

A DISCOURSE UPON GOD'S KNOWLEDGE.

Great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.—
PSALM CXLVII. 5.

It is uncertain who was the author of this psalm, and when it was penned: some think after the return from the Babylonish captivity. It is a psalm of praise, and is made up of matter of praise from the beginning to the end: God's benefits to the church, his providence over his creatures, the essential excellency of his nature.

The psalmist doubles his exhortation to praise God: ver. 1, 'Praise ye the Lord, sing praise to our God:' to praise him from his dominion as *Lord*; from his grace and mercy as *our God*; from the excellency of the duty itself, 'it is good, it is comely.' Some read it *comely*, some *lovely* or desirable, from the various derivation of the word.

Nothing doth so much delight a gracious soul, as an opportunity of celebrating the perfections and goodness of the Creator.

The highest duties a creature can render to the Creator, are pleasant and delightful in themselves, 'it is comely.' Praise is a duty that affects the whole soul.

The praise of God is a decent thing, the excellency of God's nature deserves it, and the benefits of God's grace requires it.

It is comely when done as it ought to be, with the heart as well as with the voice; a sinner sings ill though his voice be good, the soul in it is to be elevated above earthly things.

The first matter of praise is God's erecting and preserving his church: ver. 2, 'The Lord doth build up Jerusalem; he gathers together the outcasts of Israel.' The walls of demolished Jerusalem are now re-edified; God hath brought back the captivity of Jacob, and reduced his people from their Babylonish exile; and those that were dispersed into strange regions, he hath restored to their habitations. Or it may be prophetic of the calling of the Gentiles, and the gathering the outcasts of the spiritual Israel, that were before as without God in the world, and strangers to the covenant of promise. Let God be praised, but especially for building up his church and gathering the Gentiles, before counted as outcasts, Isa. xi. 12; he gathers them in this world to the faith, and hereafter to glory.

Obs. 1. From the two first verses, observe,

1. All people are under God's care; but he has a particular regard to his

church. This is the signet on his hand, as a bracelet upon his arm; this is his garden, which he delights to dress; if he prunes it, it is to purge it; if he digs about his vine and wounds the branches, it is to make it more beautiful with new clusters, and restore it to a fruitful vigour.

2. All great deliverances are to be ascribed to God, as the principal author, whosoever are the instruments. The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, he gathers together the outcasts of Israel. This great deliverance from Babylon is not to be ascribed to Cyrus or Darius, or the rest of our favourers; it is the Lord that doth it, we had his promise for it, we have now his performance. Let us not ascribe that which is the effect of his truth, only to the good-will of men; it is God's act, 'not by might, nor by power,' nor by weapons of war, or strength of horses, 'but by the Spirit of the Lord.' He sent prophets to comfort us while we were exiles, and now he hath stretched out his own arm to work our deliverance according to his word; blind man looks so much upon instruments, that he hardly takes notice of God, either in afflictions or mercies; and this is the cause that robs God of so much prayer and praise in the world.

Verse 3, 'He heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds.' He hath now restored those who had no hope but in his word; he hath dealt with them as a tender and skilful chirurgeon, he hath applied his curing plasters, and dropped in his sovereign balsams; he hath now furnished our fainting hearts with refreshing cordials, and comforted our wounds with strengthening ligatures.

How gracious is God, that restores liberty to the captives, and righteousness to the penitent! Man's misery is the fittest opportunity for God to make his mercy illustrious in itself, and most welcome to the patient.

He proceeds, verse 4. Wonder not that God calls together the outcasts, and singles them out from every corner for a return; why can he not do this, as well as 'tell the number of the stars, and call them all by their names'?

There are none of his people so despicable in the eye of man, but they are known and regarded by God. Though they are clouded in the world, yet they are the stars of the world; and shall God number the inanimate stars in the heavens, and make no account of his living stars on the earth? No; wherever they are dispersed, he will not forget them; however they are afflicted, he will not despise them. The stars are so numerous that they are innumerable by man; some are visible and known by men, others lie more hid and undiscovered in a confused light, as those in the milky way; man cannot see one of them distinctly.

God knows all his people. As he can do what is above the power of man to perform, so he understands what is above the skill of man to discover. Shall man measure God by his scantiness? Proud man must not equal himself to God, nor cut God as short as his own line.

'He tells the number of the stars; and calls them all by their names.' He hath them all in his list, as generals the names of their soldiers in their muster-roll, for they are his host, which he marshals in the heavens, as Isa. xl. 26, where you have the like expression; he knows them more distinctly than man can know anything, and so distinctly as to 'call them all by their names.' He knows their names, that is, their natural offices, influences, the different degrees of heat and light, their order and motion; and *all* of them, the least glimmering star as well as the most glaring planet, this man cannot do: 'Tell the stars if thou be able to number them,' Gen. xv. 5, saith God to Abraham (whom Josephus represents as a great astronomer); yea, they cannot be numbered, Jer. xxxiii. 22, and the uncertainty of the opinions of men evidenceth their ignorance of their number, some reckoning 1022,

others 1025, others 1098, others 7000, besides those that, by reason of their mixture of light with one another, cannot be distinctly discerned, and others perhaps so high as not to be reached by the eye of man. To impose names on things, and names according to their natures, is both an argument of power and dominion, and of wisdom and understanding; from the imposition of names upon the creatures by Adam, the knowledge of Adam is generally concluded, and it was also a fruit of that dominion God allowed him over the creatures. Now he that numbers and names the stars, that seem to lie confused among one another, as well as those that appear to us in an unclouded night, may well be supposed accurately to know his people, though lurking in secret caverns, and know those that are fit to be instruments of their deliverance; the one is as easy to him as the other, and the number of the one as distinctly known by him as the multitude of the other.

Verse 5, 'For great is our Lord, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.' He wants not knowledge to know the objects, nor power to effect his will concerning them. Of great power, רב כח. Much power, plenteous in power; so the word רב is rendered, Ps. lxxxvi. 5. 15, רב חסד. A multitude of power, as well as a multitude of mercy; a power that exceeds all created power and understanding.

'His understanding is infinite.' You may not imagine how he can call all the stars by name, the multitude of visible being so great, and the multitude of the invisible being greater; but you must know that as God is almighty, so he is omniscient; and as there is no end of his power, so no account can exactly be given of his understanding: 'his understanding is infinite,' אין מספר. No number or account of it; and so the same words are rendered, Joel i. 6, 'A nation strong, and without number.' No end of his understanding; *Syriac*, no measure, no bounds. His essence is infinite, and so is his power and understanding; and vast is his knowledge, that we can no more comprehend it, than we can measure spaces that are without limits, or tell the minutes or hours of eternity. Who then can fathom that whereof there is no number, but which exceeds all, so that there is no searching of it out? He knows universals, he knows particulars. We must not take understanding, תבונה, here, as noting a faculty, but the use of the understanding in the knowledge of things, and the judgment in the consideration of them, and so it is often used.

In the verse there is a description of God.

1. In his essence: 'great is our Lord.'
2. In his power: 'of great power.'
3. In his knowledge: 'his understanding is infinite;' his understanding is his eye, and his power is his arm. Of his infinite understanding I am to discourse.

Doct. God hath an infinite knowledge and understanding; all knowledge. Omnipresence, which before we spake of, respects his essence; omniscience respects his understanding, according to our manner of conception.

This is clear in Scripture; hence God is called a God of knowledge: 1 Sam. ii. 3, 'The Lord is a God of knowledge;' *Heb.* 'knowledges,' in the plural number, of all kind of knowledge. It is spoken there to quell man's pride in his own reason and parts. What is the knowledge of man but a spark to the whole element of fire, a grain of dust, and worse than nothing, in comparison of the knowledge of God, as his essence is in comparison of the essence of God? All kind of knowledge. He knows what angels know, what man knows, and infinitely more; he knows himself, his own operations, all his creatures, the notions and thoughts of them; he is understanding above understanding, mind above mind, the mind of minds, the light of

lights; this the Greek word $\Theta\epsilon\delta\varsigma$ signifies in the etymology of it, of $\Theta\epsilon\iota\sigma\theta\alpha\iota$ * to see, to contemplate; and $\delta\alpha\acute{\iota}\mu\omega\upsilon\alpha\iota$ of $\delta\alpha\acute{\iota}\omega$ scio. The names of God signify a nature viewing and piercing all things; and the attribution of our senses to God in Scripture, as hearing and seeing, which are the senses whereby knowledge enters into us, signifies God's knowledge.

1. The notion of God's knowledge of all things lies above the ruins of nature: it was not obliterated by the fall of man. It was necessary offending man was to know that he had a Creator whom he had injured, that he had a Judge to try and punish him; since God thought fit to keep up the world, it had been kept up to no purpose, had not this notion been continued alive in the minds of men; there would not have been any practice of his laws, no bar to the worst of crimes. If men had thought they had to deal with an ignorant Deity, there could be no practice of religion. Who would lift up his eyes, or spread his hand towards heaven, if he imagined his devotion were directed to a God as blind as the heathens imagined fortune? To what boot would it be for them to make heaven and earth resound with their cries, if they had not thought God had an eye to see them and an ear to hear them? And indeed the very notion of a God at the first blush speaks him a being endued with understanding; no man can imagine a Creator void of one of the noblest perfections belonging to those creatures that are the flower and cream of his works.

2. Therefore all nations acknowledge this, as well as the existence and being of God. No nation but had their temples, particular ceremonies of worship, and presented their sacrifices, which they could not have been so vain as to do, without an acknowledgement of this attribute. This notion of God's knowledge owed not its rise to tradition, but to natural implantation; it was born and grew up with every rational creature. Though the several nations and men of the world agreed not in one kind of Deity, or in their sentiments of his nature or other perfections, some judging him clothed with a fine and pure body, others judging him an uncompounded spirit, some fixing him to a seat in the heavens, others owning his universal presence in all parts of the world, yet they all agreed in the universality of his knowledge; and their own consciences reflecting their crimes, unknown to any but themselves, would keep this notion in some vigour whether they would or no. Now this being implanted in the minds of all men by nature, cannot be false, for nature imprints not in the minds of all men an assent to a falsity. Nature would not pervert the reason and minds of men. Universal notions of God are from original, not lapsed nature, and preserved in mankind in order to a restoration from a lapsed state. The heathens did acknowledge this; in all the solemn covenants, solemnised with oaths and the invocation of the name of God, this attribute was supposed.† They confessed knowledge to be peculiar to the Deity; *Scientia Deorum vita*, saith Cicero. Some called him Νοῦς , *mens*, mind, pure understanding, without any mote; Ἐπόπτης , the inspector of all. As they called him Life, because he was the author of life, so they called him *Intellectus*, because he was the author of all knowledge and understanding in his creatures. And one being asked, Whether any man could be hid from God? No, saith he, not so much as thinking. Some call him the Eye of the world,‡ and the

* Qu ᾽Θεᾷσθαι ?—ED.

† Agamemnon (Homer Il. 3. v. 277), making a covenant with Priam, invokes the sun:—

$\text{Ἡελίος ὃς πάντ' ἐφορᾷς καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούεις.}$

‡ Gamach in 1 Pa. Aquin. q. 14. cap. i. p. 119.

Egyptians represented God by an eye on the top of a sceptre, because God is all eye, and can be ignorant of nothing.*

And the same nation made eyes and ears of the most excellent metals, consecrating them to God, and hanging them up in the midst of their temples, in signification of God's seeing and hearing all things; hence they called God light, as well as the Scripture, because all things are visible to him.

For the better understanding of this, we will inquire,

I. What kind of knowledge or understanding there is in God.

II. What God knows.

III. How God knows things.

IV. The proof that God knows all things.

V. The use of all to ourselves.

I. What kind of understanding or knowledge there is in God.

The knowledge of God in Scripture hath various names, according to the various relations or objects of it. In respect of *present* things, it is called knowledge or sight; in respect of things *past*, remembrance; in respect of things *future*, or to come, it is called foreknowledge or prescience, 1 Peter i. 2. In regard of the universality of the objects, it is called omniscience; in regard of the simple understanding of things, it is called knowledge; in regard of acting and modelling the ways of acting, it is called wisdom and prudence, Eph. i. 8. He must have knowledge, otherwise he could not be wise; wisdom is the flower of knowledge, and knowledge is the root of wisdom.

As to what this knowledge is, if we know what knowledge is in man, we may apprehend what it is in God, removing all imperfection from it, and ascribing to him the most eminent way of understanding; because we cannot comprehend God, but as he is pleased to condescend to us in his own ways of discovery,—that is, under some way of similitude to his perfectest creatures,—therefore we have a notion of God by his understanding and will: understanding, whereby he conceives and apprehends things; will, whereby he extends himself in acting, according to his wisdom, and whereby he doth approve or disapprove. Yet, we must not measure his understanding by our own, or think it to be of so gross a temper as a created mind; that he hath 'eyes of flesh,' or 'sees or knows as man sees,' Job x. 4. We can no more measure his knowledge by ours, than we can measure his essence by our essence. As he hath an incomprehensible essence, to which ours is but as a drop of a bucket, so he hath an incomprehensible knowledge, to which ours is but as a grain of dust, or mere darkness. 'His thoughts are above our thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth.'

The knowledge of God is variously divided by the schools, and acknowledged by all divines.

1. A knowledge *visionis et simplicis intelligentie*; the one we may call a sight, the other an understanding; the one refers to sense, the other to the mind.

(1). A knowledge of vision or sight. Thus God knows himself and all things that really were, are, or shall be in time; all those things which he hath decreed to be, though they are not yet actually sprung up in the world, but lie couchant in their causes.

(2). A knowledge of intelligence, or simple understanding. The object of this is not things that are in being, or that shall by any decree of God ever be existent in the world, but such things as are possible to be wrought by the

* Clem. Alexand. Strom. lib. vi.

power of God, though they shall never in the least peep up into being, but lie for ever wrapt up in darkness and nothing.* This also is a necessary knowledge to be allowed to God, because the object of this knowledge is necessary. The possibility of more creatures than ever were or shall be, is a conclusion that hath a necessary truth in it, as it is necessary that the power of God can produce more creatures, though it be not necessary that it should produce more creatures; so it is necessary that whatsoever the power of God can work, is possible to be. And as God knows this possibility, so he knows all the objects that are thus possible; and herein doth much consist the infiniteness of his knowledge, as shall be shewn presently.

These two kinds of knowledge differ. That of *vision* is of things which God hath decreed to be, though they are not yet. That of *intelligence* is of things which never shall be, yet they may be, or are possible to be, if God please to will and order their being; one respects things that shall be, the other, things that may be, and are not repugnant to the nature of God to be. The knowledge of vision follows the act of God's will, and supposeth an act of God's will before, decreeing things to be. (If we could suppose any first or second in God's decree, we might say God knew them as possible *before* he decreed them; he knew them as future *because* he decreed them.) For without the will of God decreeing a thing to come to pass, God cannot know that it will infallibly come to pass. But the knowledge of intelligence stands without any act of his will, in order to the being of those things he knows. He knows possible things only in his power; he knows other things both in his power, as able to effect them, and in his will, as determining the being of them. Such knowledge we must grant to be in God, for there is such a kind of knowledge in man; for man doth not only know and see what is before his eyes in this world, but he may have a conception of many more worlds, and many more creatures, which he knows are possible to the power of God.

2. Secondly, There is a speculative and practical knowledge in God.

(1.) A speculative knowledge is, when the truth of a thing is known without a respect to any working or practical operation. The knowledge of things possible is in God only speculative,† and some say God's knowledge of himself is only speculative, because there is nothing for God to work in himself. And, though he knows himself, yet this knowledge of himself doth not terminate there, but flows into a love of himself, and delight in himself; yet this love of himself, and delight in himself, is not enough to make it a practical knowledge, because it is natural, and naturally and necessarily flows from the knowledge of himself and his own goodness. He cannot but love himself, and delight in himself, upon the knowledge of himself. But that which is properly practice is where there is a dominion over the action, and it is wrought, not naturally and necessarily, but in a way of freedom and counsel. As when we see a beautiful flower or other thing, there ariseth a delight in the mind; this no man will call practice, because it is a natural affection of the will, arising from the virtue of the object, without any consideration of the understanding in a practical manner, by counselling, commanding, &c.

(2.) A practical knowledge, which tends to operation and practice, and is the principle of working about things that are known, as the knowledge an artificer hath in an art or mystery. This knowledge is in God. The knowledge he hath of the things he hath decreed, is such a kind of knowledge, for it terminates in the act of creation, which is not a natural and necessary act, as the loving himself and delighting in himself is, but wholly free; for

* Suarez de Deo, lib. iii. cap. iv. p. 230.

† Ibid. p. 138.

it was at his liberty whether he would create them or no. This is called discretion : Jer. x. 12, 'He hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.' Such also is his knowledge of the things he hath created, and which are in being, for it terminates in the government of them for his own glorious ends. It is by this knowledge 'the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down their dew,' Prov. iii. 20. This is a knowledge whereby he knows the essence, qualities, and properties of what he creates, and governs in order to his own glory, and the common good of the world over which he [p]resides ; so that speculative knowledge is God's knowledge of himself and things possible ; practical knowledge is his knowledge of his creatures and things governable ; yet in some sort, this practical knowledge is not only of things that are made, but of things which are possible, which God might make, though he will not. For as he knows that they can be created, so he knows how they are to be created, and how to be governed, though he never will create them. This is a practical knowledge ; for it is not requisite to constitute a knowledge practical, actually to act, but that the knowledge in itself be referrible to action.*

3. There is a knowledge of approbation, as well as apprehension. This the Scripture often mentions. Words of understanding are used to signify the acts of affection. This knowledge adds to the simple act of the understanding, the complacency and pleasure of the will, and is improperly knowledge, because it belongs to the will, and not to the understanding ; only it is radically in the understanding, because affection implies knowledge : men cannot approve of that which they are ignorant of. Thus knowledge is taken : Amos iii. 2, 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth ;' and 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'The Lord knows who are his,' that is, he loves them : he doth not only know them, but acknowledge them for his own. It notes not only an exact understanding, but a special care of them ; and so is that to be understood, Gen. i. 31, 'God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good ;' that is, he saw it with an eye of approbation, as well as apprehension. This is grounded upon God's knowledge of vision, his sight of his creatures ; for God doth not love or delight in anything but what is actually in being, or what he hath decreed to bring into being. On the contrary also, when God doth not approve, he is said not to know : Mat. xxv. 12, 'I know you not ;' and Mat. vii. 23, 'I never knew you.' He doth not approve of their works. It is not an ignorance of understanding, but an ignorance of will ; for whiles he saith he never knew them, he testifies that he did know them, in rendering the reason of his disapproving them, because he knows all their works. So he knows them, and doth not know them, in a different manner ; he knows them so as to understand them, but he doth not know them so as to love them.

We must then ascribe an universal knowledge to God. If we deny him a speculative knowledge, or knowledge of intelligence, we destroy his deity, we make him ignorant of his own power. If we deny him practical knowledge, we deny ourselves to be his creatures ; for as his creatures, we are the fruits of this his discretion discovered in creation. If we deny his knowledge of vision, we deny his governing dominion. How can he exercise a sovereign and uncontrollable dominion, that is ignorant of the nature and qualities of the things he is to govern ? If he had not knowledge, he could make no revelation ; he that knows not, cannot dictate : we could then have no Scripture. To deny God knowledge, is to dash out the Scripture and demolish the Deity.

God is described in Zech. ii. 9, with 'seven eyes,' to shew his perfect

* Suarez de Deo, l. iii. c. iv. p. 140.

knowledge of all things, all occurrences in the world ; and the cherubims, or whatsoever is meant by the wings, are described to be ' full of eyes both before and behind,' Ezek. i. 18, round about them ; much more is God all eye, all ear, all understanding. The sun is a natural image of God. If the sun had an eye, it would see ; if it had an understanding, it would know all visible things ; it would see what it shines upon, and understand what it influenceth in the most obscure bowels of the earth. Doth God excel his creature the sun in excellency and beauty, and not in light and understanding ? Certainly more than the sun excels an atom or grain of dust.

We may yet make some representation of this knowledge of God by a lower thing, a picture, which seems to look upon every one, though there be never so great a multitude in the room where it hangs. No man can cast his eye upon it, but it seems to behold him in particular, and so exactly, as if there were none but him upon whom the eye of it were fixed ; and every man finds the same cast of it. Shall art frame a thing of that nature, and shall not the God of art and all knowledge be much more in reality than that is in imagination ? Shall not God have a far greater capacity to behold everything in the world, which is infinitely less to him than a wide room to a picture ?

II. The second thing, What God knows ; how far his understanding reaches.

1. God knows himself, and only knows himself. This is the first and original knowledge wherein he excels all creatures. No man doth exactly know himself, much less doth he understand the full nature of a spirit, much less still the nature and perfections of God ; for what proportion can there be between a finite faculty and an infinite object ? Herein consists the infiniteness of God's knowledge, that he knows his own essence, that he knows that which is unknowable to any else. It doth not so much consist in knowing the creature which he hath made, as in knowing himself who was never made. It is not so much infinite, because he knows all things which are in the world, or that shall be, or things that he can make, because the number of them is finite ; but because he hath a perfect and comprehensive knowledge of his own infinite perfections.* Though it be said that ' angels see his face,' Mat. xviii. 10, that sight notes rather their immediate attendance than their exact knowledge. They see some signs of his presence and majesty, more illustrious and express than ever appeared to man in this life ; but the essence of God is invisible to them, hid from them in the secret place of eternity. None knows God but himself : 1 Cor. ii. 11, ' What man knows the things of a man save the spirit of a man ? so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God ; the Spirit of God searches the deep things of God.' Searcheth, that is, exactly knows, thoroughly understands, as those who have their eyes in every chink and crevice, to see what lies hid there. The word *search* notes not an inquiry, but an exact knowledge, such as men have of things upon a diligent scrutiny ; as when God is said to search the heart and the reins, it doth not signify a precedent ignorance, but an exact knowledge of the most intimate corners of the hearts of men. As the conceptions of men are unknown to any but themselves, so the depths of the divine essence, perfections, and decrees are unknown to any but to God himself ; he only knows what he is, and what he knows, what he can do, and what he hath decreed to do.

(1.) For, first, if God did not know himself, he would not be perfect. It is the perfection of a creature to know itself, much more a perfection belonging to God. If God did not comprehend himself, he would want an infinite

* Moulin.

perfection, and so would cease to be God, in being defective in that which intellectual creatures in some measure possess. As God is the most perfect being, so he must have the most perfect understanding. If he did not understand himself, he would be under the greatest ignorance, because he would be ignorant of the most excellent object. Ignorance is the imperfection of the understanding, and ignorance of one's self is a greater imperfection than ignorance of things without. If God should know all things without himself, and not know himself, he would not have the most perfect knowledge, because he would not have the knowledge of the best of objects.

(2.) Without the knowledge of himself he could not be blessed. Nothing can have any complacency in itself without the knowledge of itself. Nothing can in a rational manner enjoy itself without understanding itself. The blessedness of God consists not in the knowledge of anything without him, but in the knowledge of himself and his own excellency as the principle of all things. If, therefore, he did not perfectly know himself and his own happiness, he could not enjoy a happiness; for to be, and not to know to be, is as if a thing were not. He is 'God blessed for ever,' Rom. ix. 5, and therefore for ever had a knowledge of himself.

(3.) Without the knowledge of himself he could create nothing. For he would be ignorant of his own power and his own ability; and he that doth not know how far his power extends could not act. If he did not know himself, he could know nothing; and he that knows nothing can do nothing. He could not know an effect to be possible to him unless he knew his own power as a cause.

(4.) Without the knowledge of himself he could govern nothing. He could not without the knowledge of his own holiness and righteousness prescribe laws to men, nor without a knowledge of his own nature order himself a manner of worship suitable to it.

All worship must be congruous to the dignity and nature of the object worshipped; he must therefore know his own authority, whereby worship was to be enacted; his own excellency, to which worship was to be suited; his own glory, to which worship was to be directed. If he did not know himself, he did not know what to punish, because he could not know what was contrary to himself. Not knowing himself, he would not know what was a contempt of him, and what an adoration of him; what was worthy of God, and what was unworthy of him. In fine, he could not know other things unless he knew himself. Unless he knew his own power, he could not know how he created things; unless he knew his own wisdom, he could not know the beauty of his works; unless he knew his own glory, he could not know the end of his works; unless he knew his own holiness, he could not know what was evil; and unless he knew his own justice, he could not know how to punish the crimes of his offending creatures. And therefore,

[1.] God knows himself, because his knowledge with his will is the cause of all other things that can fall under his cognizance. He knows himself first before he can know any other thing, that is, first according to our conceptions; for indeed God knows himself and all other things at once. He is the first truth, and therefore is the first object of his own understanding. There is nothing more excellent than himself, and therefore nothing more known to him than himself. As he is all knowledge, so he hath in himself the most excellent object of knowledge. To understand is properly to know one's self. No object is so intelligible to God as God is to himself, nor so intimately and immediately joined with his understanding as himself. For his understanding is his essence, himself.

[2.] He knows himself by his own essence. He knows not himself and

his own power by the effect, because he knows himself from eternity, before there was a world, or any effect of his power extant. It is not a knowledge by the cause, for God hath no cause, nor a knowledge of himself by any species or anything from without. If it were anything from without himself, that must be created or uncreated: if uncreated, it would be God, and so we must either own many gods, or own it to be his essence, and so not distinct from himself; if created, then his knowledge of himself would depend upon a creature. He could not then know himself from eternity, but in time, because nothing can be created from eternity but in time. God knows not himself by any faculty, for there is no composition in God, he is not made up of parts, but is a simple being. Some therefore have called God, not *intellectus*, understanding, because that savours of a faculty, but *intellectio*, intellection. God is all act in the knowledge of himself, and his knowledge of other things.

[3.] God therefore knows himself perfectly, comprehensively. Nothing in his own nature is concealed from him, he reflects upon everything that he is.* There is a positive comprehension, so God doth not comprehend himself; for what is comprehended hath bounds, and what is comprehended by itself is finite to itself. And there is a negative comprehension, God so comprehends himself; nothing in his own nature is obscure to him, unknown by him. For there is as great a perfection in the understanding of God to know, as there is in the divine nature to be known. The understanding of God and the nature of God are both infinite, and so equal to one another. His understanding is equal to himself; he knows himself so well, that nothing can be known by him more perfectly than himself is known to himself. He knows himself in the highest manner, because nothing is so proportioned to the understanding of God as himself. He knows his own essence, goodness, power, all his perfections, decrees, intentions, acts, the infinite capacity of his own understanding, so that nothing of himself is in the dark to himself. And in this respect, some use this expression, that the infiniteness of God is in a manner finite to himself, because it is comprehended by himself.

Thus God transcends all creatures. Thus his understanding is truly infinite, because nothing but himself is an infinite object for it. What angels may understand of themselves perfectly I know not, but no creature in the world understands himself. Man understands not fully the excellency and parts of his own nature; upon God's knowledge of himself depends the comfort of his people and the terror of the wicked. This is also a clear argument for his knowledge of all other things without himself; he that knows himself must needs know all other things less than himself, and which were made by himself. When the knowledge of his own immensity and infiniteness is not an object too difficult for him, the knowledge of a finite and limited creature in all his actions, thoughts, circumstances, cannot be too hard for him. Since he knows himself who is infinite, he cannot but know whatsoever is finite. This is the foundation of all his other knowledge. The knowledge of everything present, past, and to come is far less than the knowledge of himself. He is more incomprehensible in his own nature than all things created, or that can be created, put together can be. If he then have a perfect comprehensive knowledge of his own nature, any knowledge of all other things is less than the knowledge of himself. This ought to be well considered by us, as the fountain whence all his other knowledge flows.

2. Therefore God knows all other things, whether they be possible, past, present, or future.

* Magalanous.

Whether they be things that he can do, but will never do ; or whether they be things that he hath done, but are not now ; things that are now in being, or things that are not now existing, that lie in the womb of their proper and immediate causes,* if his understanding be infinite, he then knows all things whatsoever that can be known, else his understanding would have bounds ; and what hath limits is not infinite, but finite. If he be ignorant of any one thing that is knowable, that is a bound to him, it comes with an exception, a *but* : God knows all things but this, a bar is then set to his knowledge. If there were anything, any particular circumstance in the whole creation, or non-creation, and possible to be known by him, and yet were unknown to him, he could not be said to be omniscient, as he would not be almighty if any one thing that implied not a repugnancy to his nature did transcend his power.

(1.) First, all things possible. No question but God knows what he could create as well as what he hath created, what he would not create as well as what he resolved to create ; he knew that he would not do before he willed to do it. This is the next thing which declares the infiniteness of his understanding ; for as his power is infinite, and can create innumerable worlds and creatures, so is his knowledge infinite, in knowing innumerable things possible to his power. Possibles are infinite, that is, there is no end of what God can do, and therefore no end of what God doth know, otherwise his power would be more infinite than his knowledge. If he knew only what is created, there would be an end of his understanding, because all creatures may be numbered, but possible things cannot be reckoned up by any creature. There is the same reason of this in eternity. When never so many numbers of years are run out, there is still more to come, there still wants an end ; and when millions of worlds are created, there is no more an end of God's power than of eternity. Thus there is no end of his understanding ; that is, his knowledge is not terminated by anything.

This the Scripture gives us some account of. God knows things that are not, for 'he calls things that are not as if they were,' Rom. iv. 17. He calls things that are not as if they were in being ; what he calls is not unknown to him. If he knows things that are not, he knows things that may never be, as he knows things that shall be because he wills them, so he knows things that might be, because he is able to effect them. He knew that the inhabitants of Keilah would betray David to Saul if he remained in that place, 1 Sam. xxiii. 11 ; he knew what they would do upon that occasion, though it was never done. As he knew what was in their power and in their wills, so he must needs know what is within the compass of his own power. As he can permit more than he doth permit, so he knows what he can permit, and what upon that permission would be done by his creatures ; so God knew the possibility of the Tyrians' repentance, if they had the same means, heard the same truths, and beheld the same miracles which were offered to the ears and presented to the eyes of the Jews, Mat. xi. 21.

This must needs be so, because,

[1.] Man knows things that are possible to him, though he will never effect them. A carpenter knows a house in the model he hath of it in his head, though he never build a house according to that model. A watch-maker hath the frame of a watch in his mind, which he will never work with his instruments. Man knows what he could do, though he never intends to do it.† As the understanding of man hath a virtue, that where it sees one man it may imagine thousands of men of the same shape, stature, form, parts, yea, taller, more vigorous, sprightly, intelligent than

* Petav, Theol. Dogm., lib. ix. 257.

† Ficin, de immort, lib. ii. cap. 10.

the man he sees, because it is possible such a number may be ; shall not the understanding of God much more know what he is able to effect, since the understanding of man can know what he is never able to produce, yet may be produced by God, viz. that he who produced this man which I see, can produce a thousand exactly like him ? If the divine understanding did not know infinite things, but were confined to a certain number, it may be demanded whether God can understand anything further than that number, or whether he cannot ? If he can, then he doth actually understand all those things which he hath a power to understand, otherwise there would be an increase of God's knowledge, if it were actually now and not before, and so he would be more perfect than he was before. If he cannot understand them, then he cannot understand what a human mind can understand ; for our understandings can multiply numbers *in infinitum*, and there is no number so great but a man can still add to it. We must suppose the divine understanding more excellent in knowledge. God knows all that a man can imagine, though it never were nor never shall be. He must needs know whatsoever is in the power of man to imagine or think, because God concurs to the support of the faculty in that imagination ; and though it may be replied, an atheist may imagine that there is no God, a man may imagine that God can lie, or that he can be destroyed, doth God know therefore that he is not, or that he can lie, or cease to be ? No, he knows he cannot ; his knowledge extends to things possible, not to things impossible to himself. He knows it as imaginable by man, not as possible in itself, because it is utterly impossible* and repugnant to the nature of God, since he eminently contains in himself all things possible, past, present, and to come. He cannot know himself without knowing them.

[2.] God knowing his own power, knows whatsoever is in his power to effect. If he knows not all things possible, he could not know the extent of his own power, and so would not know himself as a cause sufficient for more things than he hath created. How can he comprehend himself, who comprehends not all effluxes of things possible that may come from him, and be wrought by him ? How can he know himself as a cause, if he know not the objects and works which he is able to produce ? † Since the power of God extends to numberless things, his knowledge also extends to numberless objects ; as if a unit could see the numbers it could produce, it would see infinite numbers, for a unit is as it were all number. God, knowing the fruitfulness of his own virtue, knows a numberless multitude of things which he can do more than have been done or shall be done by him ; he therefore knows innumerable worlds, innumerable angels, with higher perfections than any of them which he hath created have. So that if the world should last many millions of years, God knows that he can every day create another world more capacious than this ; and having created an inconceivable number, he knows he could still create more. So that he beholds infinite worlds, infinite numbers of men and other creatures in himself, infinite kinds of things, infinite species and individuals under those kinds, even as many as he can create, if his will did order and determine it ; for not being ignorant of his own power, he cannot be ignorant of the effects wherein it may display and discover itself. A comprehensive knowledge of his own power doth necessarily include the objects of that power ; so he knows whatsoever he could effect, and whatsoever he could permit, if he pleased to do it.

If God could not understand more than he hath created, he could not create more than he hath created ; for it cannot be conceived how he can

* Gamach.

† Ficin. de immort, lib. ii. cap. x.

create anything that he is ignorant of ; what he doth not know, he cannot do ; he must know also the extent of his own goodness, and how far anything is capable to partake of it. So much therefore as any detract from the knowledge of God, they detract from his power.

[3.] It is further evident that God knows all possible things, because he knew those things which he has created before they were created, when they were yet in a possibility. If God knew things before they were created, he knew them when they were in a possibility, and not in actual reality. It is absurd to imagine that his understanding did lacquey after the creatures, and draw knowledge from them after they were created. It is absurd to think that God did create, before he knew what he could or would create. If he knew those things he did create when they were possible, he must know all things which he can create, and therefore all things that are possible.

To conclude this, we must consider that this knowledge is of another kind than his knowledge of things that are or shall be. He sees possible things as possible, not as things that ever are or shall be. If he saw them as existing or future, and they shall never be, this knowledge would be false, there would be a deceit in it, which cannot be. He knows those things not in themselves, because they are not, nor in their causes, because they shall never be ; he knows them in his own power, not in his will ; he understands them as able to produce them, not as willing to effect them. Things possible he knows only in his power, things future he knows both in his power and his will, as he is both able and determined in his own good pleasure to give being to them. Those that shall never come to pass, he knows only in himself, as a sufficient cause ; those things that shall come into being he knows in himself as the efficient cause, and also in their immediate second causes.

This should teach us to spend our thoughts in the admiration of the excellency of God and the divine knowledge ; his understanding is infinite.

(2.) God knows all things past. This is an argument used by God himself to elevate his excellency above all the commonly adored idols : Isa. xli. 22, ' Let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them.' He knows them as if they were now present, and not past ; for indeed in his eternity there is nothing past or future to his knowledge. This is called remembrance in Scripture, as when God remembered Rachel's prayer for a child, Gen. xxx. 22 ; and he is said to put tears into his bottle, and write them into his book of accounts, which signifies the exact and unerring knowledge in God of the minute circumstances past in the world ; and this knowledge is called a ' book of remembrance,' Mal. iii. 16, signifying the perpetual presence of things past before him. There are two elegant expressions signifying the certainty and perpetuity of God's knowledge of sins past : Job xiv. 17, ' My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up my iniquity !' A metaphor taken from men, that put up in a bag the money they would charily keep, tie the bag, sew up the holes, and bind it hard that nothing may fall out ; or a vessel wherein they reserve liquors, and daub it with pitch and glutinous stuff, that nothing may leak out, but be safely kept till the time of use. Or else, as some think, from the bags attorneys carry with them full of writings, when they are to manage a cause against a person. Thus we find God often in Scripture calling to men's minds their past actions, upbraiding them with their ingratitude ; wherein he testifies his remembrance of his own past benefits, and their crimes. His knowledge in this regard has something of infinity in it, since though the sins of all men that have been in the world are finite in regard of number, yet when the sins of one man in thoughts,

words, and deeds, are numberless in his own account, and perhaps in the account of any creature, the sins of all the vast numbers of men that have been, or shall be, are much more numberless, it cannot be less than infinite knowledge that can make a collection of them, and take a survey of them all at once.

If past things had not been known by God, how could Moses have been acquainted with the original of things? How could he have declared the former transactions, wherein all histories are silent but the Scripture? How could he know the cause of man's present misery so many ages after, where-with all philosophy was unacquainted? How could he have writ the order of the creation, the particulars of the sin of Adam, the circumstances of Cain's murder, the private speech of Lamech to his wives, if God had not revealed them? And how could a revelation be made, if things past were forgotten by him? Do we not remember many things done among men, as well as by ourselves, and reserve the forms of divers things in our minds, which rise as occasions are presented to draw them forth? And shall not God much more, who hath no cloud of darkness upon his understanding? A man that makes a curious picture, hath the form of it in his mind before he made it; and if the fire burn it, the form of it in his mind is not destroyed by the fire, but retained in it. God's memory is no less perfect than his understanding. If he did not know things past, he could not be a righteous governor, or exercise any judicial act in a righteous manner; he could not dispense rewards and punishments according to his promises and threatenings, if things that were past could be forgotten by him; he could not require that which is past, Eccles. iii. 15, if he did not remember that which is past.

And though God be said to forget in Scripture, and not to know his people, and his people pray to him to remember them, as if he had forgotten them, Ps. cxix. 49, this is improperly ascribed to God.* As God is said to repent, when he changes things according to his counsel beyond the expectation of men, so he is said to forget, when he defers the making good his promise to the godly, or his threatenings to the wicked. This is not a defect of memory belonging to his mind, but an act of his will. When he is said to remember his covenant, it is to will grace according to his covenant; when he is said to forget his covenant, it is to intercept the influences of it, whereby to punish the sin of his people; and when he is said not to know his people, it is not an absolute forgetfulness of them, but withdrawing from them the testimonies of his kindness, and clouding the signs of his favour; so God in pardoning is said to forget sin, not that he ceaseth to know it, but ceaseth to punish it. It is not to be meant of a simple forgetfulness, or a lapse of his memory, but of a judicial forgetfulness; so when his people in Scripture pray, 'Lord, remember thy word unto thy servant,' no more is to be understood, but, Lord, fulfil thy word and promise to thy servant.

(3.) He knows things present. Heb. iv. 13, 'All things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' This is grounded upon the knowledge of himself; it is not so difficult to know all creatures exactly, as to know himself, because they are finite, but himself is infinite; he knows his own power, and therefore everything through which his omnipotence is diffused, all the acts and objects of it; not the least thing that is the birth of his power can be concealed from him; he knows his own goodness, and therefore every object upon which the warm beams of his goodness strike; he therefore knows distinctly the properties of every creature, because every property in them is a ray of his goodness; he is not only the

* Bradward.

efficient, but the exemplary cause ; therefore, as he knows all that his power hath wrought, as he is the efficient, so he knows them in himself as the pattern, as a carpenter can give account of every part and passage in a house he hath built, by consulting the model in his own mind, whereby he built it. 'He looked upon all things after he had made them, and pronounced them good,' Gen. i. 31 ; full of a natural goodness he had endowed them with ; he did not ignorantly pronounce them so, and call them good, whether he knew them or not ; and therefore he knows them in particular, as he knew them all in their first presence. Is there any reason he should be ignorant of everything now present in the world, or that anything that derives an existence from him as a free cause, should be concealed from him ? If he did not know things present in their particularities, many things would be known by man, yea, by beasts, which the infinite God were ignorant of ; and if he did not know all things present, but only some, it is possible for the most blessed God to be deceived and be miserable. Ignorance is a calamity to the understanding. He could not prescribe laws to his creatures, unless he knew their natures, to which those laws were to be suited ; no, not natural ordinances to the sun, moon, and heavenly bodies, and inanimate creatures, unless he knew the vigour and virtue in them, to execute those ordinances ; for to prescribe laws above the nature of things, is inconsistent with the wisdom of government ; he must know how far they were able to obey, whether the laws were suited to their ability ; and for his rational creatures, whether the punishment annexed to the law were proper, and suited to the transgression of the creature.

[1.] First, He knows all creatures, from the highest to the lowest, the least as well as the greatest. He knows the ravens and their young ones, Job xxxviii. 41 ; the drops of rain and dew which he hath begotten, ver. 29, every bird in the air, as well as any man doth what he hath in a cage at home : Ps. l. 11, 'I know all the fowls in the mountains, and the wild beasts in the field,' which some read creeping things. The clouds are numbered in his wisdom, Job xxxviii. 37, every worm in the earth, every drop of rain that falls upon the ground, the flakes of snow, and the knots of hail, the sands upon the sea shore, the hairs upon the head ; it is no more absurd to imagine that God knows them, than that God made them ; they are all the effects of his power, as well as the stars, which he calls by their names, as well as the most glorious angel and blessed spirit ; he knows them as well as if there were none but them in particular for him to know ; the least things were framed by his art as well as the greatest ; the least things partake of his goodness as well as the greatest ; he knows his own arts, and his own goodness, and therefore all the stamps and impressions of them upon all his creatures ; he knows the immediate causes of the least, and therefore the effects of those causes. Since his knowledge is infinite, it must extend to those things which are at the greatest distance from him, to those which approach nearest to not being ; since he did not want power to create, he cannot want understanding to know everything he hath created, the dispositions, qualities, and virtues of the minutest creature.

Nor is the understanding of God imbas'd, and suffers a diminution by the knowledge of the vilest and most inconsiderable things. Is it not an imperfection to be ignorant of the nature of anything ? and can God have such a defect in his most perfect understanding ? Is the understanding of man of an impurer alloy by knowing the nature of the rankest poisons ? by understanding a fly, or a small insect, or by considering the deformity of a toad ? Is it not generally counted a note of a dignified mind to be able to discourse of the nature of them ? Was Solomon, who knew all from the

cedar to the hyssop, debased by so rich a present of wisdom from his Creator? Is any glass defiled by presenting a deformed image? Is there anything more vile than the imagination, 'which are only evil, and continually'? Doth not the mind of man descend to the mud of the earth, play the adulterer or idolater with mean objects, suck in the most unclean things? Yet God knows these in all their circumstances, in every appearance, inside and outside. Is there anything viler than some thoughts of men, than some actions of men, their unclean beds, and gluttonous vomiting, and Luciferian pride? Yet do not these fall under the eye of God in all their nakedness!

The second person's taking human nature, though it obscured, yet it did not disparage the Deity, or bring any disgrace to it. Is gold the worse for being formed into the image of a fly? Doth it not still retain the nobleness of the metal? When men are despised for descending to the knowledge of mean and vile things, it is because they neglect the knowledge of the greater, and sin in their inquiries after lesser things, with a neglect of that which concerns more the honour of God and the happiness of themselves; to be ambitious of such a knowledge, and careless of that of more concern, is criminal and contemptible. But God knows the greatest as well as the least; mean things are not known by him to exclude the knowledge of the greater, nor are vile things governed by him to exclude the order of the better. The deformity of objects known by God doth not deform him, nor defile him; he doth not view them without himself, but within himself, wherein all things in their ideas are beautiful and comely. Our knowledge of a deformed thing is not a deforming of our understanding, but is beautiful in the knowledge, though it be not in the object; nor is there any fear that the understanding of God should become material by knowing material things, any more than our understandings lose their spirituality by knowing the nature of bodies; it is to be observed therefore that only those senses of men, as seeing, hearing, smelling, which have those qualities for their objects that come nearest the nature of spiritual things, as light, sounds, fragrant odours, are ascribed to God in Scripture; not touching or tasting, which are senses that are not exercised without a more immediate commerce with gross matter; and the reason may be, because we should have no gross thoughts of God, as if he were a body, and made of matter like the things he knows.

[2.] As he knows all creatures, so God knows all the actions of creatures. He counts in particular all the ways of men: 'Doth he not see all my ways, and count all my steps?' Job xxxi. 4. He 'tells their wanderings,' as if one by one, Ps. lvi. 8; 'His eyes are upon all the ways of man, and he sees all his goings,' Job xxxiv. 21, a metaphor taken from men when they look wistly, with fixed eyes upon a thing, to view it in every circumstance, whence it comes, whither it goes, to observe every little motion of it. God's eye is not a wandering, but a fixed eye, and the ways of man are not only 'before his eyes,' but he doth exactly 'ponder' them, Prov. v. 21; as one that will not be ignorant of the least mite in them, but weigh and examine them by the standard of his law; he may as well know the motions of our members as the hairs of our heads; the smallest actions before they be, whether civil, natural, or religious, fall under his cognisance. What meaner than a man carrying a pitcher? yet our Saviour foretells it, Luke xxii. 10. God knows not only what men do, but what they would have done had he not restrained them; what Abimelech would have done to Sarah had not God put a bar in his way, Gen. xx. 6; what a man that is taken away in his youth would have done, had he lived to a riper age; yea, he knows the most secret words as well as actions; the words spoken by the king of

Israel in his bed-chamber were revealed to Elisha, 2 Kings vi. 12; and indeed how can any action of man be concealed from God? Can we view the various actions of a heap of ants or a hive of bees in a glass, without turning our eyes; and shall not God behold the actions of all men in the world, which are less than bees or ants in his sight, and more visible to him than an ant-hill or bee-hive can be to the acutest eye of man?

[3.] As God knows all the actions of creatures, so he knows all the thoughts of creatures. The thoughts are the most closeted acts of man, hid from men and angels, unless disclosed by some outward expressions; but God descends into the depths and abysses of the soul, discerns the most inward contrivances; nothing is impenetrable to him; the sun doth not so much enlighten the earth as God understands the heart; all thoughts are as visible to him as flies and motes enclosed in a body of transparent crystal. This man naturally allows to God. Men often speak to God by the motions of their minds and secret ejaculations, which they would not do if it were not naturally implanted in them, that God knows all their inward motions. The Scripture is plain and positive in this: 'He tries the heart and reins,' Ps. vii. 9, as men by the use of fire discern the drossy and purer parts of metals. The secret intentions and aims, the most lurking affections seated in the reins, he knows that which no man, no angel is able to know, which a man himself knows not, nor makes any particular reflection upon; yea, he 'weighs the spirit,' Prov. xvi. 2, he exactly numbers all the devices and inclinations of men, as men do every piece of coin they tell out of a heap. He 'discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart,' Heb. iv. 12, all that is in the mind, all that is in the affections, every stirring and purpose, so that not one thought can be withheld from him, Job xlii. 2; yea, 'hell and destruction are before him, much more then the hearts of the children of men,' Prov. xv. 11. He works all things in the bowels of the earth, and brings forth all things out of that treasure, say some; but more naturally, God knows the whole state of the dead, all the receptacles and graves of their bodies, all the bodies of men consumed by the earth, or devoured by living creatures, things that seem to be out of all being; he knows the thoughts of the devils and damned creatures, whom he hath cast out of his care for ever into the arms of his justice, never more to cast a delightful glance towards them; not a secret in any soul in hell (which he hath no need to know, because he shall not judge them by any of the thoughts they now have, since they were condemned to punishment) is hid from him, much more is he acquainted with the thoughts of living men, the counsels of whose hearts are yet to be manifested in order to their trial and censure; yea, he knows them before they spring up into actual being: Ps. cxxxix. 2, 'Thou understandest my thoughts afar off;' my thoughts, that is, every thought, though innumerable thoughts pass through me in a day, and that in the source and fountain when it is yet in the womb, before it is our thought. If he knows them before their existence, before they can be properly called ours, much more doth he know them when they actually spring up in us; he knows the tendency of them, where the bird will light when it is in flight; he knows them exactly, he is therefore called a 'discerner' or criticiser 'of the heart,' Heb. iv. 12. As a critic discerns every letter, point, and stop, he is more intimate with us than our soul with our bodies, and hath more the possession of us than we have of ourselves; he knows them by an inspection into the heart, not by the mediation of second causes, by the looks or gestures of men, as men may discern the thoughts of one another.

First, God discerns all good motions of the mind and will. These he puts into men, and needs must God know his own act: he knew the son of

Jeroboam to have 'some good thing in him towards the Lord God of Israel,' 1 Kings xiv. 13, and the integrity of David and Hezekiah, the freest motions of the will and affections to him. 'Lord, thou knowest that I love thee,' saith Peter, John xxi. 17. Love can be no more restrained than the will itself can. A man may make another to grieve and desire, but none can force another to love.

Secondly, God discerns all the evil motions of the mind and will; every imagination of the heart,' Gen. vi. 5; the vanity of men's thoughts, Ps. xciv. 11; their inward darkness and deceitful disguises. No wonder that God, who fashioned the heart, should understand the motions of it: Ps. xxxiii. 13, 15, 'He looks from heaven, and beholds all the children of men: he fashioneth their hearts alike, and considers all their works.' Doth any man make a watch, and yet be ignorant of its motion? Did God fling away the key to this secret cabinet, when he framed it, and put off the power of unlocking it when he pleased? He did not surely frame it in such a posture as that anything in it should be hid from his eye; he did not fashion it to be privileged from his government; which would follow if he were ignorant of what was minted and coined in it.

He could not be a judge to punish men, if the inward frames and principles of men's actions were concealed from him; an outward action may glitter to an outward eye, yet the secret spring be a desire of applause, and not the fear and love of God. If the inward frames of the heart did lie covered from him in the secret recesses of the heart, those plausible acts, which in regard of their principles would merit a punishment, would meet with a reward, and God should bestow happiness where he had denounced misery. As without the knowledge of what is just, he would not be a wise lawgiver, so without the knowledge of what is inwardly committed, he could not be a righteous judge; acts that are rotten in the spring, might be judged good by the fair colour and appearance.

This is the glory of God at the last day, to 'manifest the secrets of all hearts,' 1 Cor. iv. 5; and the prophet Jeremiah links the power of judging, and the prerogative of trying the hearts together: Jer. xi. 20, 'But thou, O Lord of Hosts, that judgest righteously, that triest the reins and the heart;' and chap. xvii. 10, 'I the Lord search the heart; I try the reins;' To what end? Even 'to give every man according to his way, and according to the fruit of his doings.' And indeed his binding up the whole law with that command of not coveting, evidenceth that he will judge men by the inward affections and frames of their hearts. Again, God sustains the mind of man in every act of thinking. In him we have not only the principle of life, but every motion, the motion of our minds as well as of our members. 'In him we live and move,' &c., Acts xvii. 28. Since he supports the vigour of the faculty in every act, can he be ignorant of those acts which spring from the faculty, to which he doth at that instant communicate power and ability?

Now this knowledge of the thoughts of men is,

First, An incommunicable property, belonging only to the divine understanding. Creatures indeed may know the thoughts of others by divine revelation, but not by themselves; no creature hath a key immediately to open the minds of men, and see all that lodgeth there; no creature can fathom the heart by the line of created knowledge.* Devils may have a conjectural knowledge, and may guess at them, by the acquaintance they have with the disposition and constitution of men, and the images they behold in their fancies; and by some marks which an inward imagination

* Daille, Sermon. part i. p. 230.

may stamp upon the brain, blood, animal spirits, face, &c. ; but the knowing the thoughts merely as thought, without any impression by it, is a royalty God appropriates to himself, as the main secret of his government, and a perfection declarative of his Deity as much as any else : Jer. xvii. 9, 10, 'The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it?' Yes, there is one, and but one ; 'I the Lord search the heart ; I try the reins.' 'Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks upon the heart,' 1 Sam. xvi. 7, where God is distinguished by this perfection from all men whatsoever ; others may know by revelation, as Elisha did, what was in Gehazi's heart, 2 Kings v. 26 ; but God knows a man more than any man knows himself. What person upon earth understands the windings and turnings of his own heart, what reserves it will have, what contrivances, what inclinations ? all which God knows exactly.

Secondly, God acquires no new knowledge of the thoughts and heart, by the discovery of them in the actions. He would then be but equal in this part of knowledge to his creature ; no man or angel but may thus arrive to the knowledge of them. God were then excluded from an absolute dominion over the prime work of his lower creation ; he would have made a creature superior in this respect to himself, upon whose will to discover, his knowledge of their inward intentions should depend ; and, therefore, when God is said to search the heart, we must not understand it as if God were ignorant before, and was fain to make an exact scrutiny and inquiry, before he attained what he desired to know ; but God condescends to our capacity in the expression of his own knowledge, signifying that his knowledge is as complete as any man's knowledge can be, of the designs of others, after he hath sifted them by a strict and thorough examination, and wrung out a discovery of their intentions ; that he knows them as perfectly as if he had put them upon the rack, and forced them to make a discovery of their secret plottings. Nor must we understand that in Gen. xxii. 12, where God saith, after Abraham had stretched out his hand to sacrifice his son, 'Now I know that thou fearest God,' as though God was ignorant of Abraham's gracious disposition to him. Did Abraham's drawing his knife furnish God with a new knowledge ? No ; God knew Abraham's pious inclinations before : Gen. xviii. 19, 'I know him that he will command his children after him,' &c. Knowledge is sometimes taken for approbation ; then the sense will be, Now I approve this fact as a testimony of thy fear of me ; since thy affection to thy Isaac is extinguished by the more powerful flame of affection to my will and command, I now accept thee, and count thee a meet subject of my choicest benefits ; or now I know, that is, I have made known and manifested, the faith of Abraham to himself and to the world. Thus Paul uses the word know : 1 Cor. ii. 2, 'I have determined to know nothing ;' that is, to declare and teach nothing, to make known nothing 'but Christ crucified ;' or else, now I know, that is, I have an evidence and experiment in this noble fact, that thou fearest me. God often condescends to our capacity in speaking of himself after the manner of men, as if he had (as men do) known the inward affections of others by their outward actions.

[4.] God knows all the evils and sins of creatures.

First, God knows all sin. This follows upon the other. If he knows all the actions and thoughts of creatures, he knows also all the sinfulness in those acts and thoughts. This Zophar infers from God's punishing men : Job xi. 11, 'For he knows vain man ; he sees his wickedness also ;' he knows every man, and sees the wickedness of every man. 'He looks down from heaven,' and beholds not only the filthy persons, but what is filthy in them, Ps. xiv. 2, 3, all nations in the world, and every man of every nation ;

none of their iniquity is hid from his eyes. 'He searches Jerusalem with candles,' Zeph. i. 22. God follows sinners step by step with his eye, and will not leave searching out till he hath taken them; a metaphor taken from one that searches all chinks with a candle, that nothing can be hid from him. He knows it distinctly in all the parts of it, how an adulterer rises out of his bed to commit uncleanness; what contrivances he had, what steps he took, every circumstance in the whole progress; not only evil in the bulk, but every one of the blacker spots upon it, which may most aggravate it. If he did not know evil, how could he permit it, order it, punish it, or pardon it? Doth he permit he knows not what? order [to his own holy ends what he is ignorant of? punish or pardon that which he is uncertain whether it be a crime or no? 'Cleanse me,' saith David, 'from my secret faults,' Ps. xix. 12, secret in regard of others, secret in regard of himself; how could God cleanse him from that whereof he was ignorant? He knows sins before they are committed, much more when they are in act; he foreknew the idolatry and apostasy of the Jews; what gods they would serve, in what measure they would provoke him, and violate his covenant, Deut. xxxi. 20, 21; he knew Judas his sin long before Judas his actual existence, foretelling it in the Psalms; and Christ predicts it before he acted it. He sees sins future in his own permitting will; he sees sins present in his own supporting act. As he knows things possible to himself, because he knows his own power; so he knows things practicable by the creature, because he knows the power and principles of the creature.* This sentiment of God is naturally writ in the fear of sinners, upon lightning, thunder, or some prodigious operation of God in the world; what is the language of them, but that he sees their deeds, hears their words, knows the inward sinfulness of their hearts; that he doth not only behold them as a mere spectator, but considers them as a just judge? And the poets say, that the sins of men leaped into heaven, and were writ in parchments of Jupiter, *scelus in terrâ geritur, in cælo scribitur*, sin is acted on earth, and recorded in heaven. God, indeed, doth not behold evil with the approving eye; he knows it not with a practical knowledge to be the author of it, but with a speculative knowledge, so as to understand the fulness of it; or a knowledge *simplicis intelligentiæ*, of simple intelligence, as he permits them, not positively wills them; he knows them not with a knowledge of assent to them, but dissent from them. Evil pertains to a dissenting act of the mind, and an aversive act of the will; and what though evil formally taken hath no distinct conception, because it is a privation, a defect hath no being, and all knowledge is by the apprehension of some being, would not this lie as strongly against our own knowledge of sin? Sin is the privation of the rectitude due to an act; and who doubts man's knowledge of sin? By his knowing the act, he knows the deficiency of the act; the subject of evil hath a being, and so hath a conception in the mind; that which hath no being cannot be known by itself, or in itself, but will it follow that it cannot be known by its contrary? as we know darkness to be a privation of light, and folly to be a privation of wisdom. God knows all good by himself, because he is the sovereign good. Is it strange, then, that he should know all evil, since all evil is in some natural good?

Secondly, The manner of God's knowing evil is not so easily known; and, indeed, as we cannot comprehend the essence of God, though it is easily intelligible that there is such a being, so we can as little comprehend the manner of God's knowledge, though we cannot but conclude him to be an intelligent being, a pure understanding, knowing all things. As God hath a higher manner of being than his creatures, so he hath another and higher

* Fotherby, *Atheoma*, p. 132.

manner of knowing ; and we can as little comprehend the manner of his knowing, as we can the manner of his being. But as to the manner.

Doth not God know his own law ? and shall he not know how much any action comes short of his rule ? He cannot know his own rule without knowing all the deviations from it. He knows his own holiness, and shall he not see how any action is contrary to the holiness of his own nature ? Doth not God know everything that is true, and is it not true that this or that is evil ? and shall God be ignorant of any truth ? How doth God know that he cannot lie, but by knowing his own veracity ? How doth God know that he cannot die, but by knowing his own immutability ? And, by knowing those, he knows what a lie is, he knows what death is ; so, if sin never had been, if no creature had ever been, God would have known what sin was, because he knows his own holiness, because he knew what law was fit to be appointed to his creatures, if he should create them, and that that law might be transgressed by them. God knows all good, all goodness in himself ; he therefore hath a foundation in himself, to know all that comes short of that goodness, that is opposite to that holiness. As if light were capable of understanding, it would know darkness only by knowing itself ; by knowing itself, it would know what is contrary to itself. God knows all created goodness which he hath planted in the creature ; he knows then all defects from this goodness, what perfection an act is deprived of, what is opposite to that goodness, and that is evil. As we know sickness by health, discord by harmony, blindness by sight, because it is a privation of sight ; whosoever knows one contrary knows the other. God knows unrighteousness by the idea which he hath of righteousness, and sees an act deprived of that rectitude and goodness which ought to be in it ; he knows evil because he knows the causes whence evil proceeds.* A painter knows a picture of his own framing ; and if any one dashes any base colour upon it, shall not he also know that ? God by his hand painted all creatures, impressed upon man the fair stamp and colour of his own image ; the devil defiles it, man daubs it. Doth not God, that knows his own work, know how this piece is become different from his work ? Doth not God, that knows his creatures' goodness, which himself was the fountain of, know the change of this goodness ? Yea, he knew before, that the devil would sow tares where he had sown wheat ; and, therefore, that controversy of some in the schools, whether God knew evil by its opposition to created or uncreated goodness, is needless. We may say God knows sin as it is opposite to created goodness, yet he knows it radically by his own goodness, because he knows the goodness he hath communicated to the creature by his own essential goodness in himself. To conclude this head :

The knowledge of sin doth not bespot the holiness of God's nature, for the bare knowledge of a crime doth not infect the mind of man with the filth and pollution of that crime, for then every man that knows an act of murder committed by another, would, by that bare knowledge, be tainted with his sin ; yea, and a judge that condemns a malefactor, may as well condemn himself, if this were so. The knowledge of sins infects not the understanding that knows them, but only the will that approves them. It is no discredit to us to know evil, in order to pass a right judgment upon it ; so neither can it be to God.

(4.) God knows all future things, all things to come. The differences of time cannot hinder a knowledge of all things by him who is before time, above time, that is not measured by hours, or days, or years ; if God did not know them, the hindrance must be in himself, or in the things them-

* Cusan, p. 245.

selves, because they are things to come. Not in himself: if it did, it must arise from some impotency in his own nature, and so we render him weak; or from an unwillingness to know, and so we render him lazy, and an enemy to his own perfection; for, simply considered, the knowledge of more things is a greater perfection than the knowledge of a few; and if the knowledge of a thing includes something of perfection, the ignorance of a thing includes something of imperfection. The knowledge of future things is a greater perfection than not to know them, and is accounted among men a great part of wisdom, which they call foresight; it is then surely a greater perfection in God to know future things, than to be ignorant of them. And would God rather have something of imperfection than be possessor of all perfection? Nor doth the hindrance lie in the things themselves, because their futurity depends upon his will; for as nothing can actually be without his will, giving it existence, so nothing can be future without his will, designing the futurity of it. Certainly, if God knows all things possible, which he will not do, he must know all things future, which he is not only able, but resolved to do, or resolved to permit. God's perfect knowledge of himself, that is, of his own infinite power and concluding will, necessarily includes a foreknowledge of what he is able to do, and what he will do.

Again, if God doth not know future things, there was a time when God was ignorant of most things in the world, for, before the deluge, he was more ignorant than after; the more things were done in the world, the more knowledge did accrue to God, and so the more perfection; then, the understanding of God was not perfect from eternity, but in time; nay, is not perfect yet, if he be ignorant of those things which are still to come to pass; he must tarry for a perfection he wants, till those futurities come to be in act, till those things which are to come cease to be future, and begin to be present. Either God knows them, or desires to know them; if he desires to know them and doth not, there is something wanting to him; all desire speaks an absence of the object desired, and a sentiment of want in the person desiring. If he doth not desire to know them, nay, if he doth not actually know them, it destroys all providence, all his government of affairs, for his providence hath a concatenation of means with a prospect of something that is future; as in Joseph's case, who was put into the pit, and sold to the Egyptians, in order to his future advancement, and the preservation both of his father and his envious brethren. If God did not know all the future inclinations and actions of men, something might have been done by the will of Potiphar, or by the free will of Pharaoh, whereby Joseph might have been cut short of his advancement, and so God have been interrupted in the track and method of his designed providences. He that hath decreed to govern man for that end he hath designed him, knows all the means before whereby he will govern him, and therefore hath a distinct and certain knowledge of all things, for a confused knowledge is an imperfection in government; it is in this the infiniteness of his understanding is more seen than in knowing things past or present; 'his eyes are as a flame of fire,' Rev. i. 14, in regard of the penetrating virtue of them into things impenetrable by any else.

To make it further appear that God knows all things future, consider,

1. First, everything which is the object of God's knowledge without himself was once only future. There was a moment when nothing was in being but himself; he knew nothing actually past, because nothing was past; nothing actually present, because nothing had any existence but himself; therefore only what was future, and why not everything that is future now, as well as only what was future and to come to pass just at the beginning of

the creation? God, indeed, knows everything as present, but the things themselves known by him were not present, but future. The whole creation was once future, or else it was from eternity; if it begun in time, it was once future in itself, else it could never have begun to be. Did not God know what would be created by him before it was created by him? * Did he create he knew not what, and knew not before what he should create? Was he ignorant before he acted, and in his acting, what his operation would tend to? Or did he not know the nature of things, and the ends of them, till he had produced them, and saw them in being? Creatures then did not arise from his knowledge, but his knowledge from them; he did not then will that his creatures should be, or he had then willed what he knew not, and knew not what he willed; they, therefore, must be known before they were made, and not known because they were made; he knew them to make them, and he did not make them to know them. By the same reason he knew what creatures should be before they were, he knows still what creatures shall be before they are; † for all things that are were in God, not really in their own nature, but in him as a cause; so the earth and heavens were in him, as a model in the mind of a workman, which is in his mind and soul before it be brought forth into outward act.

2. The predictions of future things evidence this. There is not a prophecy of anything to come but is a spark of his foreknowledge, and bears witness to the truth of this assertion in the punctual accomplishment of it. This is a thing challenged by God as his own peculiar, wherein he surmounts all the idols that man's inventions have goded in the world: Isa. xli. 21, 22, 'Let them bring forth' (speaking of the idols), 'and shew us what shall happen, or declare us things to come: shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods.' Such a foreknowledge of things to come is here ascribed to God by God himself, as a distinction of him from all false gods. Such a knowledge that, if any could prove that they were possessors of, he would acknowledge them gods as well as himself; 'that we may know that you are gods.' He puts his Deity to stand or fall upon this account, and this should be the point which should decide the controversy whether he or the heathen idols were the true God. The dispute is managed by this medium: he that knows things to come is God; I know things to come, *ergo* I am God: the idols know not things to come, therefore they are not gods. God submits the being of his Deity to this trial. If God know things to come no more than the heathen idols, which were either devils or men, he would be, in his own account, no more a God than devils or men; no more a God than the pagan idols he doth scoff at for this defect. If the heathen idols were to be stripped of their deity for want of this foreknowledge of things to come, would not the true God also fall from the same excellency if he were defective in knowledge? He would, in his own judgment, no more deserve the title and character of a God than they. How could he reproach them for that, if it were wanting in himself? It cannot be understood of future things in their causes, when the effects necessarily arise from such causes, as light from the sun and heat from the fire. Many of these men know; more of them, angels and devils know; if God, therefore, had not a higher and farther knowledge than this, he would not by this be proved to be God, any more than angels and devils, who know necessary effects in their causes. The devils, indeed, did predict some things in the heathen oracles, but God is differenced from them here by the infiniteness of his knowledge, in being able to predict things to come that they knew not, or things in their particularities, things that depended on the

* Petavius *changed*.

† Bradward, lib. iii. cap. 14.

liberty of man's will, which the devils could lay no claim to a certain knowledge of. Were it only a conjectural knowledge that is here meant, the devils might answer they can conjecture, and so their deity were as good as God's; for though God might know more things, and conjecture nearer to what would be, yet still it would be but conjectural, and therefore not a higher kind of knowledge than what the devils might challenge. How much, then, is God beholden to the Socinians for denying the knowledge of all future things to him, upon which here he puts the trial of his deity? God asserts his knowledge of things to come as a manifest evidence of his Godhead; those that deny, therefore, the argument that proves it, deny the conclusion too; for this will necessarily follow, that if he be God because he knows future things, then he that doth not know future things is not God; and if God knows not future things but only by conjecture, then there is no God, because a certain knowledge, so as infallibly to predict things to come, is an inseparable perfection of the Deity. It was therefore well said of Austin, that it was as high a madness to deny God to be as* to deny him the foreknowledge of things to come.

The whole prophetic part of Scripture declares this perfection of God. Every prophet's candle was lighted at this torch; they could not have this foreknowledge of themselves. Why might not many other men have the same insight, if it were by nature?† It must be from some superior agent; and all nations owned prophecy as a beam from God, a fruit of divine illumination. Prophecy must be totally expunged if this be denied, for the subjects of prophecy are things future, and no man is properly a prophet but in prediction. Now prediction is nothing but foretelling, and things foretold are not yet come; and the foretelling of them supposeth them not to be yet, but that they shall be in time. Several such predictions we have in Scripture, the event whereof hath been certain. The years of famine in Egypt foretold that he would order second causes for bringing that judgment upon them; the captivity of his people in Babylon; the calling of the Gentiles; the rejection of the Jews. Daniel's revelation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, that prince refers to God as the revealer of secrets, Dan. ii. 47. By the same reason that he knows one thing future by himself, and by the infiniteness of his knowledge, before any causes of them appear, he doth know all things future.

3. Some future things are known by men, and we must allow God a greater knowledge than any creature. Future things in their causes may be known by angels and men, as I said before; whosoever knows necessary causes, and the efficacy of them, may foretell the effects; and when he sees the meeting and concurrence of several causes together, he may presage what the consequent effect will be of such a concurrence. So physicians foretell the progress of a disease, the increase or diminution of it by natural signs; and astronomers foretell eclipses by their observation of the motion of heavenly bodies many years before they happen.‡ Can they be hid from God, with whom are the reasons of all things?§ An expert gardener, by knowing the root in the depth of winter, can tell what flowers and what fruit it will bear, and the month when they will peep out their heads; and shall not God much more, that knows the principles of all his creatures, and is exactly privy to all their natures and qualities, know what they will be, and what operations shall be from those principles? Now if God did know things only in their causes, his knowledge would not be more excellent than

* Qu. 'no higher . . . than'?—ED.

† Pacuvius said, *Siqui quæ eventura sunt provident, æquiparent.*

‡ Cusanus.

§ Fuller's Pisgah, l. ii. p. 281.

the knowledge of angels and men, though he might know more than they of the things that will come to pass from every cause singly, and from the concurrence of many. Now as God is more excellent in being than his creature, so he is more excellent in the objects of his knowledge and the manner of his knowledge: well, then, shall a certain knowledge of something future, and a conjectural knowledge of many things, be found among men, and shall a determinate and infallible knowledge of things to come be found nowhere, in no being? If the conjecture of future things savours of ignorance, and God knows them only by conjecture, there is then no such thing in being as a perfect intelligent being, and so no God.

4. God knows his own decree and will, and therefore must needs know all future things. If anything be future, or to come to pass, it must be from itself or from God; not from itself, then it would be independent and absolute. If it hath its futurity from God, then God must know what he hath decreed to come to pass. Those things that are future in necessary causes God must know, because he willed them to be causes of such effects; he therefore knows them, because he knows what he willed. The knowledge of God cannot arise from the things themselves, for then the knowledge of God would have a cause without him; and knowledge, which is an eminent perfection, would be conferred upon him by his creatures. But as God sees things possible in the glass of his own power, so he sees things future in the glass of his own will: in his effecting will, if he hath decreed to produce them; in his permitting will, as he hath decreed to suffer them and dispose of them. Nothing can pass out of the rank of things merely possible into the order of things future, before some act of God's will hath passed for its futurity.*

It is not from the infiniteness of his own nature, simply considered, that God knows things to be future; for as things are not future because God is infinite (for then all possible things should be future), so neither is anything known to be future only because God is infinite, but because God hath decreed it; his declaration of things to come is founded upon his appointment of things to come.† In Isa. xlv. 7, it is said, 'And who, as I, shall call, and declare it, since I appointed the ancient people, and the things that are coming?'‡ Nothing is created and ordered in the world but what God decreed to be created and ordered. God knows his own decree, and therefore all things which he hath decreed to exist in time, not the minutest part of the world, could have existed without his will, not an action can be done without his will. As life, the principle, so motion, the fruit of that life, is by and from God. As he decreed life to this or that thing, so he decreed motion as the effect of life, and decreed to exert his power in concurring with them, for producing effects natural from such causes; for without such a concurrence they could not have acted anything, or produced anything. And therefore, as for natural things, which we call necessary causes, God foreseeing them all particularly in his own decree, foresaw also all effects which must necessarily flow from them, because such causes cannot but act when they are furnished with all things necessary for action. He knows his own decrees, and therefore necessarily knows what he hath decreed, or else we must say things come to pass whether God will or no; or, that he wills he knows not what. But this cannot be; for 'known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world,' Acts xv. 18. Now this necessarily flows from that principle first laid down, that God knows himself, since nothing is future without God's will. If God did not know future things, he would not know his own will; for as things possible could not be

* Chequell.

† Coccei Sum. Theol., p. 50.

‡ Gamach in Aquin., part i. qu. 24, cap. 3, p. 124.

known by him unless he knew the fulness of his own power, so things future could not be known by his understanding unless he knew the resolves of his own will.

Thus the knowledge of God differs from the knowledge of men. God's knowledge of his works precedes his works,* man's knowledge of God's works follows his works. Just as an artificer's knowledge of a watch, instrument, or engine which he would make, is before his making of it; he knows the motions of it, and the reasons of those motions before it is made, because he knows what he hath determined to work; he knows not those motions from the consideration of them after they were made, as the spectator doth, who by viewing the instrument after it is made, gains a knowledge from the sight and consideration of it, till he understands the reason of the whole; so we know things from the consideration of them after we see them in being, and therefore we know not future things. But God's knowledge doth not arise from things because they are, but because he wills them to be; and therefore he knows everything that shall be, because it cannot be without his will, as the creator and maintainer of all things; knowing his own substance, he knows all his works.

5. If God did not know all future things, he would be mutable in his knowledge.

If he did not know all things that ever were or are to be, there would be upon the appearance of every new object an addition of light to his understanding, and therefore such a change in him as every new knowledge causes in the mind of a man, or as the sun works in the world upon its rising every morning, scattering the darkness that was upon the face of the earth. If he did not know them before they came, he would gain a knowledge by them when they came to pass, which he had not before they were effected; his knowledge would be new according to the newness of the objects, and multiplied according to the multitude of the objects. If God did not know things to come as perfectly as he knew things present and past, but knew those certainly, and the others doubtfully and conjecturally, he would suffer some change, and acquire some perfection in his knowledge, when those future things should cease to be future, and become present; for he would know it more perfectly when it were present than he did when it was future, and so there would be a change from imperfection to a perfection; but God is every way immutable.

Besides, that perfection would not arise from the nature of God, but from the existence and presence of the thing. But who will affirm that God acquires any perfection of knowledge from his creatures, any more than he doth of being? He would not then have had that knowledge, and consequently that perfection from eternity, as he had when he created the world, and will not have a full perfection of the knowledge of his creature till the end of the world, nor of immortal souls, which will certainly act as well as live to eternity. And so God never was, nor ever will be perfect in knowledge; for when you have conceived millions of years, wherein angels and souls live and act, there is still more coming than you can conceive, wherein they will act. And if God be always changing to eternity from ignorance to knowledge, as those acts come to be exerted by his creatures, he will not be perfect in knowledge, no, not to eternity, but will always be changing from one degree of knowledge to another; a very unworthy conceit to entertain of the most blessed, perfect, and infinite God.

Hence then it follows, that,

(1.) God foreknows all his creatures; all kinds which he determined to

* Maimonid. *More Nevoch.*, part iii. cap. 21, p. 393, 394.

make, all particulars that should spring out of every species, the time when they should come forth of the womb, the manner how: 'In thy book all members were written,' Ps. cxxxix. 16. *Members* is not in the Hebrew, whence some refer *all* to all living creatures whatsoever, and all the parts of them which God did foresee. He knew the numbers of creatures, with all their parts; they were written in the book of his foreknowledge; the duration of them, how long they shall remain in being and act upon the stage; he knows their strength, the links of one cause with another, and what will follow in all their circumstances, and the series and combination of effects with their causes.

The duration of everything is foreknown, because determined: Job xiv. 5, 'Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee; thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.' Bounds are fixed, beyond which none shall reach; he speaks of days and months, not of years, to give us notice of God's particular foreknowledge of everything, of every day, month, year, hour of a man's life.

(2.) All the acts of his creatures are foreknown by him. All natural acts, because he knows their causes; voluntary acts I shall speak of afterwards.

(3.) This foreknowledge was certain. For it is an unworthy notion of God to ascribe to him a conjectural knowledge; if there were only a conjectural knowledge, he could but conjecturally foretell anything; and then it is possible the events of things might be contrary to his predictions. It would appear then that God were deceived and mistaken, and then there could be no rule of trying things whether they were from God or no; for the rule God sets down to discern his words from the words of false prophets is the event and certain accomplishment of what is predicted. Deut. xviii. 21, to that question, 'How shall we know whether God hath spoken or no?' he answers, that 'If the thing doth not come to pass, the Lord hath not spoken.' If his knowledge of future things were not certain, there were no stability in this rule, it would fall to the ground. We never yet find God deceived in any prediction; but the event did answer his fore-revelation; his foreknowledge therefore is certain and infallible. We cannot make God uncertain in his knowledge, but we must conceive him fluctuating and wavering in his will; but if his will be not 'yea and nay,' but 'yea,' his knowledge is certain, because he doth certainly will and resolve.

(4.) This foreknowledge was from eternity. Seeing he knows things possible in his power, and things future in his will, if his power and resolves were from eternity, his knowledge must be so too, or else we must make him ignorant of his own power, and ignorant of his own will from eternity, and consequently not from eternity blessed and perfect. His knowledge of possible things must run parallel with his power, and his knowledge of future things run parallel with his will. If he willed from eternity, he knew from eternity what he willed; but that he did will from eternity we must grant, unless we would render him changeable, and conceive him to be made in time of not willing, willing. The knowledge God hath in time was always one and the same, because his understanding is his proper essence, as perfect as his essence, and of an immutable nature.

And indeed the actual existence of a thing is not simply necessary to its being perfectly known.* We may see a thing that is passed out of being when it doth not actually exist, and a carpenter may know the house he is to build before it be built, by the model of it in his own mind; much more we may conceive the same of God, whose decrees were before the foundation

* Gamach in Aquin., part i. q. xiv. c. iii. p. 124.

of the world, Eph. i. 5, and in other places ; and to be before time was, and to be from eternity, hath no difference. As God in his being exceeds all beginning of time, so doth his knowledge all motions of time.

(5.) God foreknows all things, as present with him from eternity.* As he knows mutable things with an immutable and firm knowledge, so he knows future things with a present knowledge. Not that the things which are produced in time were actually and really present with him in their own beings from eternity, for then they could not be produced in time ; had they a real existence, then they would not be creatures, but God ; and had they actual being, then they could not be future, for future speaks a thing to come that is not yet ; if things had been actually present with him, and yet future, they had been made before they were made, and had a being before they had a being ; but they were all present to his knowledge, as if they were in actual being, because the reason of all things that were to be made was present with him.

The reason of the will of God that they shall be, was equally eternal with him,† wherein he saw what, and when, and how he would create things, how he would govern them, to what ends he would direct them. Thus all things are present to God's knowledge, though in their own nature they may be past or future, not *in esse reali*, but *in esse intelligibili*, objectively, not actually present ;‡ for as the unchangeableness and infiniteness of God's knowledge of changeable and finite things doth not make the things he knows immutable and infinite, so neither doth the eternity of his knowledge make them actually present with him from eternity, but all things are present to his understanding, because he hath at once a view of all successions of times, and his knowledge of future things is as perfect as of present things, or what is past. It is not a certain knowledge of present things, and an uncertain knowledge of future ; but his knowledge of one is as certain and unerring as his knowledge of the other.§ As a man that beholds a circle with several lines from the centre, beholds the lines as they are joined in the centre, beholds them also as they are distant and severed from one another, beholds them in their extent and in their point all at once, though they may have a great distance from one another. He saw from the beginning of time to the last minute of it, all things coming out of their causes, marching in their order according to his own appointment, as a man may see a multitude of ants, some creeping one way, some another, employed in several businesses for their winter provision. The eye of God at once runs through the whole circle of time, as the eye of man upon a tower sees all the passengers at once, though some be past, some under the tower, some coming at a farther distance. God, saith Job, 'looks to the end of the earth, and sees under the whole heaven,' Job xxviii. 24. The knowledge of God is expressed by sight in Scripture, and futurity to God is the same thing as distance to us. We can, with a perspective glass, make things that are afar off appear as if they were near, and the sun, so many thousand miles distant from us, to appear as if it were at the end of the glass. Why should then future things be at so great a distance from God's knowledge, when things so far from us may be made to approach so near to us ?

God considers all things, in his own simple knowledge, as if they were now acted ; and therefore some have chosen to call the knowledge of things to come not prescience or foreknowledge, but knowledge, because God sees all things in one instant, *scientiâ nunquam deficientis instantiæ*.|| Upon this

* Gerhard Exeges, ch. viii., de Deo, sect. xiii. p. 303.

† Bradward, l. iii. c. 14.

‡ Hornbeck.

§ Pugio Fidei, part i. ch. 19.

|| Boet. Consolat., lib. v. prof. 6.

account things that are to come are set down in Scripture as present, and sometimes as past : Isa. ix. 6, 'Unto us a Child is born,' though not yet born ; so of the sufferings of Christ : Isa. liii. 4, &c., 'He *hath* borne our griefs, he *was* wounded for our transgressions, he *was* taken from prison,' &c., not *shall be* ; and Ps. xxii. 18, 'They *part* my garments among them,' as if it were present ; all to express the certainty of God's foreknowledge, as if things were actually present before him.

(6.) This is proper to God, and incommunicable to any creature. Nothing but what is eternal can know all things that are to come. Suppose a creature might know things that are to come after he is in being, he cannot know things simply as future, because there were things future before he was in being. The devils know not men's hearts, therefore cannot foretell their actions with any certainty. They may indeed have a knowledge of some things to come, but it is only conjectural, and often mistaken, as the devil was in his predictions among the heathen, and in his presage of Job's cursing God to his face upon his pressing calamities, Job i. 11. Sometimes indeed they have a certain knowledge of something future by the revelation of God, when he uses them as instruments of his vengeance, or for the trial of his people, as in the case of Job, when he gave him a commission to strip him of his goods, or as the angels have, when he uses them as instruments of the deliverance of his people.

(7.) Though this be certain, that God foreknows all things and actions, yet the manner of his knowing all things before they come, is not so easily resolved. We must not, therefore, deny this perfection in God, because we understand not the manner how he hath the knowledge of all things. It were unworthy for us to own no more of God than we can perfectly conceive of him ; we should then own no more of him than that he doth exist. 'Canst thou,' saith Job, 'by searching find out God ? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection ?' Job xi. 7. Do we not see things, unknown to inferior creatures, to be known to ourselves ? Irrational creatures do not apprehend the nature of a man, nor what we conceive of them when we look upon them, nor do we know what they fancy of us when they look wistly upon us ; for aught as I know, we understand as little the manner of their imaginations as they do of ours ; and shall we ascribe a darkness in God as to future things, because we are ignorant of them, and of the manner how he should know them ?* Shall we doubt whether God doth certainly know those things which we only conjecture ? As our power is not the measure of the power of God, so neither is our knowledge the judge of the knowledge of God, no better, nor so well, as an irrational creature can be the judge of our reason. Do we perfectly know the manner how we know ? Shall we therefore deny that we know anything ? We know we have such a faculty which we call understanding, but doth any man certainly know what it is ? And because he doth not, shall he deny that which is plain and evident to him ? Because we cannot ascertain ourselves of the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, of the manner how minerals are engendered in the earth, shall we therefore deny that which our eyes convince us of ?

And this will be a preparation to the last thing.

6. God knows all future contingencies ; that is, God knows all things that shall accidentally happen, or, as we say, by chance ; and he knows all the free motions of men's wills that shall be to the end of the world.

If 'all things be open to him,' Heb. iv. 13, then all contingencies are, for they are in the number of things ; and as, according to Christ's speech, those things that are impossible to man, are possible to God, so those

* Ficinus in Procl., cap. 19.

things which are unknown to man, are known to God, because of the infiniteness and perfection of the divine understanding.

Let us see what a contingent is.

That is contingent which we commonly call accidental, as when a tile falls suddenly upon a man's head as he is walking in the street, or when one letting off a musket at random shoots another he did not intend to hit; such was that arrow whereby Ahab was killed, shot by a soldier at a venture, 1 Kings xxii. 34. This some call a mixed contingent, made up partly of necessity, and partly of accident; it is necessary the bullet, when sent out of the gun, or arrow out of the bow, should fly and light somewhere, but it is an accident that it hits this or that man, that was never intended by the archer. Other things, as voluntary actions, are purely contingents, and have nothing of necessity in them; all free actions that depend upon the will of man, whether to do or not to do, are of this nature, because they depend not upon a necessary cause, as burning doth upon the fire, moistening upon water, or as descent or falling down is necessary to a heavy body, for those cannot in their own nature do otherwise; but the other actions depend upon a free agent, able to turn to this or that point, and determine himself as he pleases.

Now we must know that what is accidental in regard of the creature, is not so in regard of God. The manner of Ahab's death was accidental in regard of the hand by which he was slain, but not in regard of God, who foretold his death, and foreknew the shot, and directed the arrow. God was not uncertain before of the manner of his fall, nor hovered over the battle to watch for an opportunity to accomplish his own prediction; what may be or not be in regard of us, is certain in regard of God. To imagine that what is accidental to us is so to God, is to measure God by our short line. How many events, following upon the results of princes in their counsels, seem to persons ignorant of those counsels to be a hap-hazard, yet were not contingencies to the prince and his assistants, but foreseen by him as certainly to issue so as they do, which they knew before would be the fruit of such causes and instruments they would knit together! That may be necessary in regard of God's foreknowledge, which is merely accidental in regard of the natural disposition of the immediate causes which do actually produce it; contingent in its own nature and in regard of us, but fixed in the knowledge of God. One illustrates it by this similitude: * A master sends two servants to one and the same place, two several ways, unknown to one another; they meet at the place which their master had appointed them; their meeting is accidental to them, one knows not of the other, but it was foreseen by the master that they should so meet, and that in regard of them it would seem a mere accident till they came to explain the business to one another; both the necessity of their meeting in regard of their master's order, and the accidentalness of it in regard of themselves, were in both their circumstances foreknown by the master that employed them.

For the clearing of this, take it in this method.

(1.) It is an unworthy conceit of God, in any, to exclude him from the knowledge of these things.

[1.] It will be a strange contracting of him, to allow him no greater a knowledge than we have ourselves. Contingencies are known to us when they come into act, and pass from futurity to reality; and when they are present to us, we can order our affairs accordingly; shall we allow God no greater a measure of knowledge than we have, and make him as blind as ourselves, not to see things of that nature before they come to pass? Shall

God know them no more; shall we imagine God knows no otherwise than we know, and that he doth, like us, stand gazing with admiration at events? Man can conjecture many things; is it fit to ascribe the same uncertainty to God, as though he as well as we could have no assurance till the issue appear in the view of all? If God doth not certainly foreknow them, he doth but conjecture them; but a conjectural knowledge is by no means to be fastened on God, for that is not knowledge but guess, and destroys a deity by making him subject to mistake; for he that only guesseth, may guess wrong, so that this is to make God like ourselves, and strip him of an universally acknowledged perfection of omniscience. A conjectural knowledge, saith one, † is as unworthy of God, as the creature is unworthy of omniscience. It is certain man hath a liberty to act many things this or that way as he pleases, to walk to this or that quarter, to speak or not to speak, to do this or that thing or not to do it; which way a man will certainly determine himself, is unknown before to any creature, yea, often at the present to himself, for he may be in suspense; but shall we imagine this future determination of himself is concealed from God. Those that deny God's foreknowledge in such cases, must either say that God hath an opinion that a man will resolve rather this way than that;—but then if a man by his liberty determine himself contrary to the opinion of God, is not God then deceived? and what rational creature can own him for a God that can be deceived in anything?—or else they must say that God is at uncertainty, and suspends his opinion without determining it any way; then he cannot know free acts till they are done, he would then depend upon the creature for his information, his knowledge would be every instant increased, as things he knew not before came into act; and since there are every minute an innumerable multitude of various imaginations in the minds of men, there would be every minute an accession of new knowledge to God, which he had not before; besides, this knowledge would be mutable, according to the wavering and weather-cock resolutions of men, one while standing to this point, another while to that, if he depended upon the creatures' determination for his knowledge.

[2.] If the free acts of men were unknown before to God, no man can see how there can be any government of the world by him. Such contingencies may happen, and such resolves of men's free wills unknown to God, as may perplex his affairs, and put him upon new counsels and methods for attaining those ends which he settled at the first creation of things; if things happen which God knows not of before, this must be the consequence, where there is no foresight, there is no providence; things may happen so sudden, if God be ignorant of them, that they may give a check to his intentions and scheme of government, and put him upon changing the model of it. How often doth a small intervening circumstance, unforeseen by man, dash in pieces a long meditated and well-formed design. To govern necessary causes, as sun and stars, whose effects are natural and constant in themselves, is easy to be imagined; but how to govern the world, that consists of so many men of free will, able to determine themselves to this or that, and which have no constancy in themselves, as the sun and stars have, cannot be imagined, unless we will allow in God as great a certainty of foreknowledge of the designs and actions of men, as there is inconstancy in their resolves. God must be altering the methods of his government every day, every hour, every minute, according to the determinations of men, which are so various and changeable in the whole compass of the world in the space of one minute; he must wait to see what the counsels

of men will be, before he could settle his own methods of government ; and so must govern the world according to their mutability, and not according to any certainty in himself. But his 'counsel is stable' in the midst of multitudes of free 'devices' in the heart of man, Prov. xix. 21, and knowing them all before, orders them to be subservient to his own stable counsel. If he cannot know what to-morrow will bring forth in the mind of a man, how can he certainly settle his own determination of governing him ; his degrees and resolves must be temporal, and arise *pro re natâ*, and he must alway be in counsel what he should do upon every change of men's minds. This is an unworthy conceit of the infinite majesty of heaven, to make his government depend upon the resolves of men, rather than their resolves upon the design of God.

(2.) It is therefore certain that God doth foreknow the free and voluntary acts of man. How could he else order his people to ask of him 'things to come,' in order to their deliverance, such things as depend upon the will of man, if he foreknew not the motions of their will, Isa. xlv. 11.

[1.] Actions good or indifferent depending upon the liberty of man's will as much as any whatsoever. Several of these he hath foretold ; not only a person to build up Jerusalem was predicted by him, but the name of that person, Cyrus, Isa. xlv. 28. What is more contingent, or is more the effect of the liberty of man's will, than the names of their children ? Was not the destruction of the Babylonish empire foretold, which Cyrus undertook, not by any compulsion, but by a free inclination and resolve of his own will ? And was not the dismissal of the Jews into their own country a voluntary act in that conquerer ? If you consider the liberty of man's will, might not Cyrus as well have continued their yoke as have struck off their chains, and kept them captive as well as dismissed them ? Had it not been for his own interest rather to have strengthened the fetters of so turbulent a people, who, being tenacious of their religion and laws, different from that professed by the whole world, were like to make disturbances more when they were linked in a body in their own country, than when they were transplanted and scattered into the several parts of his empire ? It was in the power of Cyrus (take him as a man) to choose one or the other. His interest invited him to continue their captivity rather than grant their deliverance, yet God knew that he would willingly do this rather than the other ; he knew this which depended upon the will of Cyrus ; and why may not an infinite God foreknow the free acts of all men, as well as of one ? If the liberty of Cyrus's will was no hindrance to God's certain and infallible foreknowledge of it, how can the contingency of any other thing be a hindrance to him ? for there is the same reason of one and all ; and his government extends to every village, every family, every person, as well as to kingdoms and nations.

So God foretold by his prophet, not only the destruction of Jeroboam's altar, but the name of the person that should be the instrument of it, 1 Kings xiii. 2, and this about three hundred years before Josiah's birth. It is a wonder that none of the pious kings of Judah, in detestation of idolatry, and hopes to recover again the kingdom of Israel, had in all that space named one of their sons by that name of Josiah, in hopes that that prophecy should be accomplished by him ; that Manasseh only should do this, who was the greatest imitator of Jeroboam's idolatry among all the Jewish kings, and indeed went beyond them, and had no mind to destroy in another kingdom what he propagated in his own. What is freer than the imposition of a name ? Yet this he foreknew, and this Josiah was Manasseh's son, 2 Kings xxi. 26. Was there anything more voluntary than for

Pharaoh to honour the butler by restoring him to his place, and punish the baker by hanging him on a gibbet? Yet this was foretold, Gen. xl. 8. And were not all the voluntary acts of men, which were the means of Joseph's advancement, foreknown by God, as well as his exaltation, which was the end he aimed at by those means? Many of these may be reckoned up.

Can all the free acts of man surmount the infinite capacity of the divine understanding? If God singles out one voluntary action in man as contingent as any, and lying among a vast number of other designs and resolutions, both antecedent and subsequent, why should he not know the whole mass of men's thoughts and actions, and pierce into all that the liberty of man's will can effect? Why should he not know every grain, as well as one that lies in the midst of many of the same kind?

And since the Scripture gives so large an account of contingents predicted by God, no man can certainly prove that anything is unforeknown to him. It is as reasonable to think he knows every contingent, as that he knows some that lie as much hid from the eye of any creature, since there is no more difficulty to an infinite understanding to know all, than to know some.* Indeed, if we deny God's foreknowledge of the voluntary actions of men, we must strike ourselves off from the belief of Scripture predictions that yet remain unaccomplished, and will be brought about by the voluntary engagements of men, as the ruin of antichrist, &c. If God foreknows not the secret motions of man's will, how can he foretell them? If we strip him of this perfection of prescience, why should we believe a word of Scripture predictions? All the credit of the word of God is torn up by the roots. If God were uncertain of such events, how can we reconcile God's declaration of them to his truth, and his demanding our belief of them to his goodness? Were it good and righteous in God to urge us to the belief of that he were uncertain of himself? How could he be true in predicting things he were not sure of? Or good in requiring credit to be given to that which might be false? This would necessarily follow, if God did not foreknow the motions of men's wills, whereby many of his predictions were fulfilled, and some remain yet to be accomplished.

[2.] God foreknows the voluntary sinful motions of men's wills.

First, God hath foretold several of them. Were not all the minute sinful circumstances about the death of our blessed Redeemer, as the piercing him, giving him gall to drink, foretold, as well as the not breaking his bones, and parting his garments? What were those but the free actions of men, which they did willingly, without any constraint? And those foretold by David, Isaiah, and other prophets, some above a thousand, some above eight hundred, and some more, some fewer years, before they came to pass; and events punctually answered the prophecies. Many sinful acts of men, which depended upon their free will, have been foretold: the Egyptians' voluntary oppressing Israel, Gen. xv. 13; Pharaoh's hardening his heart against the voice of Moses, Exod. iii. 19; that Isaiah's message would be in vain to the people, Isa. vi. 10; that the Israelites would be rebellious after Moses his death, and turn idolaters, Deut. xxxi. 16; Judas his betraying of our Saviour, a voluntary action, John vi. 71; he was not forced to do what he did, for he had some kind of repentance for it; and not violence, but voluntariness, falls under repentance.

Secondly, His truth hath depended upon this foresight. Let us consider

* The stoics, that thought their souls to be some particle of God, Ἀποσπάσματα, pieces pulled off from him, did conclude from thence that he knew all the motions of their souls as his own movements, as things coherent with him.—*Arrian Epictet.*, lib. i. chap. xiv. p. 60.

that in Gen. xv. 16, but 'the fourth generation, they shall come hither again;' that is, the posterity of Abraham shall come into Canaan; 'for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* God makes a promise to Abraham of giving his posterity the land of Canaan, not presently, but in the fourth generation. If the truth of God be infallible in the performance of his promise, his understanding is as infallible in the foresight of the Amorites' sin: the fulness of their iniquity was to precede the Israelites' possession. Did the truth of God depend upon an uncertainty? Did he make the promise hand over head, as we say? How could he with any wisdom and truth assure Israel of the possession of the land in the fourth generation, if he had not been sure that the Amorites would fill up the measure of their iniquities by that time? If Abraham had been a Socinian, to deny God's knowledge of the free acts of men, had he not had a fine excuse for unbelief? What would his reply have been to God? Alas, Lord, this is not a promise to be relied upon; the Amorites' iniquity depends upon the acts of their free will, and such thou canst have no knowledge of. Thou canst see no more than a likelihood of their iniquity being full, and therefore there is but a likelihood of thy performing thy promise, and not a certainty. Would not this be judged not only a saucy, but a blasphemous answer? And upon these principles the truth of the most faithful God had been dashed to uncertainty and a peradventure.

Thirdly, God provided a remedy for man's sin, and therefore foresaw the entrance of it into the world by the fall of Adam. He had a decree before the foundation of the world, to manifest his wisdom in the gospel by Jesus Christ, an 'eternal purpose in Jesus Christ,' Eph. iii. 11. And a decree of election passed before the foundation of the world, a separation of some to redemption and forgiveness of sin in the blood of Christ, in whom they were from eternity chosen, as well as in time accepted in Christ, Eph. i. 4, 6, 7, which is called a 'purpose in himself,' ver. 9. Had not sin entered, there had been no occasion for the death of the Son of God, it being everywhere in Scripture laid upon that score. A decree for the shedding of blood supposed a decree for the permission of sin, and a certain foreknowledge of God, that it would be committed by man. An uncertainty of foreknowledge, and a fixedness of purpose, are not consistent in a wise man, much less in the only wise God. God's purpose to manifest his wisdom to men and angels in this way might have been defeated, had God had only a conjectural foreknowledge of the fall of man; and all those solemn purposes of displaying his perfections in those methods had been to no purpose.† The provision of a remedy supposed a certainty of the disease. If a sparrow fall not to ground without the will of God, how much less could such a deplorable ruin fall upon mankind, without God's will permitting it, and his knowledge foreseeing it!

It is not hard to conceive how God might foreknow it.‡ He indeed decreed to create man in an excellent state. The goodness of God could not but furnish him with a power to stand. Yet in his wisdom he might foresee that the devil would be envious to man's happiness, and would, out of envy, attempt his subversion. As God knew of what temper the faculties were he had endued man with, and how far they were able to endure the assaults of a temptation, so he also foreknew the grand subtilty of Satan, how he would lay his mine, and to what point he would drive his temptation: how he would propose and manage it, and direct his battery against the sensitive appetite, and assault the weakest part of the fort; might he not foresee that

* Vid. Rivet. *in loc.* exerci. 86, p. 329.

† Mares. cont. Volkel. lib. i. cap. 24, p. 343. ‡ Amyrald. de Prædestin. cap. 6.

the efficacy of the temptation would exceed the measure of the resistance? Cannot God know how far the malice of Satan would extend; what shots he would, according to his nature, use; how high he would charge his temptation without his powerful restraint, as well as an engineer judge how many shots of a cannon will make a breach in a town, and how many casks of powder will blow up a fortress, who never yet built the one nor founded the other? We may easily conclude God could not be deceived in the judgment of the issue and event, since he knew how far he would let Satan loose, how far he would permit man to act; and since he dives to the bottom of the nature of all things, he foresaw that Adam was endued with an ability to stand, as he foresaw that Benhadad might naturally recover of his disease; but he foresaw also that Adam would sink under the allurements of the temptation, as he foresaw that Hazael would not let Benhadad live, 2 Kings viii. 10.

Now since the whole race of mankind lies in corruption, and is subject to the power of the devil, 1 John v. 19, may not God, that knows that corruption in every man's nature, and the force of every man's spirit, and what every particular nature will incline him to upon such objects proposed to him, and what the reasons of the temptation will be, know also the issues? Is there any difficulty in God's foreknowing this, since man, knowing the nature of one he is well acquainted with, can conclude what sentiments he will have, and how he will behave himself, upon presenting this or that object to him?

If a man that understands the disposition of his child or servant, knows before what he will do upon such an occasion, may not God much more, who knows the inclination of all his creatures, and from eternity run with his eyes over all the works he intended? Our wills are in the number of causes, and since God knows our wills, as causes, better than we do ourselves, why should he be ignorant of the effects?

God determines to give grace to such a man; not to give it to another, but leave him to himself, and suffer such temptations to assault him. Now God, knowing the corruption of man in the whole mass, and in every part of it, is it not easy for him to foreknow what the future actions of the will will be, when the tinder and fire meet together, and how such a man will determine himself, both as to the substance and manner of the action? Is it not easy for him to know how a corrupted temper and a temptation will suit? God is exactly privy to all the gall in the hearts of men, and what principles they will have before they have a being. He 'knows their thoughts afar off,' Ps. cxxxix. 2, as far off as eternity, as some explain the words, and thoughts are as voluntary as anything; he knows the power and inclinations of men in the order of second causes; he understands the corruption of men, as well as the poison of dragons and the venom of asps. This is 'laid up in store with him, and sealed among his treasures,' Deut. xxxii. 33, 34; among the treasures of his foreknowledge, say some.

What was the cruelty of Hazael but a free act? Yet God knew the frame of his heart, and what acts of murder and oppression would spring from that bitter fountain, before Hazael had conceived them in himself, 2 Kings viii. 12. As a man that knows the mineral through which waters pass may know what relish they will have before they appear above the earth, so our Saviour knew how Peter would deny him; he knew what quantity of powder would serve for such a battery, in what measure he would let loose Satan, how far he would leave the reins in Peter's hands, and then the issue might easily be known; and so, in every act of man, God knows in his own will what measure of grace he will give to determine the will to good, and what measure of grace he will withdraw from such a person, or not give to him,

and consequently, how far such a person will fall or not. God knows the inclinations of the creature ; he knows his own permissions, what degrees of grace he will either allow him or keep from him, according to which will be the degree of his sin. This may in some measure help our conceptions in this, though, as was said before, the manner of God's foreknowledge is not so easily explicable.

(3). God's foreknowledge of man's voluntary actions doth not necessitate the will of man. The foreknowledge of God is not deceived, nor the liberty of man's will diminished. I shall not trouble you with any school distinctions, but be as plain as I can, laying down several propositions in this case.

Prop. 1. It is certain all necessity doth not take away liberty. Indeed, a compulsive necessity takes away liberty, but a necessity of immutability removes not liberty from God ; why should then a necessity of infallibility in God remove liberty from the creature ? God did not necessarily create the world, because he decreed it ; yet freely, because his will from eternity stood to it : he freely decreed it, and freely created it. As the apostle saith, in regard of God's decrees, ' Who hath been his counsellor ? ' Rom. xi. 34, so, in regard of his actions, I may say, Who hath been his compeller ? He freely decreed, and he freely created. Jesus Christ necessarily took our flesh, because he had covenanted with God so to do, yet he acted freely and voluntar[il]y according to that covenant, otherwise his death had not been efficacious for us. A good man doth naturally necessarily love his children, yet voluntary. It is part of the happiness of the blessed to love God unchangeably, yet freely, for it would not be their happiness if it were done by compulsion. What is done by force cannot be called felicity, because there is no delight or complacency in it ; and though the blessed love God freely, yet, if there were a possibility of change, it would not be their happiness ; their blessedness would be damped by their fear of falling from this love, and consequently from their nearness to God, in whom their happiness consists. God foreknows that they will love him for ever, but are they therefore compelled for ever to love him ? If there were such a kind of constraint, heaven would be rendered burdensome to them, and so no heaven.

Again, God's foreknowledge of what he will do doth not necessitate him to do ; he foreknew that he would create a world, yet he freely created a world. God's foreknowledge doth not necessitate himself, why should it necessitate us more than himself ? We may instance in ourselves : when we will a thing, we necessar[il]y use our faculty of will ; and when we freely will anything, it is necessary that we freely will ; but this necessity doth not exclude but include liberty ; or more plainly, when a man writes or speaks, whilst he writes or speaks, those actions are necessary, because to speak and be silent, to write and not to write, at the same time, are impossible ; yet our writing or speaking doth not take away the power not to write or to be silent at that time, if a man would be so, for he might have chose whether he would have spoke or writ. So there is a necessity of such actions of man which God foresees ; that is, a necessity of infallibility, because God cannot be deceived, but not a coactive necessity, as if they were compelled by God to act thus or thus.

Prop. 2. No man can say in any of his voluntary actions that he ever found any force upon him. When any of us have done anything according to our wills, can we say we could not have done the contrary to it ? Were we determined to it in our own intrinsic nature, or did we not determine ourselves ? Did we not act either according to our reason, or according to outward allurements ; did we find anything without us or within us that

did force our wills to the embracing this or that? Whatever action you do, you do it because you judge it fit to be done, or because you will do it. What though God foresaw that you would do so, and that you would do this or that, did you feel any force upon you? Did you not act according to your nature? God foresees that you will eat or walk at such a time; do you find anything that moves you to eat but your own appetite, or to walk but your own reason and will? If prescience had imposed any necessity upon man, should we not probably have found some kind of plea from it in the mouth of Adam? He knew as much as any man ever since knew of the nature of God, as discoverable in creation; he could not in innocence fancy an ignorant God, a God that knew nothing of future things; he could not be so ignorant of his own action but he must have perceived a force upon his will, had there been any; had he thought that God's prescience imposed any necessity upon him, he would not have omitted the plea, especially when he was so daring as to charge the providence of God, in the gift of the woman to him, to be the cause of his crime, Gen. iii. 12. How came his posterity to invent new charges against God, which their father Adam never thought of, who had more knowledge than all of them? He could find no cause of his sin but the liberty of his own will. He charges it not upon any necessity from the devil, or any necessity from God; nor doth he allege the gift of the woman as a necessary cause of his sin, but an occasion of it, by giving the fruit to him. Judas knew that our Saviour did foreknow his treachery, for he had told him of it in the hearing of his disciples, John xiii. 21, 26, yet he never charged the necessity of his crime upon the foreknowledge of his Master. If Judas had not done it freely, he had had no reason to repent of it; his repentance justifies Christ from imposing any necessity upon him by that foreknowledge. No man acts anything but he can give an account of the motives of his action; he cannot father it upon a blind necessity; the will cannot be compelled, for then it would cease to be will. God doth not root up the foundations of nature, or change the order of it, and make men unable to act like men, that is, as free agents. God foreknows the actions of irrational creatures; this concludes no violence upon their nature, for we find their actions to be according to their nature, and spontaneous.

Prop. 3. God's foreknowledge is not, simply considered, the cause of anything. It puts nothing into things, but only beholds them as present, and arising from their proper causes. The knowledge of God is not the principle of things, or the cause of their existence, but directive of the action. Nothing is because God knows it, but because God wills it, either positively or permissively. God knows all things possible; yet because God knows them, they are not brought into actual existence, but remain still only as things possible. Knowledge only apprehends a thing, but acts nothing; it is the rule of acting, but not the cause of acting; the will is the immediate principle, and the power the immediate cause. To know a thing is not to do a thing; for then we may be said to do everything that we know. But every man knows those things which he never did, nor never will do. Knowledge in itself is an apprehension of a thing, and is not the cause of it. A spectator of a thing is not the cause of that thing which he sees; that is, he is not the cause of it as he beholds it. We see a man write; we know before that he will write at such a time; but this foreknowledge is not the cause of his writing. We see a man walk; but our vision of him brings no necessity of walking upon him; he was free to walk, or not to walk.* We foreknow that death will seize upon all men; we foreknow that the seasons of the year will succeed one another; yet is not our foreknowledge the cause

* Raleigh, of the World, lib i. cap. i. sec. 12.

of this succession of spring after winter, or of the death of all men, or any man. We see one man fighting with another; our sight is not the cause of that contest, but some quarrel among themselves exciting their own passions. As the knowledge of present things imposeth no necessity upon them while they are acting and present, so the knowledge of future things imposeth no necessity upon them while they are coming. We are certain there will be men in the world to-morrow, and that the sea will ebb and flow; but is this knowledge of ours the cause that those things will be so? I know that the sun will rise to-morrow; it is true that he shall rise; but it is not true that my foreknowledge makes it to rise. If a physician prognosticates, upon seeing the intemperances and debaucheries of men, that they will fall into such a distemper, is his prognostication any cause of their disease, or of the sharpness of any symptoms attending it? The prophet foretold the cruelty of Hazael before he committed it; but who will say that the prophet was the cause of his commission of that evil? And thus the foreknowledge of God takes not away the liberty of man's will, no more than a foreknowledge that we have of any man's actions takes away his liberty. We may, upon our knowledge of the temper of a man, certainly foreknow that if he falls into such company, and get among his cups, he will be drunk; but is this foreknowledge the cause that he is drunk? No; the cause is the liberty of his own will, and not resisting the temptation. God purposes to leave such a man to himself and his own ways; and man being so left, God foreknows what will be done by him according to that corrupt nature which is in him. Though the decree of God, of leaving a man to the liberty of his own will, be certain, yet the liberty of man's will, as thus left, is the cause of all the extravagancies he doth commit. Suppose Adam had stood; would not God certainly have foreseen that he would have stood? Yet it would have been concluded that Adam had stood, not by any necessity of God's foreknowledge, but by the liberty of his own will. Why should, then, the foreknowledge of God add more necessity to his falling than to his standing? * And though it be said sometimes in Scripture that such a thing was done, 'that the Scripture might be fulfilled,' as John xii. 38, 'that the saying of Esaias might be fulfilled, Lord, who hath believed our report?' the word *that* doth not infer that the prediction of the prophet was the cause of the Jews' unbelief; but infers this, that the prediction was manifested to be true by their unbelief, and the event answered the prediction. This prediction was not the cause of their sin; but their foreseen sin was the cause of this prediction. And so the particle *that* is taken, Ps. li. 4, 'Against thee, thee only have I sinned, that thou mightest be justified,' &c. The justifying God was not the end and intent of the sin, but the event of it upon his acknowledgment.

Prop. 4. God foreknows things because they will come to pass; but things are not future because God knows them. Foreknowledge presupposeth the object which is foreknown. A thing that is to come to pass is the object of the divine knowledge, but not the cause of the act of divine knowledge; and though the foreknowledge of God doth in eternity precede the actual presence of a thing which is foreseen as future, yet the future thing, in regard of its futurity, is as eternal as the foreknowledge of God. As the voice is uttered before it be heard, and a thing is visible before it be seen, and a thing knowable before it be known; but how comes it to be knowable to God? It must be answered, either in the power of God as a thing possible, or in the will of God as a thing future. He first willed, and then knew what he willed; he knew what he willed to effect, and he knew what he willed to

* Rivet in Isa. liii. 1, p. 16.

permit ; as he willed the death of Christ by a determinate counsel, and willed the permission of the Jews' sin, and the ordering of the malice of their nature to that end, Acts ii. 23. God decrees to make a rational creature, and to govern him by a law ; God decrees not to hinder this rational creature from transgressing his law ; and God foresees that what he would not hinder would come to pass. Man did not sin because God foresaw him ; but God foresaw him to sin, because man would sin. If Adam and other men would have acted otherwise, God would have foreknown that they would have acted well. God foresaw our actions because they would so come to pass by the motion of our free-will, which he would permit, which he would concur with, which he would order to his own holy and glorious ends for the manifestation of the perfection of his nature. If I see a man lie in a sink, no necessity is inferred upon him from my sight to lie in that filthy place ; but there is a necessity inferred by him that lies there, that I should see him in that condition if I pass by and cast my eye that way.

Prop. 5. God did not only foreknow our actions, but the manner of our actions ; that is, he did not only know that we would do such actions, but that we would do them freely. He foresaw that the will would freely determine itself to this or that. The knowledge of God takes not away the nature of things. Though God knows possible things, yet they remain in the nature of possibility ; and though God knows contingent things, yet they remain in the nature of contingencies ; and though God knows free agents, yet they remain in the nature of liberty. God did not foreknow the actions of man as necessary, but as free ; so that liberty is rather established by this foreknowledge than removed. God did not foreknow that Adam had not a power to stand, or that any man hath not a power to omit such a sinful action, but that he would not omit it. Man hath a power to do otherwise than that which God foreknows he will do. Adam was not determined by any inward necessity to fall, nor any man by any inward necessity to commit this or that particular sin ; but God foresaw that he would fall, and fall freely ; for he saw the whole circle of means and causes whereby such and such actions should be produced, and can be no more ignorant of the motions of our wills, and the manner of them, than an artificer can be ignorant of the motions of his watch, and how far the spring will let down the string in the space of an hour. He sees all causes leading to such events in their whole order, and how the free-will of man will comply with this, or refuse that ; he changes not the manner of the creature's operation, whatsoever it be.

Prop. 6. But what if the foreknowledge of God, and the liberty of the will, cannot be fully reconciled by man ? Shall we therefore deny a perfection in God, to support a liberty in ourselves ? Shall we rather fasten ignorance upon God, and accuse him of blindness, to maintain our liberty ? That God doth foreknow everything, and yet that there is liberty in the rational creature, are both certain ; but how fully to reconcile them, may surmount the understanding of man. Some truths the disciples were not capable of bearing in the days of Christ ; and several truths our understandings cannot reach as long as the world doth last ; yet in the mean time we must on the one hand take heed of conceiving God ignorant, and on the other hand of imagining the creature necessitated : the one will render God imperfect, and the other will seem to render him unjust, in punishing man for that sin which he could not avoid, but was brought into by a fatal necessity. God is sufficient to render a reason of his own proceedings, and clear up all at the day of judgment ; it is a part of man's curiosity, since the fall,

to be prying into God's secrets, things too high for him, whereby he sings his own wings, and confounds his own understanding. It is a cursed affectation that runs in the blood of Adam's posterity, to know as God, though our first father smarted and ruined his posterity in that attempt; the ways and knowledge of God are as much 'above our thoughts' and conceptions, as 'the heavens are above the earth,' Isa. lv. 9, and so sublime, that we cannot comprehend them in their true and just greatness;* his designs are so mysterious, and the ways of his conduct so profound, that it is not possible to dive into them. The force of our understandings is below his infinite wisdom, and therefore we should adore him with an humble astonishment, and cry out with the apostle; Rom. xi. 33, 'Oh the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' Whenever we meet with depths that we cannot fathom, let us remember that he is God, and we his creatures; and not be guilty of so great extravagance, as to think that a subject can pierce into all the secrets of a prince, or a work understand all the operations of the artificer. Let us only resolve not to fasten any thing on God that is unworthy of the perfection of his nature, and dishonourable to the glory of his majesty; nor imagine that we can ever step out of the rank of creatures to the glory of the Deity, to understand fully everything in his nature.

So much for the second general, what God knows.

III. The third is, How God knows all things? As it is necessary we should conceive God to be an understanding being, else he could not be God, so we must conceive his understanding to be infinitely more pure and perfect than ours in the act of it, else we liken him to ourselves, and debase him as low as his footstool. As among creatures there are degrees of being and perfection; plants above earth and sand, because they have a power of growth; beasts above plants, because to their power of growth, there is an addition of excellency of sense; rational creatures above beasts, because to sense there is added the dignity of reason; the understanding of man is more noble than all the vegetative power of plants, or the sensitive power of beasts: God therefore must be infinitely more excellent in his understanding, and therefore in the manner of it.† As man differs from a beast in regard of his knowledge, so doth God also from man in regard of his knowledge. As God therefore is, in being and perfection, infinitely more above a man than a man is above a beast, the manner of his knowledge must be infinitely more above a man's knowledge, than the knowledge of a man is above that of a beast; our understandings can clasp an object in a moment, that is at a great distance from our sense; our eye by one elevated motion can view the heavens; the manner of God's understanding must be unconceivably above our glimmerings; as the manner of his being is infinitely more perfect than all beings, so must the manner of his understanding be infinitely more perfect than all created understandings.‡ Indeed, the manner of God's knowledge can no more be known by us, than his essence can be known by us; and the same incapacity in man, which renders him unable to comprehend the being of God, renders him as unable to comprehend the manner of God's understanding.‡ As there is a vast distance between the essence of God, and our beings, so there is between the thoughts of God and our thoughts. The heavens are not so much higher than the earth, as the thoughts of God are above the thoughts of men, yea, and of the highest

* Daille, Melang. part i. p. 712, 725.

† Maxim. Tyrius Dissert. i. p. 9, 10.

‡ Maimonides More Nevochim. part iii. c. xx. p. 391-393.

angel, Isa. lv. 8, 9 ; yet though we know not the manner of God's knowledge, we know that he knows ; as though we know not the infiniteness of God, yet we know that he is infinite. It is God's sole prerogative to know himself what he is ; and it is equally his prerogative to know how he knows ; the manner of God's knowledge therefore must be considered by us, as free from those imperfections our knowledge is encumbered with.

In general, God doth necessarily know all things ; he is necessarily omnipresent, because of the immensity of his essence ; so he is necessarily omniscient, because of the infiniteness of his understanding. It is no more at the liberty of his will, whether he will know all things, than whether he will be able to create all things ; it is no more at the liberty of his will, whether he will be omniscient, than whether he will be holy ; he can as little be ignorant, as he can be impure ; he knows not all things because he *will* know them, but because it is essential to his nature to know them.

In particular.

Prop. 1. God knows by his own essence ; that is, he sees the nature of things in the ideas of his own mind, and the events of things in the decrees of his own will ; he knows them not by viewing the things, but by viewing himself ; his own essence is the mirror and book, wherein he beholds all things that he doth ordain, dispose, and execute ; and so he knows all things in the first and original cause, which is no other than his own essence willing, and his own essence executing what he wills ; he knows them in his power as the physical principle, in his will as the moral principle of things, as some speak.

He borrows not the knowledge of creatures from the creatures, nor depends upon them for means of understanding, as we poor worms do, who are beholden to the objects abroad to assist us with images of things, and to our senses to convey them into our minds ; God would then acquire a perfection from those things which are below himself, and an excellency from those things that are vile ; his knowledge would not precede the being of the creatures, but the creatures would be before the act of his knowledge. If he understood by images drawn from the creatures, as we do, there would be something in God which is not God, viz., the images of things drawn from outward objects. God would then depend upon creatures for that which is more noble than a bare being ; for to be understanding, is more excellent than barely to be. Besides, if God's knowledge of his creatures were derived from the creatures by the impression of anything upon him, as there is upon us, he could not know from eternity, because from eternity there was no actual existence of anything but himself ; and therefore there could not be any images shot out from any thing, because there was not anything in being but God ; as there is no principle of being to anything but by his essence, so there is no principle of the knowledge of anything by himself but his essence. If the knowledge of God were distinct from his essence, his knowledge were not eternal, because there is nothing eternal but his essence.

His understanding is not a faculty in him as it is in us, but the same with his essence, because of the simplicity of his nature ; God is not made up of various parts, one distinct from another, as we are, and therefore doth not understand by a part of himself, but by himself ; so that to be and to understand is the same with God ; his essence is not one thing, and the power whereby he understands another ; he would then be compounded, and not be the most simple being. This also is necessary for the perfection of God ; for the more perfect and noble the way and manner of knowing is, the more perfect and noble is the knowledge. The perfection of knowledge depends upon

the excellency of the medium whereby we know. As a knowledge by reason is a more noble way of knowing than knowledge by sense, so it is more excellent for God to know by his essence, than by anything without him, anything mixed with him; the first would render him dependent, and the other would demolish his simplicity.

Again, the natures of all things are contained in God,—not formally, for then the nature of the creatures would be God; *—but eminently, ‘he that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see?’ Ps. xciv. 9. He hath in himself eminently the beauty, perfection, life and vigour of all creatures; he created nothing contrary to himself, but everything with some footsteps of himself in them; he could not have pronounced them good, as he did, had there been anything in them contrary to his own goodness; and therefore as his essence primarily represents itself, so it represents the creatures, and makes them known to him. As the essence of God is eminently all things, so by understanding his essence, he eminently understands all things. And therefore he hath not one knowledge of himself, and another knowledge of the creatures; but by knowing himself, as the original and exemplary cause of all things, he cannot be ignorant of any creature which he is the cause of; so that he knows all things, not by an understanding of them, but by an understanding of himself; by understanding his own power as the efficient of them, his own will as the order† of them, his own goodness as the adorer and beautifier of them, his own wisdom as the disposer of them, and his own holiness, to which many of their actions are contrary.

As he sees all things possible in his own power,‡ because he is able to produce them, so he sees all things future in his own will; decreeing to effect them, if they be good; or decreeing to permit them, if they be evil. In this glass he sees what he will give being to, and what he will suffer to fall into a deficiency, without looking out of himself, or borrowing knowledge from his creatures; he knows all things in himself. And thus his knowledge is more noble, and of a higher elevation than ours, or the knowledge of any creature can be; he knows all things by one comprehension of the causes in himself.

Prop. 2. God knows all things by one act of intuition. This the schools call an intuitive knowledge. This follows upon the other; for if he know by his own essence, he knows all things by one act; there would be otherwise a division in his essence, a first and a last, a nearness and a distance. As what he made, he made by one word, so what he sees, he pierceth into by one glance from eternity to eternity; as he wills all things by one act of his will, so he knows all things by one act of his understanding. He knows not some things discursively from other things, nor knows one thing successively after another. As by one act he imparts essence to things, so by one act he knows the nature of things.

1. He doth not know by discourse as we do; that is, by deducing one thing from another, and from common notions drawing out other rational conclusions, and arguing one thing from another, and springing up various consequences from some principle assented to; but God stands in no need of reasonings: the making inferences and abstracting things would be stains in the infinite perfection of God. Here would be a mixture of knowledge and ignorance; while he knew the principle, he would not know the consequence and conclusion till he had actually deduced it; one thing would be known after another, and so he would have an ignorance and then a knowledge, and there would be different conceptions in God, and knowledge

* Dionys. † Qu. ‘orderer’?—ED. ‡ Kendal against Goodwin of Foreknowledge.

would be multiplied according to the multitude of objects, as it is in human understandings. But God knows all things before they did exist, and never was ignorant of them: Acts xv. 18, 'Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world.' He therefore knows them all at once; the knowledge of one thing was not before another, nor depended upon another, as it doth in the way of human reasoning. Though indeed some * make a virtual discourse in God, that is, though God hath a simple knowledge, yet it doth virtually contain a discourse by the flowing of one knowledge from another; as from the knowledge of his own power he knows what things are possible to be made by him, and from the knowledge of himself he passes to the knowledge of the creatures; but this is only according to our conception, and because of our weakness they are apprehended as two distinct acts in God, one of which is the reason of another. As we say that one attribute is the reason of another; as his mercy may be said to be the reason of his patience, and his omnipresence to be the reason of the knowledge of present things done in the world. God indeed by one simple act knows himself and the creatures, but when that act whereby he knows himself is conceived by us to pass to the knowledge of the creatures, we must not understand it to be a new act distinct from the other, but the same act upon different terms or objects. Such an order is in our understanding and conceptions, not in God's.

2. Nor doth he know successively as we do; that is, not by drops, one thing after another. This follows from the former, a knowledge of all things without discourse is a knowledge without succession.† The knowledge of one thing is not in God before another, one act of knowledge doth not forget‡ another. In regard of the objects, one thing is before another, one year before another, one generation of men before another; one is the cause, the other is the effect. In the creatures there is such a succession, and God knows there will be such a succession; but there is no such order in God's knowledge, for he knows all those successions by one glance, without any succession of knowledge in himself.

Man in his view of things must turn sometimes his body, sometimes only his eyes. He cannot see all the contents of a letter at once; and though he beholds all the lines in the page of a book at once, and a whole country in a map, yet to know what is contained in them, he must turn his eye from word to word, and line to line, and so spin out one thing after another by several acts and motions. We behold a great part of the sea at once, saith Epiphanius, but not all the dimensions of it; for to know the length of the sea we move our eyes one way; to see the breadth of it, we turn our eyes another way; to behold the depth of it, we hath another motion of them. And when we cast our eyes up to heaven, we seem to receive in at an instant the whole extent of the hemisphere; yet there is but one object the eye can attentively pitch upon, and we cannot distinctly view what we see in a lump without various motions of our eyes, which is not done without succession of time.§ And certainly the understanding of angels is bounded according to the measure of their beings, so that it cannot extend itself at one time to a quantity of objects, to make a distinct application of them, but the objects must present themselves one by one. But God is all eye, all understanding; as there is no succession in his essence, so there is none in his knowledge; 'his understanding,' in the nature and in the act, 'is infinite,' as it is in the text. He therefore sees eternally and universally all

* Suarez. vol. i. de Deo, lib. iii. cap. ii. p. 133, 134.

† Gamach. in Aquin. q. xiv. cap. i. p. 119.

§ Amyrant, Morale Chresti, tom. iii. p. 137.

‡ Qu. 'beget' or 'forego'?—ED.

things by one act, without any motion, much less various motions. The various changes of things in their substance, qualities, places, and relations, withdraw not anything from his eye, nor bring any new thing to his knowledge. He doth not, upon consideration of present things, turn his mind from past, or when he beholds future things, turn his mind from present; but he sees them not one after another, but all at once and altogether, the whole circle of his own counsels, and all the various lines drawn forth from the centre of his will to the circumference of his creatures. Just as if a man were able in one moment to read a whole library; or as if you should imagine a transparent crystal globe, hung up in the midst of a room, and so framed as to take in the images of all things in the room, the fretwork in the ceiling, the inlaid parts of the floor, and the particular parts of the tapestry about it, the eye of a man would behold all the beauty of the room at once in it. As the sun by one light and heat frames sensible things, so God by one simple act knows all things. As he knows mutable things by an immutable knowledge, bodily things by a spiritual knowledge, so he knows many things by one knowledge: Heb. iv. 13, 'All things are open and naked to him,' more than any one thing can be to us, and therefore he views all things at once as well as we can behold and contemplate one thing alone. As he is the 'Father of lights,' a God of infinite understanding, there is 'no variableness' in his mind, 'nor any shadow of turning' of his eye as there is of ours, to behold various things, James i. 17. His knowledge being eternal, includes all times; there is nothing past or future with him, and therefore he beholds all things by one and the same manner of knowledge, and comprehends all knowable things by one act, and in one moment.

This must needs be so,

(1.) Because of the eminency of God. God is above all, and therefore cannot but see the motions of all. He that sits in a theatre, or at the top of a place, sees all things, all persons; by one aspect he comprehends the whole circle of the place; whereas he that sits below, when he looks before, he cannot see things behind. God being above all, about all, in all, sees at once the motions of all. The whole world in the eye of God is less than a point that divides one sentence from another in a book; as a cipher, 'a grain of dust,' Isa. xl. 15. So little a thing can be seen by man at once, and all things being as little in the eye of God, are seen at once by him. As all time is but a moment to his eternity, so all things are but as a point to the immensity of his knowledge, which he can behold with more ease than we can move or turn our eye.

(2.) Because all the perfections of knowing are united in God. As particular senses are divided in man,*—by one he sees, by another he hears, by another he smells, yet all those are united in one common sense, and this common sense apprehends all,—so the various and distinct ways of knowledge in the creatures, are all eminently united in God. A man, when he sees a grain of wheat, understands at once all things that can in time proceed from that seed; so God, by beholding his own virtue and power, beholds all things which shall in time be unfolded by him. We have a shadow of this way of knowledge in our own understanding: the sense only perceives a thing present, and one object only proper and suitable to it; as the eye sees colour, the ear hears sounds, we see this and that man, one time this, another minute that; but the understanding abstracts a notion of the common nature of man, and frames a conception of that nature wherein all men agree, and so in a manner beholds and understands all men at once,

* Cusan. p. 646.

by understanding the common nature of man, which is a degree of knowledge above the sense and fancy; we may then conceive an infinite vaster perfection in the understanding of God. As to know is simply better than not to know at all, so to know by one act comprehensive is a greater perfection than to know by divided acts, by succession to receive information, and to have an increase or decrease of knowledge, to be like a bucket, always descending into the well and fetching water from thence. It is a man's weakness that he is fixed on one object only at a time; it is God's perfection that he can behold all at once, and is fixed upon one no more than upon another.

Prop. 3. God knows all things independently. This is essential to an infinite understanding. He receives not his knowledge from anything without him, he hath no tutor to instruct him, or book to inform him; 'Who hath been his counsellor?' saith the prophet, Isa. xl. 13. He hath no need of the counsels of others, nor of the instructions of others. This follows upon the first and second propositions; if he knows things by his essence, then as his essence is independent from the creatures, so is his knowledge; he borrows not any images from the creature, hath no species or pictures of things in his understanding, as we have; no beams from the creature strike upon him to enlighten him, but beams from him upon the world; the earth sends not light to the sun, but the sun to the earth.

Our knowledge indeed depends upon the object, but all created objects depend upon God's knowledge and will. We could not know creatures unless they were, but creatures could not be unless God knew them. As nothing that he wills is the cause of his will, so nothing that he knows is the cause of his knowledge; he did not make things to know them, but he knows them to make them. Who will imagine that the mark of the foot in the dust is the cause that the foot stands in this or that particular place?

If his knowledge did depend upon the things, then the existence of things did precede God's knowledge of them; to say that they are the cause of God's knowledge is to say, that God was not the cause of their being; and if he did create them, it was effected by a blind and ignorant power, he created he knew not what till he had produced it. If he be beholden for his knowledge to the creatures he hath made, he had then no knowledge of them before he made them. If his knowledge were dependent upon them, it could not be eternal, but must have a beginning when the creatures had a beginning, and be of no longer a date than since the nature of things was in actual existence; for whatsoever is a cause of knowledge doth precede the knowledge it causes, either in order of time or order of nature; temporal things therefore cannot be the cause of that knowledge which is eternal. His works could not be foreknown to him, Acts xv. 18, if his knowledge commenced with the existence of his works; if he knew them before he made them, he could not derive a knowledge from them after they were made. He made all things in wisdom, Ps. civ. 24. How can this be imagined, if the things known were the cause of his knowledge, and so before his knowledge, and therefore before his action? * God would not then be the first in the order of knowing agents, because he would not act by knowledge, but act before he knew, and know after he had acted, and so the creature which he made would be before the act of his understanding, whereby he knew what he made.

Again, since knowledge is a perfection, if God's knowledge of the creatures depended upon the creatures, he would derive an excellency from them, they would derive no excellency from any *idea* in the divine mind; he would

* Bradward. lib. i. cap. 15.

not be infinitely perfect in himself. If his perfection in knowledge were gained from anything without himself and below himself, he would not be sufficient of himself, but be under an indigence which wanted a supply from the things he had made, and could not be eternally perfect till he had created, and seen the effects of his own power, goodness, and wisdom to render him more wise and knowing in time than he was from eternity. Who can fancy such a God as this, without destroying the Deity he pretends to adore? For if his understanding be perfected by something without him, why may not his essence be perfected by something without him? that as he was made knowing by something without him, he might be made God by something without him?

How could his understanding be infinite, if it depended upon a finite object, as upon a cause? Is the majesty of God to be debased to a mendicant condition, to seek for a supply from things inferior to himself? Is it to be imagined that a fool, a toad, a fly should be assistant to the knowledge of God? that the most noble being should be perfected by things so vile, that the supreme cause of all things should receive any addition of knowledge, and be determined in his understanding by the notion of things so mean? To conclude this particular; all things depend upon his knowledge, his knowledge depends upon nothing, but is as independent as himself, and his own essence.

Prop. 4. God knows all things distinctly. His understanding is infinite in regard of clearness: 'God is light, and in him is no darkness at all,' 1 John i. 5. He sees not through a mist or cloud; there is no blemish in his understanding, no mote or beam in his eye to render anything obscure to him. Man discerns the surface and outside of things, little or nothing of the essence of things; we see the noblest things, but 'as in a glass darkly,' 1 Cor. xiii. 12. The too great nearness, as well as the too great distance of a thing, hinders our sight; the smallness of a mote escapes our eye, and so our knowledge; also the weakness of our understanding is troubled with the multitude of things, and cannot know many things but confusedly. But God knows the forms and essence of things, every circumstance; nothing is so deep but he sees to the bottom; he sees the mass, and sees the motes of beings. His understanding being infinite, is not offended with a multitude of things, or distracted with the variety of them; he discerns everything infinitely more clearly and perfectly than Adam or Solomon could any one thing in the circle of their knowledge. What knowledge they had was from him; he hath therefore infinitely a more perfect knowledge than they were capable in their natures to receive a communication of. 'All things are open to him,' Heb. iv. 13. The least fibre in its nakedness and distinct frame is transparent to him; as by the help of glasses, the mouth, feet, hands of a small insect are visible to a man, which seem to the eye, without that assistance, one entire piece, not diversified into parts. All the causes, qualities, natures, properties of things are open to him: 'He brings out the host of heaven by number, and calleth them by names,' Isa. xl. 26. He numbers the hairs of our heads; what more distinct than number? Thus God beholds things in every unity, which makes up the heap. He knows, and none else can, everything in its true and intimate causes, in its original and intermediate causes; in himself as the cause of every particular of their being, every property in their being.

Knowledge by the causes is the most noble and perfect knowledge, and most suited to the infinite excellency of the divine being; he created all things, and ordered them to a universal and particular end; he therefore knows the essential properties of everything, every activity of their nature,

all their fitness for those distinct ends to which he orders them, and for which he governs and disposeth them, and understands their darkest and most hidden qualities, infinitely clearer than any eye can behold the clear beams of the sun. He knows all things as he made them; he made them distinctly, and therefore knows them distinctly, and that every individual; therefore God is said, Gen. i. 31, to 'see everything that he hath made;' he took a review of every particular creature he had made, and upon his view pronounced it good. To pronounce that good, which was not exactly known in every creek, in every mite of its nature, had not consisted with his veracity; for every one that speaks truth ignorantly, that knows not that he speaks truth, is a liar in speaking that which is true. God knows every act of his own will, whether it be positive or permissive, and therefore every effect of his will. We must needs ascribe to God a perfect knowledge, but a confused knowledge cannot challenge that title. To know things only in a heap is unworthy of the divine perfection; for if God knows his own ends in the creation of things, he knows distinctly the means whereby he will bring them to those ends for which he hath appointed them. No wise man intends an end without a knowledge of the means conducing to that end; an ignorance then of anything in the world, which falls under the nature of a means to a divine end (and there is nothing in the world but doth), would be inconsistent with the perfection of God; it would ascribe to him a blind providence in the world. As there can be nothing imperfect in his being and essence, so there can be nothing imperfect in his understanding and knowledge, and therefore not a confused knowledge, which is an imperfection: 'Darkness and light are both alike to him,' Ps. cxxxix. 12. He sees distinctly into the one as well as the other; what is darkness to us is not so to him.

Prop. 5. God knows all things infallibly. His understanding is infinite in regard of certainty. Every tittle of what he knows is as far from failing, as what he speaks; our Saviour affirms the one, Mat. v. 18. And there is the same reason of the certainty of one as well as the other. His essence is the measure of his knowledge; whence it is as impossible that God should be mistaken in the knowledge of the least thing in the world, as it is that he should be mistaken in his own essence; for, knowing himself comprehensively, he must know all other things infallibly. Since he is essentially omniscient, he is no more capable of error in his understanding, than of imperfection in his essence; his counsels are as unerring as his essence is perfect, and his knowledge as infallible as his essence is free from defect.

Again, since God knows all things with a knowledge of vision, because he wills them, his knowledge must be as infallible as his purpose; now his purpose will certainly be effected: 'What he hath thought shall come to pass, and what he hath purposed shall stand,' Isa. xiv. 24; 'His counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure,' chap. xlv. 10. There may be interruptions of nature, the foundations of it may be out of course, but there can be no bar upon the author of nature. He hath an infinite power to carry on and perfect the resolves of his own will, he can effect what he pleases by a word. Speech is one of the least motions; yet when God said, 'Let there be light,' 'there was light,' arising from darkness. No reason can be given why God knows a thing to be, but because he infallibly wills it to be.

Again, the schools make this difference between the knowledge of the good and bad angels, that the good are never deceived,* for that is repugnant to their blessed state, for deceit is an evil and an imperfection, inconsistent with that perfect blessedness the good angels are possessed of; and would it

* Suarez, vol. ii. p. 228.

not much more be a stain upon the blessedness of that God, that is blessed for ever, to be subject to deceit? His knowledge, therefore, is not an opinion, for an opinion is uncertain; a man knows not what to think, but leans to one part of the question proposed, rather than to the other. If things did not come to pass, therefore, as God knows them, his knowledge would be imperfect; and since he knows by his essence, his essence also would be imperfect, if God were exposed to any deceit in his knowledge. He knows by himself, who is the highest truth; and therefore it is impossible he should err in his understanding.

Prop. 6. God knows immutably. His understanding else could not be infinite. Every thing and every act that is mutable is finite, it hath its bounds; for there is a term from which it changeth, and a term to which it changes. There is a change in the understanding, when we gain the knowledge of a thing which was unknown to us before, or when we actually consider a thing which we did not know before, though we had the principles of the knowledge of it, or when we know that distinctly which we before knew confusedly.* None of these can be ascribed to God, without a manifest disparagement of his infiniteness. Our knowledge, indeed, is alway arriving to us or flowing from us; we pass from one degree to another, from worse to better, or from better to worse; but God loses nothing by the ages that are run, nor will gain anything by the ages that are to come. If there were a variation in the knowledge of God, by the daily and hourly changes in the world, he would grow wiser than he was; he was not then perfectly wise before. A change in the objects known, infers not any change in the understanding exercised about them. The wheel moves round: the spokes that are lowest are presently highest, and presently return to be low again; but the eye that beholds them changes not with the motion of the wheels. God's knowledge admits no more of increase or decrease than his essence doth. Since God knows by his essence, and the essence of God is God himself, his knowledge must be void of any change. The knowledge of possible things, arising from the knowledge of his own power, cannot be changed unless his power be changed, and God become weak and impotent. The knowledge of future things cannot be changed, because that knowledge ariseth from his will, which is irreversible: 'The counsel of the Lord, that shall stand,' Prov. xix. 21. So that if God can never decay into weakness, and never turn to inconstancy, there can be no variation of his knowledge. He knows what he can do, and he knows what he will do, and both these being immutable, his knowledge must consequently be so too. It was not necessary that this or that creature should be, and therefore it was not necessary that God should know this or that creature with a knowledge of vision; but after the will of God had determined the existence of this or that creature, his knowledge being then determined to this or that object, did necessarily continue unchangeable. God therefore knows no more now than he did before; and at the end of the world, he shall know no more than he doth now; and from eternity he knows no less than he doth now, and shall do to eternity. Though things pass into being and out of being, the knowledge of God doth not vary with them, for he knows them as well before they were as when they are, and knows them as well when they are past, as when they are present.

Prop. 7. God knows all things perpetually, *i.e.* in act. Since he knows by his essence, he always knows, because his essence never ceaseth, but is a pure act; so that he doth not know only in habit, but in act. Men that have the knowledge of some art or science, have it always in habit, though,

* Tileni Syntagma, part. i. disp. xiii. thes. 13.

when they are asleep, they have it not in act. A musician hath the habit of music, but doth not so much as think of it when his senses are bound up. But God is an unsleepy eye,* he never slumbers nor sleeps; he never slumbers in regard of his providence, and therefore never slumbers in regard of his knowledge. He knows not himself, nor any other creature, more perfectly at one time than at another; he is perpetually in the act of knowing, as the sun is in the act of shining. The sun never ceased to shine, in one or other part of the world, since it was first fixed in the heavens, nor God to be in the act of knowledge, since he was God; and therefore, since he always was, and always will be God, he always was, and always will be, in the act of knowledge. Always knowing his own essence, he must always actually know what hath been gone and ceased from being, and what shall come and arise into being. As a watchmaker knows what watch he intends to make, and after he hath made it, though it be broken to pieces or consumed by the fire, he still knows it, because he knows the copy of it in his own mind. Some, therefore, in regard of this perpetual act of the divine knowledge, have called God not *intellectus*, but 'the intellection of intellections' (we have no proper English word to express the act of the understanding). As his power is co-eternal with him, so his knowledge; all times past, present, and to come, are embraced in the bosom of his understanding; he fixed all things in their seasons, that nothing new comes to him, nothing old passes from him.† What is done in a thousand years, is as actually present with his knowledge, as what is done in one day, or in one watch in the night, is with ours, since 'a thousand years are no more to God than a day, or a watch in the night' is to us, Ps. xc. 4. God is in the highest degree of being, and therefore in the highest degree of understanding. Knowledge is one of the most perfect acts in any creature. God therefore hath all actual, as well as essential and habitual, knowledge: 'His understanding is infinite.'

IV. The fourth general is, reasons to prove this.

Reas. 1. God must know what any creature knows, and more than any creature knows. There is nothing done in the world, but is known by some creature or other; every action is at least known by the person that acts, and therefore known by the Creator, who cannot be exceeded by any of the creatures, or all of them together; and every creature is known by him, since every creature is made by him. And as God works all things by an infinite power, so he knows all things by an infinite understanding.‡

The perfection of God requires this.§ All perfections that include no essential defect are formally in God; but knowledge includes no essential defect in itself, therefore it is in God. Knowledge in itself is desirable, and an excellency; ignorance is a defect. It is impossible that the least grain of defect can be found in the most perfect being. Since God is wise, he must be knowing, for wisdom must have knowledge for the basis of it. A creature can no more be wise without knowledge, than he can be active without strength. Now God is 'only wise,' Rom. xvi. 27, and therefore only knowing in the highest degree of knowledge, incomprehensibly beyond all degrees of knowledge, because infinite.

Again, the more spiritual anything is, the more understanding it is. The dull body understands nothing: sense perceives, but the understanding faculty is seated in the soul, which is of a spiritual nature, which knows things that are present, remembers things that are past, foresees many things to come. What is the property of a spiritual nature, must be in a most

* Plato, ἀνοίμητος ὁρᾶν μὲν.

† Damianus.

‡ Gerhard.

§ Gamach. in part i. Aquin. qu. xiv. cap. i. p. 118. 119.

eminent manner in the supreme Spirit of the world ; that is, in the highest degree of spirituality, and most remote from any matter.

Again, nothing can enjoy other things but by some kind of understanding them. God hath the highest enjoyment of himself, of all things he hath created, of all the glory that accrues to him by them ; nothing of perfection and blessedness can be wanting to him. Felicity doth not consist with ignorance, and all imperfect knowledge is a degree of ignorance. God therefore doth perfectly know himself, and all things from whence he designs any glory to himself. The most noble manner of acting must be ascribed to God, as being the most noble and excellent being. To act by knowledge is the most excellent manner of acting ; God hath therefore not only knowledge, but the most excellent manner of knowledge ; for as it is better to know than to be ignorant, so it is better to know in the most excellent manner than to have a mean and low kind of knowledge. His knowledge, therefore, must be every way as perfect as his essence, infinite as well as that. An infinite nature must have an infinite knowledge. A God ignorant of anything cannot be counted infinite, for he is not infinite to whom any degree of perfection is wanting.

2. All the knowledge in any creature is from God ; and you must allow God a greater and more perfect knowledge than any creature hath, yea, than all creatures have. All the drops of knowledge any creature hath come from God, and all the knowledge in every creature that ever was, is, or shall be in the whole mass, was derived from him. If all those several drops in particular creatures were collected into one spirit, into one creature, it would be an unconceivable knowledge, yet still lower than what the author of all that knowledge hath ; for God cannot give more knowledge than he hath himself, nor is the creature capable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath. As the creature is incapable of receiving so much power as God hath, for then it would be almighty, so it is incapable of receiving so much knowledge as God hath, for then it would be God. Nothing can be made by God equal to him in anything ; if anything could be made as knowing as God, it would be eternal as God, it would be the cause of all things as God. The knowledge that we poor worms have is an argument God uses for the asserting the greatness of his own knowledge : Ps. xciv. 10, 'He that teaches man knowledge, shall not he know ?' Man hath here knowledge ascribed to him ; the author of this knowledge is God ; he furnished him with it, and therefore doth in a higher manner possess it, and much more than can fall under the comprehension of any creature ; as the sun enlightens all things, but hath more light in itself than it darts upon the earth or the heavens ; and shall not God eminently contain all that knowledge he imparts to the creatures, and infinitely more exact and comprehensive ?

3. The accusations of conscience evidence God's knowledge of all actions of all his creatures. Doth not conscience check for the most secret sins, to which none are privy but a man's self, the whole world beside being ignorant of his crime ? Do not the fears of another judge gall the heart ? If a judgment above him be feared, an understanding above him discerning their secrets is confessed by those fears. Whence can those horrors arise, if there be not a Superior that understands and records the crime ? What perfection of the divine Being can this relate unto but omniscience ? What other attribute is to be feared, if God were defective in this ?

The condemnation of us by our own hearts, when none in the world can condemn us, renders it legible that there is one 'greater than our hearts' in respect of knowledge, who 'knows all things,' 1 John iii. 20. Conscience would be a vain principle, and stingless without this. It would be an easy

matter to silence all its accusations, and mockingly laugh in the face of its severest frowns. What need any trouble themselves, if none knows their crimes but themselves? Concealed sins, gnawing the conscience, are arguments of God's omniscience of all present and past actions.

4. God is the first cause of everything; every creature is his production. Since all creatures, from the highest angel to the lowest worm, exist by the power of God, if God understands his own power and excellency, nothing can be hid from him that was brought forth by that power, as well as nothing can be unknown to him that that power is able to produce.* If God knows nothing besides himself, he may then believe there is nothing besides himself. We shall then fancy a God miserably mistaken. If he knows nothing besides himself, then things were not created by him, or not understandingly and voluntarily created, but dropped from him before he was aware. To think that the first cause of all should be ignorant of those things he is the cause of, is to make him not a voluntary, but natural agent, and therefore necessary; and then that the creature came from him as light from the sun and moisture from the water; this would be an absurd opinion of the world's creation. If God be a voluntary agent, as he is, he must be an intelligent agent. The faculty of will is not in any creature without that of understanding also. If God be an intelligent agent, his knowledge must extend as far as his operation, and every object of his operation, unless we imagine God hath lost his memory in that long tract of time since the first creation of them. An artificer cannot be ignorant of his own work. If God knows himself, he knows himself to be a cause. How can he know himself to be a cause, unless he know the effects he is the cause of? One relation implies another. A man cannot know himself to be a father unless he hath a child, because it is a name of relation, and in the notion of it refers to another. The name of cause is a name of relation, and implies an effect. If God, therefore, know himself in all his perfections as the cause of things, he must know all his acts, what his wisdom contrived, what his counsel determined, and what his power effected. The knowledge of God is to be supposed in a free determination of himself; and that knowledge must be perfect both of the object, act, and all the circumstances of it. How can his will freely produce anything that was not first known in his understanding? From this the prophet argues the understanding of God, and the unsearchableness of it, because he is the 'Creator of the ends of the earth,' Isa. xl. 28; and the same reason David gives of God's knowledge of him, and of everything he did, and that afar off, because he was formed by him, Ps. cxxxix. 2, 15, 16. As the perfect making of things only belongs to God, so doth the perfect knowledge of things. It is absurd to think that God should be ignorant of what he hath given being to; that he should not know all the creatures and their qualities, the plants and their virtues, as that a man should not know the letters that are formed by him in writing. Everything bears in itself the mark of God's perfections, and shall not God know the representation of his own virtue?

5. Without this knowledge God could no more be the governor than he could be the creator of the world. Knowledge is the basis of providence; to know things is before the government of things; a practical knowledge cannot be without a theoretical knowledge. Nothing could be directed to its proper end without the knowledge of the nature of it, and its suitableness to answer that end for which it is intended. As everything, even the minutest, falls under the conduct of God, so everything falls under the knowledge of God. A blind coachman is not able to hold the reins of his horses, and

* Bradwardine, p. 6.

direct them in right paths. Since the providence of God is about particulars, his knowledge must be about particulars; he could not else govern them in particular, nor could all things be said to depend upon him in their being and operations. Providence depends upon the knowledge of God, and the exercise of it upon the goodness of God; it cannot be without understanding and will: understanding to know what is convenient, and will to perform it. When our Saviour therefore speaks of providence, he intimates these two, in a special manner, 'Your heavenly Father knows that you have need of these things,' Mat. vi. 32, and goodness, in Luke xi. 13. The reason of providence is so joined with omniscience that they cannot be separated. What a kind of God would he be that were ignorant of those things that were governed by him! The ascribing this perfection to him asserts his providence, for it is as easy for one that knows all things to look over the whole world, if writ with monosyllables in every little particular of it, as it is with a man to take a view of one letter in an alphabet.

Again,* if God were not omniscient, how could he reward the good, and punish the evil? The works of men are either rewardable or punishable, not only according to their outward circumstances, but inward principles and ends, and the degrees of venom lurking in the heart. The exact discerning of these, without a possibility to be deceived, is necessary to pass a right and infallible judgment upon them, and proportion the censure and punishment to the crime. Without such a knowledge and discerning men would not have their due; nay, a judgment, just for the matter, would be unjust in the manner, because unjustly past, without an understanding of the merit of the cause. It is necessary therefore that the supreme Judge of the world should not be thought to be blindfold when he distributes his rewards and punishments, and muffle his face when he passes his sentence. It is necessary to ascribe to him the knowledge of men's thoughts and intentions, the secret wills and aims, the hidden works of darkness in every man's conscience, because every man's work is to be measured by the will and inward frame. It is necessary that he should perpetually retain all those things in the indelible and plain records of his memory, that there may not be any work without a just proportion of what is due to it. This is the glory of God, to discover the secrets of all hearts at last; as, 1 Cor. iv. 5, 'The Lord shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of all hearts, and then shall every man have praise of God.' This knowledge fits him to be a judge; the reason why 'the ungodly shall not stand in judgment' is because God knows their ways, which is implied in his 'knowing the way of the righteous,' Ps. i. 5, 6.

V. I now proceed to the use.

Use 1. is of information or instruction. If God hath all knowledge, then,

1. Jesus Christ is not a mere creature. The two titles of 'wonderful Counsellor' and 'mighty God' are given him in conjunction, Isa. ix. 6; not only the 'angel of the covenant,' as he is called, Mal. iii. 1, or the executor of his counsels, but a counsellor, in conjunction with him in counsel, as well as power. This title is superior to any title given to any of the prophets in regard of their predictions, and therefore I should take it rather as the note of his perfect understanding than of his perfect teaching and discovering, as Calvin doth. He is not only the revealer of what he knows,—so were the prophets according to their measures,—but the counsellor of what he revealed, having a perfect understanding of all the counsels of God, as being interested in them as the mighty God. He calls himself by the peculiar

* Sabund, tit. 84, much changed.

title of God, and declares that he will manifest himself by this prerogative to all the churches : Rev. ii. 23, ' And all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts,' the most hidden operations of the minds of men that lie locked up from the view of all the world besides. And this was no new thing to him after his ascension, for the same perfection he had in the time of his earthly flesh : Luke vi. 8, ' he knew their thoughts ; ' his eyes are therefore compared, Cant. v. 12, to ' doves' eyes,' which are clear and quick, and to ' a flame of fire,' Rev. i. 14, not only heat to consume his enemies, but light to discern their contrivances against the church. He pierceth, by his knowledge, into all parts, as fire pierceth into the closest particle of iron, and separates between the most united parts of metals ; and some tell us he is called a roe, from the perspicacity of his sight, as well as from the swiftness of his motion.

(1.) He hath a perfect knowledge of the Father ; he knows the Father, and none else knows the Father ; angels know God, men know God, but Christ in a peculiar manner knows the Father : ' No man knows the Son but the Father, neither knows any man the Father save the Son,' Mat. xi. 27. He knows, so as that he learns not from any other ; he doth perfectly comprehend him, which is beyond the reach of any creature, with the addition of all the divine virtue ; not because of any incapacity in God, but the incapacity of the creature to receive. Finite is incapable of being made infinite, and therefore incapable of comprehending infinite, so that Christ cannot be *deus factus*, made of a creature a god, to comprehend God, for then of finite he would become infinite, which is a contradiction. As the Spirit is God, because he ' searches the deep things of God,' 1 Cor. ii. 10, that is, comprehends them ; * as the spirit of a man doth the things of a man (now the spirit of man understands what it thinks, and what it wills), so the Spirit of God understands what is in the understanding of God, and what is in the will of God. He hath an absolute knowledge ascribed to him, and such as could not be ascribed to anything but a divinity. Now, if the Spirit knows the deep things of God, and takes from Christ what he shews to us of him, John xvi. 15, he cannot be ignorant of those things himself, he must know the depths of God that affords us that Spirit, that is not ignorant of any of the counsels of the Father's will ; since he comprehends the Father, and the Father him, he is in himself infinite, for God, whose essence is infinite, is infinitely knowable, but no created understanding can infinitely know God. The infiniteness of the object hinders it from being understood by anything that is not infinite. Though a creature should understand all the works of God, yet it cannot be therefore said to understand God himself. As though I may understand all the volitions and motions of my soul, yet it doth not follow that therefore I understand the whole nature and substance of my soul ; or, if a man understood all the effects of the sun, that therefore he understands fully the nature of the sun. But Christ knows the Father, he lay ' in the bosom of the Father,' was in the greatest intimacy with him, John i. 18, and, from this intimacy with him, he saw him and knew him ; so he knows God as much as he is knowable, and therefore knows him perfectly, as the Father knows himself by a comprehensive vision. This is the knowledge of God wherein properly the infiniteness of his understanding appears. And our Saviour uses such expressions which manifest his knowledge to be above all created knowledge, and such a manner of knowledge of the Father as the Father hath of him.

(2.) Christ knows all creatures. That knowledge which comprehends God comprehends all created things as they are in God ; it is a knowledge

* Petav. Theol. Dogmat., tom. i. p. 467. &c.

that sinks to the depths of his will, and therefore extends to all the acts of his will in creation and providence. By knowing the Father, he knows all things that are contained in the virtue, power, and will of God; 'whatsoever the Father doth, that the Son doth,' John v. 19. As the Father therefore knows all things he is the cause of, so doth the Son know all things he is the worker of; as the perfect making of all things belongs to both, so doth the perfect knowledge of all things belong to both; where the action is the same, the knowledge is the same. Now, the Father did not create one thing, and Christ another, but 'all things were created by him, and for him,'—all things, 'both in heaven and earth,' Col. i. 16. As he knows himself, the cause of all things, and the end of all things, he cannot be ignorant of all things that were effected by him, and are referred to him. He knows all creatures in God, as he knows the essence of God; and knows all creatures in themselves, as he knows his own acts and the fruits of his power. Those things must be in his knowledge that were in his power; 'all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge' of God are 'hid in him,' Col. ii. 3. Now it is not the wisdom of God to know in part, and be in part ignorant. He cannot be ignorant of anything, since there is nothing but what was made by him, John i. 3, and since it is less to know than create; for we know many things which we cannot make. If he be the creator, he cannot but be the discernor of what he made; this is a part of wisdom belonging to an artificer, to know the nature and quality of what he makes.* Since he cannot be ignorant of what he furnished with being, and with various endowments, he must know them not only universally, but particularly.

(3.) Christ knows the hearts and affections of men. Peter scruples not to ascribe to him this knowledge among the knowledge of all other things: John xxi. 17, 'Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.' From Christ's knowledge of all things, he concludes his knowledge of the inward frames and dispositions of men. To search the heart is the sole prerogative of God: 1 Kings viii. 39, 'For thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men.' Shall we take *only* here with a limitation, as some that are no friends to the deity of Christ would, and say, God only knows the hearts of men from himself and by his own infinite virtue? Why may we not take *only* in other places with a limitation, and make nonsense of it, as Ps. lxxxvi. 10, 'thou art God alone'? Is it to be understood that God is God alone from himself, but other gods may be made by him, and so there may be numberless infinities? As God is God alone, so that none can be God but himself, so he alone knows all the hearts of all the children of men, and none but he can know them; this knowledge is from his nature.† The reason why God knows the hearts of men is rendered in the Scripture double, because he created them, and because he is present everywhere, Ps. xxxiii. 13, 15. These two are by the confession of Christians and pagans universally received as the proper characters of divinity, whereby the Deity is distinguished from all creatures. Now when Christ ascribes this to himself, and that with such an emphasis, that nothing greater than that could be urged, as he doth Rev. ii. 23, we must conclude that he is of the same essence with God, one with him in his nature, as well as one with him in his attributes. God only knows the hearts of the children of men: there is the unity of God; Christ searches the hearts and reins; there is a distinction of persons in an oneness of essence. He knows the hearts of all men, not only of those that were with him in the time of the flesh, that have been and shall be since his ascension, but of those that

* Petav. Theol. Dogmat., tom. i. p. 467.

† Placeus de deitate Christi.

lived and died before his coming, because he is to be the judge of all that lived before his humiliation on earth as well as after his exaltation in heaven. It pertains to him as a judge to know distinctly the merits of the cause of which he is to judge; and this excellency of searching the hearts is mentioned by himself with relation to his judicial proceeding, I will 'give to every one of you according to your works.' And though a creature may know what is in a man's heart if it be revealed to him, yet such a knowledge is a knowledge only by report, not by inspection; yet this latter is ascribed to Christ: John ii. 24, 25, 'He knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man;' he looked into their hearts. The evangelist, to allay the amazement of men at his relation of our Saviour's knowledge of the inward falsity of those that made a splendid profession of him, doth not say the Father revealed it to him, but intimates it to be an inseparable property of his nature. No covering was so thick as to bound his eye, no pretence so glittering as to impose upon his understanding. Those that made a profession of him, and could not be discerned by the eye of man from his faithfullest attendants, were in their inside known to him plainer than their outside was to others; and therefore he committed not himself to them, though they seemed to be persuaded to a real belief in his name because of the power of his miracles, and were touched with an admiration of him as some great prophet, and perhaps declared him to be the Messiah, ver. 23.

(4.) He had a foreknowledge of the particular inclinations of men before those distinct inclinations were in actual being in them. This is plainly asserted, John vi. 64, 'But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.' When Christ assured them from the knowledge of the hearts of his followers, that some of them were void of that faith they professed, the evangelist, to stop their amazement that Christ should have such a power and virtue, adds, that 'he knew from the beginning;' that he had not only a present knowledge, but a foreknowledge of every one's inclination; he knew not only now and then what was in the hearts of his disciples, but from the beginning of any one's giving up their names to him; he knew whether it were a pretence or sincere, he knew who should betray him, and there was no man's inward affection but was foreseen by him. 'From the beginning,' Εξ ἀρχῆς, whether we understand it from the beginning of the world, as when Christ saith concerning divorcees, 'from the beginning it was not so;' that is, from the beginning of the world, from the beginning of the law of nature; or from the beginning of their attending him; as it is taken, Luke i. 2, he had a certain prescience of the inward dispositions of men's hearts and their succeeding sentiments. He foreknew the treacherous heart of Judas in the midst of his splendid profession, and discerned his resolution in the root, and his thought in the confused chaos of his natural corruption; he knew how it would spring up before it did spring up, before Judas had any distinct and formal conception of it himself, or before there was any actual preparation to a resolve. Peter's denial was not unknown to him when Peter had a present resolution, and no question spake it in the present sincerity of his soul, never to forsake him; he foreknew what would be the result of that poison which lurked in Peter's nature before Peter himself imagined anything of it; he discerned Peter's apostatising heart when Peter resolved the contrary; our Saviour's prediction was accomplished, and Peter's valiant resolution languished into cowardice.

Shall we then conclude our blessed Saviour a creature, who perfectly and only knew the Father, who knew all creatures, who had all the treasures of

wisdom and knowledge, who knew the inward motions of men's hearts by his own virtue, and had not only a present knowledge, but a prescience of them.

2. The second instruction from this position, that God hath an infinite knowledge and understanding. Then there is a providence exercised by God in the world, and that about everything. As providence infers omniscience as the guide of it, so omniscience infers providence as the end of it. What exercise would there be of this attribute but in the government of the world? To this infinite perfection [he] refers, Jer. xvii. 10, 'I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.' He searches the heart to reward, he rewards every man according to the rewardableness of his actions. His government therefore extends to every man in the world; there is no heart but he searches, therefore no heart but he governs. To what purpose else would be this knowledge of all his creatures? For a mere contemplation of them? No. What pleasure can that be to God, who knows himself, who is infinitely more excellent than all his creatures? Doth he know them to neglect all care of them? This must be either out of sloth, but how incompatible is laziness to a pure and infinite activity! or out of majesty, but it is no less for the glory of his majesty to conduct them than it was for the glory of his power to erect them into being. He that counts nothing unworthy of his arms to make, nothing unworthy of his understanding to know, why should he count anything unworthy of his wisdom to govern? If he knows them to neglect them, it must be because he hath no will to it, or no goodness for it. Either of these would be a stain upon God; to want goodness is to be evil, and to want will is to be negligent and scornful, which are inconsistent with an infinite active goodness. Doth a father neglect providing for the wants of the family which he knows? or a physician the cure of that disease he understands? God is omniscient, he therefore sees all things; he is good, he doth not therefore neglect anything, but conducts it to the end he appointed it. There is nothing so little that can escape his knowledge, and therefore nothing so little but falls under his providence; nothing so sublime as to be above his understanding, and therefore nothing can be without the compass of his conduct; nothing can escape his eye, and therefore nothing can escape his care; nothing is known by him in vain, as nothing was made by him in vain; there must be acknowledged therefore some end of this knowledge of all his creatures.

3. Hence, then, will follow the certainty of a day of judgment. To what purpose can we imagine this attribute of omniscience, so often declared and urged in Scripture to our consideration, but in order to a government of our practice, and a future trial? Every perfection of the divine nature hath sent out brighter rays in the world than this of his infinite knowledge; his power hath been seen in the being of the world, and his wisdom in the order and harmony of the creatures; his grace and mercy hath been plentifully poured out in the mission of a Redeemer; and his justice hath been elevated by the dying groans of the Son of God upon the cross. But hath his omniscience yet met with a glory proportionable to that of his other perfections? All the attributes of God that have appeared in some beautiful glimmerings in the world, wait for a more full manifestation in glory, as the creatures do for 'the manifestation of the sons of God,' Rom. viii. 19; but especially this, since it hath been less evidenced than others, and as much or more abused than any; it expects, therefore, a public righting in the eye of the world. There have been indeed some few sparks of this perfection sensibly struck out now and then in the world, in some horrors of con-

science, which have made men become their own accusers of unknown crimes, in bringing out hidden wickedness to a public view by various providences. This hath also been the design of sprinklings of judgments upon several generations, as Ps. xc. 7, 8, 'We are consumed by thy anger, and by thy wrath we are troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, and our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.' The word עֲלֻמֵּנוּ signifies youth, as well as secret, *i. e.* sins committed long ago, and that with secrecy. By this he hath manifested that secret sins are not hid from his eye. Though inward terrors and outward judgments have been let loose to worry men into a belief of this, yet the corruptions of men would still keep a contrary notion in their minds, that 'God hath forgotten: that he hides his face from transgression, and will not regard their impiety,' Ps. x. 11. There must therefore be a time of trial for the public demonstration of this excellency, that it may receive its due honour by a full testimony, that no secrecy can be a shelter from it. As his justice, which consists in giving every one his due, could not be glorified, unless men were called to an account for their actions, so neither would his omniscience appear in its illustrious colours, without such a manifestation of the secret motions of men's hearts, and of villainies done under lock and key, when none were conscious to them but the committers of them. Now the last judgment is the time appointed for the opening of the books, Dan. vii. 10. The book of God's records, and conscience the counterpart, were never fully opened and read before, only now and then some pages turned to in particular judgments; and out of those books shall men be 'judged according to their works,' Rev. xx. 12. Then shall the defaced sins be brought with all their circumstances to every man's memory; the counsels of men's hearts fled afar from their present remembrance; all the habitual knowledge they had of their own actions, shall by God's knowledge of them be excited to an actual review; and their works not only made manifest to themselves, but notorious to all the world. All the words, thoughts, deeds of men shall be brought forth into the light of their own minds, by the infinite light of God's understanding reflecting on them. His knowledge renders him an unerring witness, as well as his justice a 'swift witness,' Mal. iii. 5; a swift witness, because he shall without any circuit, or length of speech, convince their consciences by an inward illumination of them, to take notice of the blackness and deformity of their hearts and works. In all judgments God is somewhat known to be the searcher of hearts; the time of judgment is the time of his remembrance: Hosea viii. 13, 'Now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins;' but the great instant, or *now*, of the full glorifying it, is the grand day of account. This attribute must have a time for its full discovery; and no time can be fit for it but a time of a general reckoning. Justice cannot be exercised without omniscience; for as justice is a giving to every one his due, so there must be knowledge to discern what is due to every man; the searching the heart is in order to the rewarding the works.

4. This perfection in God gives us ground to believe a resurrection. Who can think this too hard for his power, since not the least atom of the dust of our bodies can escape his knowledge? An infinite understanding comprehends every mite of a departed carcass; this will not appear impossible nor irrational to any, upon a serious consideration of this excellency in God. The body is perished, the matter of it hath been since clothed with different forms and figures; part of it hath been made the body of a worm, part of it returned to the dust that hath been blown away by the wind; part of it hath been concocted in the bodies of cannibals, fish, ravenous beasts; the

spirits have evaporated into air, part of the blood melted into water ; what then, is the matter of the body annihilated ? Is that wholly perished ? No ; the foundation remains, though it hath put on variety of forms ; the body of Abel, the first man that died, nor the body of Adam, are not to this day reduced to nothing. Indeed, the quantity and the quality of those bodies have been lost by various changes they have passed through since their dissolution ; but the matter or substance of them remains entire, and is not capable to be destroyed by all those transforming alterations, in so long a revolution of time.

The body of a man in his infancy and his old age, if it were Methuselah's, is the same in the foundation in those multitude of years ; though the quantity of it be altered, the quality different, though the colour and other things be changed in it, the matter of this body remains the same among all the alterations after death. And can it be so mixed with other natures and creatures, as that it is past finding out by an infinite understanding ? Can any particle of this matter escape the eye of him that makes and beholds all those various alterations, and where every mite of the substance of those bodies is particularly lodged, so as that he cannot compact it together again for a habitation of that soul, that many a year before fled from it ? Since the knowledge of God is infinite, and his providence extensive over the least as well as the greatest parts of the world, he must needs know the least as well as the greatest of his creatures in their beginning, progress, and dissolution ; all the forms through which the bodies of all creatures roll, the particular instants of time, and the particular place when and where those changes are made, they are all present with him ; and therefore when the revolution of time allotted by him for the reunion of souls and deceased bodies is come, it cannot be doubted but out of the treasures of his knowledge he can call forth every part of the matter of the bodies of men, from the first to the last man that expired, and strip it of all those forms and figures which it shall then have, to compact it to be a lodging for that soul which before it entertained ; and though the bodies of men have been devoured by wild beasts in the earth, and fish in the sea, and been lodged in the stomachs of barbarous men-eaters, the matter is not lost.* There is but little of the food we take that is turned into the substance of our own bodies ; that which is not proper for nourishment, which is the greatest part, is separated and concocted, and rejected ; whatsoever objections are made, are answered by this attribute. Nothing hinders a God of infinite knowledge from discerning every particle of the matter, wheresoever it is disposed ; and since he hath an eye to discern, and a hand to re-collect and unite, what difficulty is there in believing this article of the Christian faith ? He that questions this revealed truth of the resurrection of the body, must question God's omniscience, as well as his omnipotence and power.

5. What semblance of reason is there to expect a justification in the sight of God by anything in ourselves ? Is there any action done by any of us, but upon a scrutiny we may find flaws and deficiency in it ? What then ? Shall not this perfection of God discern them ? The moths that escape our eyes cannot escape his : 1 John iii. 20, ' God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things ; ' so that it is in vain for any man to flatter himself with the rectitude of any work, or enter into any debate with him who can bring a thousand articles against us, out of his own infinite records, unknown to us, and unanswerable by us. If conscience, a representative or counterpart of God's omniscience in our own bosoms, find nothing done by us but in a copy short of the original, and beholds, if not blurs, yet imperfections in

* Daille, Sermon. xv. p. 21-24.

the best actions, God must much more discern them. We never knew a copy equally exact with the original. If our own conscience be as a thousand witnesses, the knowledge of God is as millions of witnesses against us. If our corruption be so great, and our holiness so low in our own eyes, how much greater must the one, and how much meaner must the other, appear in the eyes of God! God hath an unerring eye to see, as well as an unspotted holiness to hate, and an unbribable justice to punish; he wants no more understanding to know the shortness of our actions, than he doth holiness to enact, and power to execute his laws. Nay, suppose we could recollect many actions wherein there were no spot visible to us, the consideration of this attribute should scare us from resting upon any or all of them, since it is the Lord that, by a piercing eye, sees and judges according to the heart, and not according to appearance. The least crookedness of a stick, not sensible to an acute eye, yet will appear when laid to the line, and the impurity of a counterfeit metal be manifest when applied to the touchstone; so will the best action of any mere man in the world, when it comes to be measured in God's knowledge by the straight line of his law.

Let every man therefore, as Paul, though he should 'know nothing by himself, think not himself therefore justified;' since it is the Lord, who is of an infinite understanding, that judgeth, 1 Cor. iv. 4. A man may be justified in his own sight, but 'not any living man can be justified in the sight of God,' Ps. cxliii. 2, in his sight, whose eye pierceth into our unknown secrets and frames. It was therefore well answered of a good man upon his death-bed, being asked what he was afraid of: I have laboured, saith he, with all my strength to observe the commands of God; but since I am a man, I am ignorant whether my works are acceptable to God, since God judges in one manner, and I in another manner. Let the consideration therefore of this attribute make us join with Job in his resolution: Job ix. 21, 'Though we were perfect,' yet would we not 'know our own souls.' I would not stand up to plead any of my virtues before God. Let us therefore look after another righteousness, wherein the exact eye of the divine Omniscience, we are sure, can discern no stain or crookedness.

6. What honourable and adoring thoughts ought we to have of God for this perfection! Do we not honour a man that is able to predict? do we not think it a great part of wisdom? Have not all nations regarded such a faculty as a character and a mark of divinity? There is something more ravishing in the knowledge of future things, both to the person that knows them and the person that hears them, than there is in any other kind of knowledge; whence the greatest prophets have been accounted in the greatest veneration, and men have thought it a way to glory to divine and predict. Hence it was that the devils and pagan oracles gained so much credit; upon this foundation were they established, and the enemies of mankind owned for a true god. I say from the prediction of future things, though their oracles were often ambiguous, many times false. Yet those poor heathens framed many ingenious excuses to free their adored gods from the charge of falsity and imposture. And shall we not adore the true God, the God of Israel, the God blessed for ever, for this incommunicable property, whereby he flies above the wings of the wind, the understandings of men and cherubims?

Consider how great it is to know the thoughts, and intentions, and works of one man from the beginning to the end of his life;* to foreknow all these before the being of this man, when he was lodged afar off in the loins of his ancestors, yea, of Adam. How much greater is it to foreknow and know the

* Sabund, Theol. Natural. tit. 84, somewhat changed.

thoughts and works of three or four men, of a whole village or neighbourhood! It is greater still to know the imaginations and actions of such a multitude of men as are contained in London, Paris, or Constantinople; how much greater still to know the intentions and practices, the clandestine contrivances of so many millions, that have, do, or shall swarm in all quarters of the world, every person of them having millions of thoughts, desires, designs, affections, and actions!

Let this attribute, then, make the blessed God honourable in our eyes and adorable in all our affections, specially since it is an excellency which hath so lately discovered itself, in bringing to light the hidden things of darkness, in opening and in part confounding the wicked devices of bloody men. Especially let us adore God for it, and admire it in God, since it is so necessary a perfection, that, without it, the goodness of God had been impotent, and could not have relieved us; for what help can a distressed person expect from a man of the sweetest disposition and the strongest arm, if the eyes which should discover the danger, and direct the defence and rescue, were closed up by blindness and darkness? Adore God for this wonderful perfection.

7. In the consideration of this excellent attribute, what low thoughts should we have of our own knowledge, and how humble ought we to be before God! There is nothing man is more apt to be proud of than his knowledge; it is a perfection he glories in; but if our own knowledge of the little outside and barks of things puffs us up, the consideration of the infiniteness of God's knowledge should abate the tumour. As our beings are nothing in regard to the infiniteness of his essence, so our knowledge is nothing in regard of the vastness of his understanding. We have a spark of being, but nothing to the heat of the sun; we have a drop of knowledge, but nothing to the divine ocean. What a vain thing is it for a shallow brook to boast of its streams, before a sea whose depths are unfathomable! As it is a vanity to brag of our strength when we remember the power of God, and of our prudence when we glance upon the wisdom of God, so it is no less a vanity to boast of our knowledge when we think of the understanding and knowledge of God.

How hard is it for us to know anything!* Too much noise deafs us, and too much light dazzles us; too much distance alienates the object from us, and too much nearness bars up our sight from beholding it. When we think ourselves to be near the knowledge of a thing, as a ship to the haven, a puff of wind blows us away, and the object which we desired to know eternally flies from us. We burn with a desire of knowledge, and yet are oppressed with the darkness of ignorance; we spend our days more in dark Egypt than in enlightened Goshen. In what narrow bounds is all the knowledge of the most intelligent persons included!† How few understand the exact harmony of their own bodies, the nature of the life they have in common with other animals! Who understands the nature of his own faculties, how he knows, and how he wills, how the understanding proposeth, and how the will embraceth, how his spiritual soul is united to his material body, what the nature is of the operation of our spirits? Nay, who understands the nature of his own body, the offices of his senses, the motion of his members, how they come to obey the command of the will, and a thousand other things? What a vain, weak, and ignorant thing is man, when compared with God! Yet there is not a greater pride to be found among devils than among ignorant men, with a little, very little, flashy knowledge. Ignorant man is as proud as if he knew as God!

* Pascal, p. 170.

† Amyraut, de Prædest., p. 116, 117, somewhat changed.

As the consideration of God's omniscience should render him honourable in our eyes, so it should render us vile in our own. God, because of his knowledge, is so far from disdaining his creatures, that his omniscience is a minister to his goodness. No knowledge that we are possessed of should make us swell with too high a conceit of ourselves and a disdain of others. We have infinitely more of ignorance than knowledge; let us therefore remember, in all our thoughts of God, that he is God, and we are men, and therefore ought to be humble, as becomes men, and ignorant and foolish men, to be. As weak creatures should lie low before an almighty God, and impure creatures before a holy God, false creatures before a faithful God, finite creatures before an infinite God, so should ignorant creatures before an all-knowing God. All God's attributes teach admiring thoughts of God, and low thoughts of ourselves.

8. It may inform us how much this attribute is injured in the world. The first error after Adam's eating the forbidden fruit was the denial of this, as well as the omnipresence of God: Gen. iii. 10, 'I heard thy voice in the garden, and I hid myself,' as if the thickness of the trees could screen him from the eye of his Creator. And, after Cain's murder, this is the first perfection he affronts: Gen. iv. 9, 'Where is Abel, thy brother?' saith God. How roundly doth he answer, 'I know not!' as if God were as weak as man, to be put off with a lie. Man doth as naturally hate this perfection as much as he cannot naturally but acknowledge it; he wishes God stripped of this eminency, that he might be incapable to be an inspector of his crimes, and a searcher of the closets of his heart. In wishing him deprived of this, there is a hatred of God himself, for it is a loathing an essential property of God, without which he would be a pitiful governor of the world. What a kind of God should that be, of a sinner's wishing, that had wanted eyes to see a crime, and righteousness to punish it? The want of the consideration of this attribute is the cause of all sin in the world: Hos. vii. 2, 'They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness.' They speak not to their hearts, nor make any reflection upon the infiniteness of my knowledge; it is a high contempt of God, as if he were an idol, a senseless stock or stone; in all evil practices this is denied. We know God sees all things, yet we live and walk as if he knew nothing; we call him omniscient, and live as if he were ignorant; we say he is all eye, yet act as if he were wholly blind.

In particular, this attribute is injured, by invading the peculiar rights of it, by presuming on it, and by a practical denial of it.

(1.) By invading the peculiar rights of it.

[1.] By invocation of creatures. Praying to saints, by the Romanists, is a disparagement to this divine excellency; he that knows all things is only fit to have the petitions of men presented to him. Prayer supposeth an omniscient being as the object of it; no other being but God ought to have that honour acknowledged to it, no understanding but his is infinite, no other presence but his is everywhere. To implore any deceased creature for a supply of our wants, is to own in them a property of the Deity, and make them deities that were but men, and increase their glory by a diminution of God's honour, in ascribing that perfection to creatures which belongs only to God. Alas! they are so far from understanding the desires of our souls, that they know not the words of our lips. It is against reason to address our supplications to them that neither understand us nor discern us: Isa. lxiii. 16, 'Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not.' The Jews never called upon Abraham, though the covenant was made with him for the whole seed; not one departed saint, for the whole four thousand

years between the creation of the world and the coming of Christ, was ever prayed to by the Israelites, or ever imagined to have a share in God's omniscience, so that to pray to St Peter, St Paul, much less to St Roch, St Swithin, St Martin, St Francis, &c., is such a superstition that hath no footing in the Scripture.

To desire the prayers of the living, with whom we have a communion, who can understand and grant our desires, is founded upon a mutual charity; but to implore persons that are absent, at a great distance from us, with whom we have not, nor know how to have any commerce, supposeth them in their departure to have put off humanity, and commenced gods, and endued with some part of the divinity to understand our petitions;* we are, indeed, to cherish their memories, consider their examples, imitate their graces, and observe their doctrines; we are to follow them as saints, but not elevate them as gods, in ascribing to them such a knowledge which is only the necessary right of their and our common Creator. As the invocation of saints mingles them with Christ in the exercise of his office, so it sets them equal with God in the throne of his omniscience, as if they had as much credit with God as Christ in a way of mediation, and as much knowledge of men's affairs as God himself. Omniscience is peculiar to God, and incommunicable to any creature; it is the foundation of all religion, and therefore one of the choicest acts of it, viz. prayer and invocation. To direct our vows and petitions to any else is to invade the peculiarity of this perfection in God, and to rank some creatures in a partnership with him in it.

[2.] This attribute is injured by curiosity of knowledge, especially of future things, which God hath not discovered in natural causes, or supernatural revelation. It is a common error of men's spirits to aspire to know what God would have hidden, and to pry into divine secrets; and many men are more willing to remain without the knowledge of those things which may, with a little industry, be attained, than be divested of the curiosity of inquiring into those things which are above their reach. It is hence that some have laid aside the study of the common remedies of nature, to find out the philosopher's stone, which scarce any ever yet attempted but sunk in the enterprise. From this inclination to know the most abstruse and difficult things, it is that the horrors of magic and the vanities of astrology have sprung, whereby men have thought to find, in a commerce with devils and the jurisdiction of the stars, the events of their lives, and the disposal of states and kingdoms.† Hence also arose those multitudes of ways of divination invented among the heathen, and practised too commonly in these ages of the world. This is an invasion of God's prerogative, to whom secret things belong: Deut. xxix. 29, 'Secret things belong unto the Lord our God, but revealed things belong to us and our children.' It is an intolerable boldness to attempt to fathom those, the knowledge whereof God hath reserved to himself, and to search that which God will have to surpass our understandings, whereby we more truly envy God a knowledge superior to our own, than we in Adam imagined that he envied us. Ambition is the greatest cause of this, ambition to be accounted some great thing among men, by reason of a knowledge estranged from the common mass of mankind, but more especially that soaring pride to be equal with God, which lurks in our nature ever since the fall of our first parents. This is not yet laid aside by man, though it was the first thing that embroiled the world with the wrath of God. Some think a curiosity of knowledge was the cause of the fall of the devils; I am sure it was the foil of Adam, and is yet the

* Daille, Melang. part ii. p. 560, 561. † Amyraut, Moral. tom. iii. p. 75, &c.

crime of his posterity ; had he been contented to know what God had furnished him with, neither he nor his posterity had smarted under the venom of the serpent's breath.

All curious and bold inquiries into things not revealed are an attempt upon the throne of God, and are both sinful and pernicious, like to glaring upon the sun, where, instead of a greater acuteness, we meet with blindness, and too dearly by * our ignorance in attempting a superfluous knowledge. As God's knowledge is destined to the government of the world, so should ours be to the advantage of the world, and not degenerate into vain speculations.

[3.] This attribute is injured by swearing by creatures. To swear by the name of God in a righteous cause, † when we are lawfully called to it by a superior power, or for the necessary decision of some controversy, for the ends of charity and justice, is an act of religion and a part of worship, founded upon and directed to the honour of this attribute ; by it we acknowledge the glory of his infallible knowledge of all things. But to swear by false gods, or by any creature, is blasphemous ; it sets the creature in the place of God, and invests it in that which is the peculiar honour of the divinity ; for, when any swear truly, they intend the invocation of an infallible witness, and the bringing an undoubted testimony for what they do assert. While any therefore swear by a creature, or a false god, they profess that that creature, or that which they esteem to be a god, is an infallible witness, which to be is only the right of God ; they attribute to the creature that which is the property of God alone, to know the heart, and to be a witness whether they speak true or no, and this was accounted by all nations the true design of an oath. As to swear falsely is a plain denial of the all-knowledge of God, so to swear by any creature is to set the creature upon the throne of God, in ascribing that perfection to the creature which sovereignly belongs to the Creator, for it is not in the power of any to witness to the truth of the heart, but of him that is the searcher of hearts.

[4.] We sin against this attribute by censuring the hearts of others. An open crime indeed falls under our cognisance, and therefore under our judgment ; for whatsoever falls under the authority of man to be punished, falls under the judgment of man to be censured, as an act contrary to the law of God. Yet when a censure is built upon the evil of the act which is obvious to the view, if we take a step farther, to judge the heart and state, we leave the revealed rule of the law, and ambitiously erect a tribunal equal with God's, and usurp a judicial power, pertaining only to the supreme governor of the world ; and consequently pretend to be possessed of this perfection of omniscience, which is necessary to render him capable of the exercise of that sovereign authority. For it is in respect of his dominion that God hath the supreme right to judge ; and in respect of his knowledge that he hath an incommunicable capacity to judge.

In an action that is doubtful, the good or evil whereof depends only upon God's determination, and wherein much of the judgment depends upon the discerning the intention of the agent, we cannot judge any man without a manifest invasion of God's peculiar right. Such actions are to be tried by God's knowledge, not by our surmises. God only is the master in such cases, to whom a person 'stands or falls,' Rom. xiv. 4. Till the true principle and ends of an action be known by the confession of the party acting it, a true judgment of it is not in our power. Principles and ends lie deep and hid from us ; and it is intolerable pride to pretend to have a joint key with God, to open that cabinet which he hath reserved to himself.

Besides the violation of the rule of charity in misconstruing actions,

* Qu. 'buy'?—Ed.

† Cajetan, Sum. p. 190.

which may be great and generous in their root and principle, we invade God's right, as if our ungrounded imaginations and conjectures were in joint commission with this sovereign perfection; and thereby we become usurping 'judges of evil thoughts,' James ii. 4. It is therefore a boldness worthy to be punished by the judge, to assume to ourselves the capacity and authority of him who is the only judge. For as the execution of the divine law for the inward violation of it belongs only to God, so is the right of judging a prerogative belonging only to his omniscience; his right is therefore invaded if we pretend to a knowledge of it. This humour of men the apostle checks, when he saith, 1 Cor. iv. 5, 'He that judgeth me is the Lord: therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will manifest the counsels of all hearts.' It is not the time yet for God to erect a tribunal for the trial of men's hearts, and the principles of their actions; he hath reserved the glorious discovery of this attribute for another season. We must not therefore presume to judge of the counsels of men's hearts, till God hath revealed them by opening the treasures of his own knowledge.

Much less are we to judge any man's final condition. Manasseh may sacrifice to devils, and unconverted Paul tear the church in pieces; but God had mercy on them and called them. The action may be censured, not the state, for we know not whom God may call. In censuring men, we may doubly imitate the devil, in a false accusation of the brethren, as well as in an ambitious usurpation of the rights of God.

(2.) This perfection is injured, by presuming upon it, or making an ill use of it: as in the neglect of prayer for the supply of man's wants, because God knows them already; so that that which is an encouragement to prayer, they make the reason of restraining it before God. Prayer is not to administer knowledge to God, but to acknowledge this admirable perfection of the divine nature. If God did not know, there were indeed no use of prayer; it would be as vain a thing to send up our prayers to heaven, as to implore the senseless statue or picture of a prince for a protection. We pray because God knows, for though he know our wants with a knowledge of vision, yet he will not know them with a knowledge of supply, till he be sought unto, Mat. vi. 32, 33. All the excellencies of God are ground of adoration; and this excellency is the ground of that part of worship we call prayer, Mat. vii. 11. If God be to be worshipped, he is to be called upon: invocations of his name in our necessities is a chief act of worship, whence the temple, the place of solemn worship, was not called the house of sacrifice, but 'the house of prayer.'

Prayer was not appointed for God's information as if he were ignorant, but for the expression of our desires; not to furnish him with a knowledge of what we want, but to manifest to him by some rational sign convenient to our nature, our sense of that want, which he knows by himself. So that prayer is not designed to acquaint God with our wants, but to express the desire of a remedy of our wants. God knows our wants, but hath not made promises barely to our wants but to our asking, that his omniscience in hearing, as well as his sufficiency in supplying, may have a sensible honour in our acknowledgments and receipts. It is therefore an ill use of this excellency of God to neglect prayer to him as needless, because he knows already.

(3.) This perfection of God is wronged by a practical denial of it. It is the language of every sin, and so God takes it when he comes to reckon with men for their impieties. Upon this he charges the greatness of the iniquity of Israel, the overflowing of blood in the land, and the perverseness

of the city : 'They say, The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord sees not,' Ezek. ix. 9. They deny his eyes to see, and his resolution to punish.

[1.] It will appear in forbearing sin from a sense of man's knowledge, not of God's. Open impieties are refrained [from] because of the eye of man : but secret sins are not checked because of the eye of God. Wickedness is committed in darkness, that is restrained in light ; as if darkness were as great a clog to God's eyes as it is to ours, as though his eyes were muffled with the curtains of the night, Job xxii. 14. This it is likely was at the root of Jonah's flight ; he might have some secret thought that his master's eye could not follow him, as though the close hatches of a ship could secure him from the knowledge of God, as well as the sides of the ship could from the dashing of the waves. What lies most upon the conscience when it is graciously wounded, is least regarded, or contemned when it is basely inclined. David's heart smote him not only for his sin in the gross, but as particularly circumstantiated by the commission of it in the sight of God : Ps. li 4, 'Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.' None knew the reason of Uriah's death but myself, and because others knew it not, I neglected any regard to this divine eye. When Jacob's sons used their brother Joseph so barbarously, they took care to hide it from their father, but cast away all thoughts of God, from whom it could not be concealed.

Doth not the presence of a child bridle a man from the act of a longed for sin, when the eye of God is of no force to restrain him ? As if God's knowledge were of less value than the sight of a little boy or girl, as if a child only could see, and God were blind. He that will forbear an unworthy action for fear of an informer, will not forbear it for God ; as if God's omniscience were not as full an intelligencer to him, as man can be an informer to a magistrate. As we acknowledge the power of men seeing us when we are ashamed to commit a filthy action in their view, so we discover * the power of God seeing us when we regard not what we do before the light of his eyes. Secret sins are more against God than open. Open sins are against the law, secret sins are against the law and this prime perfection of his nature. The majesty of God is not only violated, but the omniscience of God disowned, who is the only witness. We must, in all of them, either imagine him to be without eyes to behold us, or without an arm of justice to punish us. And often it is, I believe, in such cases, that if any thoughts of God's knowledge strike upon men, they quickly damp them, lest they should begin to know what they fear, and fear that they might not eat their pleasant sinful morsels.

[2.] It appears in partial confessions before God. As by a free, full, and ingenuous confession we offer a due glory to this attribute, so by a feigned and curtailed confession we deny him the honour of it ; for though by any confession we in part own him to be a sovereign and judge, yet by a half and pared acknowledgment, we own him to be no more than a human and ignorant one. Achan's full confession gave God the glory of his omniscience, manifested in the discovery of his secret crime : Joshua vii. 19, 'And Joshua said to Achan, My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession unto him.' And so, Ps. l. 23, 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me,' or confession, as the word signifieth, in which sense I would rather take it, referring to this attribute, which God seems to tax sinners with the denial of, ver. 21, telling them that he would open the records of their sins before them, and indict them particularly for every one. If there-

* Qu. 'disown' ?—Ed.

fore you would glorify this attribute, which shall one day break open your consciences, offer to me a sincere confession. When David speaks of the happiness of a pardoned man, Ps. xxxii. 1, 2, he adds, 'in whose spirit there is no guile,' not meaning a sincerity in general, but that ingenuity in confessing.* To excuse or extenuate sin, is to deny God the knowledge of the depths of our deceitful hearts. When we will mince it rather than aggravate it, lay it upon the inducements of others when it was the free act of our own wills, study shifts to deceive our judge, this is to 'speak lies of him,' as the expression is, Hosea vii. 13; as though he were a God easy to be cheated, and knew no more than we are willing to declare. What did Saul's transferring his sin from himself to the people, 1 Sam. xv. 15, but charge God with a defect in this attribute? When man could not be like God in his knowledge, he would fancy a God like to him in his ignorance, and imagine a possibility of hiding himself from his knowledge; and all men tread more or less in their father's steps, and are fruitful to devise distinctions to disguise errors in doctrine, and excuses to palliate errors in practice. This crime Job removes from himself, when he speaks of several acts of his sincerity: 'If I covered my transgression as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom,' Job xxxi. 33, I hid not any of my sins in my own conscience, but acknowledged God a witness of them, and gave God the glory of his knowledge by a free confession. I did not conceal it from God as Adam did, or as men ordinarily do, as if God could understand no more of their secret crimes than they will let him, and had no more sense of their faults than they would furnish him with. As the first rise of confession is the owning of this attribute (for the justice of God would not scare men, nor the holiness of God awe them without a sense of his knowledge of their iniquities), so to drop out some fragments of confession, discover some sins, and conceal others, is a plain denial of the extensiveness of the divine knowledge.

[3.] It is discovered by putting God off with an outside worship. Men are often flatterers of God, and think to bend him by formal glavering devotions, without the concurrence of their hearts, as though he could not pierce into the darkness of the mind, but did as little know us as one man knows another. There are such things as 'feigned lips,' Ps. xvii. 1; a contradiction between the heart and the tongue, a clamour in the voice and scoffing in the soul, a crying to God, 'Thou art my father, the guide of my youth,' and yet speaking and doing evil to the utmost of our power, Jer. iii. 4, 5; as if God could be imposed upon by fawning pretences, and, like old Isaac, take Jacob for Esau, and be cozened by the smell of his garments; as if he could not discern the negro heart under an angel's garb. Thus Ephraim, the ten tribes, apostatised from the true religion, would go with their flocks and their herds to seek the Lord, Hosea v. 6; would sacrifice multitudes of sheep and heifers, which was the main outside of the Jewish religion; only with their flocks and their herds, not with their hearts, with those inward qualifications of deep humiliation and repentance for sin, as though outside appearances limited God's observation, whereas God had told them before that he 'knew Ephraim, and Israel was not hid from him' ver. 3. Thus to do is to put a cheat upon God, and think to blind his all-seeing eye, and therefore it is called deceit: Ps. lxxviii. 36, 'They did flatter him with their mouths.' The word פתה signifies to deceive as well as to flatter; not that they or any else can deceive God, but it implies an endeavour to deceive him by a few dissembling words and gestures, or an imagination that God was satisfied with bare professions, and would not

* Camero. p. 89, col. 1.

concern himself in a further inquisition. This is an unworthy conceit of God, to fancy that we can satisfy for inward sins, and avert approaching judgments by external offerings, by a loud voice, with a false heart, as if God (like children) would be pleased with the glittering of an empty shell, or the rattling of stones, the chinking of money, a mere voice, and crying without inward frames and intentions of service.

[4.] In cherishing multitudes of evil thoughts. No man but would blush for shame if the base, impure, slovenly thoughts, either in or out of duties of worship, were visible to the understanding of man. How diligent would he be to curb his luxuriant and unworthy fancies, as well as bite in his words; but when we give the reins to the motions of our hearts, and suffer them to run at random without a curb, it is an evidence we are not concerned for their falling under the notice of the eye of God, and it argues a very weak belief of this perfection, or scarce any belief at all. Who can think any man's heart possessed with a sense of this infinite excellency, that suffers his mind, in his meditation on God, to wander into every sty, and be picking up stones upon a dunghill? What doth it intimate but that those thoughts are as invisible or inaudible to God as they are to men without the garments of words? * When a man thinks of obscene things, his own natural notions, if revived, would tell him that God discerns what he thinks, that the depths of his heart are open to him; and the voice of those notions is, deface those vain imaginations out of your minds. But what is done? Men cast away rational light, muster up conceits, that God sees them not, knows them not, and so sink into the puddle of their sordid imaginations as though they remained in darkness to God.

I might further instance,

[5.] In omission of prayer, which arises sometimes from a flat atheism. Who will call upon a God that believes no such being? Or from partial atheism, either a denial of God's sufficiency to help, or of his omniscience to know, as if God were like the statue of Jupiter in Crete, framed without ears.

[6.] In the hypocritical pretences of men to exempt them from the service God calls them to; when men pretend one thing, and intend another. This lurks in the veins sometimes of the best men; sometimes it ariseth from the fear of man, when men are more afraid of the power of man than of dissembling with the Almighty. It will pretend a virtue to cover a secret wile, and 'choose the tongue of the crafty,' as the expression in Job, chap. xv. 5.

The case is plain in Moses, who, when ordered to undertake an eminent service, pretends a want of eloquence, and an ungrateful slowness of speech. Exod. iv. 10. This generous soul, that before was not afraid to discover himself in the midst of Egypt for his countrymen, answers sneakingly to God, and would veil his carnal fear with a pretence of insufficiency and humility. 'Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?' Exod. iii. 11. He could not well allege an inability to go to Pharaoh, since he had had an education in the Egyptian learning, which rendered him capable to appear at court. God at last uncaseth him, and shews it all to be a dissimulation; and whatsoever was the pretence, fear lay at the bottom. He was afraid of his life upon his appearance before Pharaoh, from whose face he had fled upon the slaying the Egyptian, which God intimates to him, Exod. iv. 19, 'Go, and return unto Egypt, for all the men are dead which sought thy life.' What doth this carriage speak, but as if God's eye were not upon our inward parts; as though we could lock him out of our hearts that cannot be shut out from any creek of the hearts of men and angels.

* Drexel Nicetas, lib. ii. cap. x. p. 357.

Use 2. The second use is of comfort. It is a ground of great comfort under the present dispensation wherein we are. We have heard the doctrinal part, and God hath given us the experimental part of it in his special providence this day* upon the stage of world. And blessed be God that he hath given us a ground of comfort without going out of our ordinary course to fetch it, whereby it seems to be peculiarly of God's ordering for us.

1. It is a comfort in all the clandestine contrivances of men against the church. His eyes pierce as far as the depths of hell. Not one of his church's adversaries lies in a mist; all are as plain as the stars which he numbers. 'Mine adversaries are all before thee,' Ps. lxxix. 19; more exactly known to thee than I can recount them. It is a prophecy of Christ, wherein Christ is brought in speaking to God, of his own and the church's enemies. He comforts himself with this, that God hath his eye upon every particular person among his adversaries. He knows where they repose themselves when they go out to consult, and when they come in with their resolves. He discerns all the rage that spirits their hearts, in what corner it lurks, how it acts; all the disorders, motions of it, and every object of that rage. He cannot be deceived by the closest and subtlest person. Thus God speaks concerning Sennacherib and his host against Jerusalem, Isa. xxxvii. 28, 29. After he had spoke of the forming of his church and the weakness of it, he adds, 'But I know thy abode, and thy going out and thy coming in, and thy rage against me; because thy rage against me, and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore will I put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back,' &c. He knows all the methods of the counsels, the stages they had laid, the manner of execution of their designs, all the ways whither they turned themselves, and would use them no better than men do devouring fish and untamed beasts, with a hook in the nose and a bridle in the mouth. Those statesmen in Isa. xxix. 15, thought their contrivances too deep for God to fathom, and too close for God to frustrate: 'They seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay,' of no more force and understanding than a potter's vessel, which understands not its own form wrought by the artificer, nor the use it is put to by the buyer and possessor; or shall be esteemed as a potter's vessel, that can be as easily flung back into the mass from whence it was taken, as preserved in the figure it is now endued with. No secret designer is shrouded from God's sight, or can be sheltered from God's arm. He understands the venom of their hearts better than we can feel it, and discovers their inward fury more plainly than we can see the sting or teeth of a viper when they are opened for mischief; and to what purpose doth God know and see them, but in order to deliver his people from them in his own due time: 'I know their sorrow, and am come down to deliver them,' Exod. iii. 7, 8. The walls of Jerusalem are continually before him; he knows, therefore, all that would undermine and demolish them. None can hurt Zion by any ignorance or inadvertency in God.

It is observable that our Saviour, assuming to himself a different title in every epistle to the seven churches, doth particularly ascribe to himself this of knowledge and wrath in that to Thyatira, an emblem or description of the Romish state: Rev. ii. 19, 'And unto the angel of the church at Thyatira write: These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like to a flame of fire, and his feet like fine brass.' His eyes, like a flame of fire, are of a piercing nature, insinuating themselves into all the pores and parts of the body they encounter with; and his feet, like

* Nov. 1678, when the popish plot was discovered.

brass, to crush them with, is explained, verse 23, 'I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and the heart: and I will give to every one of you according to your works.' He knows every design of the Romish party, designed by that church of Thyatira.* Jezebel, there, signifies a whorish church, such a church as shall act as Jezebel, Ahab's wife, who was not only a worshipper of idols, but propagated idolatry in Israel, slew the prophets, persecuted Elijah, murdered Naboth, the name whereof signifies *prophecy*, seized upon his possession. And if it be said that, verse 19, this church was commended for her works, faith, patience, it is true Rome did at first strongly profess Christianity, and maintained the interest of it, but afterwards fell into the practice of Jezebel, and committed spiritual adultery. And is she to be owned for a wife that now plays the harlot, because she was honest and modest at her first marriage? And though she shall be destroyed, yet not speedily: † verse 22, 'I will cast her into a bed,' seems to intimate the destruction of Jezebel not to be at once and speedily, but in a lingering way, and by degrees, as sickness consumes a body.

2. This perfection of God fits him to be a special object of trust. If he were forgetful, what comfort could we have in any promise? How could we depend upon him if he were ignorant of our state? His compassions to pity us, his readiness to relieve us, his power to protect and assist us, would be insignificant, without his omniscience to inform his goodness and direct the arm of his power. This perfection is, as it were, God's office of intelligence. As you go to your memorandum-book to know what you are to do, so doth God to his omniscience. This perfection is God's eye, to acquaint him with the necessities of his church, and directs all his other attributes in their exercise for and about his people. You may depend upon his mercy that hath promised, and upon his truth to perform, upon his sufficiency to supply you and his goodness to relieve you, and his righteousness to reward you, because he hath an infinite understanding to know you and your wants, you and your services. And without this knowledge of his, no comfort could be drawn from any other perfection; none of them could be a sure nail to hang our hopes and confidence upon. This is that the church always celebrated: Ps. cv. 8, 'He hath remembered his covenant for ever, and the word which he hath commanded to a thousand generations;' and verse 42, 'He remembered his holy promise;' and Ps. evi. 45, 'He remembered for them his covenant.' He remembers and understands his covenant, therefore his promise to perform it, and therefore our wants to supply them.

3. And the rather, because God knows the persons of all his own. He hath in his infinite understanding the exact number of all the individual persons that belong to him: 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'The Lord knows them that are his.' He knows all things, because he hath created them; and he knows his people, because he hath not only made them, but also chose them. He could no more choose he knew not what, than he could create he knew not what. He knows them under a double title: of creation, as creatures, in the common mass of creation; as new creatures, by a particular act of separation. He cannot be ignorant of them in time whom he foreknew from eternity. His knowledge in time is the same he had from eternity. He foreknew them that he intended to give the grace of faith unto; and he knows them after they believe, because he knows his own act in bestowing grace upon them, and his own mark and seal wherewith he hath stamped

* For the evidence of it I refer you to Dr More's Exposition of the Seven Churches, worthy every learned and understanding man's reading, and of every sober Romanist.

† Coc. *in loc.*

them. No doubt but he that 'calls the stars of heaven by their names,' Ps. cxlvii. 4, knows the number of those living stars that sparkle in the firmament of his church. He cannot be ignorant of their persons, when he numbers the hairs of their heads, and hath registered their names in the book of life. As he only had an infinite mercy to make the choice, so he only hath an infinite understanding to comprehend their persons. We only know the elect of God by a moral assurance in the judgment of charity, when the conversation of men is according to the doctrine of God. We have not an infallible knowledge of them, we may be often mistaken; Judas, a devil, may be judged by man for a saint, till he be stripped of his disguise. God only hath an infallible knowledge of them; he knows his own records, and the counterparts in the hearts of his people. None can counterfeit his seal, nor can any raze it out. When the church is either scattered like dust by persecution, or overgrown with superstition and idolatry, that there is scarce any grain of true religion appearing, as in the time of Elijah, who complained that he was left alone, as if the church had been rooted out of that corner of the world, 1 Kings xix. 14, 18, yet God knew that he had a number fed in a cave, and had reserved 'seven thousand men' that had preserved the purity of his worship, and 'not bowed their knee to Baal.'* Christ knew his sheep as well as he is known of them, yea, better than they can know him. History acquaints us that Cyrus had so vast a memory that he knew the name of every particular soldier in his army, which consisted of divers nations. Shall it be too hard for an infinite understanding to know every one of that host that march under his banners? May he not as well know them as know the number, qualities, influences of those stars which lie concealed from our eye, as well as those that are visible to our sense? Yes, he knows them, as a general, to employ them, as a shepherd, to preserve them. He knows them in the world to guard them, and he knows them, when they are out of the world, to gather them, and cull out their bodies, though wrapped up in a cloud of the putrified carcasses of the wicked. As he knew them from all eternity to elect them, so he knows them in time to clothe their persons with righteousness, to protect their persons in calamity, according to his good pleasure, and at last to raise and reward them according to his promise.

4. We may take comfort from hence, that our sincerity cannot be unknown to an infinite understanding. Not a way of the righteous is concealed from him, and therefore they shall 'stand in judgment before him.' Ps. i. 6, 'The Lord knows the way of the righteous;' he knows them to observe them, and he knows them to reward them. How comfortable is it to appeal to this attribute of God for our integrity, with Hezekiah: 2 Kings xx. 3, 'Remember, Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.' Christ himself is brought in this prophetic psalm drawing out the comfort of this attribute: Ps. xl. 9, 'I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest,' meaning his faithfulness in declaring the righteousness of God. Job follows the same steps: 'Also now, behold, my record is in heaven, and my witness is on high,' Job xvi. 19; my innocence hath the testimony of men, but my greatest support is in the records of God. *Also now*, or besides the testimony of my own heart, I have another witness in heaven that knows the heart, and can only judge of the principles of my actions, and clear me from the scorn of my friends, and the accusations of men, with a justification of my innocence. He repeats it twice, to take the greater comfort in it. God knows that we do that in the simplicity of our hearts, which may be judged by men to be done for

* Turretine's Sermons, p. 362.

unworthy and sordid ends. He knows not only the outward action, but the inward affection, and praises that which men often dispraise; and writes down that with an *euge*, 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' which men daub with their severest censures, Rom. ii. 29. How refreshing is it to consider that God never mistakes the appearance for reality, nor is led by the judgment of man! He sits in heaven, and laughs at their follies and censures. If God had no sounder and no more piercing a judgment than man, woe be to the sincerest souls, that are often judged hypocrites by some. What a happiness is it for integrity to have a judge of infinite understanding, who will one day wipe off the dirt of worldly reproaches!

Again, God knows the least diam of grace and righteousness in the hearts of his people, though but as a 'smoking flax,' or as the least bruise of a saving conviction, Mat. xii. 20, and knows it so as to cherish it. He knows that work he hath begun, and never hath his eye off from it to abandon it.

5. The consideration of this excellent perfection in God may comfort us in our secret prayers, sighs, and works. If God were not of infinite understanding, to pierce into the heart, what comfort hath a poor creature that hath a scantiness of expressions, but a heart in a flame? If God did not understand the heart, faith and prayer, which are internal works, would be in vain. How could he give that mercy our hearts plead for, if he were ignorant of our inward affections? Hypocrites might scale heaven by lofty expressions, and a sincere soul come short of the happiness he is prepared for, for want of flourishing gifts. Prayer is an internal work, words are but the garment of prayer; meditation is the body, and affections the soul and life, of prayer: 'Give ear to my words, O Lord; consider my meditation,' Ps. v. 1. Prayer is a rational act, an act of the mind, not the act of a parrot; prayer is an act of the heart, though the speaking prayer is the work of the tongue. Now, God gives ear to the words, but he considers the meditation, the frame of the heart. Consideration is a more exact notice than hearing, the act only of the ear. Were not God of an infinite understanding, an omniscient, he might take fine clothes, a heap of garments, for the man himself, and be put off by glittering words, without a spiritual frame. What matter of rejoicing is it, that we call not upon a deaf and ignorant idol, but on one that listens to our secret petitions to give them a despatch, that knows our desires afar off, and from the infiniteness of his mercy, joined with his omniscience, stands ready to give us a return! Hath he not a book of remembrance for them that fear him, and for their sighs and ejaculations to him as well as their discourses of him, Mal. iii. 16; and not only what prayers they utter, but what gracious and holy thoughts they have of him, 'that thought upon his name'? Though millions of supplications be put up at the same time, yet they have all a distinct file (as I may say) in an infinite understanding, which perceives and comprehends them all. As he observes millions of sins committed at the same time by a vast number of persons, to record them in order to punishment, so he distinctly discerns an infinite number of cries at the same moment to register them in order to an answer.

A sigh cannot escape an infinite understanding, though crowded among a mighty multitude of cries from others, or covered with many unwelcome distractions in ourselves, no more than a believing touch from the woman that had the bloody issue could be concealed from Christ, and be undiscerned from the press of the thronging multitudes. Our groans are as audible and intelligible to him as our words, and he knows what is the mind of his own Spirit, though expressed in no plainer language than sobs and heavings,

Rom. viii. 27. Thus David cheers up himself under the neglects of his friends: Ps. xxxviii. 9, 'Lord, my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.' Not a groan of a panting spirit shall be lost till God hath lost his knowledge, not a petition forgotten while God hath a record, nor a tear dried while God hath a bottle to reserve it in, Ps. lvi. 8.

Our secret works are also known and observed by him, not only our outward labour, but our inward love in it, Heb. vi. 10. If with Isaac we go privately into the field to meditate, or secretly 'cast our bread upon the waters,' he keeps his eye upon us to reward us, and returns the fruit into our own bosoms, Mat. vi. 4, 6; yea, though it be but a cup of cold water, from an inward spring of love given to a disciple. He sees your works and your labours, and faith and patience in working them, Rev. ii. 2, all the marks of your industry, and strength of your intentions, and will be as exact at last in order to a due praise, as to open sins in order to a just recompence, 1 Cor. iv. 5.

6. The consideration of this excellent attribute affords comfort in the afflictions of good men. He knows their pressures, as well as hears their cries, Exod. iii. 7. His knowledge comes not by information from us, but his compassionate listening to our cries springs from his own inspection into our sorrows; he is affected with them before we make discovery of them. He is not ignorant of the best season, when they may be usefully inflicted, and when they may be profitably removed. The tribulation and poverty of his church is not unknown to him: Rev. ii. 8, 9, 'I know thy works and tribulation,' &c. He knows their works, and what tribulation they meet with for him; he sees their extremities, when they are toiling against the wind and tide of the world, Mark vi. 48; yea, the natural exigencies of the multitude are not neglected by him, he discerns to take care of them. Our Saviour considered the three days' fasting of his followers, and miraculously provides a dish for them in the wilderness. No good man is ever out of God's mind, and therefore never out of his compassionate care; his eye pierceth into their dungeons, and pities their miseries. Joseph may forget his brethren, and the disciples not know Christ when he walks upon the midnight waves and turbulent sea,* but a lion's den cannot obscure a Daniel from his sight, nor the depths of the whale's belly bury Jonah from the divine understanding. He discerns Peter in his chains, and Stephen under the stones of martyrdom; he knows Lazarus under his tattered rags, and Abel wallowing in his blood; his eye and knowledge goes along with his people when they are transplanted into foreign countries, and sold for slaves into the islands of the Grecians; for 'he will raise them out of the place,' Joel iii. 6, 7. He would defeat the hopes of the persecutors, and applaud the patience of his people. He knows his people in the tabernacle of life, and in the 'valley of the shadow of death,' Ps. xxiii. He knows all penal evils, because he commissions and directs them. He knows the instruments, because they are his sword, Ps. xvii. 13; and he knows his gracious sufferer, because he hath his mark. He discerns Job in his anguish, and the devil in his malice. By the direction of this attribute he orders calamities, and rescues from them: 'Thou hast seen it, for thou beholdest mischief and spite,' Ps. x. 14. That is the comfort of the psalmist, and the comfort of every believer, and the ground of committing themselves to God under all the injustice of men.

7. It is a comfort in all our infirmities. As he knows our sins to charge them, so he knows the weakness of our nature to pity us. As his infinite understanding may scare us, because he knows our transgressions, so it may

* Barlow's Man's Refuge, p. 29, 30.

relieve us, because he knows our natural mutability in our first creation : ' He knows our frame, he remembers that we are dust,' Ps. ciii. 14. It is the reason of the precedent verses, why he removes our transgression from us, why he is so backward in punishing, so patient in waiting, so forward in pitying; why? He doth not only remember our sins, but remember our frame or forming, what brittle, though clear glasses we are by creation, how easy to be cracked. He remembers our impotent and weak condition by corruption; what a sink we have of vain imaginations that remain in us after regeneration; he doth not only consider that we were made according to his image, and therefore able to stand, but that we were made of dust and weak matter, and had a sensitive soul, like that of beasts, as well as an intellectual nature, like that of angels, and therefore liable to follow the dictates of it without exact care and watchfulness. If he remembered only the first, there would be no issue but indignation; but the consideration of the latter moves his compassion. How miserable should we be for want of this perfection in the divine nature, whereby God remembers and reflects upon his past act in our first frame, and the mindfulness of our condition excites the motion of his bowels to us! Had he lost the knowledge how he first framed us, did he not still remember the mutability of our nature as we were formed and stamped in his mint, how much more wretched would our condition be than it is! If his remembrance of our original be one ground of his pity, the sense of his omniscience should be a ground of our comfort in the stirring of our infirmities; he remembers we were but dust when he made us, and yet remembers we are but dust while he preserves and forbears us.

8. It is some comfort in the fears of some lurking corruption in our hearts. We know by this whither to address ourselves for the search and discovery of it. Perhaps some blessings we want are retarded, some calamities we understand not the particular cause of are inflicted, some petitions we have put up hang too long for an answer, and the chariot wheels of divine goodness move slow, and are long in coming. Let us beg the aid of this attribute to open to us the *remoras*, to discover what base affection there is that retards the mercies we want, or attracts the affliction we feel, or bars the door against the return of our supplications. What our dim sight cannot discover, the clear eye of God can make visible to us. Job x. 2, ' Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.' As in want of pardon, we particularly plead his mercy, and in our desires for the performance of his promise we argue with him from his faithfulness, so in the fear of any insincerity or hidden corruption we should implore his omniscience. For as God is a God in covenant, our God, our God in the whole of his nature, so the perfections of his nature are employed in their several stations as assistances of his creatures. This was David's practice and comfort. After that large meditation on the omniscience and omnipresence of God, he turns his thoughts of it into petitions for the employment of it in the concerns of his soul, and begs a mercy suitable to the glory of this perfection: Ps. cxxxix. 23, ' Search me, O God, and try my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; ' dive to the bottom: ver. 24, ' And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.' His desire is not barely that God should know him, for it would be senseless to beg of God that he should have mercy, or faithfulness, or power, or knowledge in his nature; but he desires the exercise of this attribute in the discovery of himself to himself, in order to his sight of any wicked way, and humiliation for it, and reformation of it in order to his conduct to everlasting life. As we may appeal to this perfection to judge us, when the sincerity of our actions is censured by

others, so we may implore it to search us when our sincerity is questioned by ourselves, that our minds may be enlightened by a beam from his knowledge, and the little thieves may be pulled out of their dens in our hearts by the hand of his power. In particular, it is our comfort that we can, and our necessity that we must, address particularly to this, when we engage solemnly in a work of self-examination; that we may have a clearer eye to direct us than our own, that we may not mistake brass for gold, or counterfeit graces for true; that nothing that is filthy and fit to be cast out may escape our sight, and preserve its stations. And we need not question the laying at the door of this neglect (viz., not calling in this attribute to our aid, whose proper office it is, as I may so say, to search and inquire) all the mistakes, ill success, and fruitlessness of our endeavours in self-examination, because we would engage in it in the pitiful strength of our own dimness, and not in the light of God's countenance, and the assistance of his eye, which can discern what we cannot see, and discover that to us which we cannot manifest to ourselves. It is a comfort to a learner of an art, to have a skilful eye to overlook his work, and inform him of the defects. Beg the help of the eye of God in all your searches and self-examinations.

9. The consideration of this attribute is comfortable in our assurances of, and reflections upon, the pardon of sin, or seeking of it. As God punishes men for sin according to his knowledge of them, which is greater than the knowledge their own consciences have of them, so he pardons according to his knowledge. He pardons not only according to our knowledge, but according to his own. He is greater than any man's heart, to condemn for that which a man is at present ignorant of, and greater than our hearts, to pardon that which is not at present visible to us; he knows that which the most watchful conscience cannot take a survey of. If God had not an infinite understanding of us, how could we have a perfect and full pardon from him? It would not stand with his honour to pardon he knew not what. He knows what crimes we have to be pardoned, when we know not all of them ourselves, that stand in need of a gracious remission; his omniscience beholds every sin, to charge it upon our Saviour. If he knows our sins that are black, he knows every mite of Christ's righteousness, which is pure, and the utmost extent of his merits, as well as the demerit of our iniquities. As he knows the filth of our sin, he also knows the covering of our Saviour; he knows the value of the Redeemer's sufferings, and exactly understands every plea in the intercession of our advocate. Though God knows our sins *oculo indice*, yet he doth not see them *oculo judice*, with a judicial eye. His omniscience stirs not up his justice to revenge, but his mercy to pity. His infinite understanding of what Christ hath done directs him to disarm his justice, and sound an alarm to his bowels. As he understands better than we what we have committed, so he understands better than we what our Saviour hath merited, and his eye directs his hand in the blotting out guilt, and applying the remedy.

Use 3. The third use shall be to sinners to humble them, and put them upon serious consideration. This attribute speaks terrible things to a profligate sinner. Basil thinks that the ripping open the sins of the damned to their faces by this perfection of God is more terrible than their other torments in hell. God knows the persons of wicked men, not one is exempted from his eye, he sees all the actions of men as well as he knows their persons: Job xi. 11, 'He knows vain men, he sees wickedness also.' Job xxxiv. 21, 'His eye is upon all their goings.' He hears the most private whispers, Ps. cxxxix. 4; the scope, manner, circumstance of speaking he

knows it altogether ; ' he understands all our thoughts,' the first bubbleings of that bitter spring, ver. 2. The quickest glances of the fancy, the closest musings of the mind, and the abortive wouldings or wishes of the will, the language of the heart as well as the language of the tongue ; not a foolish thought or an idle word, not a wanton glance or a dishonest action ; not a negligent service, or a distracting fancy, but is more visible to him than the filth of a dunghill can be to any man by the help of a sunbeam. How much better would it be for desperate sinners to have their crimes known to all angels in heaven, and men upon earth, and devils in hell, than that they should be known to their sovereign, whose laws they have violated, and to their judge, whose righteousness obligeth him to revenge the injury !

1. Consider, what a poor refuge is secrecy to a sinner ! Not the mists of a foggy day, not the obscurity of the darkest night, not the closest curtains, nor the deepest dungeon, can hide any sin from the eye of God. Adam is known in his thickets, and Jonah in his cabin. Achan's wedge of gold is discerned by him, though buried in the earth, and hooded with a tent. Shall Sarah be unseen by him, when she mockingly laughs behind the door ? Shall Gehazi tell a lie, and comfort himself with an imagination of his master's ignorance, as long as God knows it ? Whatsoever works men do, are not hid from God, whether done in the darkness or daylight, in the midnight darkness or the noonday sun. He is all eye to see, and he hath a great wrath to punish. The wheels in Ezekiel are full of eyes : a piercing eye to behold the sinner, and a swift wheel of wrath to overtake him. God is light, and of all things light is most difficultly kept out. The ' secretest sins are set in the light of his countenance,' Ps. xc. 8, as legible to him as if writ with a sunbeam ; more visible to him than the greatest print to the sharpest eye. The fornications of the Samaritan woman, perhaps known only to her own conscience, were manifest to Christ, John iv. 16. There is nothing so secretly done, but there is an infallible witness to prepare a charge. Though God be invisible to us, we must not imagine we are so to him ; it is a vanity therefore to think we can conceal ourselves from God, by concealing the notions of God from our sense and practice. If men be as close from the eyes of all men, as from those of the sun ; yea, if they could separate themselves from their own shadow ; they could not draw themselves from God's understanding. How then can darkness shelter us, or crafty artifices defend us ? With what shame will sinners be filled, when God, who hath traced their steps, and writ their sins in a book, shall make a repetition of their ways, and unveil the web of their wickedness.

2. What a dreadful consideration is this to the juggling hypocrite, that masks himself with an appearance of piety ! An infinite understanding judges not according to the veils and shadows, but according to truth : ' He judges not according to appearance,' 1 Sam. xvi. 7. The outward comeliness of a work imposeth not on him ; his knowledge, and therefore his estimations, are quite of another nature than those of men. By this perfection God looks through the veil, and beholds the litter of abominations in the secrets of the soul, the true quality and principle of every work, and judges of them as they are, and not as they appear. Disguised pretexts cannot deceive him ; the disguises are known afar off before they are weaved, he pierceeth into the depths of the most abstruse wills ; all secret ends are dissected before. Every action is naked in its outside, and open in its inside, all are as clear to him as if their bodies were of crystal, so that if there be any secret reserves, he will certainly reprove us, Job xiii. 10. We are often deceived, we may take wolves for sheep, and hypocrites for believers ; for the eyes of men are no better than flesh, and dive no further than appear-

ance; but an infinite understanding, that fathoms the secret depths of the heart, is too knowing to let a dream pass for a truth, or mistake a shadow for a body. Though we call God Father all our days, speak the language of angels, or be endowed with the gift of miracles, he can discern whether we have his mark upon us; he can espy the treason of Judas in a kiss; Herod's intent of murdering under a specious pretence of worship; a Pharisee's fraud under a broad philactery; a ravenous wolf under the softness of a sheep's skin; and the devil in Samuel's mantle, or when he would shroud himself among the sons of God, Job i. 6, 7. All the rooms of the heart, and every atom of dust in the least chink of it, is clear to his eye. He can strip sin from the fairest excuses, pierce into the heart with more ease than the sun can through the thinnest cloud or vapour, and look through all Ephraim's ingenious inventions to excuse his idolatry, Hosea v. 3. Hypocrisy then is a senseless thing, since it cannot escape unmasking by an infinite understanding. As all our force cannot stop his arm, when he is resolved to punish, so all our sophistry cannot blind his understanding, when he comes to judge. Woe to the hypocrite, for God sees him; all his juggling is open and naked to infinite understanding.

3. Is it not also a senseless thing to be careless of sins committed long ago? The old sins forgotten by men, stick fast in an infinite understanding. Time cannot raze out that which hath been known from eternity. Why should they be forgotten many years after they were acted, since they were foreknown in an eternity before they were committed, or the criminal capable to practise them? Amalek must pay their arrears of their ancient unkindness to Israel in the time of Saul, though the generation that committed them were rotten in their graves, 1 Sam. xv. 2. Old sins are written in a book, which lies always before God; and not only our own sins, but the sins of our fathers, to be requited upon their posterity: Isa. lxv. 6, 'Behold it is written.' What a vanity is it, then, to be regardless of the sins of an age that went before us; because they are in some measure out of our knowledge, are they therefore blotted out of God's remembrance? Sins are bound up with him, as men do bonds, till they resolve to sue for the debt: 'The iniquity of Ephraim is bound up,' Hosea xiii. 12. As his foreknowledge extends to all acts that shall be done, so his remembrance extends to all acts that have been done. We may as well say, God foreknows nothing that shall be done to the end of the world, as that he forgets any things that hath been done from the beginning of the world. The former ages of the world are no further distant from him than the latter. God hath a calendar (as it were) or an account-book of men's sins ever since the beginning of the world, what they did in their childhood, what in their youth, what in their manhood, and what in their old age. He hath them 'in store among his treasure,' Deut. xxxii. 34. He hath neither lost his understanding to know them, nor his resolution to revenge them. As it follows: ver. 35, 'To me vengeance belongs.' He intends to enrich his justice with a glorious manifestation, by rendering a due recompence. And it is to be observed, that God doth not only necessarily remember them, but sometimes binds himself by an oath to do it: Amos viii. 7, 'The Lord hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works;' or in the Hebrew, 'If I ever forget any of their works;' that is, let me not be accounted a God for ever, if I do forget; let me lose my Godhead, if I lose my remembrance. It is not less a misery to the wicked, than it is a comfort to the godly, that their record is in heaven.

4. Let it be observed, that this infinite understanding doth exactly know the sins of men; he knows so as to consider. He doth not only know them,

but intently behold them : Ps. xi. 4, ' His eyelids try the children of men,' a metaphor taken from men, that contract the eyelids when they would wistly and accurately behold a thing ; it is not a transient and careless look : Ps. x. 14, ' Thou hast seen it ;' thou hast intently beheld it, as the word properly signifies. He beholds and knows the actions of every particular man, as if there were none but he in the world ; and doth not only know, but ponder, Prov. v. 21, and ' consider their works,' Ps. xxxiii. 15. He is not a bare spectator, but a diligent observer : ' By him actions are weighed,' 1 Sam. ii. 3, to see what degree of good or evil there is in them, what there is to blemish them, what to advantage them, what the quality and quantity of every action is. Consideration takes in every circumstance of the considered object. Notice is taken of the place where, the minute when, the mercy against which it is committed ; the number of them is exact in God's book : ' They have tempted me now these ten times,' Num. xiv. 22, against the demonstrations of my glory in Egypt and the wilderness. The whole guilt in every circumstance is spread before him. His knowledge of men's sins is not confused, such an imperfection an infinite understanding cannot be subject to ; it is exact, for ' iniquity is marked before him,' Jer. ii. 22.

5. God knows men's miscarriage so as to judge. This use his omniscience is put to, to maintain his sovereign authority in the exercise of his justice. His notice of the sins of men is in order to a just retribution : Ps. x. 14, ' Thou hast seen mischief, to requite it with thy hand.' The eye of his knowledge directs the hand of his justice, and no sinful action that falls under his cognizance but will fall under his revenge ; they can as little escape his censure as they can his knowledge. He is a witness in his omniscience, that he may be a judge in his righteousness. ' He knows the hearts of the wicked' so as to hate their works, and testify his abhorrency of that which is of high value with men, Luke xvi. 15. Sin is not preserved in his understanding, or written down in his books to be moth-eaten as an old manuscript, but to be opened one day and copied out in the consciences of men. He writes them to publish them, and sets them in the light of his countenance, to bring them to the light of their consciences. What a terrible consideration is it, to think that the sins of a day are upon record in an infallible understanding, much more the sins of a week. What a number, then, do the sins of a month, a year, ten or forty years arise to ! How many actions against charity, against sincerity ! What an infinite number is there of them, all bound up in the court-rolls of God's omniscience, in order to a trial, to be brought out before the eyes of men ! Who can seriously consider all those bonds, reserved in the cabinet of God's knowledge, to be sued out against the sinner in due time, without an unexpressible horror ?

Use 4. The fourth use is of exhortation. Let us have a sense of God's knowledge upon our hearts. All wickedness hath a spring from a want of due consideration and sense of it. David concludes it so, Ps. lxxxvi. 14 ; the proud rose up against him, and violent men sought after his soul, because they did not set God before them. They think God doth not know, and therefore care not what nor how they act. When the fear of this attribute is removed, a door is opened to all impiety. What is there so villainous but the minds of men will attempt to act ? What reverence of a Deity can be left, when the sense of his infinite understanding is extinguished ? What faith could there be in judgment, in witnessess ? How would the foundations of human society be overturned ! the pillars upon which commerce stands be utterly broken and dissolved ! What society can be

preserved if this be not truly believed and faithfully stuck to? But how easily would oaths be swallowed and quickly violated if the sense of this perfection were rooted out of the minds of men! What fear could they have of calling to witness a being they imagine blind and ignorant? Men secretly imagine that God knows not, or soon forgets, and then make bold to sin against him, Ezek. viii. 12. How much does it therefore concern us to cherish and keep alive the sense of this? If God 'writes us upon the palms of his hands,' as the expression is, to remember us, let us engrave him upon the tables of our hearts to remember him. It would be a good motto to write upon our minds, God knows all, he is of infinite understanding.

1. This would give check to much iniquity. Can a man's conscience easily and delightfully swallow that which he is sensible falls under the cognizance of God, when it is hateful to the eye of his holiness, and renders the actor odious to him? 'Doth he not see my ways, and count all my steps,' saith Job, chap. xxxi. 4. To what end doth he fix this consideration? To keep him from wanton glances. Temptations have no encouragement to come near him that is constantly armed with the thoughts that his sin is booked in God's omniscience. If any impudent devil hath the face to tempt us, we should not have the impudence to join issue with him under the sense of an infinite understanding. How fruitless would his wiles be against this consideration! How easily would his snares be cracked by one sensible thought of this! This doth Solomon prescribe to allay the heat of carnal imaginations, Prov. v. 20, 21. It were a useful question to ask at the appearance of every temptation, at the entrance upon every action, as the church did in temptations to idolatry, Ps. xlv. 21, 'Shall not God search this out, for he knows the secrets of the heart?' His understanding comprehends us more than our consciences can our acts, or our understanding our thoughts. Who durst speak treason against a prince if he were sure he heard him, or that it would come to his knowledge? A sense of God's knowledge of wickedness in the first motion and inward contrivance would bar the accomplishment and execution. The consideration of God's infinite understanding would cry *Stand* to the first glances of the heart to sin.

2. It would make us watchful over our hearts and thoughts. Should we harbour any unworthy thoughts in our cabinet, if our heads and hearts were possessed with this useful truth, that God knows everything which comes into our minds, we should as much blush at the rising of impure thoughts before the understanding of God as at the discovery of unworthy actions to the knowledge of men. If we lived under a sense that not a thought of all those millions which flutter about our minds can be concealed from him, how watchful and careful should we be of our hearts and thoughts!

3. It would be a good preparation to every duty. This consideration should be the preface to every service,—The divine understanding knows how I now act. This would engage us to serious intention, and quell wandering and distracting fancies. Who would come before God with a careless and ignorant soul, under a sense of his infinite understanding, and prerogative of searching the heart? 'O thou that sittest in heaven' was a consideration the psalmist had at the beginning of his prayer, Ps. exxiii. 1, whereby he testifies not only an apprehension of the majesty and power of God, but of his omniscience, as one sitting above beholds all that is below. Would we offer to God such raw and undigested petitions; would there be so much flatness in our services; should our hearts so often give us the slip; would any hang down their heads like a bulrush by an affected or

counterfeit humility while the heart is filled with pride, if we did actuate faith in this attribute? No; our prayers would be more sound, our devotions more vigorous, our hearts more close, our spirits like the chariots of Amminadab, more swift in their motions. Everything would be done by us with all our might, which would be very feeble and faint if we conceived God to be of a finite understanding like ourselves. Let us therefore before every duty, not draw, but open the curtains between God and our souls, and think that we are going before him that sees us, Gen. xvi. 13, before him that knows us. And the stronger impressions of the divine knowledge are upon our minds, the better would our preparation be for, and the more active our frames in every service. And certainly we may judge of the suitableness of our preparations by the strength of such impressions upon us.

4. This would tend to make us sincere in our whole course. This prescription David gave to Solomon, to maintain a soundness and health of spirit in his walk before God: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'And thou Solomon, my son, know the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart; for the Lord understands all the imaginations of the thoughts.' Josephus* gives this reason for Abel's holiness, that he believed God was ignorant of nothing. As the doctrine of omniscience is the foundation of all religion, so the impression of it would promote the practice of all religion. When all our ways are imagined by us to be before the Lord, we shall then keep his precepts, Ps. cxix. 168. And we can never be perfect or sincere till we walk before God, Gen. xvii. 1, as under the eye of God's knowledge. What we speak, what we think, what we act, is in his sight. He knows every place where we are, everything that we do, as well as Christ knew Nathanael under the fig-tree. As he is too powerful to be vanquished, so he is too understanding to be deceived. The sense of this would make us walk with as much care as if the understanding of all men did comprehend us and our actions.

5. The consideration of this attribute would make us humble. How dejected would a person be, if he were sure all the angels in heaven and men upon earth did perfectly know his crimes, with all their aggravations! But what is created knowledge to an infinite and just censuring understanding? When we consider that he knows our actions, whereof there are multitudes, and our thoughts, whereof there are millions; that he views all the blessings bestowed upon us, all the injuries we have returned to him; that he exactly knows his own bounty, and our ingratitude; all the idolatry, blasphemy, and secret enmity in every man's heart against him; all tyrannical oppressions, hidden lusts, omissions of necessary duties, violation of plain precepts, every foolish imagination, with all the circumstances of them, and that perfectly in their full anatomy, every mite of unworthiness and wickedness in every circumstance; and add to this his knowledge, the wonders of his patience, which are miraculous upon the score of his omniscience, that he is not as quick in his revenge as he is in his understanding, but is so far from inflicting punishment that he continues his former benefits, arms not his justice against us, but solicits our repentance, and waits to be gracious with all this knowledge of our crimes: should not the consideration of this melt our hearts into humiliation before him, and make us earnest in begging pardon and forgiveness of him?

Again, Do we not all find a worm in our best fruit, a flaw in our soundest duties? Shall any of us vaunt, as if God beheld only the gold, and not any dross; as if he knew one thing only, and not another. If we knew something by ourselves to cheer us, do we not also know something, yea, many

* Antiquit., lib. i. cap. 3.

things, to condemn us, and therefore to humble us? Let the sense of God's infinite knowledge, therefore, be an incentive and argument for more humiliation in us. If we know enough to render ourselves vile in our own eyes, how much more doth God know to render us vile in his!

6. The consideration of this excellent perfection should make us to acquiesce in God, and rely upon him in every strait. In public, in private, he knows all cases, and he knows all remedies. He knows the seasons of bringing them, and he knows the seasons of removing them, for his own glory. What is contingent in respect of us, and of our foreknowledge, and in respect of second causes, it is not so in regard of God's, who hath the knowledge of the futuration of all things. He knows all causes in themselves, and therefore knows what every cause will produce, what will be the event of every counsel and of every action. How should we commit ourselves to this God of infinite understanding, who knows all things, and foreknows everything; that cannot be forced through ignorance to take new counsel, or be surprised with anything that can happen to us. This use the psalmist makes of it: Ps. x. 14, 'Thou hast seen it, the poor committeth himself unto thee.' Though 'some trust in chariots and horses,' Ps. xx. 7, some in counsels and counsellors, some in their arms and courage, and some in mere vanity and nothing, yet let us 'remember the name' and nature 'of the Lord our God,' his divine perfections, of which this of his infinite understanding and omniscience is none of the least, but so necessary, that without it he could not be God, and the whole world would be a mere chaos and confusion.