

On the Nature of God

by James Arminius

This sermon explores the nature of God, discussing how we can know God's nature, the essence of God, and the attributes of God's essence.

Scripture: Proverbs 14:29, Proverbs 19:11, Proverbs 22:24, Proverbs 29:22, Ephesians 4:29, James 1:19

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Spiritual Maturity"

Description

Steven Cole preaches on the importance of an overseer not being quick-tempered, emphasizing the need for self-control and patience, as quick-tempered individuals are easily provoked and lack the ability to govern their passions. The overseer should exhibit the fruit of the Spirit, showing kindness, patience, and self-control, rather than being irritable or touchy. Paul and James both highlight the significance of not being easily provoked and the righteousness that comes from controlling one's anger, which is essential for effective leadership in the church.

Transcript

DISPUTATION 4

ON THE NATURE OF GOD

RESPONDENT: JAMES ARMINIUS -- WHEN HE STOOD FOR HIS DEGREE OF D. D.

I. The very nature of things and the Scriptures of God, as well as the general consent of all wise men and nations, testify that a nature is correctly ascribed to God. (Gal. iv, 8; 2 Pet. i, 4; Aristot. De Repub. 1. 7, c. 1; Cicero De Nat. Deor.)

II. This nature cannot be known a priori: for it is the first of all things, and was alone, for infinite ages, before all things. It is adequately known only by God, and God by it; because God is the same as it is. It is in some slight measure known by us, but in a degree infinitely below what it is [in] itself; because we are from it by an external emanation. (Isa. xlv, 6; Rev. i, 8; 1 Cor. ii, 11; 1 Tim. vi, 16; 1 Cor. xiii, 9.)

III. But this nature is known by us, either immediately through the unclouded vision of it as it is. This is called "face to face," (1 Cor. xiii, 12,) and is peculiar to the blessed in heaven: (1 John iii, 2.) Or mediately through analogical images and signs, which are not only the external acts of God and his works through them, (Psalm xix, 1-8; Rom. i, 20,) but likewise his word, (Rom. x, 14-17,) which, in that part in which it proposes Christ, "who is the Image of the Invisible God," (Col. i, 15,) as "the brightness of his glory, and

the express image of his person," (Heb. i, 3,) gives such a further increase to our knowledge, that "we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." (2 Cor. iii, 18.) This is called "through a glass in an enigma," or "darkly," and applies exclusively to travelers and pilgrims who "are absent from the Lord." (2 Cor. v, 6; Exod. xxxiii, 20.)

IV. But there are two modes of this second perception from the works and the word of God. The First is that of Affirmation, (which is also styled by Thomas Aquinas, "the mode of Causality and by the habitude of the principle,") according to which the simple perfections which are in the creatures, as being the productions of God, are attributed analogically to God according to some similitude. (Psalm xciv, 9, 10; Matt. vii, 11; Isa. xlix, 15.) The Second is that of Negation or Removal, according to which the relative perfections and all the imperfections which appertain to the creatures, as having been produced out of nothing, are removed from God. (Isa. iv, 8, 9; 1 Cor. i, 25.) To the mode of Affirmation, (because it is through the habitude of the cause and principle, to the excellence of which no effect ever rises,) that of Pre-eminence must be added, according to which the perfections that are predicated of the creatures are understood [to be] infinitely more perfect in God. (Isa. xl, 15, 17, 22, 25.) Though this mode be affirmative and positive in itself, (for as the nature of God necessarily exists, so it is necessarily known,) in positively and not in negation; yet it cannot be enunciated or expressed by us, except through a Negation of those modes according to which the creatures are partakers of their own perfections, or the perfections in creatures are circumscribed. Those modes, being added to the perfections of the creatures, produce this effect, that those which, considered without them, were simple perfections, are relative perfections, and by that very circumstance are to be removed from God. Hence it appears, that the mode of Pre-eminence does not differ in species from the mode of Affirmation and Negation.

V. Besides, in the entire nature of things and in the Scriptures themselves, only two substances are found, in which is contained every perfection of things. They are Essence and Life, the former of them constituting the perfection of all existing creatures; the latter, that of only some them, and those the most perfect. (Gen. 1; Psalm civ, 29, 148; Acts xvii, 28.) Beyond these two the human mind cannot possibly comprehend any substance, indeed, it cannot raise its conceptions to any other: for it is itself circumscribed within the limits of created nature, of which it forms a part; it is therefore incapable of passing beyond the circle which encloses the whole. (Rev. i, 8; iv, 8; Dan. vi, 46.) Wherefore in the nature of God himself, only these two causes of motion, Essence and Life, can become objects of our consideration.

LET THE FOLLOWING BE OUR PROBLEMS

Have a corporeal Essence, and a vegetative and sensitive Life, any analogy to the Essence and Life of God, though such analogy be less than a spiritual Essence and an intellectual Life?

If they have this analogy, how are body and senses removed simply from God?

If they have not this analogy, how has God been able to produce this kind of Essence and Life?

VI. But in God both these are to be considered in the mode of Pre-eminence, that is, in excellence far surpassing the Essence and Life of all the creatures. (Psalm cii, 27; 1 Tim. vi, 16.)

THE ESSENCE OF GOD

VII. The Essence of God is that by which God exists; or it is the first cause of motion of the Divine Nature by which God is understood to exist.

VIII. Because every Essence, which is either in the superior or in the inferior nature of things, is distributed into spiritual and corporeal, (Col. i, 16;) of which, the former notes simply perfection, the latter a defection or defect from this perfection. On this account we separate corporeal Essence from God according to the mode of removal, and at the same time all those things which belong to a corporeal Essence as such, whether it be simple or compound -- such as magnitude, figure, place, or parts, whether sensible or imaginable. Whence also He cannot be perceived by the corporeal senses, either by those which are external or by the internal, since he is invisible, intangible, and incapable of being represented. (Deut. iv, 14; 1 Kings viii, 1 Luke xxiv, 39; John iv, 24; 1 Tim. i, 17.) But we ascribe to Him a spiritual Essence, and that in the mode of preeminence, as "the Father of Spirits." (Heb. xii, 9.) Therefore,

(1.) We reject the dogma of the Anthro-po-morphites, [those who maintained that "the uncorruptable God" had a form or body "like to corruptible man,"] and the intolerable custom of the Papists, which they constantly practice, in fashioning a [supposed] likeness of God's Essence. (Deut. iv, 15, 16; Rom. i, 23; Isa. xl, 18; Acts xvii, 29.)

(2.) When bodily members are attributed in the Scriptures to God, that is done on account of the simplicity of those effects, which the creatures themselves usually produce only by the aid and operation of those members.

IX. As we ought to enunciate negatively the mode by which the Essence of God pre-eminently both is and is spiritual, above the excellence of all Essences, even of those which are spiritual; so this may be done first and immediately in a single phrase, "he is, αναρκων και αναιτιων without beginning and without cause either external or internal." (Isa. xliii, 10; xlv, 8, xxiv, ; xlv, 9; Rev. i, 8; Rom. xi, 35, 36; 1 Cor. viii, 4-6; Rom. ix, 5.) For since there cannot be any advancement in infinitum, (for if there could, there would be no Essence, no Knowledge,) there must be one Essence, above and before which no other can exist: but such an Essence must that of God be; for, to whatsoever this Essence may be attributed, it will by that very act of ascription be God himself.

X. Because the Essence of God is devoid of all cause, from this circumstance arise, in the first place, Simplicity and Infinity of Being in the Essence of God.

XI. Simplicity is a preeminent mode of the Essence of God, by which he is void of all composition, and of component parts whether they belong to the senses or to the understanding. He is without composition, because without external cause; and He is without component parts, because without internal cause. (Rom. xi, 35, 36; Heb. 2:10; Isa. xl, 12, 22.) The Essence of God, therefore, neither consists of material, integral and quantitative parts, of matter and form, of kind and difference, of subject and accident, nor of form and the thing formed, (for it is to itself a form, existing by itself and its own individuality,) neither hypothetically and through nature, through capability and actuality, nor through essence and being. Hence God is his own Essence and his own Being, and is the same in that which is, and that by which it is. He is all eye, ear, hand and foot, because he entirely sees, hears, works, and is in every place. (Psalm cxxxix, 8- 12.) THEREFORE,

Whatever is absolutely predicated about God, it is understood essentially and not accidentally; and those things, (whether many or diverse,) which are predicated concerning God, are, in God, not many but one: (James i, 17.) It is only in our mode of considering them, which is a compound mode, that they are

distinguished as being many and diverse; though this may, not inappropriately, be said, because they are likewise distinguished by a formal reason.

XII. Infinity of Being is a preeminent mode of the Essence of God, by which it is devoid of all limitation and boundary, (Psalm cxlv, 3; Isa. xliii, 10,) whether from something above it or below it, from something before it or after it. It is not bounded by anything above it, because it has received its being from no one. Nor by anything below it, because the form, which is itself, is not limited to the capacity of any matter whatsoever that may be its recipient. Neither by any thing before it, because it is from nothing efficient: nor after it, because it does not exist for the sake of another end. But, His Essence is terminated inwardly by its own property, according to which it is what it is and nothing else. Yet by this no limits are prescribed to its Infinity; for by the very circumstance, that it is its own being, subsisting through itself, neither received from another nor in another, it is distinguished, from all others, and others are removed from it. (Isa. xlv, 9; Rom. xi, 36; Prov. xvi, 4.) THEREFORE,

Whatsoever is predicated absolutely about God, is predicated concerning Him immediately, primarily, and without [respect to] cause.

XIII. From the Simplicity and Infinity of the Divine sense, arise Infinity with regard to time, which is called "Eternity;" and with regard to place, which is called "Immensity;" Impassability, Immutability, and Incorruptibility.

XIV. Eternity is a pre-eminent mode of the Essence of God, by which it is devoid of time with regard to the term or limits of beginning and end, because it is of infinite being; it is also devoid of time with regard to the succession of former and latter, of past and future, because it is of simple being, which is never in capability, but always in act, (Gen. xxi, 33; Psalm xc, 9; Isa. xlv, 6; 2 Tim. i, 9.) According to this mode, therefore, the Being of God is always the universal, the whole, the plentitude of his essence, closely, fixedly, and at every instant present with it, resembling a moment which is also devoid of intelligible parts, and never flows onward progressively, but always continues within itself. It will be lawful, therefore, for us, with Boetius, to define Eternity in the following manner, after changing, by his good leave, the word Life into that of Essence: "It is an interminable, entire and at the same time, a perfect possession of Essence. But it seems that I may by some sort of right require this change to be made, because Essence comes to be considered in the first moving cause of the Divine Nature, before Life; and because Eternity does not belong to Essence through Life, but to Life through Essence. THEREFORE,

Whatsoever things are predicated absolutely concerning God, they belong to Him from all eternity and all together. It is certain that those things which do not from all eternity belong to Him, are predicated about Him not absolutely, but in reference to the creatures, such as, "He is the Creator, the Lord, the Judge of all men."

XV. Immensity is a pre-eminent mode of the Essence of God, by which it is void of place according to space and limits: being co-extended space, because it belongs to simple entity, not having part and part, therefore not having part beyond part. Being also its own encircling limits, or beyond which it has no existence, because it is of infinite entity: and, before all things, God alone was both the world, and place, and all things to himself; but He was alone, because there was nothing outwardly beyond, except himself. (I Kings viii, 27; Job xi, 8, 9.)

XVI. After creatures, and places in which creatures are contained, have been granted to have an existence, from this Immensity follows the Omnipresence or Ubiquity of the Essence of God, according to

which it is entirely wheresoever any creature or any place is, and this in exact similarity to a [mathematical] point, which is totally present to the entire circumference, and to each of its parts, and yet without circumscription. If there be any difference, it arises, from the Will, the Ability and the Act of God. (Psalm cxxxix, 8- 12; Isa. lxvi, 1; Jer. xxiii, 24; Acts xvii, 27, 28.)

XVII. Impassability is a pre-eminent mode of the Essence of God, according to which it is devoid of all suffering or feeling; not only because nothing can act against this Essence, for it is of infinite Being and devoid of an external cause; but likewise because it cannot receive the act of anything, for it is of simple Entity. THEREFORE, Christ has not suffered according to the Essence of his Deity.

XVIII. Immutability is a pre-eminent mode of the Essence of God, by which it is void of all change; of being transferred from place to place, because it is itself its own end and good, and because it is immense; of generation and corruption; of alteration; of increase and decrease; for the same reason as that by which it is incapable of suffering. (Psalm cii, 27; Mal. iii, 6; James i, 17.) Whence likewise, in the Scriptures, Incorruptibility is attributed to God. Nay, even motion cannot happen to Him through operation; for it appertains to God, and to Him alone, to be at rest in operation. (Rom. i, 23; Isa. xl, 28.)

XIX. These modes of the Essence of God belong so peculiarly to Him, as to render them incapable of being communicated to any other thing; and of whatever kind these modes may be, they are, according to themselves, as proper to God as His Essence itself, without which they cannot be communicated, unless we wish to destroy it after despoiling it of its peculiar modes of being; and according to analogy, they are more peculiar to Him than his Essence, because they are pre- eminent, for nothing can be analogous to them. THEREFORE, Christ, according to his humanity, is not in every place.

XX. Since Unity and Good are the general affections of Being, the same are also to be attributed to God, but with the mode of pre-eminence, according to the measure of the Simplicity and Infinity of his Essence. (Gen. i, 31; Matt. xix, 17.)

XXI. The Unity of the Essence of God is that according to which it is in every possible way so at one in itself, as to be altogether indivisible with regard to number, species, genus, parts, modes, &c. (Deut. iv, 35; 1 Cor. viii)

XXII. It appertains also to the Essence of God, to be divided from every other thing: and to be incapable of entering into the composition of any other thing: while some persons ascribe this property to the Simplicity and others to the Unity of God's Essence, several attribute it to both. But on reading the Scriptures, we find that Holiness is frequently ascribed to God, which usually designates a separation or setting apart; on this account, perhaps, that very thing by which God is thus divided from others, may, without any impropriety, be called by the name of Holiness. (Josh. xxiv, 19; Isa. vi, 3; Gen. ii, 3; Exod. xiii, 2; 1 Pet. ii, 2-9; 1 Thess. v, 23.) THEREFORE,

God is neither the soul of the world, nor the form of the universe; He is neither an inherent form, nor a bodily one.

XXIII. The Goodness of the Essence of God is that according to which it is, essentially in itself, the Supreme and very Good; from a participation in which all other things have an existence and are good; and to which all other things are to be referred as to their supreme end: for this reason it is called communicable. (Matt. xix, 17; Jas. i, 17; 1 Cor. x, 31.)

XXIV. These modes and affections are so primarily attributed to the Essence of God, that they ought to be deduced through all the rest of those things which come under our consideration in the latter momentum of the Divine Nature. If this deduction be made, especially through those things which appertain to the operation of God, then the most abundant utility will redound to us from them and from our knowledge of them. This benefit, however, they will not perform for us, if they be made subjects of consideration only in this momentum in the Divine Nature. (Mal. iii, 6; Num. xxiii, 19; Lament. iii, 22; Hosea xi, 9.)

ON THE LIFE OF GOD

XXV. The Life of God, which comes to be considered under the second [momentum] cause of motion in the Divine Nature, is an act flowing from the Essence of God, by which his Essence is signified to be in action within itself. (Psalm xlii, 2; Heb. iii, 12; Num. xiv, 21.)

XXVI. We call it "an act flowing from his essence;" because, as our understanding forms a conception of essence and life in the nature of God under distinct forms, and of the essence as having precedence of the life; we must beware lest the life be conceived as an act approaching to the essence similar to unity, which, when added to unity, makes it binary or two-fold. But it must be conceived as an act flowing from the essence, which advances itself to its own perfection, in the same manner as a [mathematical] point by its flowing moves itself forward in length, [§ 14.] It is our wish, that these things be understood only by the confined capacity of our consideration, who are compelled to use the words of our darkness, in order in any degree to adumbrate or represent that light to which no mortal can approach.

XXVII. We say "that the Divine Essence is in action by means of the life;" because the acts of God, the internal as well as the external, those which are directed inwards and those directed outwards, must all be ascribed to His life as to their proximate and immediate principle. (Heb. iv, 12.) For it is in reference to his life, that God the Father produces out of his own essence his Word and his Spirit; and in reference to his life, God understands, wills, is able to do, and does, all those things which He understands, wills, is able to do, and actually does. Hence, since blessedness consists in action, it is with propriety ascribed to life. (1 Tim. i, 11; Rom. vi, 23.) This also seems to be the cause why it was the will of God, that his oath should be expressed in these words, "THE LORD LIVETH." (Jer. iv, 2.)

XXVIII. The life of God is his essence itself, and his very being; because the Divine Essence is in every respect simple, as well as infinite, and therefore, eternal and immutable. On this account, to it, and indeed to it alone, is attributed immortality, which, therefore, cannot be communicated to any creature. (1 Tim. i, 17; vi, 16.) It is immense, without increase and decrease; it is one and undivided, holy and set apart from all things; it is good, and therefore communicable, and actually communicative of itself, both by creation and preservation, and by habitation commenced in this life, to be consummated in the life to come. (Gen. ii, 7; Acts xvii, 28; Rom. viii, 10, 11; 1 Cor. xv, 28.)

XXIX. But the life of God is active in three faculties, in the understanding, the will, and the power or capability properly so called. In the Understanding, inwardly considering its object of what kind soever, whether it be one [with it] or united to it in the act of understanding. In the Will, inwardly willing its first, chief, and proper object; and extrinsically willing the rest. In the Power, or capability operating only extrinsically, which may be the cause of its being called by the particular name of capability, as being that which is capable of operating on all its objects, before it actually operates.

ON THE UNDERSTANDING OF GOD

XXX. The understanding of God is a faculty of his life, which is the first in nature as well as in order, and by which He distinctly understands all things and every thing which now have, will have, have had, can have, or might hypothetically have, any kind of being; by which He likewise distinctly understands the order which all and each of them hold among themselves, the connections and the various relations which they have or can have; not excluding even that entity which belongs to reason, and which exists, or can exist, only in the mind, imagination, and enunciation. (Rom. xi, 33.)

XXXI. God, therefore, understands himself. He knows all things possible, whether they be in the capability of God or of the creature; in active or passive capability; in the capability of operation, imagination, or enunciation. He knows all things that could have an existence, on laying down any hypothesis. He knows other things than himself, those which are necessary and contingent, good and bad, universal and particular, future, present and past, excellent and vile. He knows things substantial and accidental of every kind; the actions and passions, the modes and circumstances of all things; external words and deeds, internal thoughts, deliberations, counsels, and determinations, and the entities of reason, whether complex or simple. All these things, being jointly attributed to the understanding of God, seem to conduce to the conclusion, that God may deservedly be said to know things infinite. (Acts xv, 18; Heb. iv, 13; Matt. xi, 27; Psalm cxlvii, 4; Isa. li, 32, 33; liv, 7; Matt. x, 30; Psalm cxxxv, 1 John iii, 20; 1 Sam. xvi, 7; 1 Kings viii, 39; Psalm xciv, 11; Isa. xl, 28; Psalm cxlvii, 5; 139; xciv, 9, 10; x, 13, 14.)

XXXII. All the things which God knows, he knows neither by intelligible images, nor by similitude, (for it is not necessary for Him to use abstraction and application for the purpose of understanding;) but He knows them by his own essence, and by this alone, with the exception of evil things which he knows indirectly by the opposite good things; as, through means of the habitude, privation is discovered. Therefore,

(1.) God knows himself entirely and adequately. For He is all being, light and eye. He also knows other things entirely; but excellently, as they are in Himself and in his understanding; adequately, as they are in their proper natures. (1 Cor. ii, 11; Psalm xciv, 9, 10.)

(2.) He knows himself primarily; and it is impossible for that which God understands first and by itself, to be any other thing than his own essence.

(3.) The act of understanding in God is his own being and essence.

XXXIII. The mode by which God understands, is not that which is successive, and which is either through composition and division, or through deductive argumentation; but it is simple, and through infinite intuition. (Heb. iv, 13.) THEREFORE,

(1.) God knows all things from eternity; nothing recently. For this new perfection would add something to His essence by which He understands all things; or his understanding would exceed His essence, if he now understood what he did not formerly understand. But this cannot happen, since he understands all things through his essence. (Acts xv, 18; Ephes. i, 4.)

(2.) He knows all things immeasurably, without the augmentation and decrease of the things known and of the knowledge itself. (Psalm cxlvii, 5.)

(3.) He knows all things immutably, his knowledge not being varied to the infinite changes of the things known. (James i, 17)

(4.) By a single and undivided act, not being diverted towards many things but collected into himself, He knows all things. Yet he does not know them confusedly, or only universally and in general; but also in a distinct and most special manner He knows himself in himself, things in their causes, in themselves, in his own essence, in themselves as being present, in their causes antecedently, and in himself most pre-eminently. (Heb. iv, 13; 1 Kings viii, 39; Psalm cxxxix, 16, 17.)

(5.) And therefore when sleep, drowsiness and oblivion are attributed to God, by these expressions is meant only a deferring of the punishment to be inflicted on his enemies, and a delay in affording solace and aid to his friends. (Psalm xiii, 1, 2.)

XXXIV. Although by one, and that a simple act, God understands all things, yet a certain order in the objects of his knowledge may be assigned to Him without impropriety, indeed, it ought to be for the sake of ourselves. (1.) He knows himself. (2.) He knows all things possible, which may be referred to three general classes. (i.) Let the first be of those things to which the capability of God can immediately extend itself, or which may exist by his mere and sole act. (ii.) Let the second consist of those things which, by God's preservation, motion, aid, concurrence and permission, may have an existence from the creatures, whether these creatures will themselves exist or not, and whether they might be placed in this or in that order, or in infinite orders of things; let it even consist of those things which might have an existence from the creatures, if this or that hypothesis were admitted. (1 Sam. xxiii, 11, 12; Matt. xi, 21.) (iii.) Let the third class be of those things which God can do from the acts of the creatures, in accordance either with himself or with his acts. (3.) He knows all beings, whether they be considered as future, as past, or as present; (Jer. xviii, 6; Isa. xlv, 7;) and of these there is also a threefold order. The first order is of those beings which by his own mere act shall exist, do exist, or have existed. (Acts xv, 18.) The second is of those which will exist, do exist, or have existed, by the intervention of the Creatures, either by themselves, or through them by God's preservation, motion, aid, concurrence and permission. (Psalm cxxxix, 4) The third order consists of those which God will himself do or make, does make, or hath made, from the acts of the creatures, in accordance either with himself or with his acts. (Deut. 28). This consideration is of infinite utility in various heads of theological doctrine.

XXXV. God understands all things in a holy manner, regarding things as they are, without any admixture. (Psalm ix, 8; 1 Thess. ii, 4.) On this account He is said to judge, not according to the person or appearance and the face, but according to truth. (Rom. ii, 2.)

XXXVI. The understanding of God is certain, and never can be deceived, so that He certainly and infallibly sees even future contingencies, whether He sees them in their causes or in themselves. (1 Sam. xxiii, 11, 12; Matt. xi, 21.) But, this certainty rests upon the infinity of the essence of God, by which in a manner the most present He understands all things.

XXXVII. The understanding of God is derived from no external cause, not even from an object; though if there should not afterwards be an object, there would not likewise be the understanding of God about it. (Isa. xl, 13, 14; Rom. xi, 33, 34.)

XXXVIII. Though the understanding of God be certain and infallible, yet it does not impose any necessity on things, nay, it rather establishes in them a contingency. For since it is an understanding not only of the thing itself, but likewise of its mode, it must know the thing and its mode such as they both are; and therefore if the mode of the thing be contingent, it will know it to be contingent; which cannot be done, if this mode of the thing be changed into a necessary one, even solely by reason of the Divine

understanding. (Acts xxvii, 22-25, 31; xxiii, 11, in connection with verses 17, 18, &c., with xxv, 10, 12; and with xxvi, 32; Rom. xi, 33; Psalm cxlvii, 5.)

XXXIX. Since God distinctly understands such a variety of things by one infinite intuition, Omniscience or All-Wisdom is by a most deserved right attributed to Him. Yet this omniscience is not to be considered in God according to the mode of the habitude, but according to that of a most pure act.

XL. But the single and most simple knowledge of God may be distinguished by some modes, according to various objects and the relations to those objects, into theoretical and practical knowledge, into that of vision and of simple intelligence.

XLI. Theoretical knowledge is that by which things are understood under the relation of being and of truth. Practical knowledge is that by which things are considered under the relation of good, and as objects of the will and of the power of God. (Isa. xlvi, 8; xxxvii, 28, xvi, 5.)

XLII. The knowledge of vision is that by which God knows himself and all other beings, which are, will be, or have been. The knowledge of simple intelligence is that by which He knows things possible. Some persons call the former "definite" or "determinate," and the latter "indefinite" or "indeterminate" knowledge.

XLIII. The schoolmen say besides, that one kind of God's knowledge is natural and necessary, another free, and a third kind middle. (1.) Natural or necessary knowledge is that by which God understands himself and all things possible. (2.) Free knowledge is that by which he knows, all other beings. (3.) Middle knowledge is that by which he knows that "if This thing happens, That will take place." The first precedes every free act of the Divine will; the second follows the free act of God's will; and the last precedes indeed the free act of the Divine will, but hypothetically from this act it sees that some particular thing will occur. But, in strictness of speech, every kind of God's knowledge is necessary. For the free understanding of God does not arise from this circumstance, that a free act of His will exhibits or offers an object to the understanding; but when any object whatsoever is laid down, the Divine understanding knows it necessarily on account of the infinity of its own essence. In like manner, any object whatsoever being laid down hypothetically, God understands necessarily what will arise from that object.

XLIV. Free knowledge is also called "foreknowledge," as is likewise that of vision by which other beings are known; and since it follows a free act of the will, it is not the cause of things; it is, therefore, affirmed with truth concerning it, that things do not exist because God knows them as about to come into existence, but that He knows future things because they are future.

XLV. That kind of God's knowledge which is called "practical," of simple intelligence," and "natural or necessary," is the cause of all things through the mode of prescribing and directing, to which is added the action of the will and power; (Psalm civ, 24;) although that "middle" kind of knowledge must intervene in things which depend on the liberty of a created will.

XLVI. God's knowledge is so peculiarly his own, as to be impossible to be communicated to any thing created, not even to the soul of Christ; though we gladly confess, that Christ knows all those things which are required for the discharge of his office and for his perfect blessedness. (1 Kings viii, 39; Matt. xxiv, 36.)

ON THE WILL OF GOD

XLVII. By the expression "will of God" is signified properly "the faculty itself of willing," but figuratively sometimes "the act of willing," and at other times "the object willed." (John vi, 39; Psalm cxv, 3.)

XLVIII. Not only a consideration of the essence and of the understanding of God, but also the Scriptures and the universal agreement of mankind, testify that a will is correctly attributed to God.

XLIX. This is the second faculty in the life of God, [§ 29,] which follows the Divine understanding and is produced from it, and by which God is borne towards a known good. Towards a good, because it is an adequate object of his will. And towards a known good, because the Divine understanding is previously borne towards it as a being, not only by knowing it as it is a being, but likewise by judging it to be good. Hence the act of the understanding is to offer it as a good, to the will which is of the same nature as the understanding, or rather, which is its own offspring, that it may also discharge its office and act concerning this known good. But God does not will the evil which is called that of "culpability;" because He does not more will any good connected with this evil than He wills the good to which the malignity of sin is opposed, and which is the Divine good itself. All the precepts of God demonstrate this in the most convincing manner. (Psalm v, 4, 5.)

L. But Good is of two kinds -- the Chief Good itself, and that which is different from it. (Matt. xix, 17; Gen. i, 31.) The order which subsists between them is this: the latter does not exist with the Chief Good, but has its existence from it by the Understanding and the Will of God. (Rom. xi, 36.) Wherefore the Supreme Good is the primary, the choicest, and the direct object of the Divine Will; that is, its own infinite Essence, which was alone from all eternity, infinite ages prior to the existence of another good; and therefore it is the only good. (Prov. viii, 22-24.) On this account it may also be denominated, without impropriety, the peculiar and adequate object of the Divine Will. Since the Understanding and the Will of God were, each by its own act, borne towards this [Essence] they found such a plenitude of Being and Goodness in it, that the Understanding gave its judgment for commencing the communication of it outwards: and the Will approved of this kind of communication, after that method; whence the existence of a good, of what kind soever it was, which was different from the Chief Good. It cannot, therefore, be called an object of the Divine Will, except an indirect one, which God wills on account of that Chief Good, or rather He wills it to be on account of the Chief Good. (Prov. xvi, 4,.) Therefore, The Will of God is the very Essence of God, yet distinguished from it according to the formal reason.

LI. The act by which the Will of God advances towards its objects, is (1.) most simple: for as the Understanding of God by a most simple act understands its own Essence, and, through it, all other things; so the Will of God, by a single and simple act, wills its own goodness, and all things in its goodness. (Prov. xvi, 4.) Therefore, the multitude of things willed is not repugnant to the simplicity of the Divine Will. (Isa. xliii, 7; Ephes. i, 5-9.) (2.) This act is Infinite: for it is moved to will, neither by an external cause, by any other efficient, nor by an end, which is out of itself; it is not moved even by any object which is not itself. (Deut. vii, 7; Matt. xi, 26.) Nay, the willing of the end is not the cause of willing those things which are for the end; though it wills those things which are for the end to be put in order to that end. (Acts xvii, 25, 26; Psalm xvi, 9.) It is no valid objection to this truth, that God would not will or do some things unless some act of the creature intervened. (1 Sam. ii, 30.) (3.) It is Eternal; because nothing can de novo either be or appear good to God. (4.) It is Immutable; because that which has once either been or seemed good to Him, both is and appears such to Him perpetually; and that by which God is known to will any thing, is nothing else but this, his immutable entity. (Mal. iii, 6; Rom. xi, 1.) (5.) This act is likewise Holy: because God advances towards his object only on account of its being good, not on account of any other thing which is added to it; and only because his Understanding accounts it good, not because feeling inclines [him] towards it without right reason. (2 Tim. ii, 19; Rom. ix, 11; 12, 4; Psalm cxix, 137.)

LII. As the simple and external act by which the Divine Understanding knows all its objects, has not excluded order from them; so likewise may we be allowed to assign a certain order, according to which the simple and sole act of the will of God is borne towards its objects: (1.) God wills his own Essence and Goodness, that is, himself. (2.) He wills all those things which, by the extreme judgment of his wisdom, He hath determined to be made out of infinite beings possible to himself. (Prov. xvi, 4.) And, First, He wills to make them. Then, when they are made, He is affected towards them by his Will, as they have some similitude to his nature. (Gen. i, 31; John xiv, 23.) (3.) The third object of the Divine Will are those things which God judges it to be right that they should be done by creatures endowed with understanding and free-will: and his act of willing concerning these things is signified by a precept, in which we likewise include the prohibition of that which He wills not to be done by the same creature. (Exod. xx, 1, 2, &c.; Micah vi, 8.) We allow it to remain a matter of discussion, whether counsels can have a place here, provided those things about which the consultations are held be not considered as [things] of supererogation. (4.) The fourth object of the Divine Will is the Divine permission, by which God permits a rational creature to do what He forbade, and to omit what he commanded; and which consists of the suspension of an efficacious impediment, not of one that is due and sufficient. (Acts xiv, 16, 17; Psalm lxxxi, 13; Isa. v, 4) (5.) The fifth object of the Divine Will are those things which, according to his own infinite wisdom, God judges to be done from the acts of rational creatures. (Isa. v, 5; 1 Sam. ii, 30; Gen. xxii, 16, 17.)

LIII. But though nothing from without be the cause of God's volition, yet, since he wills that there should be order in things, (which order is placed principally in this, that some things be the causes of others,) just so far as God's volition is borne towards those objects, it is as if it were the cause of itself as it is borne towards others: (Hosea ii, 21, 22.) Thus the cause why He wills the condemnation of any one, this, because he wills the order of his justice to be observed throughout the universe. (John vi, 40; Deut. vii, 8.) Neither do we therefore deny, but that an act of a creature, or the omission of an act, may be thus far the occasion or primary cause of a certain Divine volition, that, without any consideration of that act or its omission, God might set it aside by such a volition. (1 Sam. ii, 30; Jer. xviii, 7, 8.)

LIV. Through his own Will, and by means of his Power, God is the cause of all other things; (Lam. iii, 37, 38;) yet so that when he acts through second causes, either with them or in them, he does not take away their own peculiar mode of acting with which they have been divinely endued but he suffers them according to their own mode to produce their own effects, necessary things necessarily, contingent things contingently, free things freely: and this contingency and freedom of second causes does not prevent that from being certainly done, or coming to pass, which God in this manner works by them; and therefore, the certain futurity of an event does not include its necessity. (Isa. x, 5, 6, 7; Gen. xlv, 5, 28; Acts xxvii, 29, 31.)

LV. Though God by a single and undivided act wills all the things which he wills; yet his Will, or rather his Volition, may be distinguished from the objects, by a consideration of the mode and order according to which it is borne towards its objects.

LVI. The Divine Will is borne towards its object, either according to the mode of Nature, or according to the mode of Liberty. According to the mode of Nature, it tends towards a primary and proper object, one that is suitable and adequate to its nature. According to the mode of Liberty, it tends towards all other things. Thus, God by a natural necessity wills himself; but He wills freely all other things; (2 Tim. ii, 13; Rev. iv, 11;) though the act which is posterior in order may be bound by a free act which is prior in order. This may be called "hypothetical necessity," having its origin partly from the free volition and act of God, partly from

the immutability of his nature. "For God is not unrighteous," says the Apostle, "to forget the work and labour of love" of the pious; because he hath promised them a remuneration, and the immutability of his nature does not suffer him to rescind his promises. (Heb. vi, 10, 18.)

LVII. To this must be subjoined another distinction, according to which God wills something as an end, and other things as the means to that end. His Will tends towards the end by a natural affection or desire; and towards the means by a free choice. (Prov. xvi, 4)

LVIII. The will of God is also distinguished into that by which he wills to do or to prevent something, and which is called "the will of his good pleasure," or rather "of his pleasure;" (Psalm cxv, 3;) and into that by which he wills something to be done, or to be omitted, by creatures endued with understanding, and which is called "the will which is signified." The latter is revealed; the former is partly revealed, and partly hidden. (Mark iii, 35; 1 Thess. iv, 3; Deut. xxix, 29; 1 Cor. ii, 11, 12.) The former is efficacious, for it uses power, either so much as cannot be resisted, or such a kind as He certainly knows nothing will withstand: (Psalm xxxiii, 9; Rom. ix, 19.) The latter is called "inefficacious," and resistance is frequently made to it; yet so that, when the creature transgresses the order of this revealed Will, the creature by it may be reduced to order, and that the Will of God may be done on those by whom his Will has not been performed. (2 Sam. xvii, 14; Isa. v, 4, 5; Matt. xxi, 39-41; Acts v, 4; 1 Cor. vii, 28.) To this two-fold Will is opposed the Remission of the Will, which is called "Permission," and which is also two-fold. The one, which permits something to the power of a rational creature, by not circumscribing its act with a law; and this is opposed to "the revealed Will." The other is that by which God permits something to the capability and will of the creature, by not interposing an efficacious hindrance; and this is opposed to "the Will of God's pleasure" that is efficacious. (Acts xiv, 16; Psalm lxxxi, 13.)

LIX. The things which God wills to do he wills (1.) either from himself, not on account of any cause placed out of himself, whether this be without the consideration of any act which proceeds from the creature, or solely on occasion of the act of the creature: (Deut. vii, 7, 8; Rom. xi, 35; John iii, 16.) Or (2.) He does it on account of some other previous cause laid down on the part of the creature. (Exod. xxxii, 32, 33; 1 Sam. xv, 17, 23.) In regard to this distinction, some work is said to be proper to God, and some foreign to Him and his "strange work." (Lam. iii, 33; Isa. xxviii, 21.) This is also signified by the church in the following words: "O God! whose property is, ever to have mercy and to forgive," &c.

LX. Some persons also distinguish the will of God into that which is antecedent, and that which is consequent. This distinction has reference to one and the same volition or act of the rational creature, which if the act of the Divine will precedes, it is called the "antecedent will of God;" (1 Tim. ii, 4;) but if it follows, it is called his "consequent will:" (Acts i, 25; Matt. xxiii, 37, 38.) But the antecedent will, it appears, ought to be called velleity, rather than will.

LXI. There is not much distance between this distinction, and another, according to which God is said to will some things "so far as they are good when absolutely considered according to their nature;" but to will other things "so far as, after an inspection, of all the circumstances, they are understood to be desirable."

LXII. God also wills some things in their antecedent causes; that is He wills their causes as relatively, and places those causes in such order, that effects may follow from them; and, if they do follow, that they may of themselves be pleasing to him. (Ezek. xxxiii, 11; Gen. iv, 7.) He wills other things not only in their causes, but also in themselves. (John vi, 40; Matt. xi, 25, 26.) incident with this, is the distinction of the Divine Will into Conditional and Absolute.

LXIII. Lastly. God wills some things per se or accidentally. He wills per se, those things which are simply and relatively good; (2 Pet. iii, 9; accidentally, those which are in some respect evil, but which have such good things united with them as He wills in preference to the respective good things which are opposed to those evil ones: thus, He wills the evils of punishment, because he would rather have the order of justice preserved in punishment, than suffer an offending creature to go unpunished. (Jer. ix, 9 Psalm i, 21; Jer. xv, 6.)

LET THE FOLLOWING BE PROBLEMS TO US

(1.) Is it possible for two affirmatively contrary volitions of God to tend towards one and the same uniform object?

(2.) Is it possible for one volition of God to tend towards contrary objects?

lxiv. In this momentum of the Divine Nature, come under consideration those attributes which are ascribed to him in the Scriptures, either properly or figuratively, according to a certain analogy of affections and moral virtues in us; such as are love, hatred, goodness, mercy, desire, anger, justice, &c.

LXV. Those things which have the analogy of affections may be commodiously referred to two principal kinds. So the first can embrace those which we may call primary or principal; the second, those which are derived from the primary.

LXVI. 1The first or principal are Love, (whose opposition is Hatred,) and Goodness; and with these are connected Grace, Benignity and Mercy.

LXVII. Love is an affection of union in God, the objects of which are God himself and the good of justice or righteousness, the creature and its felicity. (Prov. xvi, 4; Psalm. xi, 7; John iii, 16; Wisdom xi, 24-26.) HATRED is an affection of separation in God, the object of which are the unrighteousness and misery of the creature. (Psalm v, 5; Ezek. xxv, 11; Deut. xxv, 15, 16, &c.; Isa. i, 24) But since God primarily loves himself and the good of justice, and at the same moment hates iniquity; and since He loves the creature and its happiness only secondarily, and at the same moment dislikes the misery of the creature; (Psalm xi, 5; Deut. xxviii, 63;) hence it comes to pass, that he hates a creature that pertinaciously perseveres in unrighteousness, and He loves its misery. (Isa. lxvi, 4.)

LXVIII. Goodness in God is an affection of communicating his own good. (Rev. iv, 11; Gen. i, 31.) Its first object outwards is nothing; and thus necessarily the first, that, on its removal, there can be no outward communication. The First advance of this goodness is towards the creature as it is a creature; the Second is towards the creature as it performs its duty, to communicate good to it beyond the remuneration promised. Both these procedures of the Divine goodness may appropriately receive the appellation of "Benignity." The Third advance is towards a creature that has sinned, and that has by such transgression rendered itself liable to misery. This advance is called Mercy, that is, an affection for affording succour to a person in misery, sin itself presenting no obstacle to its exercise. (Rom. v, 8; Ezek. xvi, 6.) We attribute these advances to the Divine Goodness in such a manner, that in the mean time we concede to the love of God towards his creatures its portion in these advances.

LXIX. Grace seems to stand as a proper adjunct to Goodness, and to Love towards the creatures. According to it, God is disposed to communicate his own good, and to love the creatures, not of merit or of debt, nor that it may add anything to God himself; (Psalm xvi, 2;) but that it may be well with him on whom

the good is bestowed, and who is beloved. (Exod. xxxiv, 6; Rom. v, 8; 1 John iv, 7.)

LXX. The affections which arise from the primary ones, [§ 65,] are special, as being those which are not occupied about Good and Evil in common, but specially about Good as it is present or absent. We distinguish these affections according to the confined capacity of our consideration, as they have some analogy either in Concupiscibility or in Irascibility.

LXXI. In the Concupiscible we consider, first, Desire and that which is opposed to it; and, afterwards, Joy and Grief. We describe Desire, in God, as an affection for obtaining the works of righteousness which have been prescribed to creatures endued with understanding, and for bestowing on them "the recompense of reward:" (Psalm lxxxi, 13-16; v, 3-5; Isa. xlviii, 18, 19.) To this is opposed that affection according to which God abhors the works of unrighteousness, and the omission of a remuneration. (Jer. v, 7, 9.) Joy is an affection arising from the presence of a thing that is suitable: such as the fruition of himself, the obedience of the creature, the communication of his own goodness, and the destruction of his rebels and enemies. (Isa. lxii, 5; Psalm lxxxi, 13; Prov. i, 24-26.) Grief, which is its opposite, has its origin in the disobedience and the misery of the creature, and in the occasion given by his people for blaspheming the name of God among the Gentiles. Nearly allied to this is Repentance, which, in God, is nothing more than a change of the thing willed or done, on account of the act of a rational creature. (Gen. xv, 6; Jer. xviii, 8-10.)

LXXII. In the Irascible we place Hope, and its opposite, Despair, Confidence and Anger, and we do not exclude even Fear, which, by an Anthro-pathy, we read, as attributed to God. (Deut. xxxii, 27.) Hope is an attentive expectation of a good work due from the creature, and by the grace of God capable of being performed. It may easily be reconciled with the certain fore-knowledge of God. (Isa. v, 4; Luke xiii, 6, 7.) Despair arises from the pertinacious wickedness of the creature, who is "alienated from the life of God," and hardened in evil, and who, after "he is past feeling," his conscience having been "seared with a hot iron," has "given himself over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness." (Jer. xiii, 23; Ephes. iv, 18, 19.) What in God we call Confidence or Courage, is that by which He with great animation prosecutes a good that is beloved and desired, and puts away and repulses an evil that is hated. Anger is an affection of depulsion in God, through the punishment of the creature who has transgressed his law; by which He brings upon the creature the evil of misery for his unrighteousness, and takes the vengeance which is due to Himself, as an indication of his love of righteousness and his hatred of sin. When this is vehement, it is called "Fury." (Isa. lxiii, 3-5; Ezek. xiii, 13, 14; Isa. xxvii, 4; Jer. ix, 9; Deut. xxxii, 35; Jer. x, 24; 12, 13; Isa. lxiii, 6.)

LXXIII. We attribute these affections to God, on account of some of his own which are analogous to them, without any passion, as He is simple and immutable; and without any inordinateness, disorder and repugnance to right reason; for He exercises himself in a holy manner about all things which are the objects of his will. But we subject the use and exercise of them to the infinite wisdom of God, whose office it is previously to affix to each its object, mode, end, and circumstances, and to determine to which of them, in preference to the rest, is to be conceded the province of acting. (Exod. xxxii, 10-14; Deut. xxxii, 26, 27.)

LXXIV. Those things in God which have an analogy to moral virtues, as moderators of these affections, are partly general to all the affections, as Righteousness; and partly concern some of them in a special manner, as Patience, and those which are moderators of Anger and of the punishments which proceed from Anger.

LXXV. Righteousness or Justice in God, is an eternal and constant will to render to every one his own: (Psalm xi, 7) To God himself that which is his, and to the creature what belongs to it. We consider this righteousness in its Words and in its Acts. In all its Words are found veracity and constancy; and in its Promises, fidelity. (2 Tim. ii, 13; Num. xxiii, 19; Rom. iii, 4; 1 Thess. v, 24) With regard to its Acts, it is two-fold, Disposing and Remunerative. The former is that according to which God disposes all the things in his actions through his own wisdom, according to the rule of equity which has either been prescribed or pointed out by his wisdom. The latter, [remunerative righteousness,] is that by which God renders to his creatures that which belongs to it, according to his work through an agreement into which He has entered with it. (Heb. vi, 10, 17, 18; Psalm cxlv, 17; 2 Thess. i, 6; Rev. ii, 23.)

LXXVI. Patience is that by which God patiently endures the absence of a good that is loved, desired, and hoped for, and the presence of an evil that is hated; and which spares sinners, not only that He may through them execute the judicial acts of his mercy and justice, but that he may likewise lead them to repentance; or may punish with the greater equity and more grievously, the contumacious. (Isa. v, 4; Ezek. xviii, 23; Matt. xxi, 33- 41; Luke xiii, 6-9; Rom. ii, 4, 5; 2 Pet. iii, 9.)

LXXVII. Long-suffering, gentleness, readiness to pardon, and clemency, are the moderators of Anger and Punishments. Long- Suffering suspends anger, lest it should hasten to drive away the evil as soon as ever such an act was required by the demerits of the creature. (Exod. xxxiv, 6; Isa. xlviii, 8, 9; Psalm ciii, 9.) We call that Gentleness, or Lenity, which attempts Anger, lest it should be of too great a magnitude; nay, lest its severity should correspond with the magnitude of the wickedness committed. (Psalm ciii, 10.) We call that Readiness To Pardon, which moderates Anger, so that it may not continue forever, agreeably to the deserts of sinners. (Psalm xxx, 5; Jer. iii, 5; Joel ii, 13.) Clemency is that by which God attempts the deserved punishments, that by their severity and continuance they may be far inferior to the demerits of sin, and may not exceed the strength of the creature. (2 Sam. vii, 14; Psalm ciii, 13, 14.)

ON THE POWER OF GOD

LXXVIII. By the term "The Power Of God," is meant not a passive power, which cannot happen to God who is a pure act; nor the act, by which God is always acting in himself through necessity of nature; but it signifies an active power, by which He can operate extrinsically, and by which he does so operate when it seems good to himself.

LXXIX. We describe it thus: "It is a faculty of the Life of God, posterior in order to the Understanding and the Will, by which God can, from the liberty of his own Will, operate extrinsically all things whatsoever that He can freely will, and by which he does whatsoever He freely wills." Hence it appears, that Power resembles a principle which executes what the will commands under the direction of knowledge. But we wish Impeding or Obstruction to be comprehended under the operation. (Psalm cxv, 3; Lament. iii, 37, 38; Psalm xxxiii, 9; Jer. xviii, 6.) Therefore,

From this we exclude the power or capability of generating and breathing forth, because it acts in a natural manner and intrinsically.

LXXX. The measure of the Divine Capability is the Free Will of God, and indeed this is an adequate measure. (Psalm cxv, 3; Matt. xi, 25-27) For whatsoever God can will freely, He can likewise do it; and whatsoever it is possible for Him to do, He can freely will it; and whatever it is impossible for Him to will, He cannot do it; and that which He cannot do, He also cannot will. But He does, because He wills; and He does not do, because He does not will. Therefore, He does the things which He does, because He wills so

to do. He does them not, because He wills them not; not, on the contrary. Hence the objects of the Divine Capability may be most commodiously, and indeed ought to be, circumscribed through the object of the Free Will of God.

LXXXI. The following is the manner: Since the Free Will [of God] rests upon a Will conducting itself according to the mode of [his] nature, and both of them have an Understanding which precedes them, and which, in conjunction with the Will, has the very Essence of God for its foundation; and since God can freely will those things alone which are not contrary to his Essence and Natural Will, and which can be comprehended in his Understanding as entities and true things: it follows, that He can do these things alone; nay, that He can likewise do all things, since the Free Will of God, and therefore, his Power also, are bound by those alone. And since things of this kind are the only things which are simply and absolutely possible, all other things being impossible, God is deservedly said to be capable of doing all things that are possible. (Luke i, 37; xviii, 27; Mark xiv, 36.) For how can there be an entity, a truth, or a good, which is contrary to His Essence and Natural Will, and incomprehensible to his Understanding?

LXXXII. The things thus laid down [as described in the last clause of the preceding Thesis] are indeed confessed by all men; and they are generally described in the schools as things impossible, which imply a contradiction. But it is asked in species, "What are those things?" We will here recount some of them. God cannot make another God; is incapable of being changed; (James i, 17;) he cannot sin; (Psalm v, 5;) cannot lie; (Num. xxiii, 19; 2 Tim. ii, 13;) cannot cause a thing at the same time to be and not to be, to have been and not to have been, to be hereafter and not hereafter to be, to be this and not to be this, to be this and its contrary. He cannot cause an accident to be without its subject, a substance to be changed into a pre-existing substance, bread into the body of Christ, and He cannot cause a body to be in every place. When we make such assertions as these, we do not inflict an injury on the power of God; but we must beware that things unworthy of Him be not attributed to his Essence, his Understanding, and his Will.

LXXXIII. The Power of God is infinite; because it can do not only all things possible; (which are innumerable, so that they cannot be reckoned to be such a number, without a possibility of their being still more;) but likewise because nothing can resist it. For all created things depend upon the Divine Power, as upon their efficient principle, as the phrase is, both in their being and in their preservation; whence Omnipotence is deservedly attributed to Him. (Rev. i, 8; Ephes. iii, 20; Matt. iii, 9; xxvi, 53; Rom. ix, 19; Phil. iii, 21.)

LXXXIV. Since the measure of God's Power is his own Free Will, and since therefore God does anything because he wills to do it; it cannot be concluded from the Omnipotence of God that anything will come to pass, [or will afterwards be,] unless it be evident from the Divine Will. (Dan. iii, 17, 18; Rom. iv, 20, 21; Matt. viii, 2.) But if this be evident from the will of God, what He hath willed to do is certain to be done, although, to the mind of the creature, it may not seem possible. (Luke i, 19, 20, 34-37.) And that the mind must be "brought into captivity to the obedience of faith," is a truth which here finds abundant scope for exercise.

LXXXV. The distinction of Power into absolute, and ordinary or actual, has not reference to God's Power so much as to his Will, which uses his Power to do some things when it wills to use it, and which does not use it when it does not will; though it would be possible for it to use the Power if it would; and if it did use it, the Divine Will would, through it, do far more things than it does. (Matt. iii, 9.)

LXXXVI. The Omnipotence of God cannot be communicated to any creature. (1 Tim. vi, 15; Jude. 4.)

ON THE PERFECTION OF GOD

LXXXVII. From the simple and infinite combination of all these things, when they are considered with the mode of pre- eminence, the Perfection of God has its existence. Not that by which He has every single thing in a manner the most perfect; for this is effected by Simplicity and Infinity: but it is that by which, in the most perfect manner, he has all things which denote any perfection. And it may fitly be described thus: "It is the interminable, the entire, and, at the same time, the perfect possession of Essence and Life." (Matt. v, 48; Gen. xvii, 1; Exod. vi, 3; Psalm l:10; Acts xvii, 25; James i, 17.)

LXXXVIII. This Perfection of God infinitely exceeds the perfection of all the creatures, on a three-fold account. For it possesses all things in a mode the most perfect, and does not derive them from another. But the perfection which the creatures possess, they derive from God, and it is faintly shadowed forth after its archetype. Some creatures have a larger portion [of this derived perfection] than others; and the more of it they possess, the nearer they are to God and have the greater likeness to Him. (Rom. xi, 35, 36; 1 Cor. iv, 7; Acts xvii, 28, 29; 2 Cor. iii, 18; 2 Pet. i, 4; Matt. v, 48.)

LXXXIX. From this Perfection, by means of some internal act of God, his Blessedness has its existence; and his Glory exists, by means of some relation of it extrinsically. (1 Tim. i, 11; vi, 15; Exod. xxxiii, 18.)

ON THE BLESSEDNESS OF GOD

XC. Blessedness is through an act of the understanding: is it not also through an act of the will? Such is our opinion; and we delineate it thus. It is an act of the life of God, by which he enjoys his own perfection, that is fully known by his Understanding and supremely loved by his Will; and by which He complacently reposes in this Perfection with satisfaction. (Gen. xvii, 1; Psalm xvi, 11; 1 Cor. ii, 9, 10.)

XCI. The Blessedness of God is so peculiar to himself, that it cannot be communicated to a creature. (1 Cor. xv, 28.) Yet, in relation to the object, he is the beautifying good of all creatures endued with understanding, and is the Effector of the act which tends to this object, and which reposes with satisfaction in it. In these consists the blessedness of the creature.

THE GLORY OF GOD

XCII. The Glory of God is from his Perfection, regarded extrinsically, and may in some degree be described thus: It is the excellence of God above all things. God makes this glory manifest by external acts in various ways. (Rom. i, 23; ix, 4; Psalm viii, 1.)

XCIII. But the modes of manifestation, which are declared to us in the scriptures, are chiefly two: the one, by an effulgence of light and of unusual splendour, or by its opposite, a dense darkness or obscurity. (Matt. xvii, 2-5; Luke ii, 9; Exod. xvi, 10; 1 Kings viii, 11.) The other, by the production of works which agree with his Perfection and Excellence. (Psalm xix, 1; John ii, 11.)

But ceasing from any more prolix discussion of this subject, let us with ardent prayers suppliantly beseech the God of Glory, that, since He has formed us for his Glory, He would vouchsafe to make us yet more and more the instruments of illustrating his Glory among men, through Jesus Christ our Lord, the brightness of his Glory, and the express image of his Person.

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