follows that there is nothing in the Divine nature which answers more truly and exactly to *knowledge, justice, truth, mercy*, and other qualities in man, than the knowledge of God answers to human organs of vision, or his power to the hands or the feet; and from this it would follow, that nothing is said in the Scriptures of the Divine Being, but what is, in the highest sense, figurative, and purely metaphorical. We are no more like God in our *minds* than in our *bodies*, and it might as truly have been said with respect to man's *bodily* shape, as to his *mental* faculties, that man was made "in the image of God."[\[7\]](#)

It is also to be observed, that when the Scriptures speak of the knowledge, power, and other attributes of God, in figurative language, taken from the eyes or hands of the body, It is sufficiently obvious that this language is metaphorical, not only from the reason of things itself, out because the same ideas are also quite as often expressed without figure; and the metaphor therefore never misleads us. We have sufficient proof also that it never did mislead the Jews, even in the worst periods of their history, and when their tendency to idolatry and gross superstition was most powerful. They made images in human shape of other gods; but never of *JEHOVAH*: the Jews were never anthropomorphites, whatever they might be beside. But it is equally certain, that they did give a *literal* interpretation to those passages in their Scriptures which speak of the *knowledge, justice, mercy, &c*, of God, as the same in *kind*, though infinitely higher in their degree of excellence, with the same qualities in men The reason is obvious: they could not interpret those passages of their holy writings which speak of the hands, the eyes, and the feet of God *literally*; because every part of the same sacred revelation was full of representations of the Divine nature, which declared his absolute spirituality: and they could not interpret those passages figuratively which speak of the intellectual and moral qualities of God in terms that express the same qualities in men; because their whole revelation did not

furnish them with any hint, even the most distant, that there was a more literal or exact sense in which they could be taken. It was not possible for any man to take literally that sublimely figurative representation of the upholding and ruling power of God, where he is said to "hold the waters of the ocean in the hollow of his hand," unless he could also conclude that where he is said to "weigh the hills in scales, and the mountains in a balance," he was to understand this literally also. The idea suggested is that of sustaining, regulating, and adjusting power; but if he were told, that he ought to take the idea of power in as figurative a sense as that of the waters being held in the hollow of the hand of God, and his weighing the mountains in scales, he would find it impossible to form any idea of the thing signified at all. The first step in the attempt would plunge him into total darkness. The figurative *hand* assists him to form the idea of managing and controlling *power*, but the figurative *power* suggests *nothing*; and so this scheme blots out entirely all revelation of God of any kind, by resolving the whole into figures, which represent nothing of which we can form any conception.

The argument of ARCHBISHOP KING, from the passions which are ascribed to God in Scripture, is not more conclusive. "After the same manner we find him represented as affected with such passions as we perceive to be in ourselves, as angry and pleased, as loving and hating, as repenting and changing his resolutions, as full of mercy, and provoked to revenge; and yet, on reflection, we cannot think that any of these passions literally affect the Divine nature." But why not? As they are represented in Scripture to be affections of the Divine nature, and not in the *gross* manner in which they are expressed in this extract, there seems nothing improper in taking them *literally*; and no necessity is made out to compel us to understand them to signify *somewhat* for which we have not a name, and of which we can form no idea. The Scriptures nowhere warrant us to consider God as a cold metaphysical abstraction; and they nowhere indicate to us that when they ascribe *affections* to him, they are to be taken as mere figures of speech. On the contrary, they teach us to consider them as answering *substantially*, though not *circumstantially* to the innocent affections of men and angels. Why may not anger be "literally" ascribed to God, not indeed as it may be caricatured to suit a theory, but *as* we find it ascribed in the Scriptures? It is not *malignant* anger, nor blind, stormy, and disturbing anger, which is spoken of; nor is this always, nor need it be at any time, the anger of creatures. There is an anger which is without sin in man,—"a perception of evil, and opposition to it, and also an emotion of mind, a sensation, or passion, suitable thereto." (*Wesley*.) There was this in our Lord, who was without *sin*; nor is it represented by the evangelists, who give us the instances, as even an *infirmity* of the nature He assumed. In God it may be allowed to exist in a different *manner* to that in which it is found even in men who are "angry and *sin not* ;" it is accompanied with no weakness, it is allied to no imperfection ; but that it does exist as *truly* in him as in man, is the doctrine of Scripture; and there is no perfection ascribed to God, to which it can be proved contrary, or with which we cannot conceive it to coexist.[8] Not only *anger*, we are told, is ascribed to God, but "the being pleased." Let the term used, be *complacency*, instead of one which seems to have been selected to convey a notion of a lower and less worthy kind; and there is no incongruity in the idea. HE is the *blessed* or *happy* God, and therefore capable of pleasure. He looked upon his works, and saw that they were "good," "very good,"—words which suggest the idea of his *complacency* upon their completion; and this, when separated from all connection with human infirmity, appears to be a perfection, and not a defect. To be incapable of complacency and delight, is the character of the Supreme Being of EPICURUS and of the modern Hindoos, of whose *internal state*, so to speak, deep sleep, and the surface of an unruffled lake, are favourite figurative



representations. But of this refinement we have nothing in the Bible, nor is it in the least necessary to our idea of infinite perfection. And why should not *love* exist in God, in more than a figurative sense? For this affection to be accompanied with perturbation, anxiety, and weak or irrational partiality, is a mere accident. So we often see it in human beings; but though this affection, without any concurrent infirmity, be ascribed to God, it surely does not follow that it exists in him, as something in nature "wholly different" from love in wise and holy creatures, in angels and in saints. Not only the beauty, the force, and the encouragement of a thousand passages of Scripture would be lost, upon this hypothesis; but their meaning also. Love in God is something, we are told, which is so called, because it produces similar effects to those which are produced by love in man; but what this something is, we are not informed; and the revelation of Scripture as to God, is thus reduced to a revelation of his acts only, but not, in the least, of the principles from which they flow.[9]

The same observations may be applied to "*mercy and revenge*," by the latter of which the archbishop can mean nothing more than judicial vengeance, or *retribution*, though an equivocal term has been adopted, *ad captandum*. "Repenting, and changing his resolutions," are improperly placed among the *affections*; but, freed from ideas of human infirmity, they may be, without the least dishonour to the fulness of the Divine perfections, ascribed to God in as *literal* a sense as we find them stated in the Scriptures. They there clearly signify no more than the change which takes place in the *affections* of God, his *anger* or his *love*, as men turn from the practice of righteousness, or repent and turn back again to him; and the consequent changes in his dispensations toward them as their Governor and Lord. This is the Scriptural doctrine, and there is nothing in it which is not most worthy of God, though literally interpreted; nothing which is not consistent with his absolute immutability. He is unchangeably the lover and the rewarder of righteousness, unchangeably the hater and the judge of iniquity; and as his creatures are righteous or wicked, or are changed from the one state to the other, they become the objects of the different *regards*, and of the different *administrations*, of the *same* righteous and gracious Sovereign, who, by these very changes, shows that he is without variableness, or shadow of turning.

If then there is no reason for not attributing even certain affections of the human mind to God, when connected with absolute perfection and excellence, in their nature and in their exercise, no reason certainly can be given for not considering his intellectual attributes, represented, as to their *nature* though not as to their *degree*, by terms taken from the faculties of the human mind, as corresponding with our own. But the matter is placed beyond all doubt by the appeal which is so often made in the Bible to these properties in man, not as illustrations only of something *distantly* and *indistinctly* analogous to properties in the Divine nature, but as representations of the *nature* and *reality* of these qualities in the Supreme Being, and which are, *therefore*, made the *grounds* of *argument*, the *basis* of *duty*, and the *sources* of *consolation*.

With respect to the *nature* of God, it is sufficient to refer to the passage before mentioned, - "GOD is a SPIRIT; -where the argument is, that he requires not a ceremonial but a spiritual worship, the worship of man's *spirit*; because he himself is a SPIRIT. How this argument could be brought out on Archbishop KING'S and Dr. COPLESTON'S theory, it is difficult to state. It would be something of this kind: -GOD is a SPIRIT; that is, he is called a SPIRIT, because his nature is analogous to the

spiritual nature of man: but this analogy implies no similarity of nature: it is a mere analogy of relation; and therefore though we have no *direct* and *proper* notion of the nature of God, yet, because he is *called* a *Spirit*, "they that worship him must worship him in *spirit* and in truth." This is indeed far from being an intelligible, and it is still less a *practical*, argument.

With respect to his *intellectual* attributes, it is argued in Scripture, "He that teacheth man *knowledge*, shall not be *know*?" Here the knowledge of God is supposed to be of the same *nature* as the knowledge of man. This is the sole foundation of the argument; which would have appeared indescribably obscure, if, according to Archbishop King's hypothesis, it had stood,-" He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not have *somewhat* in his nature, which, because it gives rise to actions similar to those which proceed from knowledge, we may call knowledge, but of which we have no *direct* or *proper* notion "

With respect to his *moral* attributes, we find the same appeals,- "Shall not the Judge of the whole earth do *right*?" Here the abstract term *right* is undoubtedly used in the sense commonly received among men, and is supposed to be comprehensible by them.-" The *righteous* LORD loveth righteousness." The righteousness in man which he loveth, is, clearly, correspondent in its kind to that which constitutes him eminently "the righteous Lord."-Still more forcibly, the house of Israel is called upon "to *judge* between him and his vineyard : " he condescends to try his own justice by the notions of justice which prevail among men; in which there could be no meaning, if this moral quality were not in God and in man of the same *kind*-" Hear *now*, O house of Israel, is not my way *equal*" But what force would there be in this challenge, designed to silence the murmurs of a people under correction, as though they had not been justly dealt with, if justice among men had no more resemblance to justice in God than a *hand* to power, or an eye to knowledge, or "a map of China to China itself?" The appeal is to a standard common to both, and by which one might be as explicitly determined as the other.[10] Finally, the ground of all *praise* and *adoration* of God for works of mercy and judgment,-of all *trust* in God, on account of his faithfulness and truth,-and of all *imitation* of God in his *mercy* and *compassion*,-is laid in every part of the word of God, not surely in this, that there are unknown and unapprehended qualities of *some kind* in God, which lead him to perform actions similar to those which flow from justice, truth and mercy in men; but in the consideration that he is *justice itself truth itself*, and *goodness itself*. The hypothesis is therefore contradicted by the Scripture; and though it has been assumed in favour of a great truth,-that the prescience of God does not destroy the liberty of man,-that truth needs not so cumbrous and mischievous an auxiliary. Divine foreknowledge and the freedom of human agency are compatible, not because foreknowledge in God is a figure of speech; or something different in kind to foreknowledge in man -but because knowledge, simply considered, whether present, past, or future, can have no influence upon action at all, and cannot therefore change a contingent action into a necessary one.

For, after all, where does the great theological difficulty lie, for the evasion of which so much is to be sacrificed? The prescience, counsels, and plans of God, are prescience, counsels, and plans, which respect free agents, as far as men are concerned; and unless we superadd *influence* to necessitate, or plans to *entice irresistibly* and to *entrap inevitably*, into some given course of conduct, there is clearly no incongruity between these and human freedom. There is a difficulty in conceiving *how* foreknowledge should be absolute, as there is a difficulty in

conceiving how God's present knowledge should penetrate the heart of man, and know his present thoughts: but neither party argues from the incomprehensibility of the mode to the impossibility of the thing. The great difficulty does not then lie here. It seems to be planted precisely in this, that God should prohibit many things, which he nevertheless knows will occur, and in the prescience of which he regulates his dispensations to bring out of these circumstances various results, which he makes subservient to the displays of his mercy and his justice; and particularly, that in the case of those individuals who, he knows, will finally perish, he exhorts, warns, invites, and, in a word, takes active and influential means to prevent a foreseen result. This forms the difficulty; because, in the case of man, the prescience of failure would, in many cases, paralyze all effort,-whereas, in the government of God, men are treated, in our views, with as much *intensity of care and effort*, as though the issue of things was entirely unknown. But if the perplexity arises from this, nothing can be more clear than that the question is not, how to reconcile God's prescience with the freedom of man; but how to reconcile the conduct of God toward man, considered as a free agent, with his own prescience; how to assign a congruity to warnings, exhortations, and other means adopted to prevent destruction as to individuals, with the certain foresight of that terrible result. In this, however, no moral attribute of God is impugned. On the contrary, mercy requires the application of means of deliverance, if man be under a dispensation of grace; and justice requires it, if man is to be judged for the use or abuse of mercy. The difficulty then entirely resolves itself into a mere matter of feeling, which, of course,-as we cannot be judges of a nature infinite in perfection, though similar to what is excellent in our own, nor of proceedings which, in the unlimited range of the government of God, may have connections and bearings beyond all our comprehension,-we cannot reduce to a human standard. Is it, then, to adjust a mere matter of feeling, that we are to make these outrageous interpretations of the word of God, in what he hath spoken of himself? And are we to deny that we have no "proper or direct notion of God," because we cannot find him out to perfection? this difficulty, which we ought not to dare to try by human standards, is not one however, we again remark, which arises at all out of the relation of the Divine prescience to the liberty of human actions; and it is entirely untouched by any part of this controversy. We fall into new difficulties through these speculations, but do not escape the true one. If the freedom of man is denied, the moral attributes of God are impugned; and the difficulty, as a matter of feeling, is heightened. Divine prescience cannot be denied, because the prophetic Scriptures have determined that already; and if Archbishop King's interpretation of foreknowledge be resorted to, the something substituted for prescience, and equivalent to it, comes in, to bring us back, in a fallacious circle, to the point from which we started.

It may therefore be certainly concluded, that the omniscience of God comprehends his certain prescience of all events however contingent; and if any thing more were necessary to strengthen the argument above given, it might be drawn from the irrational, and, above all, the unscriptural consequences, which would follow from the denial of this doctrine. These are forcibly stated by President Edwards: - "It would follow from this notion, (namely, that the Almighty doth not foreknow what will be the result of future contingencies,) that as God is liable to be continually repenting what he has done; so he must be exposed to be constantly changing his mind and intentions as to his future conduct; altering his measures, relinquishing his old designs, and forming new schemes and projections. For his purposes, even as to the main parts of his scheme, namely, such as belong to the state of his moral kingdom, must be always liable to be broken, through want of foresight; and he must be continually putting his system to rights, as it gets out of order, through the

contingence of the actions of moral agents: he must be a Being, who, instead of being absolutely immutable, must necessarily be the subject of infinitely the most numerous acts of repentance, and changes of intention, of any being whatsoever; for this plain reason, that his vastly extensive charge comprehends an infinitely greater number of those things which are to him contingent and uncertain. In such a situation he must have little else to do, but to mend broken links as well as he can, and be rectifying his disjointed frame and disordered movements, in the best manner the case will allow. The supreme Lord of all things must needs be under great and miserable disadvantages, in governing the world which he has made, and has the care of, through his being utterly unable to find out things of chief importance, which hereafter shall befall his system; which, if he did but know, he might make seasonable provision for. In many cases, there may be very great necessity that he should make provision, in the manner of his ordering and disposing things, for some great events which are to happen, of vast and extensive influence, and endless consequence to the universe; which he may see afterward, when it is too late, and may wish in vain that he had known beforehand, that he might have ordered his affairs accordingly. And it is in the power of man, on these principles, by his devices, purposes, and actions, thus to disappoint God, break his measures, make him continually to change his mind, subject him to vexation, and bring him into confusion."

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[1] Nihil Deo clausum, interest animis nostris, et mediis cogitationibus inter venit. Sen. *Epist.*

[2] Quis enim non timeat Deum, omnia pervidentem, et cogitantem, &c. Cic. *De Nat. Deor.*

[3] Several parallels have been at different times drawn, even by Christian divines, between the character of Socrates and Christ, doubtless with the intention of exalting the latter, but yet so as to veil the true character of the former. How great is the disgust one feels at that want of all moral delicacy from which only such comparisons could emanate, when the true character of Socrates comes to be unveiled! On a sermon preached at Cambridge by Dr. Butler, which contains one of these parallels, "the Christian Observer" has the following just remarks

"We earnestly request that such of our readers as are sufficiently acquainted with classical literature to institute the examination, would turn to the eleventh chapter of the third book of the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon, and we are persuaded that they will not think our reprehension of Dr. Butler misplaced. The very title of the chapter, we should have thought, would have precluded any Christian scholar, much more any Christian divine, from the possibility of being guilty of a profanation so gross and revolting. The title of it is *Cum Meretrice Theodora de arte hominum afflictorum disserit*, (Socrates, viz.) Doubtless many who heard Dr. Butler preach, and many more who have since read his sermon, have taken it for granted, that when he ventured to recommend the conduct of Socrates, in associating with courtezans, as being an adumbration with that of our Saviour, he must have alluded to instances in the life of that philosopher of his having laboured to reclaim the vicious, or to console the penitent with the hope of pardon. For ourselves, we know of no such

instances. But what will be his surprise to find that the intercourse of Socrates with courtezans, as it is here recorded by Xenophon, was of the most licentious anti profligate description ?"

[4] There is another theory which was formerly much debated, under the name of *Scientia Media*; but to which, in the present day, reference is seldom made. The knowledge of God was distributed into *Necessary*, which goes before every act of the will in the order of nature, and by which he knows himself and all possible things:- *Free*, which follows the act of time will, and by which God knows all things which lie has decreed to do and to permit, as things which he wills to be done or permitted :- *Middle*, so called because partaking of the two former kinds, by which lie knows, *sub conditione*, what men and angels would

voluntarily do under any given circumstances. "Tertiani *Mediam*, qua sub conditione novit quid homines aut angeli facturi essent pro sua libertate, si cum his aut illis circumstantiis, in hoc vel in illo rerum ordine constituerentur."-Erisco. PIUS *De & ieiunia Dei*. They illustrate this kind of knowledge by such passages as, "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if time mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes." This distinction, which was taken from the Jesuits, who drew it from time schoolmen, was at least favoured by some of the remonstrant divines, as the extract from Episcopius shows; and they seem to have been led to it by the circumstance that almost all time high Calvinist theologians of that day entirely denied the possibility of contingent future actions being foreknown, in order to support on this ground their doctrine of absolute predestination. In this, however, those remonstrants, who adopted that notion, did not follow their great leader Arminius, who felt no need of this subterfuge. but stood on the plain declarations of Scripture, unembarrassed with metaphysical distinctions. Gomarus, on the other side, adopted this opinion, which was confined, among the Calvinists of that day, to himself and another. Gomarus betook himself to this notion of conditional prescience, in order to avoid being charged with making God time author of the sin of Adam, and found it a convenient mode of eluding so formidable an objection, as Curcellaeus remarks: "Sapienter ergo, meo iudicio, Gomarus, cum suam de reprobationis objecto sententiam hoc ab. surdo videret urgeri, quod Deum peccati Adami auctorem constituerit, ad praescientiam conditionatam confugit, *qua Deus ex infinite scientiae suae lumine, quaedam futura non absolute, sed certa conditione posita praenovit*. Hac enim ratione commodissime ictum istum declinavit.-Eumque postea secutus est Wallaeus in Locis suis Communibus; qui etiam feliciter scopulum illum praetervehit. Nullum praeterea ex Calvini discipulis novi, qui hanc in I)eo scientiam agnoscat.

-De *Iure Dei*.

To what practical end this opinion went, it is not easy to see either as to such of time Calvinists or of the Arminians as adopted it. The point of the question, after all, was, whether the *actual* circumstances in which a free agent would be placed, and his conduct accordingly, could *both* be foreknown. Gomarus, who adopted time view of *conditional* foreknowledge, as to Adam at least, conceded the liberty of the will, so far as the first man was concerned, to his opponents; but Episcopius and others conceded by this notion something of more importance to time supralapsarians, who denied that the prescience of future contingencies was at all possible. However both agreed to destroy the prescience of God as to. *actual* contingencies, though the

advocates of the *Media Scientia* reserved the point as to *possible*, or rather *hypothetic* ones, and thus the whole was, after all, resolved into the wider question, Is the knowledge of future contingencies possible? This point will be presently considered.

[5] So little effect has this theory in removing any difficulty, that persons of the most opposite theological sentiments have claimed it in their favour:-Socinus and his followers,-all the supralapsarian Calvinists,-and a few Arminians.

[6] *Certainty* is, properly speaking, no quality of an action at all, unless it be taken in the sense of a *fixed* and *necessitated* action; in this controversy it means the *certainty* which the mind that foresees has, that an action will be done, and the certainty is therefore in the mind, and not in the action.

[7] "Though his grace rightly lays down analogy for the foundation of his discourse, yet, for want of having thoroughly weighed and digested it, and by wording himself incautiously, he seems entirely to destroy the nature of it; insomuch that while he rejects the strict *propriety* of our conceptions and words, on the one hand, he appears to his antagonists to run into an extreme, even below *metaphor*, on the other.

"His greatest mistake is, that through his discourse he supposes the members and actions of a human body, which we attribute to God in a pure metaphor, to be equally upon the same foot of analogy with the *passions* of a human soul, which are attributed to him in a lower and more imperfect degree of analogy; and even with the *operations* and perfections of the pure mind or *intellect* which are attributed to him in a yet higher and more complete degree. In pursuance of this oversight, he expressly asserts love and anger, wisdom and goodness, knowledge and foreknowledge, and all the other Divine attributes to be spoken of God, as improperly as eyes or ears; that there is no more likeness between these things in the Divine nature and in ours, than there is between our *hand* and God's *power*, and that they are not to be taken in the same sense.

"Agreeably to this incautious and indistinct manner of treating a subject curious and difficult, he hath unwarily dropped some such shocking expressions as these, *the best representations we can make of God are infinitely short of truth*. Which God forbid, in the sense his adversaries take it; for then all our reasonings concerning him would be groundless and false. But the saying is evidently true in a favourable and qualified sense and meaning; namely, that they are infinitely short of the real, true, internal nature of God as he is in himself.- Again, *that they are emblems indeed and parabolical figures of the Divine attributes, which they are designed to signify*; as if they were signs or figures of our own, altogether precarious and arbitrary, and without any real and true foundation of analogy between them in the nature of either God or man: and accordingly he unhappily describes the knowledge we have of God and his attributes, by the notion we form of a strange country by a *map*, which is only *paper and ink, strokes and lines*." (Bishop BROWN'S *Procedure of Human Understanding*.)

[8] Melancthon says: "*The Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him; and I [Moses] prayed for Aaron also at the same time*, Deut. ix, 20. Let us not elude the exceedingly lamentable expressions which the Holy Ghost employs when he says, *God was very angry*; and let us not feign to ourselves a *God of stone*, or a



*Stoical Deity.* For though God is angry in a different manner from men, yet let us conclude that God was really angry with Aaron, and that Aaron was not then in [a state of] grace, but obnoxious to everlasting punishment. Dreadful was the fall of Aaron, who had through fear yielded to the madness of the people when they instituted the Egyptian worship. Being warned by this example, let us not confirm ourselves in security, but acknowledge that it is possible for elect and renewed persons horribly to fall," &c. (Loc-i Praecipui Theologi, 1513.)

[9] "It would destroy the confidence of prayer, and the ardour of devotion, if we could regard the Deity as subsisting by himself, and as having no sympathies, but mere abstract relations to the whole family in heaven and earth; and I look upon it as one of the most rational and philosophical confutations of your system, that it is fitted neither for the theory nor the practice of our religion; and that, if we could adopt it, we must henceforth exchange the language of Scripture for the anthems of Epicurus :-

"Omnis enim per se Divum natura necesse est,

Immortali vvo summâ cum pace fruatur,

Semota ab nostris rebus, sejunctaque longe;

Nam privata dolore omni, privata periculis,

Ipsa suis pollens opibus, nihil indiga nostri,

Nec bene promeritis capitur, nec tangitur ira.

"It is in direct opposition to all such vain and skeptical speculations, that Christianity always represents and speaks of the Deity as participating, so far as infinity and perfection may participate, in those feelings and affections which belong to our rational natures." (GRINFIELD'S *Vindiciae Analogicae*.)

[10] How can we confess God to be just, if we understand it not? But how can we understand him so, but by the measures of justice? and bow shall we know *that*, if there be two justices, one that we know, and one that we know not, one contrary to another? If they be contrary, they are not justice; for *justice* can be no more opposed to *justice*, than *truth* to *truth*: if they be not contrary, then that which we understand to be just in us, is just in God; and that which is just once, is just for ever in the same case and circumstances: and, indeed, how is it that we are in all things of excellency and virtue to be like God, and to be meek like Christ; to *be humble as he is humble*, and to *be pure like God*, to be just after his example, to *be merciful as our heavenly Father is merciful*? If there is but one mercy, and one justice, and one meekness, then the *measure* of these, and the *reason*, is eternally the same. If there be two, either they are not essential to God, or else not imitable by us: and then how can we *glory* God, and *speak honour of his name*, and *exalt his justice*, and *magnify his truth*, and *sincerity*, and simplicity, if *truth* and *simplicity*, and justice, and mercy in him is not that thing which we understand, and which we are to imitate 9" &c. (Bishop TAYLOR'S "*Ductor Dubitantium*.")