

A CALM AND SOBER
I N Q U I R Y

Concerning the possibility of a

TRINITY IN THE GODHEAD

In a Letter,

TO A PERSON OF WORTH,

OCCASIONED BY THE LATELY PUBLISHED CONSIDERATIONS ON THE
EXPLICATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY : BY DR.
WALLIS, DR. SHERLOCK, DR. S—TH, DR. CUDWORTH & C.

TOGETHER

WITH CERTAIN LETTERS,

FORMERLY WRITTEN TO THE REVEREND DR. WALLIS, ON THE
SAME SUBJECT.



A
CALM DISCOURSE,
OF THE
TRINITY IN THE GODHEAD, &c.

SIR,

I INTEND not this discourse shall be concerned in what this author hath said of the several explications given by the persons named on his title page. The only thing it is designed for, is the discoursing with him that single point which he refers to, in his twenty-ninth and thirtieth pages, and which in this controversy, is on all hands, confessed to be the cardinal one, namely,—Whether a trinity in the Godhead be possible or no?

I put not the question about three persons; both because I will not, in so short a discourse as I intend to make this, be engaged in discussing the unagreed notion of a person; and because the Scripture lays not that necessity upon me, though I do not think the use of that term, in this affair, either blamable or indefensible. But I shall inquire whether the Father, the Son, or Word, and the Holy Ghost cannot possibly admit of sufficient distinction from one another to answer the parts and purposes severally assigned them by the Scripture, in the Christian economy, and yet be each of them God, consistently with

this most inviolable and indubitable truth, that there can be but one God.

This author concludes it to be impossible in the mentioned pages of his discourse, and thereupon seems to judge it necessary that two of them be excluded the Godhead, as many others, some going the Arian, some the Photinian, more lately called the Socinian way, have done before him. He acknowledges page 30. col. 1 there may be "some secret revealed by God, because it was above human capacity to discover it; and sometimes also to comprehend how it can be," but adds, "there is a vast difference between my not being able to conceive how a thing should be, and a clear apprehension, and sight that it cannot be." What he says thus far is unexceptionable, and I heartily concur with him in it. But for what he subjoins, (wherein he might have spoken his mind of the matter in controversy with as much advantage to his cause, without reflecting upon his adversaries, as if they considered these things either with no intention, or with no sincerity, not allowing them even the never so little of the one or the other) that, "three distinct Almighty and All-knowing persons, should be but one Almighty, or but one All-knowing, or but one God, a man, who considers with never so little intention and sincerity, clearly sees that it cannot be. In short, that it is not a mystery, but, as Dr. South speaks, an absurdity and a contradiction." This is that I would consider with him, if he will affix these words of his, "a man who considers, &c. clearly sees it cannot be; and it is an absurdity and a contradiction," to the question as I have set it down above. In the mean time he cannot be ignorant that as he hath represented the matter, he hath here either not truly, or at least not fairly, given the sense of any of them whom he pretended to oppose.

For when by those words, "But that three divine persons, or that three distinct Almighty and All-knowing persons should be but one Almighty, but one All-knowing, or but one God," he would slyly insinuate to his unwary and less attentive reader that the same men held three Almighties, and but one; he well knows, and elsewhere confesses, (though he might suppose that some readers would not be at leisure to compare one place of his writings with another, but hastily run away with the apprehension, that such as were not of his mind spake nothing but nonsense and contradictions,) that not only his later opposers since P. Lombard, as he speaks, but divers much more ancient, as Athanasius, and the rest of the Nicene fathers, &c. denied three Almighties, though they affirmed each of the persons to be Almighty, understanding omnipotency, as they do omniscency, to be an attribute not of the person, as such, but of the essence

as such which they affirm to be but one, that is, that they are each of them Almighty, by communication in one and the same almighty essence. And if their sentiment be so very absurd, he needed the less to fear representing it as it is.

And the other who seems to grant three Almighty, doth never say there is but one Almighty; though such say too there is but one God, placing the *unity of the Godhead* in somewhat else, as he hath himself taken notice; which is remote from express self-contradiction also. But I shall concern myself no further about the one or the other of these ways of explaining the doctrine of the three persons. Only shall inquire concerning the possibility of such a trinity in the Godhead as was above expressed, requiting the uncharitableness of this author, in imputing carelessness or insincerity to all, that think it possible, with so much charity, as to believe he would not (against the plain tenour of Scripture) have rejected the doctrine of the trinity, as he professes to do that of the incarnation, if he had not thought it every way impossible. And here I premise,

First. That the present undertaking is not to shew that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are three, and but one, in the same respect, which I would adventure, in this author's words, to say, no man that considers with never so little intention and sincerity, would offer at. But when they are supposed to be but one, in respect of Deity, they are thought to be three in some other respect.

Secondly. That what I now design is only to represent this matter as possible to be some way, and in the way here proposed for ought we know, not as definitely certain, to be this way or that. The former is enough to our present purpose, that is, if any way it can be conceived, without absurdity or contradiction, that these may be three with sufficient distinction to found the distinct attributes which the Scriptures do severally give them, so as some things may be affirmed of some one, and not be affirmed of the other of them, and yet their *unity in Godhead* be conserved, our point is gained; and the clamour of this and every other, opposer ought to cease, for our asserting what—every one that considers clearly sees cannot be.

Now, so much being forelaid, that we may proceed with clearness and satisfaction of mind—If we would understand whether it be possible that these three may be sufficiently distinguished for the mentioned purpose, and yet be one in Godhead, or in divine being; we are to recollect ourselves and consider what we are wont and find ourselves indispensably obliged to conceive of that ever blessed Being, and what is with less certainty or evidence said or thought of it—Therefore,

I. We cannot but acknowledge that whereas we do with greatest certainty and clearness conceive of it as an intellectual Being, comprehensive, with that, of infinite and universal perfection, so we do, most expressly, though this be implied in universal perfection, conclude it a Being most necessarily existent; which God hath himself been pleased to signify to us by the appropriated name I am, or I am what I am.

Hereby is this most excellent of Beings infinitely distinguished from all creatures, or from the whole creation. All created being is merely contingent, that is, (according to the true notion of contingency) dependant upon will and pleasure. So he hath himself taught us to distinguish; and with such distinction to conceive of the creation, Rev. 4. 11. Thou hast made all things, and for, (or by, *δια*) thy pleasure (or will *θελημα σου*) they are, or were created. Whatsoever being is necessarily existent, the excellency of its nature being such, as that it was necessary to it to exist, or impossible not to exist, is God, or is Divine Being. Notwithstanding what some have imagined of necessary matter, we might adventure to affirm this universally of all necessary being, that it is divine, taking it to be plainly demonstrable, and to have been demonstrated beyond all contradiction, by the learned Dr. Cudworth, and many others long before him. And doubt not to evince (though that is not the present business) that supposing the imagination of necessary matter were true, this sensible world could never possibly have been made of it, by any power whatsoever; the only pretence for which it is imagined. But if any have a mind to make this a dispute, to avoid being unseasonably involved in it at this time, it will serve my present purpose to assert only, whatsoever intellectual being is necessarily existent is divine.

And on the other hand, whatsoever being is contingent, that is, such as that it depended on a mere intervening act of will, (namely, even the sovereign and supreme will) whether it should be or not be, is created, or is creature.

II. Whatsoever simplicity the ever blessed God hath by any express revelation claimed to himself, or can by evident and irrefragable reason be demonstrated to belong to him, as a perfection, we ought humbly and with all possible reverence and adoration, to ascribe to him. But such simplicity as he hath not claimed, as is arbitrarily ascribed to him by over-bold, and adventurous intruders into the deep and most profound arcana of the divine nature, such as can never be proved to belong to him, or to be any real perfection, such as would prove an imperfection, and a blemish, would render the divine nature less intelligible, more impossible to be so far conceived as is requi-

sité, as would discompose and disturb our minds, confound our conceptions, make our apprehensions of his other known perfections less distinct or inconsistent, render him less adorable, or less an object of religion, or such as is manifestly unreconcilable with his plain affirmations concerning himself, we ought not to impose it upon ourselves, or be so far imposed upon, as to ascribe to him such simplicity.

It would be an over-officious and too meanly servile religiousness to be awed by the sophistry of presumptuous scholastic wits, into a subscription to their confident determinations concerning the being of God, that such and such things are necessary or impossible thereto, beyond what the plain undisguised reason of things, or his own express word do evince: to imagine a sacredness in their rash conclusions, so as to be afraid of searching into them, or of examining whether they have any firm and solid ground or bottom: to allow the schools the making of our Bible, or the forming of our creed, who license (and even sport) themselves to philosophize upon the nature of God with as peevish, and irreverent a liberty, as they would upon a worm, or any, the meanest insect, while yet they can pronounce little with certainty even concerning that, hath nothing in it either of the christian or the man. It will become as well as concern us, to disencumber our minds, and release them from the entanglements of their unproved dictates; whatsoever authority they may have acquired, only by having been long, and commonly, taken for granted. The more reverence we have of God, the less we are to have for such men, as have themselves expressed little.

III. Such as have thought themselves obliged by the plain word of God to acknowledge a *trinity* in the Godhead, namely of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, but withal to diminish the distinction of the one from the other, so as even to make it next to nothing, by reason of the straits into which unexamined maxims have cast their minds, concerning the divine simplicity; have yet not thought that to be *absolute* or *omnimodous*. For the allowing of *three somewhats* in the divine nature (and what less could have been said?) cannot consist with absolute simplicity in all respects, inasmuch as they cannot be *three* without differing, in *some respect*, from one another.

Since therefore there is a necessity apprehended of acknowledging three such *somewhats* in the Godhead, both because the word of God (who best understands his own nature) doth speak of three in it so plainly, that without notorious violence, it cannot be understood otherwise, and because it affirms some things of one or other of them, which it affirms not of the rest; it will therefore be *necessary* to admit a true distinction between

them, otherwise they cannot be three : and *safe* to say there is so much, as is requisite to found the distinct affirmations, which we find in God's word, concerning this or that, apart from the other ; otherwise we shall, in effect, deny what God affirms ; and *modest* to confess that how great the distinction is, with precise and particular limitation, we do not know nor dare be curious to determine or inquire : only that as it cannot be less, than is sufficient to sustain distinct predicates or attributions ; so it cannot be so great, as to intrench upon the unity of the Godhead. Which limits, on the one hand, and the other, God hath himself plainly set us.

IV. Therefore since we may offend very highly by an arrogant pretence to the knowledge we have not, but shall not offend by confessing the ignorance which we cannot (and therefore need not) remedy, we should abstain from confident conclusions in the dark, and at random, especially concerning the nature of God ; and for instance from saying, We clearly see a sufficient distinction of Father, Son, and Spirit, in the Godhead cannot be, or is impossible. It expresses too little reverence of God, as if his being had any, or so narrow, limits as to be presently seen through ; an over-magnifying opinion of ourselves, as if our eye could penetrate that vast and sacred darkness, or the glorious light (equally impervious to us) wherein God dwells ; too great rudeness to the rest of men, more than implicitly representing all mankind besides as stark blind, who can discern nothing of what we pretend clearly to see.

And it is manifest this cannot be said to be impossible, upon any other pretence, but that it consists not with the *unity of the Godhead*, in opposition to the multiplication thereof, or with *that simplicity*, which stands in opposition to the concurrence in all perfections therein, with distinction greater than hath been commonly thought to belong to the divine nature. For the former, we are at a certainty : but for the latter, how do we know what the original, natural state of the Divine Being is, in this respect ? or what simplicity belongs to it ? or what it may contain or comprehend in it, consistently with the unity thereof ; or so, but that it may still be but one Divine Being ? What distinction, and unity (conserved together) we can have, otherwise, an idea of, without any apprehended inconsistency, absurdity or contradiction, we shall rashly pronounce to be impossible (or somewhat imperfectly resembled thereby) in the Divine Being, unless we understood it better than we do. Some prints and characters of that most perfect Being may be apprehended in the creatures, especially that are intelligent ; such being expressly said to have been made in the image of God. And if here we find *oneness*, with *distinction*, meeting

together in the same created intelligent being, this may assist our understandings in conceiving what is possible to be (in much higher perfection) though not to the concluding what certainly is, in the uncreated.

V. Waving the many artificial unions of distinct things, that united, and continuing distinct, make one thing under one name, I shall only consider what is *natural*, and give instance in what is nearest us, *our very selves*; though the truth is, we know so little of our own nature, that it is a strange assuming when we confidently determine what is impossible to be in the divine nature, besides what he hath told us, or made our own faculties plainly tell us is so; and what he hath made any man's faculties to tell him, he hath made all men's that can use them.

But so much we manifestly find in ourselves, that we have three natures in us very sufficiently distinguishable, and that are intimately united, the *vegetative*, *sensitive*, and the *intellective*. So that notwithstanding their manifest distinction, no one scruples when they are united, to call the whole *the human nature*. Or if any make a difficulty, or would raise a dispute about the distinction of these three natures, I for the present content myself with what is more obvious, not doubting to reach any mark by degrees, namely, that we are made up of a mind, and a body, somewhat that can think, and somewhat that cannot; sufficiently distinct, yet so united, that not only every one, without hesitation, calls that thing made up of them one man; but also every one that considers deeply, will be transported with wonder by what more than magical knot or tye, two things so little akin, should be so held together, that the one that hath the power of will and choice cannot sever itself, and return into the same union with the other at pleasure. But,

VI. Since we find this is a thing actually done, the making up of two things of so different natures into one thing, that puts the matter out of doubt that this was a thing possible to be done, it was what God could do, for he hath done it. And if that were possible to him, to unite two things of so very different natures into one thing; let any colourable reason be assigned me, why it should not be as possible to him, to unite two things of a like nature, that is, if it were possible to him, to unite a *spirit* and a *body*, why is it less possible to him to have united *two spirits*? And then I further inquire, if it were possible to him to unite *two*, would it not be as possible to unite *three*? Let reason here be put upon its utmost stretch, and tell me what in all this is less possible than what we see is actually done! Will any man say two or three spirits united, being of

the same nature, will mingle, be confounded, run into one another, and lose their distinction? I ask, supposing them to pre-exist apart, antecedently to their union; are they not now distinguished by their own individual essences, let them be as much united as our souls and bodies are, why should they not as much remain distinct by their singular essences? There is no more hazard of their losing their distinction, by the similitude of their natures, than of our soul and body, transmuting one another by their dissimilitude.

I know not but the dictates of so vlogged an author with many in this age, as Spinosæ, may signify somewhat with some into whose hands this may fall; who, with design bad enough, says, that from whence one might collect the remaining distinction of two things of the same nature in such a supposed union, were the more easily conceivable of the two, that is, than of two things of different natures. For in his Posthumous Ethics, de Deo, He lays this down in explication of his second definition, *Cogitatio alia cogitatione terminatur. At corpus non terminatur cogitatione, nec cogitatio corpore, one thought is terminated by another: but the body is not terminated by thought, nor thought by the body.* Some may regard him in this, and it would do our business. For my part, I care not to be so much beholden to him; for it would at the long run, overdo it; and I know his meaning. But I see not but two congenerous natures are equally capable of being united, retaining their distinction, as two of a different kind, and that sufficiently serves the present purpose.

However, let any man tell me, why it should be impossible to God so to unite three spirits, as by his own power to fix their limits also, and by a perpetual law inwrought in their distinct beings to keep them distinct, so that they shall remain everlastingly united, but not identified; and by virtue of that union, be some one thing, which must, yet, want a name, as much, and as truly, as our soul and body united do constitute one man. Nor is it now the question, whether such a union would be convenient or inconvenient, apt or inapt; but all the question is, whether it be possible or impossible; which is as much as we are concerned in at this time. But you will say, Suppose it be possible, to what purpose is all this? how remote is it from the supposed Trinity in the Godhead? You will see to what purpose it is by and bye. I therefore add,

VII. That if such a union of three things, whether of like or of different natures, so as that they shall be truly one thing, and yet remain distinct, though united, can be effected, as one may with certainty pronounce, there is nothing more impossible, or

unconceivable in it, than we find is actually done, then it is not intrinsically impossible, or objectively ; it is not impossible in itself. No power can effect what is simply, and in itself impossible. There is therefore no contradiction, no repugnancy, or inconsistency, as to the thing, nor consequently any shadow of absurdity in the conception hereof. Whereupon,

VIII. If such a union with such distinction be not impossible in itself, so that by a competent power it is sufficiently possible to be effected, or made ; we are to consider whether it will appear more impossible, or whether I shall have a conception in my own mind any thing more incongruous if I conceive such a union, with such distinction, unmade, or that is original and eternal, in an unmade, or uncreated Being. For we are first to consider the thing in itself, abstractly from made or unmade, created or uncreated being. And if it pass clear of contradiction or absurdity, in its abstract notion, we are so far safe, and are not liable to be charged as having the conception in our minds of an impossible, absurd, or self-repugnant thing. So that clamour and cry of the adversary must cease, or be itself absurd, and without pretence. This now supposed union with such distinction, must if it be judged impossible, as it is in our thoughts introduced into unmade being, can no longer be judged impossible, as it is *a union* of distinct things, but only as it is *unmade*, or is supposed to have place in the unmade eternal Being.

IX. This is that then we have further to consider, whether, supposing it possible that three spiritual beings might as well be made or created in a state of so near union with continuing distinction, as to admit of becoming *one spiritual being*, to be called by some fit *name*, which might easily be found out, if the thing were produced, as that a spiritual being, and a corporeal being may be made and created in a state of so near union with continuing distinction, as to become one spiritual-corporeal being, called by the name of *man* ; I say, whether supposing the former of these to be as possible to be done, or created, as the latter, which we see done already : we may not as well suppose somewhat like it, but infinitely more perfect to be original, and eternal in the uncreated Being ? If the first be possible, the next actual, what pretence is there to think the last impossible ?

X. I might add, as that which may be expected to be significant with such as do seriously believe the doctrines both of the incarnation, and the trinity, though I know it will signify nothing with them, who with equal contempt reject both, that the union of the two natures, the human, made up of a human body and a human soul, which are two exceedingly different natures, with the divine, which is a third and infinitely more different

from both the other, in one person, namely, of the Son of God, cannot certainly appear to any considering person, more conceivable or possible, than that which we now suppose, but assert not, of three distinct essences united in the *One Godhead*, upon any account, but this only, that this is supposed to be an unmade, eternal union, the other made and temporal; which renders not the one less conceivable than the other, as it is union, but only as in the several terms of this union it is supposed eternally to have place in the Being of God; whereas that other union, in respect of one of its terms is acknowledged *de novo* to have place there.

In short, here is a spiritual created being, a human soul, setting aside for the present the consideration of the human body, which united therewith made up the man, Christ, confessed to be in hypostatical union with the uncreated spiritual being of God, not as that being is in the person of the Father, nor is in the person of the Holy Ghost, for then they should have become man too; but as it was in the person of the Son only; why shall it be thought less possible that three uncreated spiritual beings may be in so near a union with each other as to be *one God*, as that a created spirit, and body too, should be in so near a union with one of the persons in the Godhead only, as therewith to be *one person*? will it not hereby be much more easily apprehensible how *one* of the persons (as the common way of speaking is) should be incarnate, and not the other two? Will not the notion of person itself be much more unexceptionable, when it shall be supposed to have its own individual nature? And why is a natural, eternal union of uncreated natures with continual distinction, or without confusion sufficient unto the unity of the Godhead, less supposable, than a temporal contracted union with created natures without confusion too, that shall be sufficient to the *unity* of a person? will it be any thing more contrary to *such simplicity* of the divine nature as is necessarily to be ascribed thereto? or will it be *tritheism*, and inconsistent with the acknowledged inviolable *unity* of the Godhead?

XI. That we may proceed to speak to both, let these things be considered with seriousness and sobriety of mind, as to ourselves; with all possible reverence towards the blessed God, and with just candour and equanimity towards other men. And first we must leave it to any one's future representation (not being hitherto able to discern any thing) what there is in all this that is here supposed any way repugnant to such simplicity, as God any where claims to his own being, or that plain reason will constrain us to ascribe to him, or that is really in itself any perfection. We are sure God hath not by his word taught us to ascribe to him universal absolute simplicity; or suggested to us any such notices as directly and evidently infer

it to belong to him : nor hath seemed at all intent upon cautioning of us lest we should not ascribe it. The *word* we find not among his *Attributes* mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. The thing, so far as it signifies any general perfection, we are sure belongs to him ; but the Scriptures are not written with visible design to obviate any danger of our misconceiving his nature, by not apprehending it to be in every respect most absolutely simple. It doth teach us to conceive of him as most powerful, most wise, most gracious ; and doth not teach us to conceive all these in the abstract, namely, power, wisdom and goodness to be the same thing. Yet we easily apprehend by reflecting upon ourselves, that, without multiplying the subject, these may all reside together in the same man. But our difficulty is greater to conceive what is commonly taught, that these without real distinction, or with formal only, as contradistinguished to the difference of thing from thing, are in the abstract affirmable of God, that he is power, wisdom, goodness : that to his being belongs so absolute simplicity, that we must not look upon these as things really distinguishable, *there*, from one another, but as different conceptions of the same thing. We must conceive of things as we can, not as we cannot ; and are only concerned to take heed of unrevealed, and undemonstrable, and peremptory conceptions concerning that glorious most incomprehensible and ever blessed Being ; to beware of too curious prying into the nature of God, when it was so penal to look unduly into, or even to touch that only-hallowed symbol of his presence, his ark ! beyond what he hath revealed expressly or we can most clearly, by generally received light, apprehend. When we know there is a knowledge of him so reserved from us, whereof our minds are so little receptive, that it seemed all one, whether he told us, he did dwell in thick darkness, or in inaccessible light. It will be a reproach to us, if we shall need to be taught reverence of him by pagans ; or that such a document should need to be given us for our admonition, as that very ancient inscription in one of their temples imported, “ I am whatsoever was, is, or shall be, and who is he that shall draw aside my vail ? ”

XII. If we should suppose three spiritual necessary beings, the one whereof were mere power (or furious might) destitute of either wisdom, or goodness ; another mere wisdom (or craft rather) destitute of either goodness or power ; a third mere goodness (or fond and fruitless kindness) destitute of either power or wisdom, existing separately and apart from each other : this triple conception would overthrow itself, and must certainly allow little ease to any considering mind. Nor could any of these be God. But if we conceive essential power, wis-

dom, and goodness concurring in one spiritual necessarily existent Being, in which are each of these, not only, by the *περιχωρησις* *mutual penetration* usually acknowledged in the three persons, totally *permeating* one another (which signifying but mere presence, as we may express it, is in comparison, a small thing) but really and vitally united, by so much a nearer, and more perfect union than hath ever come under our notice among created beings, of partly corporeal, partly incorporeal natures, by how much beings of *purest spirituality* may be apter to the most intimate union, than when one is quite of a different nature from the other, and as whatsoever union is supposable to be, originally, eternally, and by natural necessity, in the most *perfect being*, may be thought inexpressibly *more perfect* than any other. And if, hereupon, we further conceive the most entire, perpetual, everlasting intercourse and communion of these three, so originally united, that what is conceivable of perfection, or excellency in any one of these, is as much the others, for whatsoever exercises or operations, as his own ; I cannot apprehend what there is of repugnancy, contraction, or absurdity in this supposition ; nor any thing that, by any measures he hath given us to govern our conceptions of him, appears unbecoming or unworthy of God. There is, it is true, less simplicity, but more perfection ascribed hereby to the divine Being, entirely considered ; and more intelligibly, than if you go about to impose upon yourself the notion of most absolute omnimodous simplicity therein. There would be yet more absolute simplicity ascribed unto an eternal Being, if you should conceive in it mere power exclusive of wisdom, and goodness—and so of the rest ; but infinitely less perfection. And, if that would avail any thing, I could easily produce more school-men, than one, of no small note, concurring in this sentiment that *simplicitas, si sumatur in tota sua amplitudine, non dicit perfectionem simpliciter, simplicity if it be taken in its whole extent, does not describe absolute perfection*. But I count it not worth the while.

XIII. And let it be here again observed, I speak not of this, as any certain determination, that thus things are in the Deity ; but as a possible supposition of what, for ought we know, may be. If any say this gives us the notion of a compounded Deity, or of a composition in it ; I only say the term, *composition*, seems to imply a pre-existing *component* that brings such things together, and supposes such and such more simple things to have pre-existed apart or separate, and to be brought afterwards together into a *united state*. Whereupon I peremptorily deny any composition in the being of God. And let any man from what hath been hitherto said, or supposed, infer it, if he can. Im-

agine this of the Godhead, and you shall, we acknowledge, conceive most untruly, most unworthily, most injuriously of God; and what is most absolutely impossible to agree to the Divine Being. And for this reason only, that I know of, that carries any shadow of importance in it, many have been so apt, without the least warrant from any revelation God hath given of himself, to ascribe to him an unintelligible *simplicity*; apprehending they must otherwise admit a *composition* in his most sacred essence, that is, the putting of things together that were separate, to make it up; which must suppose it a new production, that once was not, and from an imperfect state by the coalition of things once severed, to have arrived to the perfection we ascribe to the Divine Being; which sort of being cannot, without the most absurd and blasphemous contradiction, ever admit to be called God. But if we suppose most perfect, essential power, wisdom, love, by original, eternal and most natural necessity to have co-existed in that being most intimately *united*, though *distinct*; that seemingly important reason, will appear but a shadow, and accordingly vanish as such.

And indeed this is no more than what, in effect, such as discourse upon this subject do commonly say (though perhaps some may less consider the ducture and sequel of their own professed sentiments) when they speak of the incomprehensibleness of God's essence, and how impossible it is a finite mind should form or receive a full and complete idea of it; or when they therefore say, that any conceptions we can have of the wisdom, goodness, or any other attribute of the Divine Being, are still but inadequate conceptions; whereby they must mean, when we consider for instance the wisdom of God that we not only fall infinitely short of conceiving all that belongs to the Divine Being, in that kind, but that there is also infinitely more belonging thereto, in other kinds, than it is possible that conception can contain or express. And when we have the conception in our minds of the divine wisdom, do we not apprehend there is really somewhat else in the Divine Being, whereof that term hath no signification? or will we say his wisdom and his power are really the same thing? as they must either be the same, or divers things: if we say they are the same, we must, I doubt, confess ourselves to say what we do not understand, especially when, in the abstract, we affirm them of one another, and of God; and accordingly say that wisdom is power, and power is wisdom, and the one of these is God, and the other, God. I know a formal distinction is commonly admitted, that is, that the conception of the one is not included in the conception of the other. But are these different conceptions true or false? If false, why are they admitted? if true, there must be

somewhat in the nature of the thing corresponding to them. But if we say they are distinct, but most intimately, and eternally united in the Divine Being, by a necessary, natural union, or that it is not impossible so to be, what we say will, I think, agree with itself, and not disagree with any other conception we are obliged to have concerning the blessed God.

In the mean time, I profess not to judge, we are under the precise notions of power, wisdom and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost: nor that the notions we have of those, or any other divine perfections, do exactly correspond to what, in God, is signified by these names; but I reckon, that what relief and ease is given our minds by their being disentangled from any apprehended necessity of thinking these to be the very same things, may facilitate to us our apprehending the Father, Son and Spirit to be sufficiently distinct, for our affirming, or understanding the affirmation, of some things concerning some one, without including the other of them.

XIV. But some perhaps will say, while we thus amplify the distinction of these glorious three, we shall seem to have too friendly a look towards, or shall say in effect, what Dr. Sherlock is so highly blamed for saying, and make three Gods. I answer, that if with sincere minds we inquire after truth, for its own sake, we shall little regard the friendship or enmity, honour or dishonour of this or that man. If this were indeed so; doth what was true become false, because such a man hath said it? But it is remote from being so. There is no more, here positively asserted than generally so much distinction between the Father, Son, and Spirit, as is in itself necessary to the founding the distinct attributions, which in the Scriptures are severally given them—that when the word or wisdom was said to be with God (understanding it, as the case requires with God the Father) in the creation of all things, we may not think, nothing more is said than that he was with himself; that when the Word is said to be made flesh, it is equally said the Father was made flesh, or the Holy Ghost; that when the Holy Ghost is said to have proceeded from, or have been sent by the Father, or the Son, he is said to have proceeded from himself, or have sent himself.—But, in the mean time this is offered without determining precisely, how great distinction is necessary to this purpose. It is not here positively said these three are three distinct substances, three infinite minds or spirits. We again and again insist, and inculcate, how becoming, and necessary it is to abstain from over-bold inquiries, or positive determinations concerning the limits, or the extent of this distinction, beyond what the Scriptures have, in general, made necessary to the mentioned purpose; that we may not throw

ourselves into guilt, nor cast our minds into unnecessary straits, by affirming this or that to be necessary, or impossible in these matters.

XV. The case is only thus, that since we are plainly led by the express revelation God hath made of himself to us in his word, to admit a *trinal conception* of him, or to conceive this threefold distinction in his being, of Father, Son, and Spirit ; since we have so much to greaten that distinction, divers things being said of each of these, that must not be understood of either of the other ; since we have nothing to limit it on the other hand, but the *unity* of the Godhead, which we are sure can be but One, both from the plain word of God, and the nature of the thing itself ; since we are assured both these may consist, namely, this *trinity*, and this *unity*, by being told there are three, (1 John 5.7) and these three (that is plainly, continuing three) are *one thing* ; which one thing, can mean nothing else but Godhead ; as is also said concerning two of them, elsewhere, (there being no occasion, then, to mention the third) I and my Father are one thing John 10.30. We are here-upon unavoidably put upon it to cast in our own minds (and are concerned to do it with the most religious reverence and profoundest humility) what sort of thing this most sacred Godhead may be, unto which this *oneness* is ascribed, with *threefold distinction*. And manifestly finding there are in the creation *made unions*, with sufficient remaining *distinction*, particularly in ourselves, that we are a soul and a body (things of so very different natures) that often the soul is called the man, (not excluding the body) and the body, or our flesh called the man (not excluding the soul) we are plainly led to apprehend that it is rather more easily possible there might be *two spirits* (so much more agreeing in nature) so united, as to be *one thing*, and yet continuing distinct ; and if *two*, there might as well be *three*, if the Creator pleased. And hence we are led further to apprehend, that if such a made union, with continuing distinction be possible in created being, it is for ought we know, not impossible in the uncreated ; that there may be such an eternal *unmade union*, with *continuing distinction*. And all this being only represented as *possible* to be thus, without concluding that *thus* it *certainly is* ; sufficiently serves our purpose, that no pretence might remain of excluding the eternal Word ; and the eternal Spirit, the Godhead, as if a *trinity* therein were contradictory and impossible, repugnant to reason, and common sense. Were now is the coincidence ?

XVI. Nor is there, hereupon, so great a remaining difficulty to salve the unity of the Godhead ; when the supposition is

taken in, of the natural, eternal, necessary union of these three that hath been mentioned.

And it shall be considered, that the Godhead is not supposed more necessarily to exist, than these three are to coexist in the nearest and most intimate union with each other therein. That Spiritual Being which exists necessarily, and is every way absolutely perfect, whether it consist of three in one, or of only one, is God. We could never have known, it is true, that there are such three coexisting in this one God, if he himself had not told us. What man knoweth the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth but the Spirit of God. 1 Cor. 2. 11. In telling us this he hath told us no impossible, no unconceivable thing. It is absurd, and very irreligious presumption to say this cannot be. If a worm were so far capable of thought, as to determine this or that concerning our nature; and that such a thing were impossible to belong to it, which we find to be in it, we should trample upon it! More admirable divine patience spares us! He hath only let us know that this is the state of his essence, whereof we should have been otherwise ignorant. This is its constitution, (as if it were said *ita se habet comparatam*) *thus it is in, and of itself*, that there are *three* in it to be conceived, under the distinct notions of Father, Son, and Spirit, without telling us expressly how far they are distinct, in terms of art, or in scholastic forms of speech. But he considered us as men, reasonable creatures; and that when he tells us there are *three* existing in his being, of each of which some things are said, that must not be understood spoken of the other, and yet that there is but one God: we are not incapable of understanding, that these *three* must agree *in Godhead*; and yet that they must be *sufficiently distinct*, unto this purpose, that we may distinctly conceive of, apply ourselves to, and expect from, the one and the other of them. And the frame of our religion is therefore ordered for us accordingly, that is, for us to whom he hath revealed so much. Others, to whom such notices are not given, he expects should deport themselves towards him, according to the light which they have, not which they have not.

XVII. But an hypothesis in this affair, which leaves out the *very nexus*, that *natural, eternal union*, or leaves it out of its proper place, and insists upon *mutual consciousness*, which, at the most, is but a consequence thereof, wants the principal thing requisite to the salving the unity of the Godhead. If two or three created spirits had never so perfect a mutual perfection of one another, that would not constitute them one thing, though it *probably* argue them to be so; and but *proba-*

My ; for God might, no doubt, give them a mutual insight into one another, without making them one ; but if he should create them in as near a union, as our soul and body are in with one another (and it is very apprehensible they might be created in a much nearer, and more permanent one, both being of the same nature, and neither subject to decay) they would as truly, admit to be called *one something* (as such a creature might well enough be called, till a fitter name were found out) notwithstanding their supposed continuing distinction, as fitly, as our soul and body *united*, are, notwithstanding their continuing distinction, called *one man*. And I do sincerely profess such a union, with perpetual distinction, seems to me every whit as conceivable, being supposed unmade, uncreated, and eternal, as any union is among creatures, that must therefore be a made thing, or a temporal production.

And whereas the necessity of existence (most unquestionably of an intellectual being) is a most certain, and fundamental attribute of Deity : the Father, Son, and Spirit being supposed necessarily existent, in this *united state*, they cannot but be God ; and the Godhead by reason of this necessary union cannot but be one ; yet so, as that when you predicate Godhead, or the name of God of any one of them, you herein express a true, but an inadequate conception of God ; that is, the Father is God, not excluding the Son, and Holy Ghost ; the Son is God, not excluding the Father and the Holy Ghost ; the Holy Ghost is God, not excluding the Father and the Son. Thus our body is the man, not excluding the soul ; our soul is the man ; not excluding the body. Therefore their union in Godhead being so strict and close, notwithstanding their distinction, to say that any one of them is God, in exclusion of the other two, would not be a true predication. It is indeed said, the Father is the only true God ; but that neither excludes the Son, nor the Holy Ghost from being the true God also ; (John 17. 3.) each of them communicating in that Godhead which only is true. It had been quite another thing, if it had been said, Thou Father only, art the true God.

XVIII. The order moreover, is this way also very clearly preserved and fitly complied with, of priority and posteriority (not of time, as every one sees, but nature) which the names Father, Son, and Spirit do more than intimate. For the Father (usually called by divines the *fons trinitatis*, *fountain of the trinity*) being by this appellation plainly signified to be first in this sacred triad ; the Son, as that title imports, to be of the Father ; and the Spirit to be of, or from, both the other : let these two latter be considered as being of, or from the first, not by any intervening act of will, by which it might have been possible they

should not have been so; but by natural, necessary, eternal *promanation*; so as that necessity of existence is hereby made as truly to agree to them as to the first, which is acknowledged the most fundamental attribute of Deity. This *promanation* is hereby sufficiently distinguished from creation; and these two set infinitely above all creatures, or the whole universe of created beings. Nor is there hereby any place left for that unapt application of a son and a grandson deriving themselves from the grandfather, or two brothers from one father. p. 17. of these considerations.

And although it be also true, and readily acknowledged, that there are numerous instances of involuntary productions among the creatures, and which are therefore to be deemed a sort of natural and necessary productions; yet that necessity not being absolute, but *ex hypothesi* only, that is, upon supposition of their productive causes, and all things requisite to those productions, being so, and so, aptly posited in order thereto, all which depended upon one sovereign will at first, so that all might have been otherwise, this signifies nothing to exempt them out of the state and rank of creatures, or invalidate this most unalterable distinction between created being, and uncreated.

XIX. But if here it shall be urged to me that one individual necessarily existent Spiritual Being alone is God, and is all that is signified by the name of God; and therefore that three distinct individual, necessarily existent, spiritual Beings must unavoidably be three distinct Gods:

I would say, if by one individual, necessarily existent, Spiritual Being, you mean one such Being, comprehending Father, Son and Holy Ghost taken together, I grant it. But if by one individual, necessarily existent, spiritual being, you mean either the Father, Son or Holy Ghost, taken sejunctly, I deny it; for both the other are truly signified by the name of God too, as well as that one.

I therefore say, the term individual, must in this case now supposed (as possible, not as certain) admit of a twofold application; either to the distinct essence of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost; or to the entire essence of the Godhead, in which these three do concur. Each of these conceived by itself are (according to this supposition) individual essences, but conceived together, they are the entire individual essence of God. For there is but one such essence, and no more, and it can never be multiplied, nor divided into more of the same name and nature: as the body and soul of a man, are one individual body, and one individual soul, but both together are but one individual man: and the case would be the same, if a man

did consist of two, or three spirits so (or more nearly) united, together, as his soul and body are. Especially if you should suppose, which is the supposition of no impossible or unconceivable thing, that these three spirits which together, as we now do suppose, do constitute a man, were created with an aptitude to this united coexistence, but with an impossibility of existing separately, except to the divine power which created them conjunct, and might separate them so as to make them exist apart: which yet cannot be the case in respect of three such uncreated spiritual beings, whose union is supposed to be by natural, eternal necessity, as their essences are; and are therefore most absolutely inseparable.

XX. Or if it should be said, I make the notion of God to comprehend Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and a Godhead besides common to these three:

I answer; nothing I have said or supposed, implies any such thing; or that the notion of God imports any thing more of real being, than is contained in Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, taken together, and most intimately, naturally, and vitally, by eternal necessity, united with one another. As in a created being, consisting of more things than one taken together and united; a man for instance, there is nothing more of real entity, besides what is contained in his body and his soul *united* and taken together. It is true that this term, a man, speaks somewhat very diverse from a human body taken alone or a human soul taken alone, or from both, separately taken; but nothing divers from both united, and taken together. And for what this may be unjustly collected to imply of composition, repugnant to divine perfection, it is before obviated. Sect. 13.

If therefore it be asked, "What do we conceive under the notion of God, but a necessary, spiritual Being?" I answer, that this is a *true* notion of God, and may be passable enough, among pagans, for a *full* one. But we christians are taught to conceive under the notion of God, a necessary spiritual Being, in which Father, Son, and Spirit, do so necessarily coexist, as to constitute that Being; and that when we conceive any one of them to be God, that is but an inadequate, not an entire and full conception of the Godhead. Nor will any place remain for that trivial cavil, that if each of these have Godhead in him, *he* therefore hath a *trinity* in him; but that he is one of the three who together are the One God, by necessary, natural, eternal union.

Which union is also quite of another kind than that of *three men* (as for instance, of Peter, James and John) partaking in the same kind of nature; who notwithstanding, exist separately, and apart from each other. These three are supposed

to coexist in natural, necessary, eternal, and most intimate union, so as to be one Divine Being.

Nor is it any prejudice against our thus stating the notion of the Godhead, that we know of no such union in all the creation, that may assist our conception of this union. What incongruity is there in supposing, in this respect, as well as in many others, somewhat most peculiarly appropriate to the being of God? If there be no such actual union in the creation, it is enough to our purpose, if such a one were possible to have been. And we do know of the actual union of two things of very different natures so as to be one thing, and have no reason to think the union of two or more things of the same sort of nature, with sufficient remaining distinction, less possible or less intelligible.

XXI. Upon the whole, let such a union be conceived in the being of God, with such distinction, and one would think (though the complexions of men's minds do strangely and unaccountably differ) the absolute perfection of the Deity, and especially the perfect felicity thereof, should be much the more apprehensible with us. When we consider the most delicious society which would hence ensue, among the so entirely consentient Father, Son, and Spirit, with whom there is so perfect rectitude, everlasting harmony, mutual complacency, unto highest delectation; according to our way of conceiving things, who are taught by our own nature (which also hath in it the divine image) to reckon no enjoyment pleasant, without the consociation of some other with us therein; we for our parts cannot but hereby have in our minds a more gustful idea of a blessed state, than we can conceive in mere eternal solitude.

God speaks to us, as men, and will not blame us for conceiving things so infinitely above us, according to the capacity of our natures; provided we do not assume to ourselves to be a measure for our conceptions of him; further than as he is himself pleased to warrant, and direct us herein. Some likeness we may (taught by himself) apprehend between him and us, but with infinite (not inequality only, but) unlikeness. And for this case of delectation in society, we must suppose an immense difference between him an all-sufficient, self-sufficient Being, comprehending in himself the infinite fulness of whatsoever is most excellent and delectable, and ourselves, who have in us but a very minute portion of being, goodness, or felicity, and whom he hath made to stand much in need of one another, and most of all of him.

But when, looking into ourselves, we find there is in us a disposition, often upon no necessity, but sometimes, from some sort of benignity of temper, unto conversation with others;

we have no reason, when other things concur, and do fairly induce, and lead our thoughts this way, to apprehend any incongruity in supposing he may have some distinct object of the same sort of propension in his own most perfect Being too, and therewith such a propension itself also.

XXII. As to what concerns ourselves, the observation is not altogether unapposite, what Cicero treating of friendship, discourses of perpetual solitude, "that the affectation of it must signify the worst of ill humour, and the most savage nature in the world. And supposing one of so sour and morose a humour, as to shun and hate the conversation of men, he would not endure it, to be without some one or other to whom he might disgorge the virulency of that his malignant humour. Or that supposing such a thing could happen, that God should take a man quite out of the society of men, and place him in absolute solitude, supplied with the abundance of whatsoever nature could covet besides; Who, saith he, is so made of iron, as to endure that kind of life?" And he introduces Architas Tarentinus reported to speak to this purpose,—"that if one could ascend into heaven, behold the frame of the world, and the beauty of every star, his admiration would be unpleasant to him alone, which would be most delicious, if he had some one to whom to express his sense of the whole."

We are not, I say, strictly to measure God by ourselves in this; further than as he himself prompts and leads us. But if we so form our conception of divine bliss, as not to exclude from it somewhat, whereof that delight in society, which we find in ourselves may be an imperfect faint resemblance; it seems not altogether disagreeable to what the Scriptures also teach us to conceive concerning him, when they bring in the eternal wisdom, saying, as one distinct from the prime Author, and Parent of all things, Then was I by him, as one brought up with him, and daily his delight. Prov. 8. 30.

XXIII. However, let the whole of what hath been hitherto proposed be taken together, and to me, it appears our conception of the *sacred trinity* will be so remote from any shadow of inconsistency or repugnancy, that no necessity can remain upon us of torturing wit, and racking invention to the uttermost, to do a laboured and artificial violence (by I know not what screws and engines) to so numerous plain texts of Scripture, only to undeify our glorious Redeemer, and do the utmost despite to the Spirit of grace. We may be content to let the word of God (or what we pretend to own for a divine revelation) stand as it is, and undistorted, speak its own sense. And when we find the Former of all things speaking as *We* or *Us*.

(Gen. 1. 26.) when we find another (Prov. 8. 22.) *I*, possessed by the Lord, in the beginning of his way, before his works of old; so as that he says of himself (as distinct from the other) *I* was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was—and, When he prepared the heavens *I* was there, &c. (ver. 27.) when we find the child born for us, the Son given to us, called also the mighty God, and (as in reference to us he fitly might) the everlasting Father. (Isa. ix. 6.) when we are told of the ruler that was to come out of Bethlehem-Ephrata, that his goings forth were from everlasting: (Mic. 5. 2.) that, The word was in the beginning with God, and was God—that all things were made by him, and without him nothing was made, that was made—that this word was made flesh—that his glory was beheld as the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth: (John 1. 11.) even that same *he* that above was said to have been in the beginning with God, and to be God:—that when he who was said to have come down from heaven, (John 3. 13.) was, even while he was on earth, at that time, said to be in heaven:—that we are told by himself, he and his Father are *one* thing: (John 10. 30.)—that he is not only said to know the heart, but to know all things: (John 21. 17.)—that even he who according to the flesh came of the Israelites, (Rom. 9. 5.) is yet expressly said to be over all, God blessed for ever:—that when he was in the form of God, he humbled himself to the taking on him the form of a servant, and to be found in fashion as a man: (Phil. 2. 6.)—that it is said, all things were created by him, that are in heaven, and on earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers,—and that all things were created by him, and for him; (Col. 1. 16.) than which nothing could have been said more peculiar or appropriate to Deity,—that even of the Son of God it is said, he is the true God and eternal life: (1. John 5. 20.)—that we are so plainly told, he is Alpha and Omega, (Rev. 1. 8.) the first and the last, he that was, and is, and is to come, the Lord Almighty, (chap. 2. 23.) the beginning of the creation of God: the searcher of hearts: (chap. 3. 14.)—that the Spirit of God is said to search all things, even the deep things of God: (1 Cor. 2. 10.)—that lying to him is said to be lying to God: (Acts. 5. 3.)—that the great Christian solemnity baptism, is directed to be in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:—that it is so distinctly said, there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, and that these three are one thing. 1 John 5. 7.

I cannot imagine what should oblige us so studiously to wire-draw all this to quite other meanings.

XXIV. And for the leaving out of this last mentioned text

in some copies, what hath been said (not to mention divers others) by the famously learned Dr. Hammond upon that place, is so reasonable, so moderate, so charitable to the opposite party, and so apt to satisfy impartial and unprejudiced minds, that one would scarce think, after the reading of it, any real doubt can remain concerning the authenticness of that 7th verse in 1 John. 5.

Wherefore now taking all these texts together ; with many more that might have been mentioned, I must indeed profess to wonder, that with men of so good sense, as our socinian adversaries are accounted, this consideration should not have more place and weight, namely, That it being so obvious to any reader of the Scriptures to apprehend from so numerous texts, that Deity must belong to the Son of God, and that there wants not sufficient inducement to conceive so of the Holy Ghost also ; there should be no more caution given in the Scriptures themselves to prevent mistake (if there were any) in apprehending the matter accordingly : and to obviate the unspeakable consequent danger of erring in a case of so vast importance. How unagreeable it is to all our notions of God ; and to his usual procedure in cases of less consequence ! How little doth it consist with his being so wise and so compassionate a lover of the souls of men, to let them be so fatally exposed unto so inevitable, and so destructive a delusion ! that the whole Christian church should through so many centuries of years, be even trained into so horrid and continued idolatry by himself who so severely forbids it ! I cannot allow myself to think men of that persuasion insincere in their professing to believe the divine authority of the holy Scriptures, when the leader and head of their party, wrote a book, that is not without nerves in defence of it. But I confess I cannot devise, with what design they can think those Scriptures were written ! or why they should count it a thing worthy of infinite wisdom to vouchsafe such a revelation to men, allowing them to treat and use it as they do ! And that till some great socinian wits should arise fifteen hundred years after, to rectify their notions in these things, men should generally be in so great hazard of being deceived into damnation, by those very Scriptures, which were professedly written to make them wise to salvation !

XXV. Nor is it of so weighty importance in this controversy, to cast the balance the other way, that a noted critic (upon what introduction needs not be determined) changed his judgment, or that his posthumous interpretations of some texts (if they were his interpretations) carry an appearance of his having changed it ; because he thought such texts might possibly admit to be interpreted otherwise, than they usually

were, by such as alleged them for the *trinity*, or the (disputed) Deity of the Son or Spirit, or that the cause must be lost, upon his deserting it, or that he was still to be reckoned of the opposite party (as the author calls it) and that such texts as we most relied upon, were therefore given up by some of our own.

And it is really a great assuming, when a man shall adventure to pronounce so peremptorily, against the so common judgment of the Christian church, without any colour or proof, that our copies, are false copies, our translations, our explanations false, and the generality of the wisest, the most inquisitive, most pious, and most judicious assertors of the Christian cause, for so many continued ages, fools, or cheats for owning and avowing them; for no other imaginable reason, but only because they make against him! How will he prove any copies we rely upon to be false? Is it because he is pleased to suspect them? And is an interpretation false, because the words can possibly be tortured unto some other sense? Let him name me the text, wherein any doctrine is supposed to be delivered that is of merely supernatural revelation, of which it is not possible to devise some other meaning, not more remote, alien, or unimaginable, than theirs, of most of the disputed texts.

Nor indeed do we need to except that natural sentiment in itself, that there is but one God, (which this author takes such pains to prove, as if he thought, or would make other men think we denied it.) For though it is so generally acknowledged, doth he not know it is not so generally understood in the same sense? Against whom doth he write? Doth he not know they understand this *oneness* in one sense, he, in another? *they* in such a sense as admits a *trinity*, *he* in a sense that excludes it?

But (for such things as did need a superadded verbal revelation) how easy is it to an inventive, pervicacious wit, to wrest words this way, or that.

XXVI. The Scriptures were written for the instruction of sober learners; not for the pastime of contentious wits, that affect only to play tricks upon them. At their rate of interpreting, among whom he ranks himself, it is impossible any doctrine can with certainty, be founded upon them. Take the first chapter of St. John's gospel for instance, and what doctrine can be asserted in plainer words, than the Deity of Christ, in the three first verses of that chapter? Set any man of an ordinary, unprepossessed understanding, to read them, and when he finds that by the word is meant Jesus Christ (which themselves admit) see if he will not judge it plainly taught, that Jesus Christ is God, in the most eminent, known sense: especially when he shall take

notice of so many other texts, that, according to their most obvious appearance, carry the same sense. But it is first, through mere shortness of discourse, taken for granted, and rashly concluded on, that it is absolutely impossible, if the Father be God, the Son can be God too (or the Holy Ghost) upon a presumption, that we can know every thing that belongs to the divine nature; and what is possible to be in it, and what not; and next, there is hereupon not only a license imagined, but an obligation, and necessity, to shake heaven and earth, or tear that divine word that is more stable, into a thousand pieces, or expound it to nothing, to make it comply with that forelaid presumptuous determination. Whereas if we could but bend our minds so far to comply with the plain duction of that revelation God hath made unto us of himself; as to apprehend that in the most only Godhead there may be distinctions, which we particularly understand not, sufficient to found the doctrine of a trinity therein, and very consistent with the *unity* of it; we should save the divine word, and our own minds, from unjust torture, both at once. And our task, herein will be the easier, that we are neither concerned nor allowed to determine, that things are precisely so, or so; but only to suppose it possible that so they may be, for ought that we know. Which will I am certain not be so hard, nor so bold an undertaking, as his, who shall take upon him to prove, that any thing here supposed is impossible.

Indeed if any one would run the discourse into the abyss of infinity, he may soon create such difficulties to himself, as it ought not to be thought strange, if they be greater than any human understanding can expedite. But not greater than any man will be entangled in, that shall set himself to consider infinity upon other accounts; which yet he will find it imposed upon him unavoidably to admit whether he will or no: not greater than this author will be equally concerned in, upon his doing that right to truth, in opposition to the former leaders of his own party, as to acknowledge the omnipresence of the divine essence, (p. 23.) which he will find, let him try it when he will: nor yet so great, nor accompanied with so gross, so palpable and horrid absurdities, as he will soon be encountered with, should he retract his grant, or entertain the monstrously maimed, and most deformed, impious, conceit of a finite, or limited Deity!

XXVII. Yet also in this present case, the impossibility to our narrow minds of comprehending infinity, is most rationally improvable to our very just advantage. It ought to be upbraided to none as a pretext, or a cover to sloth, or dulness. It is no reproach to us that we are creatures, and have not infinite

capacities. And it ought to quiet our minds, that they may so certainly know they have limits ; within which, we are to content ourselves with such notions, about indemonstrable, and unrevealed things, as they can, with greatest ease to themselves, find room for.

I can reflect upon nothing in what is here proposed, but what is intelligible without much toil, or much metaphysics. As matters, of so common concernment, ought, to our uttermost, to be represented in such a way that they may be so : we need not be concerned in scholastic disquisitions about union ; or by what peculiar name to call that which is here supposed. It is enough for us to know there may be a real, natural, vital, and very intimate union, of things that shall, notwithstanding it, continue distinct, and that shall, by it, be truly one. Nor do we need to be anxiously curious in stating the notions of *person* and *personality*, of *suppositum* and *suppositivity*, though I think not the term person disallowable in the present case. Nor will I say what that noted man (so noted that I need not name him, and who was as much acquainted with metaphysics as most in his age) published to the world above twenty years ago, that he counted the notion of the schools about *suppositum* a foolery. For I do well know, the thing itself, which our Christian metaphysicians intended, to be of no small importance in our religion, and especially to the doctrine of redemption, and of our Redeemer.

XXVIII. But I reckon they that go the more metaphysical way, and content themselves with the *modal* distinction of three persons in the Godhead, say nothing herein that can be proved absurd or contradictory. As to what is commonly urged, that if there be three persons in the Deity, each person must have its distinct *individual essence*, as well as its distinct *personality*, I would deny the consequence, and say, that though this be true in *created* persons (taking person in the strict metaphysical sense) it is not necessary to be so in *uncreated* : that the reason is not the same between finite things and infinite ; and would put them to prove, if they can, that the same infinite essence cannot be whole and undivided in three several persons ; knowing there can be nothing more difficult urged in the case, than may against the divine omnipresence ; which irrefragable reasons, as well as the plainest testimony of Scripture will oblige us to acknowledge.

But I think, though this hypothesis abstractly considered, and by itself, is not indefensible ; it doth not altogether so well square with the Christian economy, nor so easily allow that distinction to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which seems

requisite to found the distinct attributions. that are severally given them in the Holy Scriptures.

XXIX. To conclude, I only wish these things might be considered, and discoursed with less confidence, and peremptory determination; with a greater awe of what is divine and sacred; and that we may more confine ourselves to the plain words of Scripture in this matter, and be content therewith. I generally blame it in the socinians (who appear otherwise rational and considering men) that they seem to have formed their belief of things, not possible to be known but by the Scriptures, without them; and then think they are by all imaginable arts, and they care not what violence, (as Socinus himself hath in effect confessed) to mould and form them according to their preconceived sense. Common modesty, and civility, one would have thought, should have made Schlictingius abstain from prefixing, and continuing that as a running title to a long chapter: *Articulus Evangelicorum de Trinitate cum sensu communi pugnat; the doctrine of the orthodox respecting the trinity is inconsistent with common sense*; engrossing common sense to himself and his party, and reproaching the generality of christians, as not understanding common sense. They should take upon them less, and not vaunt, as if they were the men, and wisdom must die with them.

For this author, I congratulate his nearer approach to us, from those who were formerly leaders of his party, in the doctrines of God's omnipresence, and the perceptiveness, and activity of separate souls. He writes with sprightliness and vigour. And, I doubt not, believes really, what he writes with so little seeming doubt. And because his spirit appears to be of a more generous, exalted pitch, than to comport with any thing against his judgment, for secular interest and advantage, I reckon it the greater pity it should want the addition of what would be very ornamental to it, and which he wishes to two of the persons, to whom he makes himself an antagonist, more of the tenderness and catholic charity of genuine Christianity, (p. 12. col. 2.) to accompany those his abilities and learning, which would not thereby be the lesser (as he speaks) nor the less conspicuous.

I believe few would have thought him to see the less clearly, if he had been content to see for himself, not for mankind. And if he had not talked at that rate, as if he carried the eyes of all the world in his pocket, they would have been less apt to think he carried his own there. Nor had his performance, in this writing of his, lost any thing of real value, if in a discourse upon so grave a subject, some *lepidities* had been left out, as that of *Dulcinea del Toboso, &c.*

And to allude to what he says of Dr. Cudworth, his displeasure will not hurt so rough an author as Arnobius, so many ages after he is dead, if he should happen to offend him, by having once said, *Dissoluti—est pectoris in rebus seriis quærere voluptatem—&c.* it is the mark of a depraved mind to seek for amusement in serious subjects.

But for all of us, I hope we may say without offence to any, common human frailty should be more considered, and that we know but in part, and in how small a part ! We should, hereupon, be more equal to one another. And when it is obvious to every one, how we are straitened in this matter, and that we ought to suppose one another intently aiming to reconcile the Scripture-discovery with natural sentiments, should not uncharitably censure, or labour to expose one another, that any seem more satisfied with their own method than with ours. What an odd and almost ludicrous spectacle do we give to the blessed angels that supervise us (if their benignity did not more prompt them to compassion) when they behold us fighting in the dark, about things we so little understand ; or, when we all labour under a gradual blindness, objecting it to one another, and one accusing another that he abandons not his own too weak sight, to see only by his (perhaps) blinder eye.

Thus, Sir, you have my sense what I think safe, and enough to be said in this weighty matter. To you, these thoughts are not new, with whom they have been communicated and discoursed heretofore, long ago. And I believe you may so far recollect yourself, as to remember the principal ground was suggested to you, upon which this discourse now rests ; namely necessity of existence, and contingency ; emanations absolutely independent upon any will at all ; and the arbitrary productions of the divine will,—as the sufficient and most fundamental difference between what is uncreated and what is created ; and upon this very account, as that which might give scope and room to our thoughts, to conceive the doctrine of the *trinity*, consistently with the *unity* of the Godhead ; and so, as that the Son, though truly from the Father ; and the Holy Ghost, though truly from both, shall yet appear infinitely distinguished from all created beings whatsoever.

So much you know was under consideration with us above twenty years ago ; and was afterwards imparted to many more ; long before there was any mention or forethought, within our notice, of such a revival of former controversies, upon this subject, as we have lately seen.

This occasion, now given, hath put me upon revolving

anew these former thoughts; and upon digesting them into some order, such as it is, for public view. If they shall prove to be of any use, it appears they will not be out of season; and it will be grateful to me to be any way serviceable to so worthy a cause. If they shall be found altogether useless; being evicted either of impertinency, or untruth, it shall not be ungrateful; for I thank God, I find not a disposition in my mind to be fond of any notions of mine, as they are such, nor to be more adventurous, or confident, in determining of things hid, not only in so profound, but in most sacred darkness, than I have all along expressed myself. I ought indeed to be the more cautious of offending in this kind, that being the thing I blame, the positive asserting this or that to be impossible, or not possibly competent to the nature of God, which by his own word, or the manifest reason of things doth not plainly appear to be so: much more which his word doth as plainly as it is possible any thing can be expressed by words, ascribe to him. The only thing I assert is, that a trinity in the Godhead may be possible, for ought we know, in the way that I have proposed: at least it is so, for any thing that I do as yet know. And so confident I am of the truth, and true meaning of his word, revealing a trinity in his eternal Godhead, that I strongly hope, if ever it shall be proved to be impossible upon these terms that I have here set down; by the same, or by equal light, the possibility of it some other way, will appear too, that is, that not only a *trinity* in the *unity* of the Godhead is a possible thing; but that it is also possible that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost may be sufficiently distinguished to answer the frame and design of Christianity: and that will equally serve my purpose. For so however, will the scandal be removed, that may seem to lie upon our holy religion, through the industrious misrepresentation which is made of it, by sceptics, deists, or atheists, as if it were made up of inconsistencies and absurdities, and were fitter to be entertained with laughter than faith: and being effectually vindicated, it will be the more successfully propagated, and more cheerfully practised; which is all that is coveted and sought by

SIR,

Your very respectful,

humble servant, &c.

POSTSCRIPT.

HAVING the copies of some letters by me, which I wrote to Dr. Wallis between two and three years ago, upon this subject; I think, Sir, it is not improper, and perhaps it may be some way useful, to let them accompany this to yourself. And here I shall freely tell you my principal inducement, (taking notice in some of the doctor's printed letters; of others to him, contained in them) to send him *incognito* one also; but with that reason against printing it, which you find towards the end of the first letter.

It was really the apprehension, which had long remained with me, that the *simplicity*, which (if the notion of it were stretched too far) not the Scriptures, but the schools have taught us to ascribe to the being of God, was that alone which hath given us difficulty, in conceiving a trinity in the only one God.

It is not the *unity*, or *oneliness* of the Godhead; but the *simplicity* of it, as the school-men have stated it, that hath created the matter of dispute. Unity, you know, denies more of the same; simplicity denies more in it. Concerning the former that there could be no more Gods than one, we are at a point; the reason of the thing itself, and the holy Scriptures so expressly asserting it, leave it out of dispute.

All the doubt is about the latter. Not whether such a thing belongs to the nature of God; but concerning the just explanation of it. As it is a real excellency, not a blemish; and not merely a moral, but a natural excellency, there can be no

doubt of its belonging to the divine nature ; but if you understand it as exclusive of all variety therein, you find not any express mention of such an attribute of God in the Scriptures. They are silent in the matter. It hath no authority, but of the schools. That and the reason that can be brought for it must give it its whole and only support. It is the only thing that must open, and give way, to admit the doctrine of the trinity ; and it is the only thing that needs to do so. For we none of us assert a trinity of Gods ; but a trinity in the Godhead. It is the only thing that can to the adversaries of the trinity with any colourable pretence seem opposite to it. And which therefore I thought the only thing that remained to be sifted and examined, if they will state it in an opposition thereto. And consider, what so mighty and invincible strength of reason it had, whence alone either to shock the authority, or pervert the plain meaning of the holy Scriptures, discompose the whole frame of Christian religion, disturb the peace of the church, perplex very thinking minds, subvert the faith of some, and turn it into ridicule with too many.

I reckoned the Dr. (as I still do, notwithstanding the contempt this author hath of him) a person of a very clear, unmuddled understanding. I found him, by what he expressed in his first letter of the trinity, not apt to be awed by the authority of the schools, nor any bigot to them, as having declined their notion of a person, and fixing upon another, (less answering, as I apprehend, the scheme and design of Christianity) I thought it easy, and reputable enough to him to add, what might be requisite in this matter, without contradicting (directly, or discernibly) any thing he had said. I gave him the opportunity of doing it, as from himself, without seeming to have the least thing to that purpose suggested to him by any other. I had myself, I think, seen and considered the main strength of the schoolmen's reasonings concerning that *simplicity*, which they will have to be divine ; and, for ought I do yet know, have competently occurred to it in this foregoing letter, and partly in what you will now find I wrote to him. But what there is of real infirmity, or impertinency to this case (as it is, and ought to be represented) in their arguings, I reckoned he would both see and evince more clearly than I.

Therefore I greatly desired to have engaged him upon this point ; but I could not prevail. And am therefore willing that what I wrote then with design of the greatest privacy, should now become public. Not that I think it hath so great value in itself ; but that perhaps it may further serve to excite some others more able and more at leisure to search and inquire into this matter ; and either to improve, or disprove what I have es-

sayed. And which of the two it is, it is all one to me. For I have no interest or design, but that of truth, and the service of the Christian cause.

I was so little apprehensive of any such future use to be made of these letters, that I kept no account of the dates, except that one of the two latter (which both only refer to the first) I find, by the copy I have in my hands, to have been sent December, 19th. 1691. I remember it was a long time, and guess it might be six or eight weeks, before I heard any thing of the first, after I had sent it. Probably it might have been sent in October, or the beginning of November before. I at length heard of it very casually, being in a house in London, whither the doctor's eighth letter was newly arrived (then no secret) in order to impression. I then found this my first letter was lightly touched, but mistaken; which occasioned (it being a post-night) my second. That was followed by the third, the next post after, when I had a little more time wherein to express my mind, though I still concealed my name, as it is yet fittest to do, my main business in my letter to you lying with a person, who (blamelessly enough) conceals his.

These two latter of my letters to the Dr. produced some alteration in that paragraph of his eighth letter, which relates to my first. But yet no way answering the design for which I wrote it. You have them now together exactly according to the copies I have by me, excepting one or two circumstantial things fitly enough left out, or somewhat altered. And they had all slept long enough, if this occasion had not brought them to light.

But before I give them to you, let me suggest some things further to you concerning the foregoing letter to yourself. You may apprehend that some will think it strange (if not an inconsistency) that I should suppose it possible an absolute omnimodous simplicity may not belong to the Divine Being, when yet I absolutely deny all composition in it.

And I apprehend too some may think so, at least awhile; but such as have considered well, will not think so, and such as shall, I presume will not long. For,

1. If I had denied the simplicity of the divine nature, had the inference been just, that therefore I must grant a composition? How many instances might be given of one opposite not agreeing to this or that thing, when also the other doth as little agree! And most of all doth the transcendent excellency of the divine nature, exempt it from the limiting by-partition to which creatures are subject.

Take reason in the proper sense for arriving gradually by argumentation from the knowledge of more evident, to the know-

ledge of obscurer things, and so we cannot say the divine nature is rational. But is it therefore to be called irrational? Faith and hope agree not to it. Are we therefore to think infidelity or despair do not disagree?

It is indeed more generally apprehended, we can scarce have the notion of any thing that strictly, or otherwise than by some very defective analogy, agrees to him, and to us, Some pagans, and some christians from them (not in derogation, but) in great reverence to the high excellency of the Deity, not excepting the most common notion of all other, even that of being itself; make his being and substance to be superessential, and supersubstantial. It is out of doubt that whatsoever perfection is in us, is not the same thing in him formally, but in an unconceivable transcendent eminency only. Do therefore their contraries agree to him?

2. I am far from denying the simplicity of the blessed nature of God, which I ascribe to him in the highest perfection which it is capable of signifying. I most peremptorily affirm not only all the simplicity which he expressly affirms of himself; but all that can by just consequence be inferred from any affirmation of his; or that can by plain reason be evinced any other way. Whatsoever is any real perfection. &c. Sect. 11.

It is true while I affirm such a simplicity as excludes all composition, in the sense already given, I affirm not such as excludes all variety: not such as excludes a trinity, which he so plainly affirms, and with such distinction, as his affirmations concerning it imply, and make requisite.

I further judge that though the Scriptures do not expressly ascribe simplicity to the being of God, as a natural excellency, they say that which implies it, as such, to belong to him; as when they bring him in saying of himself, "I am what I am." This must imply his nature to exclude every thing that is alien from itself. I take it, as it signifies (besides a moral) a mere natural excellency, to import a most perfect purity of essence. And I understand that to be *purum, pure*, which is *plenum sui, full of itself*, and *quod nihil habet alieni, which contains nothing foreign from itself*. I do therefore take the natural simplicity of the Divine Being to exclude the ingrediency of any thing that can infer in it, conflict, decay, chance, disturbance or infelicity in the least degree; and to include whatsoever infers the contraries of all these; serenity, tranquillity, harmony, stability, delight and joy, in highest perfection; as necessity of existence also doth; and that for all this, it by no means needs to exclude a trinity, but to include it rather.

But I judge human (and even all created) minds very incompetent judges of the divine simplicity, We know not what the

divine nature may include consistently with its own perfection, nor what it must, as necessary thereto. Our eye is no judge of corporeal simplicity. In darkness it discerns nothing but simplicity, without distinction of things : in more dusky light the whole horizon appears most simple, and every where like itself : in brighter light, we perceive great varieties, and much greater if a microscope assist our eye. But of all the aerial people that replenish the region (except rare appearances to very few) we see none. Here want not objects, but a finer eye.

It is much at this rate with our minds in beholding the spiritual sphere of beings, most of all the uncreated, which is remotest, and furthest above, out of our sight. We behold simplicity ! and what do we make of that ? vast undistinguished vacuity ! sad, immense solitude ! only this at first view. If we draw nearer, and fix our eye, we think we apprehend somewhat, but dubiously hallucinate, as the half-cured blind man did, when he thought he saw men like trees.

But if a voice which we acknowledge divine, speak to us out of the profound abyss, and tell us of grateful varieties and distinctions in it ; Good God ! shall we not believe it ? Or shall we say we clearly see *that* is not, which *only we* do not see ? This seems like somewhat worse than blindness !

Now follow the Letters.

LETTERS TO DR. WALLIS

SENT IN 1691.

LETTER I.

SIR,

I Could much please myself in revolving in my own mind the very respectful thoughts and veneration I have long had for you, and in conversing with the grateful and entertaining idea which I have not abitrarily, but by your irresistible imposition received; and retained of you many years, on the account of your former most useful and acceptable performances, and which is both renewed and heightened greatly by your late, clear, prudent, and piously modest discourses (both letters and sermons) of that awful mystery, the trinity in the Godhead. But as I can neither satisfy myself of the fitness of making an encomium of you the matter of a letter to yourself; so nor can I hope to please you by doing a thing in itself so inept, and so insignificant to you. I shall better do both, if I shall offer any thing to you concerning this mentioned subject, your further consideration whereof may prove a further benefit to the world.

In what you have already said concerning it, you have used that great caution, and so well guarded yourself, as not so far as I can apprehend, to give an adversary in this single point, the least advantage. That which I would in the general, humbly offer, is, whether you have said so much as with safety

might be said, and as the case may require, for the gaining of a just advantage to the common Christian cause.

We design, in fight, not only to keep ourselves safe, but to overcome, and not *in prælio, in battle* only, but *in bello, in war*. In wars indeed of this sort, both our own safety and victory, are less to be valued than truth. Which, being of a piece, can be injured in no part, without some damage to the whole frame of congenerous truth. And as it is very possible, while an enemy is withstood attacking some one fort, a greater loss may not be provided against elsewhere; it may so fall out in affairs of this kind too, that the care of defending some one truth may be accompanied with a present not attending to the jeopardy of divers others. The nearer we approach an adversary (within just limits) in these rational decertations, the less he can have to say against us. But being well resolved ourselves about the main point of disagreement, we then take care not to come so near, as to fall in with him, pass into his tents, and give away our main cause.

I am, worthiest Sir, far from assuming so much to myself, or detracting so much from you, as to give a judgment that this really is done in your discourses about the trinity. I only submit it to your own most penetrating judgment, what may be further requisite and possible in this matter, to take away any appearances hereof, and prevent ill consequences that may too easily ensue. I have, for my own part, long imposed it upon myself to abstain from any positive conceptions concerning the Godhead, beyond what I find expressly contained in the divine revelation, or what the reason of things, either antecedently thereto, or consequentially thereupon, doth most evidently persuade and require; and do greatly approve the same caution, which I cannot but observe with you: but desire it may be weighed whether such measures may not, and must not lead us further.

As for the word *person*, you prudently profess not to be fond of it, the thing being agreed, though you also truly judge it a good word, and sufficiently warranted. For the *notion* signified by it, you all along seem to decline that of the schools, or the metaphysical one, which, you know, makes it to be a rational, or intelligent *suppositum*; and to take up with (what I think I may, wanting a fitter that is a more comprehensive word, call) the *civil notion* of it; which will allow the same man to be capable of sustaining three or more persons, supposing his circumstances or qualifications to be such or such, as to that purpose you speak both in your letters and sermons.

Now whereas you have also told us, letter the first, that by *personality* you mean that distinction (whatever it be) by which

the three persons are distinguished each from other ; that which with great submission, and most profound respect to you, I propose to your further consideration, will be capable of being resolved into these two inquiries—Whether only such a distinction of the divine persons, as this amounts to, will be sufficient to found the several attributions which the holy Scriptures give distinctly and severally to them, and to preserve the scheme of Christian religion entire, which is wont to be deduced from these sacred writings, and—Whether some further distinction may not be admitted as possible, consistently with the solved unity of the Godhead.

1. As to the former of these.

(1.) Whereas you think the word person to be a good word, and sufficiently warranted by Scripture, as (Heb. 1. 3.) where the Son is called the express image of his Father's Person ; alleging that so we render the word *hypostasis* which is there used, and do mean by it what you think to be there meant ; I desire you would please to consider whether the word *hypostasis*, according to the common use of it will admit to be so taken, as you explain yourself to mean by the word person, for though the latin word *persona*, as you say, according to the true and ancient sense, may well enough admit to be so taken, as that the *same man* might sustain *three persons*, I offer it to your re-consideration, whether ever you have observed the word *hypostasis*, in any sort of authors, when it signifies any person at all (for I know that it frequently signifies somewhat else than a person) to be taken in that sense. And whether one *hypostasis* so taken as it uses to be when it signifies a person, may not be capable of sustaining three of those persons which you here describe. And whether, according to this sense you mean not God to be only *one* such *hypostasis*.

(2.) Be pleased further hereupon to consider how well it agrees with this supposition of God's being but one *hypostasis* or intelligent *suppositum*, so frequently to speak, as the Holy Scriptures do of the Father, Son or Word, the Spirit or Holy Ghost, as three distinct I's or He's. The Lord possessed me (as the divine word or wisdom is brought in speaking) in the beginning of his way—I was set up from everlasting, (Prov. 8. 22, 23.) when he prepared the heavens I was there, (ver. 27.)—Then was I by him, (ver. 30, &c.) The Word—was with God, (John 1. 1.) He was in the world, (ver. 10.) we beheld his glory, (ver. 14.) and of the Spirit, He dwelleth with you, (John 14. 17.) The Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in my name, He shall teach you all things, (ver. 26) And whom I will send you from the Father, he shall testify of me, (chap. 15. 26.) And when he is come, he will reprove the

world—(chap. 16. 8.) And the observation seems to me as weighty, as it is usual, that, in some of the mentioned chapters, the somewhat hard *synthesis* of constructing *ἐκεῖνος* with *πνεῦμα* even where *παράκλητος* is not the nearer *suppositum*, but, in one place, a very remote one, (and one would think too remote to be referred to, ver. 13, 14. is rather chosen to be used than that the Spirit should not be spoken of as a distinct *he*, or rather than he should be called *it*, which could not so fitly notify a person. If the same man were a king, a general, and a father, I doubt whether that would give sufficient ground to his being called *he*, and *he*, and *he*.

(2) But the distinct predicates spoken of the three sacred persons in the Godhead seem much more to challenge a greater distinction of the persons than your notion of a *person* doth seem to admit: that of *sending* and being *sent*, spoken so often of the *first* in reference to the *second* and of the *first* and *second* in reference to the *third*, as not to need the quoting of places. If the same man were a king, a general, and a judge; methinks it would not well square with the usual forms of speaking among men (and God speaks to men as men) to say, that, as the first, he sends the two latter, that is himself.

And one would think our being required to be baptized in the distinct names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost should signify some greater distinction.

As also that three are said to bear witness in heaven. I doubt that in a cause wherein our law requires two or more witnesses; the same man that should be a father, a brother, and a son; would scarce thereupon be admitted for three witnesses.

And how the *incarnation* of the Son can be understood according to your notion of person, without the Father's and Holy Ghost's incarnation also, I confess I cannot apprehend. Your notion of a *person* contradistinct to the scholastic notion, as was said before, seems to leave the Godhead to be but *one hypostasis*, or *person* in the latter sense. How then are we to conceive of the hypostatical union? The assumed nature will be as much hypostatically united with the Father, or the Spirit, as with the Son.

(3.) And doth not this civil, or merely respective notion of a person, the other being left, fall in with the Antitrinitarian? Will it not make us Unitarians only, as they affect to call themselves? Would any of them (as you are pleased to take notice, letter 6. p. 1, 2.) say, none but a mad-man would deny there may be three persons in one God, have been so mad (not yet professing themselves converts) as to say so, if they had not supposed their cause not hurt by this notion of a person? For, (as you well say, letter 1.) we need not be fond of words, so the

thing be agreed, so have they equal reason to say, we need not be afraid of words, if in the sense you agree with us. And with one sort of them I only desire you to consider how great an appearance the asserting only of three persons, in the one sense, quitting the other, will carry off an agreement.

And have they not all the advantage left them which they seek in arguing against the satisfaction made by our Saviour from the necessity of an *alterity*, that in the business of making satisfaction there must be *alter atque alter, one who satisfies, and another who is satisfied*. I do very well know, what instances are brought of human rulers making satisfaction for delinquents, but there is no parity in the cases, they being themselves debtors to the governed community, as God is not, who hath with most undoubted righteousness made all things for himself.

(4.) And consider whether by your notion of a person you forsake not the generality of them, who have gone, as to this point, under the repute of orthodox? who no doubt have understood by three persons, three intelligent *hypostases*; though they have differed in thinking, some of them that only a *τροπος υπαρχεως* *a mode of subsistence* was the *genitum* or *spiratum* as to the two latter: a notion that is either too fine, or too little solid, for some minds to grasp, or take any hold of: others that the divine nature might itself be some way said to be communicated to them. But I pass to the

2. Inquiry: Whether some further distinction may not be admitted as possible? The only thing that straitens us here, is the most unquestionable *unity* or *unicity* (as we may call it) of the Godhead. Which, if it cannot be otherwise defended, I must yet for my part, notwithstanding these hardships (and I know no man with whom I could do it with more inclination) fall in with you. But I must crave it of you so far to fall in with you know not who, as to apply your clearer mind, as, I do my more cloudy one, to consider whether it can or no. You will here say, Further than what? and what would I have further?

To the former of these, I only say, further than the asserting, in very deed, but one *hypostasis*, in the Godhead, distinguished no otherwise into three, than by certain relative capacities, like those which may among men be sustained by one and the same man; and which distinction, as you after add, is analogous to what, in created beings, is called *distinctio modalis*: *a modal distinction*.

To the latter, I desire you to observe what I generally propose, not that we may positively assert any further determinate distinction as certain and known; but only whether we

may not admit some further distinction to be possible, in consistency with the unity of the Godhead. I do equally detest and dread to speak with rash and peremptory confidence about things both so mysterious and so sacred. But may we not modestly say, that if to that economy which God hath represented himself in his word, to bear, and keep afoot, towards his creatures, any further distinction than hath been assigned is *necessary*, it is also *possible*, and may be, for ought we know; if indeed we know nothing to the contrary. What is *impossible* we are sure cannot be *necessary*. But God himself best, and only knows his own nature, and what his own meaning is in the representation he hath made to us. If we sincerely aim to understand his meaning, that we may bear ourselves towards him accordingly, he will with merciful indulgence consider our short, or mis-apprehensions. But we need not say there is not this or that distinction, if really we do not know there is not. While we know so little of natures inferior to our own, and even of our own nature, and how things are distinguished that belong to ourselves, we have little reason to be shy of confessing ignorance about the nature of God.

Therefore I most entirely agree to the two conclusions of the ingenious W. J. wherewith he concludes his letter. But in the mean time (and pursuantly enough thereto) cannot but doubt the concludingness of his very acute reasonings against, at least, some of the expressions of that learned person (Dr. Sherlock,) which he animadverts upon, as, I perceive you also do (p. 16.) of your seventh letter. And even W. J. himself: for with a pious modesty he tells us—concerning infinite natures he presumes not to determine. Letter, (p. 8.)

What he objects against that author having said the divine persons are three beings really distinct (wherein I instance, not intending to run through that elaborate letter) that then there must be three distinct essences—seems to me a *παρεργον*, an *unnecessary labour*. I doubt not the author will easily admit it. But what will be the consequence? That therefore there are three Deities? That cannot be his meaning, nor be consequent from it, if he only mean that the Deity comprehends in it three such essences. If indeed he think those three beings are as distinct as Peter, James, and John; what is said by W. J. against him, I think irrefragable, that then they are no otherwise one, than Peter, James, and John; and by him against himself; for Peter, James, and John are not mutually self-conscious, as they are asserted to be, which mutual self-consciousness, since it is supposed to make the three divine persons one, cannot be supposed to leave them so distinct, as they are with whom it is not found.

As to what is observed of the defective expression of this unitive principle by the word consciousness, that bare consciousness, without consent, is no more than bare omniscieny. Sure it is not so much. For consciousness doth not signify omniscieny. We are conscious to ourselves, yet are not omniscient. But I reckon, (as I find he also doth) that even consent added to consciousness, would yet leave the expression defective, and still want the unifying power which is sought after. For it would infer no more than a sort of moral union, which in the kind of it, may be found among men, between whom there is so little of natural union (speaking of the numerical nature) that they are actually separate.

But now may we not suppose (as that which is possible, and actually is, for ought we know) what may be fundamental to both consciousness and consent, a natural union even of the numerical natures? Such a union would not infer a unity, or identity of these natures, essences, substances, or beings themselves. For as W. J. hath well argued, (Letter, p. 5, 6.) "Substances upon union are not confounded or identified, or brought to unity of substance, but continuing numerically distinct substances acquire some mutual community or communication of operations, &c." And deferring the consideration awhile what this would signify towards the unity, notwithstanding, of the Godhead, we shall take notice how accommodately to our present purpose W. J. speaks in what follows, where instancing in the chief unions that are known to us, he says, "Our soul and body are two substances really distinct, and in close union with one another. But notwithstanding this, they continue distinct substances under that union, In like manner the human soul of Christ is in union with the *Logos*, or second person of the trinity, which we call an hypostatical union. But neither doth this union make a unity of substance. For the two substances of the divine and human natures continue distinct under that union." It is true, he adds, "which must not be allowed in the unity of the Godhead, where there can be no plurality or multiplicity of substances." Nor do I say that it must, I only say, Do we know, or are we sure there is no sort of plurality?

But if we are sure that there are temporal unions (that is begun in time) as in ourselves for instance, of two substances that make but one man, and in our Saviour a human nature and divine that make but one Immanuel. How do we know but that there may be three in the Godhead that make but one God? And the rather, because this being supposed, it must also be supposed that they are necessarily and eternally united, and with a conjunct natural impossibility of ever being, or having

been otherwise, whereof the absolute immutability of God must upon that supposition most certainly assure us. And such a supposed union will be most remote from making the Deity an aggregate. And for any thing of composition, I reckon we are most strictly bound to believe every thing of the most perfect simplicity of the Divine Being which his word informs us of, and to assent to every thing that is with plain evidence demonstrable of it. But not every thing which the schools would impose upon us, without such testimony or evidence. For as none can "know the things of a man, but the spirit of a man which is in him, so nor can any know the things of God, but the Spirit of God." Nor can I think the argument concluding from the imperfection of a being, in which distinct things concur that were separate, or are *de novo* united, to the imperfection of a being, in which things some way distinct are necessarily and eternally self-united. Nor can therefore agree with W. J. that we are to look (universally) upon real distinction as a mark of separability; or that clear and distinct conception is to us the rule of partibility. For though I will not affirm that to be the state of all created spirits; yet I cannot deny it to be possible that God might have created such a being, as should have in it distinct (assignable) parts, all of them essential to it, and not separable from it without the cessation of the whole. But now, as the accession of the human nature to the divine in the hypostatical union infers no imperfection to the divine, so much less would what things we may suppose naturally, necessarily, and eternally united in the Godhead infer any imperfection therein.

I easily admit what is said by W. J. letter, page 8. That we have no better definition of God, than that he is—a Spirit infinitely perfect—But then, being so far taught by himself my conception of him, I must include in it, this trinal distinction, or a triple somewhat which he affirms of himself, and without which, or any one whereof, he were not infinitely perfect, and consequently not God, and that all together do make one God. As you most aptly say of your resemblance of him, a cube, there are in it three dimensions truly distinct from each other, yet all these are but one cube, and if any one of the three were wanting, it were not a cube.

Set this down then for the notion of God, that he is a Spirit infinitely perfect, comprehending in that omnimodous perfection a trinal distinction, or three persons truly distinct, each whereof is God. What will be the consequence? that therefore there are three Gods? Not at all, but that each of these partaking divine nature give us an inadequate, and all together a most perfectly adequate and entire notion of God. Nor

would the language of this hypothesis being pressed to speak out (as he says in his letter) be this—these are not fit to be called three Gods; but not possible (with any truth) to be so called.

And whereas he after tells us, these three being united by similitude of nature, mutual consciousness, consent, co-operation under the greatest union possible; and in that state of union do constitute the *το θειον*, the entire all-comprehensive Godhead, and adds, this looks somewhat like a conceivable thing. To this I note two things:

First, That he makes it not look like so conceivable a thing, as it really may do. For he leaves out the most important thing that was as supposable as any of the rest, and prior to a mere similitude, namely, a natural union of these (supposed) distinct essences, without which they are not under the greatest union possible; and which, being supposed necessary, and eternal, cannot admit these should be more than one God.

Secondly, I note that what he opposes to it (so defectively represented) is as defective, that the Christian trinity doth not use to be represented thus, &c. What hurt is there in it, if it can be more intelligibly represented than hath been used? But his gentle treatment of this hypothesis, which he thought, as he represents it, not altogether unintelligible, and which with some help may be more intelligible, became one inquiring what might most safely, and with least torture to our own minds, be said, or thought in so awful a mystery. It however seems not proper to call this an hypostatical union—much less to say it amounts to no more. It amounts not to so much. For an hypostatical or personal union would make the terms united (the *unita*, the things or somewhats under this union) become by it one hypostasis or person; whereas this union must leave them distinct persons or *hypostases*, but makes them one God. In the use of the phrase *hypostatical* or personal union the denomination is not taken from the subject of the union, as if the design were to signify that to be divers *hypostases*, or persons, but from the effect or result of the mentioned union, to signify that which results to be one person or *hypostasis*. As the matter is plain in the instance wherein it is of most noted use, the case of the two natures united in the one person of the Son of God; where the things united are not supposed to be two persons, but two natures so conjoined, as yet to make but one person, which therefore is the negative result or effect of the union, namely, that the person is not multiplied by the accession of another nature, but remains still only one. But this were a union quite of another kind, namely, of the three *hypostases*, still remaining distinct, and concurring in

one Godhead. And may not this be supposed without prejudice to its perfection.

For the schools themselves suppose themselves not to admit a composition prejudicial to the perfection of the Godhead, when they admit three modes of subsistence, which are distinct from one another, and from the Godhead, which they must admit. For if each of them were the very Godhead, each of them (as is urged against us by you know who) must have three persons belonging to it, as the Godhead hath. And yourself acknowledge three somewhats in the Godhead distinct, or else they could not be three. I will not here urge that if they be three somewhats, they must be three things, not three nothings; for however uneasy it is to assign a medium between something and nothing, I shall wave that metaphysical contest. But yet collect, that *simplicity* in the very strictest sense that can be conceived, is not, in your account, to be ascribed to God, either according to his own word, or the reason of things.

It may here be urged, How can we conceive this natural union (as I have adventured to phrase it) of the three persons, supposing them distinct things, substances, or spirits? Is such a union conceivable, as shall make them be but one God, and not be such, as shall make them cease to be three distinct things, substances, or spirits? We find indeed the mentioned unions of soul and body in ourselves, and of the two natures in Christ consistent enough with manifest distinction; but then the things united are in themselves of most different natures. But if things of so congenerous a nature be united, will not their distinction be lost in their union?

I answer, First. That a spirit and a spirit are numerically as distinct, as a body and a spirit. And, Secondly, that we may certainly conceive it as possible to God to have united two or three created spirits, and by as strict union as is between our souls and bodies, without confounding them; and I reckon the union between our souls and bodies much more wonderful than that would have been. Why then is an unmade, uncreated union of three spirits less conceivable as that which is to be pre-supposed to their mutual consciousness?

I shall not move, or meddle with, any controversy about the infinity of these three supposed substances or spirits, it being acknowledged on all hands that contemplations of that kind cannot but be above our measure. And well knowing how much easier it is to puzzle oneself upon that question, *An possit dari infinitum infinito infinitius, whether one infinite can be added to another so as to increase its infinity*, than to speak satisfyingly, and unexceptionably about it to another.

And though I will not use the expressions, as signifying my

formed judgment, that there are three things, substances, or spirits in the Godhead (as you, that there are three somewhats) yet; as I have many years thought, I do still think that what the learned W. J. doth but more lightly touch of the Son, and the Holy Ghost being produced (which term I use, but reciting it, as he doth) not by a voluntary external, but by an internal, necessary, and emanative act, hath great weight in it.

In short my sense hath long lain thus, and I submit it to your searching and candid judgment, namely, That though we need not have determinate thoughts, how far the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinguished; yet we must conceive them in the general to be so far distinguished, as is really necessary to the founding the distinct attributions which the Scriptures do distinctly give them. And that whatever distinction is truly necessary to that purpose, will yet not hinder the participation of the two *latter* with the *first* in the Godhead, which can be but one, because that though we are led by plain Scripture, and the very import of that word, to conceive of the Father as the Fountain, yet the Son being from him, and the Holy Ghost from them both, not contingently, or dependently on will and pleasure; but by eternal, natural, necessary promanation, these two latter are infinitely distinguished from the whole creation: inasmuch as all creatures are contingent beings, or dependent upon will and pleasure, as the character is given us of created things, (Rev. 4. 11.) Thou hast made all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. But that whatever is what it is necessarily, is God. For I have no doubt but the dreams of some, more anciently, and of late, concerning necessary matter, and the sophisms of Spinoza and some others, tending to prove the necessity and identity of all substance are (with what they aim to evince) demonstrably false. The sum of all will be this,

(1.) That we can be more certain of nothing than that there is but one God.

(2.) We are most sure the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are sufficiently distinguished to give a just ground to the distinct attributions, which are in the Scripture severally given to them.

(3.) We are not sure what that sufficient distinction is: (wherein I find you saying with me over and over) but whereas you rightly make the word *person* applicable to God, but in a sense analogous to that which obtains of it with men; why may it not be said it may be fitly applicable, for ought we know, in a sense analogous to that notion of it among men, which makes a *person* signify an intelligent *hypostasis*, and so three distinct persons, three distinct intelligent *hypostases*.

(4.) But if that sufficient distinction can be no less, than that there be in the Godhead, three distinct intelligent *hypostases*, each having its own distinct singular intelligent nature, with its proper personality belonging to it, we know nothing to the contrary, but that the necessary eternal nature of the Godhead may admit thereof. If any can from plain Scripture testimony, or cogent reason evince the contrary, let the evidence be produced. In the mean time we need not impose upon ourselves any formal denial of it.

(5.) If the contrary can be evidenced, and that hereupon it be designed to conclude that there can be but one intelligent hypostasis in the Godhead, and therefore that the Son, and the Holy Ghost are but creatures, the last refuge must be to deny the former consequence, and to allege that though the same finite singular nature cannot well be understood to remain entirely to one, and be communicated entirely to another, and another, the case will not be the same speaking of an infinite nature.

SIR,

If what is here said shall occasion to you any new thoughts that you shall judge may be of common use, I conceive there will be no need of publishing my letter, but only that you be pleased to communicate your own sentiments, as from yourself, which will have so much the more of authority and usefulness with them. The most considerable thing that I have hinted, is the necessary promanation of the Son, and Holy Ghost, that must distinguish them from contingent beings, and so from creatures; which if you think improveable to any good purpose, as it hath been with me a thought many years old, so I suppose it not new to you, and being now resumed by you, upon this occasion, you will easily cultivate it to better advantage than any words of mine can give it.

But if you think it adviseable that any part of my letter be published, if you please to signify your mind to that purpose in one line — marked — it will come sealed to my view, and will give opportunity of offering my thoughts to you, what parts I would have suppressed, which will be such only, as shall leave the rest the fuller testimony of my being,

SIR,

Your most sincere honourer and most
respectful humble servant,

Anonymous.

Poiret's method of proving a trinity in the Godhead, though it call itself mathematical or geometrical, is with me much less convictive, than the plain scriptural way.

LETTER. II.

SIR,

YOUR eighth letter happening to come to my view before it was printed off, I have the opportunity of taking notice to you that it quite misrepresents the intent of the letter to you subscribed Anonymous, which it makes to be the defending or excusing some expressions of Dr. Sherlock's; which indeed was the least considerable thing, if it were any thing at all in the design of that letter, and not altogether accidental to it. The true design of it was, that there might be a clearer foundation asserted (as possible at least) to the doctrine of the incarnation and satisfaction of the Son of God. Nor can the *forte quod sic* here be solved by the *forte quod non*, the exigency of the case being such, as that *if more be possible* it will be *highly requisite*; and that it cannot well be avoided to assert more, unless it can be clearly evinced that more is impossible. Nor yet is it necessary to determine how much more is necessary. But not only the commonly received frame of Christian doctrine, doth seem to require somewhat beyond what the mere civil or respective notion of the word *person* imports; but also the plain letter of Scripture, which says (Heb. 1.3.) that the Son of God is the express image of the Father's *hypostasis*, which seems to signify there are two *hypostases*, and other Scriptures seem to say enough, whence we may with parity of reason collect a third. Now that letter intimates, I think, sufficient matter of doubt, whether *hypostasis* doth not signify much more than *person*, in your sense.

The principal thing, that letter humbly offered to consideration that is,—whether supposing a greater distinction than you have assigned be necessary, it may not be defended, by the just supposal that the promanation of the second or third persons (or *hypostases* rather) howsoever diverse they are, is by natural eternal necessity, not contingent, or depending upon will and pleasure, as all created being is and doth—is altogether waved. That letter was written with design of giving you the occasion of considering what might be further requisite and possible to be asserted for the serving of the truth, and with that sincerity and plenitude of respect to you that it might be wholly in your own power to do it in such a way, as wherein not at all to disserve yourself. Which temper of mind is still the same with

Rev. Sir,

Your most unfeigned honourer,

and humble servant,

Anonymous.

December, 16, 91.

LETTER III.

Worthy Sir,

I Am loath troublesomely to importune you. But the very little time I had for the view of your eighth letter, before I wrote mine by the last post not allowing me fully to write my sense as to that part which concerned my former letter, I take leave now to add, that my design in it (as well as the professed design of the letter itself) was to offer you the occasion of employing that clear understanding, wherewith God hath blest you, above most, in considering whether a greater latitude cannot be allowed us in conceiving the *distinction* of the three in the Godhead consistently with the *unity* thereof, than your notion of a *person* will extend to. And if it can, whether it ought not to be represented (at least as possible) to give a less exceptionable ground to the doctrines of the incarnation and satisfaction of the second person, in order whereto it seems to me highly requisite. This was that I really intended, and not the vindicating the sentiments of that author, which you might observe that letter animadverts upon. The Scripture seems to allow a greater latitude, by the ground it gives us to apprehend *three hypostases*; which so much differ from the notion you give of *persons*, that one *hypostasis* may sustain three such persons as you describe. The only thing that seems to straiten us in this matter, is the usual doctrine of the schools about the divine *simplicity*. I confess I greatly coveted to have had your thoughts engaged in sifting and examining that doctrine;

so far as to consider whether there be really any thing in it, cogent and demonstrable that will be repugnant to what is overturned in that letter. And I the rather desired more room might be gained in this matter, apprehending the unitarians (as they more lately affect to call themselves) might upon the whole, think you more theirs, than ours ; and while they agree with you concerning the possibility of such a trinity as you assert, may judge their advantage against the other mentioned doctrines, no less than it was.

My desiring that letter of mine might not be printed, was most agreeable to what I intended in writing it ; that was, only to suggest to you somewhat (very loosely) that I reckoned you more capable than any man I knew, to cultivate, and improve, to the great service of the common Christian cause. And that you might seem to say, what you might, upon your own search, find safe and fit to be said, as merely from yourself, without taking notice what occasion was given you by any such letter at all. Had I designed it for public view, it would have been written with more care, and with more (expressed) respect to you. But if upon the whole, you judge there is nothing in it considerable to the purposes it mentions, my further request is, you will please rather to suppress that part of your letter which concerns it (for which I suppose there is yet opportunity) and take no notice any such letter came to your hands. I am,

Reverend Sir,

Your most respectful,

Humble servant,

December, 19. 91.

Anonymous.

Summary Propositions

COLLECTED OUT OF

THE FOREGOING DISCOURSES,

MORE BRIEFLY OFFERING TO VIEW THE SUBSTANCE
OF WHAT IS CONTAINED IN THEM.

1. Of the *unity* of the Godhead there can be no doubt, it being in reason demonstrable and most expressly, often, asserted in Scripture.

2. That there is a *trinity* in the Godhead, of Father, Son, or Word, and Holy Ghost is the plain, obvious sense of so many scriptures, that it apparently tends to frustrate the design of the whole Scripture-revelation, and to make it useless, not to admit this *trinity*, or otherwise to understand such scriptures.

3. That therefore the devising any other sense of such scriptures ought by no means to be attempted, unless this *trinity* in the Godhead can be evidently demonstrated to be impossible.

4. That the impossibility of it can never be demonstrated from the mere *unity* of the Godhead, which may be such, as to admit these distinctions in it, for ought we know.

5. Nothing is more appropriate to the Godhead than to be a necessarily existent, intelligent Being; since all creatures whether intelligent, or unintelligent, are contingent, depending upon the will of the necessary, intelligent, Being.

6. If therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost do coexist in the Godhead necessarily, they cannot but be God.

7. And if the first be conceived as the *fountain*, the second as by natural, necessary (not voluntary) promanation from the first, the third by natural, necessary (not voluntary) spiration, so

that neither of these latter, could have been otherwise ; This aptly agrees with the notions of Father, Son, and Spirit distinctly put upon them, and infinitely distinguishes the two latter from all creatures that depend upon will and pleasure.

8. Whatever distinction there be of these three among themselves, yet the first being the Original, the second being by that promanation necessarily and eternally united with the first, the third by such spiration united necessarily and eternally with both the other, inasmuch as eternity, and necessity of existence admit no change, this union must be inviolable, and everlasting, and thereupon the Godhead which they constitute, can be but one.

9. We have among the creatures, and even in ourselves, instances of very different natures, continuing distinct, but so united, as to be one thing; and it were more easily supposable of congenerous natures.

10. If such union with distinction be impossible in the Godhead, it must not be from any repugnancy in the thing itself, since very intimate union, with continuing distinction, is in itself no impossible thing; but from somewhat peculiar to the Divine Being.

11. That peculiarity, since it cannot be unity (which because it may admit distinctions in one and the same thing, we are not sure it cannot be so in the Godhead) must be that simplicity commonly wont to be ascribed to the divine nature.

12. Such simplicity as shall exclude that distinction, which shall appear necessary in the present case, is not by express Scripture any where ascribed to God; and therefore must be rationally demonstrated of him, if it shall be judged to belong at all to him.

13. Absolute simplicity is not a perfection, nor is by any ascribed to God. Not by the socinians themselves, who ascribe to him the several intellectual and moral excellencies, that are attributed to him in the Scripture, of which they give very different definitions, as may be seen in their own Volkeli^{us} at large, which should signify them not to be counted, in all respects, the same thing.

14. That is not a just consequence, which is the most plausible one that seems capable of being alleged for such absolute simplicity, that otherwise there would be a composition admitted in the divine nature, which would import an imperfection inconsistent with Deity. For the several excellencies that concur in it, howsoever distinguished, being never put together, nor having ever existed apart, but in eternal, necessary union, though they may make some sort of variety, import no proper composition, and carry with them more apparent perfection.

than absolute omnimodous simplicity can be conceived to do.

15. Such a supposed possible variety even of individual natures in the Deity, some way differing from each other, infers not an unbounded liberty of conceiving what pluralities therein we please or can imagine. The divine revelation, which could only justify, doth also limit us, herein, mentioning three distinct I's or He's, and no more.

16. The several attributes which are common to these three, do to our apprehension, and way of conceiving things, require less distinction ; no more, for ought we know, than may arise from their being variously modified, according to the distinction of objects, or other extrinsical things, to which they may be referred.

We that so little know how our own souls, and the powers and principles that belong to them do differ from one another, and from them, must be supposed more ignorant, and should be less curious, in this.

of the
County of
Harris
State of
Texas
for the
year
1900

1900

ANNUAL REPORT

A
LETTER TO A FRIEND

CONCERNING

A POSTSCRIPT

To the Defence of Dr. SHERLOCK's Notion

OF THE

Trinity in Unity,

RELATING TO THE CALM AND SOBER INQUIRY UPON THE
SAME SUBJECT.



A

LETTER TO A FRIEND &c.

SIR,

I find a postscript to the newly published defence of Dr Sherlock's notion of the *Trinity in Unity*, takes notice of the inquiry concerning the possibility of a trinity in the Godhead. He that writes it seems somewhat out of humour, or not in such as it is decent to hope is more usual with him : and I cannot guess for what, unless that one, whom he imagines a dissenter, hath adventured to cast his eyes, that way that he did his. But for the imagination he may have as little ground, as I to think the dean's defender is the dean: and as little as he had to say the inquirer took great care that no man should suspect that he favours the dean in his notions. Here he is quite out in his guess ; for the inquirer took no such care at all, but nakedly to represent his own sentiments as they were, whether they agreed with the dean's, or wherein they differed : and really cares not who knows that he hath not so little kindness either for the truth or for him, as to abandon or decline what he thinks to be true for his sake, or (as he expressed himself p. 311 of that discourse) because he said it.

But the defender represents the dean as much of another temper, and that he will thank him for not favouring him in his notions. But yet he says, that though the inquirer doth not in every particular say what the dean says, yet he says what will justify him against the charge of tritheism. And is there any hurt to him in that? What a strange man doth he make the

dean ! as if he could not be pleased unless he alone did engross truth ! will he thank a man for not favouring his notions, and yet would blame him for not saying in every particular what he says, though he say what will justify him against the heaviest charge framed against him ! may one neither be allowed to agree with him, nor disagree ?

But Sir, the defender's discourse hath no design (nor I believe he himself) to disprove the possibility of a trinity in the ever blessed Godhead. Therefore the inquirer is safe from him as to the principal design he is concerned for, it is all one to him if it still appear possible in what way it be so represented, that is intelligible, consistent with itself, and with other truth; so that it is hardly worth the while to him, further to inquire whether the dean's hypothesis or his be better, if either be found unexceptionably, safe and good. But because the defender hath, to give preference to the one, misrepresented both with some appearing disadvantage to the cause itself, what he says ought to be considered. And the whole matter will be reduced to this twofold inquiry :—whether the inquirer hath said more than the dean, or more than is defensible, of the distinction of the sacred three in the Godhead : and—whether the dean hath said so much as the inquirer, or so much as was requisite of their union.

1. For the former, the defender, p. 103. mentions the dean's notion of three infinite minds or spirits : and makes the inquirer to have been proving three spirits, three distinct essences, three individual natures, in the Godhead ; and then adds “for my part, I cannot tell where the difference is, unless it be in the term infinite.” It is indeed strange the inquirer should have said more than the dean, if there were no difference, unless in the term infinite, wherein he must have said infinitely less

But he at length, apprehends another difference, though he after labours to make it none, namely, that the inquirer disputes, but asserts nothing, and he fancies he doth so to shelter himself from the animadverter, of whom he says he seems to be terribly afraid. Here he puts the dean into a fit of kindness and good nature, allowing the inquirer to partake with him in his fears, though not in his notions, as more sacred. But he herein understands not the inquirer, who if he had been so terribly afraid, could very easily have said nothing : and who was really afraid of a greater animadverter, thinking it too great boldness, under his eye, to speak confidently of his own peculiarities, and that lie folded up in so venerable darkness. He thought it enough, in opposition to the daring person (who-soever he was) with whom he was concerned that so perempto-

rily pronounced the trinity an absurdity, a contradiction, nonsense, and an impossibility, to represent what he proposed as possible for ought he knew.

And now the defender will have the dean to have done no more. And with all my heart let him have done no more, if he and his animadverter, and the rest of the world will so agree it: but he will have the inquirer to have done more, and to be much more exposed to the charge of tritheism, by asserting three distinct essences, three individual natures, and three spiritual beings in the Godhead. This is indeed very marvellous, that the inquirer should expose himself to the charge of tritheism by asserting all this, when but a few lines before upon the same page, he is said to have asserted nothing! But he may as well make the inquirer in asserting nothing to have asserted all this, as the dean in asserting all this to have asserted nothing.

And where the inquirer hath said in express words that the sacred three are three distinct substances I cannot find. And we must in great part alter the common notion of substance to make it affirmable of God at all, namely, that it doth *substare accidentibus, subsist in accidents*, which I believe the dean will no more than the inquirer suppose the Divine Being to admit. But it is true, that there is somewhat more considerable in the notion of substance, according whereto, if the dean can make a shift to avoid the having of any inconvenient thing proved upon him by consequence, I hope the inquirer may find a way to escape as well.

But whereas he says, the dean allows but one divine essence, and one individual nature in the Godhead repeated in three persons, but without multiplication, as he says he had already explained it. This hath occasioned me to look back to that explanation, and if he think the allowing but one divine essence, and one individual nature in the Godhead, will agree with what the dean hath said in his vindication, I shall not envy him, nor now go about to disprove it. But I confess I see not how it can agree with what the defender says in this his explanation itself, when p. 23. he tells us, the Son is the living subsisting image of the Father, and the image and the prototype cannot be the same, but must be two. No man is his own image, nor is an image, the image of itself. And he adds, this is so self-evident &c. But whereas the distinction all this while might be understood to be but modal, and that appears to be the defender's present (whatever was the dean's former) meaning, that the three subsistences differ only in their different manner of subsisting, yet with this meaning his other words do little agree, for he plainly asserts a real distinction of three in the same in-

dividual numerical nature. And who did ever make a real distinction to be but modal? More expressly he had said before, (p. 18,) the divine nature is one individual nature, but not one single nature, for one single nature can be but one person whether in God or man.

I shall not here discuss with him the criticism upon which he lays so mighty stress of one individual nature and one single nature but take the terms he chooses, and if the divine nature be not one single nature, it must be double, it must be triple. And what doth this come to less than three natures? unless all ordinary forms of speech must be quite abandoned and forsaken. And wherein doth it come short of what is said by the inquirer? p. 318. "This term *individual* must (in the case now supposed, as *possible* not as *certain*) admit of a twofold application either to the distinct essence of the Father, or of the Son, or of the Holy Ghost; or to the entire essence of the Godhead, in which these three do concur. Each of these conceived by itself, are (according to this supposition) individual essences, but conceived together they are the entire individual essence of God, for there is but one such essence and no more, and it can never be multiplied nor divided into more of the same name and nature." Duplicity, triplicity, are admitted; simplicity rejected. If simple and single be of the same signification where is the difference, but that the one thinks absolute omnimodous simplicity is not to be affirmed of the divine nature, as he often speaks: the other says downright, it is not single or simple without limitation. The one denies multiplication of it, so doth the other. The one indeed speaks positively, the other doth but suppose what he says as possible, not certain. And there is indeed some difference between supposing a thing as possible for ought one knows; and affirming it so positively, as to impute heresy, and nonsense, to all gainsayers. But both bring for proof, the same thing, the incarnation; as in the postscript, the defender takes notice the inquirer doth, p. 102. And so doth he himself in his letter, p. 102, "The divine nature was incarnate in Christ, he was perfect God and perfect man, and if there was but one single divine nature in all three persons, this one single divine nature was incarnate, and therefore the Father and the Holy Ghost who are this single divine nature, as well as the Son, must be as much incarnate as the Son was." He makes the contrary absurd. And brings in (fitly enough) Victorinus After teaching, that we ought not to say, nor is it lawful to say, there is but one substance, that is, as he paraphrases it, one single subsisting nature (therefore there must be three single subsisting natures) and three persons. For if this

same substance did and suffered all (*patri-passiani et nos*) we must be Patripassians, which God forbid.

And what the defender alleges from the ancients, (Letter p. 24. 25.) against the sabellians, allowing only a trinity of names and his taking the *τρεῖς ὑπαρξείς* in the *concrete* not in *abstract*, fully enough speaks the inquirer's sense, his accounting the contrary too fine and metaphysical for him was what was written to Dr. Wallis, (Calm Discourse, p. 339.) too fine or too little solid, &c.

In short, till it can be effectually proved, that mind and spirit do not signify somewhat as absolute as nature or essence (or rather more than the former, which signifies the principle of operation as of the other being,) and till it can be as well proved, that asserting a thing as certain, so as to pronounce it heresy and nonsense to think otherwise, is less than only to propose it as possible, or inquire whether it be so or no, the dean must be judged by every one that understands common sense, to have heightened the distinction of three persons at least as much as the inquirer. And whether the inquirer have supposed more than is defensible against the defender's objections, will be considered by and by in its proper place. In the mean time let it,

2. Be examined whether the dean has said as much for salving the unity of the Godhead as the inquirer, or as much as is requisite to that purpose. And here our business will be short, for it all turns upon that one single point, whether mutual consciousness be that union which must be acknowledged, or suppose it only. For which we need only appeal to common reason, whether being do not in the natural order precede even the power of working, and consequently whether being united vitally, precede not the possibility of acting agreeably to that united state, whereupon the inquiry is not concerning actual conscience only, but (as he speaks) consciousness. Is it possible any three persons or intelligent subsistences, should naturally have vital perception of each other's internal motions and sensations, without being vitally preunited? I say *naturally*, for that God might give to three created spirits a *temporary perception* of each other without bringing them into a *stated union* each with other, is little to be doubted; as a spirit may assume a body and animate it *pro tempore* without being substantially united with it. And if that body were also a spirit they might *pro tempore* for ought we know by extraordinary divine disposition (for within the ordinary course of nature we know of no such intimacy of created spirits to another) be *quasi animæ*, the cause of life to one another. But if naturally they were so to mingle and transfuse sensations mutually into each other,

they must be naturally, first, in vital union with one another. Nor therefore did the inquirer mistake the dean's notion as the defender fancies in the passage he quotes p. 104. as if he took mutual consciousness for mere mutual perspection. For though *scire, to know*, abstractly taken, doth not signify more than *perspicere, to look through*, yet the inquirer in that passage speaking of a never so perfect mutual perspection properly enough expressed thereby as great a feeling such spirits were supposed to have of each other, in themselves, as mutual consciousness is apt to signify, or as the dean can yet be supposed to have meant, that perspection being more perfect which produces gusts and relishes suitable to the object, than that which stays in mere speculation only.

And upon the whole, it seems very strange the defender should say, "if such an internal, vital sensation, be not an essential union, he believes no man can tell what it is." For how can such *actual sensation* be imagined to be *union*? As well might the use of sense itself (speaking of any thing singly to which it belongs) be said to be its constituent form, or (consequently) the doing any thing that proceeds from reason, be the form of a man. So the writing a book, should be the author. And whereas he says "it is certain the dean took it to be so, and therefore he did not leave out a natural eternal union;" it follows, indeed, that he did not leave it out, in his mind and design, but he nevertheless left it out of his book, and therefore said not enough there, to save the unity of the God-head, but ought to have insisted upon somewhat prior to mutual consciousness, as constituent of that unity, and which might make the three one, and not merely argue them to be so.

But now (p. 105.) he comes to find as great fault with the inquirer's way of maintaining this unity, and because he is resolved to dislike it, if he cannot find it faulty, sets himself to make it so. The temper of mind wherewith he writes (p. 105.) and onwards to the end, so soon, and so constantly shews itself, that no man whose mind is not in the same disorder will upon trial apprehend any thing in it, but such heat as dwells in darkness. And he himself hath given the document which may be a measure to any apprehensive reader. "True divine wisdom rests not on an illnated, and perverse spirit;" (See his letter, p. 1.) I understand it, "while the ill fit lasts." But it is strange he could write those words without any self-reflection.

The thing to be revenged is, that the inquirer did freely speak his thoughts, wherein he judged the dean's *hypothesis* defective, his not taking notice of what he reckoned naturally antecedent and fundamental to mutual consciousness: a most

intimate, natural, necessary, eternal union of the sacred three. If the inquirer spake sincerely, as he understood the matter, and him ; and it evidently appear the defender did not so, I only say the wronged person hath much the advantage and wishes him no other harm, than such gentle regrets, as are necessary to set him right with himself, and his higher Judge. He says, he (the inquirer) represents this *unity* by the union of soul and body, and by the union of the divine and human nature, &c.

It is true, he partly doth so, but more fully by the (supposed union of) three created spirits (to which he that will may see, he only makes that a lower step) and he says, (with respect especially to the former of these) "That a union supposable to be originally, eternally, and by natural necessity in the most perfect Being, is to be thought unexpressibly more perfect than any other." But (he adds) "these are personal unions, and therefore cannot be the unity of the Godhead." And he very well knew (for he had but little before cited the passage) that the inquirer never intended them so, but only to represent that the union of the three in the Godhead, could not be reasonably thought less possible.

What he further adds is much stranger (and yet herein I am resolved to put charity towards him to the utmost stretch, as he professes to have done his understanding) for he says—as far as he can possibly understand and that he should be glad to be better informed, though there is some reason to apprehend that former displeasure darkened his understanding, (and even dimmed his eye-sight) which yet I hope hath its more lucid intervals, and that this distemper is not a fixed habit with him. And what is it now that he cannot possibly understand otherwise ? that no other union will satisfy him (namely, the inquirer) but such a union of three spiritual beings and individual natures as by their composition constitute the Godhead, as the composition of soul and body do the man, that is, he cannot understand but he means what he expressly denies. Who can help so cross an understanding ? If he had not had his very finger upon the place where the inquirer says in express words "I peremptorily deny all composition in the being of God," (Calm Discourse p. 312.) this had been more excusable (besides much said to the same purpose elsewhere. (Calm Discourse p. 332.) It had been ingenuous in any man not to impute that to another, as his meaning, which in the plainest terms he disavows, as none of his meaning : And it had been prudent in the dean (or his defender) of all mankind not to have done so in the present case, as will further be seen in due time. But he takes it for an affront, when he fancies a man to come too near him.

He adds, "for this reason he disputes earnestly against the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity of the divine nature, and will not allow that wisdom, power, and goodness, are the same thing in God, and distinguished into different conceptions by us, only through the weakness of our understandings, which cannot comprehend an infinite Being in one thought, and therefore must, as well as we can, contemplate him by parts." I know not what he means by earnestly, the matter was weighty, and it is true, he was in writing about it in no disposition to jest. But it is said "he disputed against the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity of the divine nature." I hope the defender in this means honestly, but he speaks very improperly, for it supposes him to think that the universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity, so earnestly disputed against, did really belong to the divine nature, but I can scarce believe him to think so, and therefore he should have said, his disputation tended to prove it not to belong. If he (namely, the defender, or the dean) did really think it did, *they*, or *he*, must be very singular in that sentiment. I would have them name me the man that ever laid down and asserted such a position. Some I know have said of that sacred Being, that it is *summe simplex, simple in the highest sense*, or more simple than any thing else, but that imports not universal, absolute, omnimodous simplicity, which is impossible to be a perfection, or therefore to belong to the divine nature. No man that ever acknowledged a trinity of persons even modally distinguished, could ever pretend it, for such simplicity excludes all modes. Nay, the antitrinitarians themselves can never be for it, as the calm discourse hath shewn. p. 352. And if the dean be, he is gone into the remotest extreme from what he held (and plainly enough seems still to hold) that ever man of sense did.

But for what is added, that he "will not allow that wisdom, power and goodness, are the same thing in God:" this is not fairly said, civility allows me not to say, untruly. There is no word in the place he cites, nor any where in that book, that signifies not allowing, it is intimated we are not instructed "by the Scripture to conceive of the divine nature, as, in every respect, most absolutely simple," or that power, wisdom, goodness in the abstract, are the same thing, and that our difficulty is great to apprehend them really undistinguishable. And let me seriously ask himself, doth he in good earnest think it is only through the weakness of our understandings that we distinguish the notions of the divine wisdom, power and goodness? certainly it were great weakness of understanding to define them alike. I believe he never met with the writer yet that distinguished them less, than *ratione ratiocinata*, reason in

its subject in contradistinction to *ratiocinante*, *reason in its exercise* : which implies somewhat corresponding to our distinct notions of them (eminently and not formally) in *natura rei*, *the nature of the thing*.

And whereas he further says, "This prepared his way to make goodness, wisdom, power,—a natural trinity in unity," herein the defender is mistaken. This is not the *trinity* which the inquirer's discourse was ever intended to terminate in, as he himself hath expressly said, and the defender takes notice of it, which makes me wonder how he could think it was so intended, citing the very passage, (vide page 314.) where the inquirer "professes, not to judge, that we are under the precise notions of power, wisdom and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." But why then were these three so much discoursed of before? They are three most celebrated divine attributes, wherein we have our most immediate and very principal concern. And some have thought the trinity was most fitly to be conceived by them: the inquirer did not think so; but he thought first, it would be requisite to have our minds disentangled from any apprehended necessity of conceiving them to be in all respects the very same things, nor are they the very same, if they be so distinguished, as is expressed in the sixteenth of the summary propositions; (Calm Discourse vide page 353,) where also they are each of them said to be common to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, whence therefore it is impossible they should be thought to distinguish Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But that some distinction being admitted even of them, this might facilitate to us our conception of the greater distinction which must be, of Father, Son and Spirit, as is expressed p. 314. Indeed he did not think fit to interrupt his discourse by staying to shew reasons why he did not rest in that account alone of the trinity, though it might seem plausible, or not absurd, but proceeded further to what was more satisfying to himself, and might be so to other men. And (as the intervening series of his discourse leads thereto) this is more directly done page 317. &c. especially where he comes to speak of the necessary coexistence, and the (as necessary and natural) order of the Father, Son and Spirit, towards each other. The second being, not by any intervening act of will, but by necessary, eternal promanation, from the first, and the third from them both. And the true reason why power, wisdom and goodness, were not thought expressive of the distinction of Father, Son and Spirit, but common to each of them (as is said, summary Propositions 16.) was, that the two latter cannot but be necessary emanations, most connatural to their original, as is truly suggested by the defender, p. 111.

If you object (as the defender brings in the inquirer, saying) That this gives us the notion of a compounded Deity, &c. this, that is, the supposition, that absolute omnimodous simplicity, belongs not to it, is the thing which may be thought to give us this notion. And he tells us, he (the inquirer) answers this difficulty, by giving us a new notion of a *compositum*. And what is that which he calls a new notion? that a *compositum* seems to imply a pre-existing component, that brings such things together, and supposes such and such more simple things to have pre-existed apart, or separate, and to be brought afterwards together into a united state.

And indeed is this a new notion? as new as the creation? Let him shew me an instance through the whole created universe of beings (and for the uncreated being the defender (now at this time) disputes against any composition there, and the inquirer denies any) first, where there hath been a *compositum* without a pre-existing component, or next the compounded parts whereof, if substantial did not in order of nature pre-exist separate; that is, whether *esse simpliciter*, *simply to be*; do not naturally precede *esse tale*, *to be in a particular form*, or which is all one, to our present purpose, whether they were not capable hereof if the Creator pleased. Let any man, I say, tell me where was there ever a *compositum* made by substantial union, that did not consist of once separate or of separable parts.

But note his admirable following supposition, "that is to say, that if a man, suppose, who consists of body and soul, had been from eternity, without a maker, and his soul, and body had never subsisted apart, he could not have been said to have been a compounded creature?" This is said with design most groundlessly (as we shall see) to fasten an absurd consequence upon the inquirer, and see how it lucks: Did ever any man undertake to reprove an absurdity with greater absurdity? a creature without a Maker! what sort of creature must this be! we have a pretty saying quoted in the defender's letter; "He that writes lies down;" and we are apt enough too, when we write to trip and fall down, and ought in such cases to be merciful to one another, even though he that falls should be in no danger of hurting his forehead, much more if he be. What was another man's turn now, may be mine next.

But let the supposition proceed, and put we being instead of creature, which no doubt was the defender's meaning, for creature he must needs know it could not be that had no Maker. And what then? "why he should not" (says he) "have been said to be compounded, though he would have had the same parts that he has now:" We have here a self-confounding

supposition, which having done that first, cannot hurt him whom it was designed to confound, being taken in season. Grant one, and you grant a thousand. A being made up of a soul and a body, is so imperfect an entity, as could not be of itself. Nothing is of itself which is not absolutely perfect. If he mind to disprove this, let him try his faculty when he pleases against it, and (which I sincerely believe he never intends) together with it, against all religion. But besides, he hath destroyed his own supposition himself (to put us out of that danger) by saying in plain words, p. 107. "We have no notion of an eternal and necessary existence, but in an absolute perfect and infinite nature." Now say I, what is so perfect, and hath whatever belongs to it necessarily, though distinguishable things belong to it, hath no parts, for what are parts, but such things as can be parted? such things as never were parted, and never can be, (as it is nonsense to talk of those things being parted that are united necessarily, and of themselves) are no parts, if *partiri*, whence they are so called, must not (and herein he cannot so fool the whole Christian world as to make it concur with him) lose its signification to serve a turn. Though the things be real, their partibility is not real. If any indeed will call them *parts*, because they may be conceived or contemplated apart, as *parts* merely conceivable are no prejudice to the perfection of the Divine Being, so are such conceivable parts acknowledged by this author himself in express words; "we cannot comprehend an infinite Being in one thought, and therefore must as well as we can contemplate him by parts." His letter, p. 105. God can as little admit to be a part of any thing, as to have any thing a part of him. And yet it is no prejudice to the dignity and perfection of his being, to conceive of him conjunctly with other things, as when we make him a *part* (subject or predicate) of a proposition. All his disputation therefore against parts and composition in the Deity, is against a figment, or no present adversary. For my part I am of his mind, and I should be obliged to thank him that this once he vouchsafes to let me be on his side, when he knows I am, if he did not take so vast pains to make others not know it. How hard a thing is it for an angry man (especially when he knows not why) to write with a sincere mind.

But hath he in all this fervent bluster a present concern at this time for the honour of the Divine Being? (as God forbid I should think he never hath) what is that he supposes injurious to it? Is it the words, parts and compounds? or is it the things supposed to be united in the Divine Being? The words he knows to be his own, and let him dispose of them more ineptly if he can tell how: parts that were never put together,

never parted, nor ever shall be the one or other; that is, ~~that~~ never were or will be parts: and a compound of such parts! But now for the things upon which he would obtrude these words,—three essences, natures, (or if you please, infinite minds or spirits) signified by the names of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in eternal union, but distinct in the Being of God.—Let us consider his disputation against them united, or in union, according to its double aspect: First, upon the hypothesis or supposition of them: Secondly, upon himself.

First, Consider his disputation as levelled against the hypothesis or supposition of such distinct essences, natures, minds, spirits, in necessary, eternal union in the Divine Being. And one of his arguments against it, is in those words of his one principal argument against it (here put out parts and composition which are his own, and we have no more to do with them) is, that God is eternal and unmade, and whatsoever (hath parts, says he) hath such essences in it, must have a maker. And here let him prove his consequence, and his business is done, namely, both ways, as will be seen by and by. But let him shew the inconsistency between a thing's having such distinct essences naturally and necessarily united in it, (as the supposition to be argued against is, and before ought to have been justly stated) and it is being eternal and unmade. But how that is to be evinced I cannot so much as guess; confident affirmation, against the most obvious tenour of God's own word, is of little account, Who shall ascend into the heavens? or fathom the depths? or can have that perspection of God's incomprehensible nature, as without (and visibly against) his own revelation to be able, without great rashness, to pronounce so concerning him? But so toyish an argument as here follows, is worse than the position; that is, when one shall say, that for ought we know there may be three distinct essences by an eternal unmade union, united into one, in the being of God; any man should say, and be so vain as to expect to be regarded, that because they are united by an eternal and unmade union, therefore they are not united by an eternal and unmade union! If there be not a contradiction in the terms to disprove a thing, by itself, is to say nothing, or is all one with proving a thing by itself. He proceeds, to what hath nothing in it like an argument, but against his own conceit of parts, and that very trifling too. "There can be but one eternal nature in God: but if there be three—there must be three." This it is now come to, proving his point by itself. Here he makes sure work to have nothing denied, but then nothing is proved, no advance is made; if there be three, there must be three. But if there be three what? eternal *parts*: there must

be three different natures, or else they——would be the same. (What ! though distinct ?) But this supposes somebody said the first : and who ? himself ; therefore he is disproving himself. If I had said so, I would have denied his consequence, for there may be similar parts : whereas by different, he seems to mean dissimilar. He says “not only distinct, but different natures.” Now you have that wonderful thing talked of sometimes, but never brought to view before, a distinction without a difference. It is strange how any things should be distinct, and no way different. What distinguishes them if they differ by nothing ? This different, applied to this present case, is his own word, coined to introduce a notion that is not new to christians only, but to all mankind. If by different natures he means (as he seems) of a different kind, who thought of such a difference ? But I trow, things that differ in number, do as truly differ (however essentially cohereing) though not so widely.

His next is, that though we have a natural notion of an eternal Being, we have no notion of three eternal essences (which again I put instead of his parts) which necessarily coexist in an eternal union. Doth he mean we are to disbelieve every thing of God whereof we have not a natural notion ? Then to what purpose is a divine revelation ? Is this notion of God pretended to be natural ? It is enough, if such a notion be most favoured by his own revelation, who best understands his own nature, and there be no evident natural notion against it. He forgot that he had said, (Defence, p. 5.) “If every thing which we have no positive idea of must be allowed to contradict reason, we shall find contradictions enough ;” adding, “We must confess a great many things to be true, which we have no idea of, &c.” He adds, “once more we have no notion of an eternal and necessary existence, but in an absolutely perfect and infinite nature, but if there be” (I here again leave out his three parts, because I design to consider if there be any thing of strength brought against what was supposed possible by the inquirer, not against his fiction, which I trouble not myself any further with) “three spiritual Beings—neither of them can be absolutely perfect and infinite,” (I would rather have said none, or no one, than neither, since the discourse is of more than two. I thought the meaning of *uter* and *nueter* had been agreed long ago,) “though we could suppose their union to make such a perfect Being, because they are not the same, and (neither) no one of them is the whole,”—&c.

This is the only thing that ever came under my notice among the school-men, that hath any appearing strength in it, against the hypothesis which I have proposed as possible for ought I knew. They generally dispute against many sorts of composi-

tions in the being of God, which I am not concerned in : that of matter and form, which is alien from this affair, of quantitative parts, which is as alien : of subject and accident, which touches us not : of act and power, which doth it as little : each subsistent, being eternally in utmost actuality. And by sundry sorts and methods of argument, whereof only this can seem to signify any thing against the present supposition. And it wholly resolves into the notion of infinity, about which I generally spoke my sense in that first Letter to Dr. Wallis. (See *Calm Discourse*. p. 344.) And as I there intimated how much easier it is to puzzle another upon that subject than to satisfy oneself, so I here say, that I doubt not to give any man as much trouble about it in respect of quantitative extension, as he can me, in this. I think it demonstrable that one Infinite can never be from another by voluntary production, that it cannot by necessary emanation, I think not so. In the mean time when we are told so plainly by the divine oracles, of a *sacred three*, that are each of them God, and of some one, whereof some things are spoken that are not, nor can be of the others ; I think it easier to count three than to determine of infiniteness : and accordingly to form one's belief. But of this more when we come to compare him with himself. And for what he discourses of the aspect this supposition hath upon the Trinity, and the Homo-ousion : (p. 108. 109. 110.) it all proceeds still upon his own fiction of parts, and upon the invidious straining of that similitude of the union of soul and body, as he himself doth *tantum non* confess ; except that he lessens it by saying most untruly that he (the inquirer) doth expressly own the consequence. Therefore if he do not own the consequence, then the defender confesses himself to have invidiously devised it ; and what is it ? That if all three by this composition are but one God, neither of them by himself is true and perfect God. The divinity is like the english. But both his own. The inquirer denies both antecedent (which he knows) and consequent too. Leave out by this composition, (his own figment) and his argument as much disproves any trinity at all as it doth the present *hypothesis*.

But wherein doth the inquirer own it ? because such a similitude is used (as it is often in that discourse) of the union between soul and body (declared elsewhere to be unexpressibly defective) that therefore the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are each of them by himself no more truly Lord or God, according to the Athanasian creed, or otherwise than in as improper a sense, as the body of a man, excluding the soul, is a man, or a human person. Or as if Deity were no more in one of the persons, than humanity in a carcass ! who that looks upon all

this with equal eyes, but will rather choose as doubtful a notion, than so apparently ill a spirit! Are similitudes ever wont to be alike throughout, to what they are brought to illustrate? It might as well be said, because he mentions with approbation such as illustrate the doctrine of the trinity by a tree and its branches, that, therefore, there we are to expect leaves and blossoms. Is it strange the created universe should not afford us an exact representation of uncreated Being? How could he but think of that; "To whom do ye liken me?" At least one would have thought he should not have forgot what he had so lately said himself. "We must grant we have no perfect example of any such union in nature." Letter. p. 5. What appetite in him is it, that now seeks what nature doth not afford? A very unnatural one, we may conclude. It were trifling to repeat what was said, and was so plain, before, that the union between soul and body was never brought to illustrate personal union but essential. The former is here imagined without pretence, there being no mention or occasion for the mentioning of *persons* in the place he alleges. (Calm Discourse p. 317.) But to make out his violent consequence he foists in a supposition, that never came into any man's imagination but a sociinian's and his own:—(Which I say, contradicting him to them, that the matter may (as it ought) appear the more strange. His Letter p. 110.) If God be a person, he can be but one. Is God the appropriate name of a person? then indeed there will be but one person; but who here says so but himself? The name God is the name of the essence, not the distinguishing name of a person. But if three intelligent natures be united in one Deity, each will be persons, and each will be God, and all will be one God; not by parts, other than conceptible, undivided, and inseparable, as the soul and body of a man are not. Which sufficiently conserves the Christian trinity from such furious and impotent *attaques* as these. And the *homo-ousiotes* is most entirely conserved too. For what are three spiritual natures no more the same, than (as he grossly speaks) the soul and body are? no more than an intelligent mind, and a piece of clay? by what consequence is this said, from any thing in the inquirer's hypothesis? Whereas also he expressly insists, that the Father, as *Fons trinitatis*, is first, (Calm Discourse p. 316.) the Son of the Father, the Holy Ghost from both. Is not the water in the streams, the same that was in the fountain? and are not the several attributes expressly spoken of as common to these three? (Calm Discourse p. 353.) Essential power, wisdom, goodness, (which are denied to be the precise notions of Father, Son, and Spirit) said by more than a *πρωγενής*, as that may be understood to

signify, mere presence, (how intimate soever) but by real vital union, as much each one's as any one's? and all other conceivable perfections besides? Why were these words read with eyes refusing their office, to let them into the reader's mind? whence also how fabulous is the talk of power begetting wisdom, &c. (Postscript to his Letter p. 111.) against what is so plainly said of the order of *priority* and *posteriority*, &c. (Calm Discourse p. 317.)

There had been some prudence seen in all this conduct, if the defender could have taken effectual care, that every thing should have been blotted out of all the copies of that discourse, but what he would have thought fit to be permitted to the view of other eyes than his own. For then, though in so gross prevarication he had not preserved his innocency, he might have saved in some degree his reputation. Yet also he should have taken some heed that anger might not so have discoloured his eye, as to make so injudicious a choice what to confess and what to conceal. For had he not himself blabbed, that it was said, we are not under the precise notions of power, wisdom and goodness, to conceive of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost; he might more plausibly have formed his odd births, and fathered them where he doth. But wrath indulged will show its governing power. And all this fury and vengeance (upon the inquirer, and the dean too) he reckoned was due, only because it was so presumptuously thought, that somewhat in his hypothesis (or which he defends) might have been better, and that he (probably) sees it might; so much a greater thing (in some ill fits) is the gratifying a humour than the Christian cause!

But let us now see how all this turns upon himself. And how directly his ill polished (not to say envenomed) darts, missing their designed mark, strike into that very breast which he undertakes to defend. Whereas there are two things, principally to be designed in a discourse of this subject. Namely,

1. The explaining the unity of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, so as that though they are some way three, they may yet be concluded to be in Godhead but one.

2. The evincing notwithstanding that unity, the possibility of their sufficient distinction, to admit the distinct predicates that are severally spoken of them in the Holy Scriptures.

The inquirer's discourse chiefly insists upon these two things.

1. That necessity of existence is the most fundamental attribute of Deity. And that therefore the Father, as the Fountain, being necessarily of himself: the Son, necessarily of the Father: the Holy Ghost, necessarily from them both, each cannot but be God, and the same, one God. (In reference to the former purpose.)

2. That absolute omnimodous simplicity, being never asserted, in Scripture, of the Divine Being, nor capable of being, otherwise, demonstrated of it, and it being impossible, either from Scripture, or rational evidence, accurately to assign the limits thereof, and determine what simplicity belongs to that ever blessed Being, and what not: if it be necessary to our apprehending how such distinct *predicates* and *attributions* may severally belong, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that we conceive three distinct essences necessarily coexisting, in an eternal, vital, inseparable union in the Divine Being; the thing may be in itself possible for ought we know. And this is propounded to serve the latter purpose.

The defender of the dean seems to think otherwise of these two things, namely, of necessity of existence, common to the sacred three, which will prove each of them to be God, and, belonging to them in the mentioned order, as Father, Son, and Spirit, will prove them, necessarily, to be one God.

And of what is said of simplicity, which might admit their sufficient distinction; of both these, I say, he seems to think otherwise by neglecting both, lest that discourse should be thought any way pertinent, or useful to its end. And disputes vehemently against the latter, how strongly and successfully, he does it, in respect of the truth of the thing, we have seen. But whether weakly or strongly, that his disputation tends to wound the dean's cause, all that it can, shall now be made appear.

It is notorious the dean hath asserted, so positively, three infinite Minds or Spirits, that the benign interpretation wherewith this defender would salve the matter, (a new vocabulary being to be made for him on purpose, and the reason of things quite altered) will to any man of sense seem rather ludicrous, than sufficient, without express retractation. For which the inquirer thinks he is upon somewhat better terms, than he, if there were occasion for it, both by the tenour of his whole discourse, and by what he hath particularly said in the 28 sec. Calm Discourse p. 326. But after the interpretation offered, see whether such things are not said over and over in the defence, as make the defender (and the dean if he speak his sense) most obnoxious to the whole argumentation in the postscript. So as, if a part was acted, it was carried so untowardly, that it seemed to be quite forgotten what part it was, and all the blows (for it was come now to offending instead of defending) fall directly upon him, whom the actor had undertaken to defend.

It hath been noted already, that the defender says expressly, (Defence p. 16. p. 18.) "the divine nature is one individual nature," (and so says the inquirer, Calm Discourse p. 318.)—

but not one single nature ; (then it must be double and triple, not absolutely simple, as also the inquirer says) to which he (namely, the defender) adds, "one single nature can be but one person, whether in God or man." Now let any man judge whether all his reasonings are not most directly applicable against him, (if they signify any thing) which are contained in his postscript, p. 106, 107, 108. &c.

How furiously doth he exagitate that saying, "When you predicate Godhead, or the name of God, of any one of them, (namely, Father, Son, or Holy Ghost) you herein express a true but inadequate conception of God," &c. insisting that the whole "undivided divine nature" (no doubt it is everlastingly undivided wherever it is) "subsists entirely, in three distinct persons" This the inquirer never denied, though he charges it upon him, that he makes no one of the persons to be true and perfect God. Postscript p. 108. But how well doth that agree with what he had himself said, (defence, p. 26) Though God be the most absolute, complete, independent Being, yet neither the Son, nor the Holy Ghost, can be said to be, an absolute, complete, independent God. He falsely charges it upon the inquirer that he makes the persons severally not perfect God, and he denies two of them to be complete God. To say not perfect, is criminal (as indeed it is) to say not complete is innocent ! But his saying the Son and Holy Ghost are not complete God ; how doth it consist with what is said, postscript p. 109. "The same whole entire divinity distinctly and inseparably subsists in the person of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." What is wanting to make him complete God, in whom "the whole, entire divinity subsists?" No wonder if he quarrel with all the world who so little agree with him, whose defence he undertakes, or with himself. In the mean time the inquirer hath the less reason to complain, when he manifestly treats himself as ill as him.

I only add, that for his Discourse concerning "the one Divinity, or one Divine Nature, subsisting wholly and entirely, three times," (whereas I had thought the three persons had subsisted at all times, and all at once) Defence p. 26, &c. And the persons of the Son and Holy Spirit, not being emanations p. 28. Not the Son, because he is the Father's image : and an image is not an emanation, but a reflection : (but how should there be a reflected image without an emanation ?) "nor the Holy Ghost being *προβολη*, something proceeding not in the sense of *emanation*, but of the *mysterious procession*" I shall make no guesses about it (for it concerns not the inquirer) only I think it very secure against the formidable objection which he mentions p. 35. of its being too intelligible.

Upon the whole matter I see not what service it can do him, to put intelligent person instead of mind. For I thought every person had been intelligent. Boethius's definition which he alleges plainly implies so much, and one would think he must know that it is the usual notion of person to understand by it *suppositum rationale* or *intelligens*. Therefore methinks he should not reckon it necessary to distinguish persons (as he doth by this addition of intelligent) into such as are persons and such as are no persons.

But since he expressly says (and I think for the most part truly, Defence p. 30.) "that the three persons or subsistences, in the ever blessed trinity are three real, substantial subsistences, each of which hath entirely, all the perfections of the divine nature, divine wisdom, power, and goodness; and therefore each of them is eternal, infinite mind, as distinct from each other as any other three persons; and this he believes, the dean will no more recant, than he will renounce a trinity; for all the wit of man, cannot find a medium, between a substantial trinity, and a trinity of names, or a trinity of mere modes, respects and relations in the same single essence, which is no trinity at all." As also he had said much to the same purpose before, "that to talk of three subsistences in the abstract, without three that subsist, or of one single nature which hath three subsistences, when it is impossible that in singularity there can be more than one subsistence, &c." I believe he will find no small difficulty to name what it is, that with the peculiar distinct manner of subsistence makes a person; not the very same common nature, for the persons cannot be distinguished from each other by that which is common to them all. Therefore the divine nature which is common to the three, must according to him comprehend three single natures, and not be absolutely simple. Hither must be his resort at last, after all his earnest disputation against it. And these he will have to be parts, which because they are undivided, impartible, inseparable, everlastingly and necessarily united, I do reckon the inquirer did with very sufficient reason, and with just decency (and doth still continue very preumptorially to) deny.

And whereas he contends that the whole divine nature is entirely in each subsistence, (as he does again and again) I think the term whole, improper, where there are no proper parts. And I doubt not, when he gives place to cooler thoughts, he will see cause to qualify that assertion. For if he strictly mean that every thing that belongs to the Godhead is in each person; I see not how he will fetch himself from the socinian consequence, that then each person must have a trinity subsisting in

it, and be Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. For I doubt not he will acknowledge that the entire divinity includes in it the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. And therefore he must be beholden to an inadequate notion in this very case, when all is done, how much soever he hath contended against it. I do however think it safe and free from any other difficulty, than what we unavoidably have, in conceiving infinities, to say, That all perfection is in each subsistent (which I like better than subsistence, as more expressive of the concrete) as far as their natural, necessary, eternal order, towards one another, as the first is the fountain or radix, the second from that, and the third from both, can possibly admit. All must be originally in the Father, with whom, the other two have that intimate, vital, eternal union, that what is in him the other communicate therein, in as full perfection as is inconceivable, and more than it is possible for us, or for any finite mind to conceive. Therefore since that difference which only proceeds from that natural, eternal order, is conjecturable only, but is really unknown, unrevealed and inscrutable; it is better, herein, to confess the imperfection of that knowledge which we have, than to boast that which we have not, or aspire to that which we cannot have.

A
V I E W
OF THAT PART OF
THE LATE CONSIDERATIONS
Addressed to H.H. about the TRINITY.
WHICH CONCERNS THE
SOBER INQUIRY,
ON THAT SUBJECT.
In a Letter to the former Friend.



A VIEW OF
THE LATE CONSIDERATIONS

Addressed to H. H. about the Trinity.

YOU see, Sir, I make no haste to tell you my thoughts of what hath been published since my last to you, against my sentiments touching the Holy Trinity. I saw the matter less required my time and thoughts, than my other affairs : and so little, that I was almost indifferent whether I took any notice thereof or no. There is really nothing of argument in what I have seen, but what I had suggested before, and objected to myself, in those very discourses of mine, now animadverted on : which not having prevented, with me, the opinion I am of, can as little alter it, and should as little any man's else. But a little leisure, as it can, without extortion, be gained from other occasions, I do not much grudge to bestow on this.

I find myself concerned in the late considerations on the explications of the doctrine of the trinity—in a letter to H. H. The author is pleased to give me the honour of a name, a lank, unvocal one. It is so contrived, that one may easily guess whom he means ; but the reason of his doing so I cannot guess. Is it because he knew himself, what he would have others believe ?

But I suppose he as well knew his own name. If he knew not the former, he ran the hazard of injuring either the suppos-

ed author, or the true, or both. I could, I believe, make as shrewd a guess at his name, and express it as plainly. But I think it not civil to do so; because I apprehend he hath some reason to conceal it, whereof I think he hath a right to be the judge. But I will not prescribe to him rules of civility, of which that he is a great judge, I will not allow myself to doubt.

Yet I will not suppose him to have so very diminishing thoughts of our Saviour, as not to acknowledge and reverence the authority of that great rule of his, which he knows gained reverence with some who called not themselves christians, "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you—&c." Nor can divine what greater reason he should have to hide his own name, than to expose mine, or make the person he indigitates, be thought the author of the discourse he intended to expose; since no man can imagine how, as the Christian world is constituted, any one can be more obnoxious for denying three persons, than for asserting three Gods: which latter his impotent attempt aims to make that author do.

For his censures of that author's style, and difficulty to be understood, they offend me not. But so I have known some pretend deafness, to what they were unwilling to hear. There is indeed one place *Sober Inquiry*, p. 309. in the end of sect: 8. were *must* should have been left out, upon the adding afterwards of *can*; that might give one some trouble. In which yet, the supposal of an (not unusual) asyndeton, would, without the help of magic, have relieved a considering reader. And for his compliments, as they do me no real good, so, I thank God, they hurt me not. I dwell at home, and better know my own furniture, than another can. For himself, I discern, and readily acknowledge in him, those excellent accomplishments, for which I most heartily wish him an advocate in a better cause, without despair he will yet prove so; when I take notice of some passages which look like indications of a serious temper of mind, as of choosing God, and the honour of his name, for our portion and design; and that he lives in vain, who knows not his Maker, and his God, with the like.

But on the other hand, I was as heartily sorry to meet with an expression of so different a strain, on so awful a subject, of "making a coat for the moon." That precept which Josephus inserts among those given the Jews, doth for the reason it hath in it, abstracting from its authority, deserve to be considered. *Βλασφημεῖο δε μηδεὶς θεὸς, ὡς ποιεῖς ἄλλαι νομιζοῦσι*; *Let no one blaspheme the gods which other nations worship.** It seems to import a decency to the rest of mankind, whose notions of a Deity did not argue them sunk into the lowest degrees of sottishness and stupidity. Good Sir, what needed (think you) so

* *Lib. 4. Jud: Antiq:*

adventurous boldness, in so lubricous a case ! It gains nothing to a man's cause either of strength or reputation with wise and good men. A sound argument will be as sound without it. Nor should I much value having them on my side, whom I can hope to make laugh at so hazardous a jest. I can never indeed have any great veneration for a morose sourness, whatsoever affected appearance it may have with it, of a simulated sanctimony or religiousness ; but I should think it no hardship upon me to repress that levity, as to attempt dancing upon the brink of so tremendous a precipice. And would always express myself with suspicion, and a supposed possibility of being mistaken, in a case wherein I find many of noted judgment and integrity, in the succession of several ages, differing from me. But go we on to the cause itself, where he pretends,—First to give a view of the sober inquirer's hypothesis : And then to argue against it.

As to the former. He doth it, I am loath to say, with less fairness than from a person of his (otherwise) appearing ingenuity, one would expect. For he really makes me to have said more than I ever did, in divers instances ; and much less than I have expressly said ; and that he cannot have so little understanding as not to know was most material to the cause in hand.

He represents me, p. 40. col. 1. saying the persons are distinct essences, numerical natures, beings, substances ; and col. 2. That I hold them to be three spirits ; when in the close of one of those paragraphs, namely, *Calm Discourse*, p. 341. I recite the words of W. J. "In the unity of the Godhead there must be no plurality or multiplicity of substances allowed : " and do add, Nor do I say that there must. And p. 314. "I do not positively say there are three distinct substances, minds, or spirits." I would ask this my learned antagonist, Have *saying*, and *not saying*, the same signification ? And again, when (*Calm Discourse*, p. 345.) my words are, "I will not use the expressions, as signifying my formed judgment, that there are three things, substances or spirits in the Godhead ; how could he say, I hold the three persons to be three spirits ? Is any man, according to the ordinary way of speaking, said to hold what is not his formed judgment ? If he only propose things whereof he doubts, to be considered and discussed by others, in order to the forming of it, and by gentle ventilation to sift out truth, it the rather argues him not to hold this or that.

And I think much service might be done to the common interest of religion, by such a free mutual communication of even more doubtful thoughts, if such disquisitions were pursued with

more candour, and with less confidence and prepossession of mind, or addictedness to the interest of any party whatsoever. If it were rather endeavoured, to reason one another into, or out of, this or that opinion, than either by sophistical collusions to cheat, or to hector by great words, one that is not of my mind. Or if the design were less to expose an adversary, than to clear the matter in controversy.

Besides, that if such equanimity did more generally appear, and govern, in transactions of this nature, it would produce a greater liberty in communicating our thoughts, about some of the more vogued and fashionable opinions, by exempting each other from the fear of ill treatment, in the most sensible kind. It being too manifest, that the same confident insulting genius, which makes a man think himself competent to be a standard to mankind, would also make him impatient of dissent, and tempt him to do worse, than reproach one that differs from him, if it were in his power. And the club or faggot-arguments must be expected to take place, where what he thinks rational ones, did not do the business. This only on the by.

In the mean time that there is a trinity in the Godhead, is no matter of doubt with me; but only whether this be the best way of explaining and defending it. If this be not the best, or sufficient, some other will, I believe, or hath been found out by some other. Of which I have spoken my sense not only indefinitely, (Calm Discourse p. 329.) but particularly of the more common way; not that I did then, or have yet thought it the best, but not indefensible, p. 326.

And I must now sincerely profess, That the perusal of these very considerations gives me more confidence about this hypothesis, than I allowed myself before; finding that the very sagacious author of them, of whose abilities and industry together, I really have that opinion, as to count him the most likely to confute it of all the modern antitrinitarians, hath no other way to deal with it, than first, both partially and invidiously to represent it, and then, rather to trifle than argue against it. He first paints it out in false and ugly colours, before he comes to reasoning. And then, when he should reason, he says nothing that hath so much as a colour. It seems to me an argument of a suspected ill cause on his side, that he thought it needful to prepossess the reader with the imagination of I know not (and I believe he knows not) what gross ideas, as he romances, belonging to this hypothesis. Because from those words, (Prov. 8. 30.) Then was I by him, as one brought up with him, and daily his delight; the author speaks of the delicious society, which these words intimate, the eternal wis-

dom, and the prime Author and Parent of all things, to have each with other

For my part, I have little doubt but this ingenious writer is so well acquainted with the gust and relish of intellectual delight, that he chose to expose his adversary by using that odd expression of gross idea so causelessly, in accommodation only to the genius of some other men, whom he thought fit to humour, rather than his own. Nor can he be so little acquainted with the paganish theology, as not to apprehend a vast disagreement between this and that, and a much greater agreement between the paganish notion of the Deity, and his own.

For the questions which he supposes me to put, and makes me answer as he thinks fit, by misapplied passages of that discourse, I hope it will appear they were either prevented, or answered at another rate. At length he says, "The butt-end of this hypothesis, &c." I like not that phrase the worse for the author's sake, of whom it seems borrowed, whose memory greater things will make live, when we are forgot. But let him proceed—The butt-end of this hypothesis is the true strength of it. But that true strength he hath either had the hap not to observe, or taken the care not to represent, that is, from what is so often inculcated in that discourse, the necessary existence of two *hypostases* of, and in the first, and of an omnimodous simplicity groundlessly supposed in the Divine Being, he hath kept himself at a wary cautious distance, when he might apprehend there was its strength. Therefore I cannot also but observe, that as he hath marked this hypothesis, with (most undue) ill characters; so he hath maimed it too, of what was most considerable belonging to it, that he might expose it by the former means, so as to make it need much defence; and that by the latter, it might seem quite destitute of any defence at all.

And now when (not without some untoward disfigurations) it hath thus far escaped his hands, and is (in none of the best shapes) set up only to be beaten down; the argument he first attacks it with, is the inartificial one of authority. And yet his argument from this topic, is only negative, that the opinion he would confute wants authority, "that the inquirer was the first that ever dreamt of it: and that no learned divine of any persuasion will subscribe to it:" As if he had said, It is false, and impossible to be true. The inquirer only proposing what he offered, as possible for ought we know, is not otherwise opposed than by asserting it to be impossible. This therefore he must say, or he saith nothing to the purpose; and why now is it impossible? Because no body said it before. So, then, was every thing that any man first said; but afterwards, by being

often spoken, it might, it seems, at length become true! For any learned divines subscribing to it, I suppose he intends that in the strict sense. And so the inquirer never said he would subscribe it himself otherwise than that his judgment did more incline to it, as liable to less exception than other ways of defending the doctrine of the trinity, or than denying it, which he thought least defensible of all.

But now supposing one should find learned divines of the same mind, (and perhaps some may be found more confident than he) I would ask the considerator, whether he will therefore confess a trinity a possible thing? If not, he deals not fairly, to put the inquirer upon quoting authorities to no purpose: or that he would have them conclude him, by whom he will not be concluded himself.

He seems indeed himself to have forgot the question (with which afterwards he charges the inquirer) as it is set down, *Sober Inquiry* p. 301. Whether a trinity in the Godhead be a possible thing? This was the question, not what John, or Thomas, or James such a one thought? But while he pretends to think no body else is of the inquirer's mind in the particular point he is now speaking to, that is, the delicious society the divine *hypostases* are supposed to have with each other; give me leave freely to discourse this matter. I would fain know what it is, wherein he supposes the inquirer to have over-shot his mark: or of what makes he here so mighty a wonderment? It can be but one of these two things:—either that there are three divine persons in the Godhead really distinct; or,—that they have (if there be) a delicious society or conversation with each other. Will he say the former is a singular opinion? or that it is novel? Was there never a real trinitarian in the world before? Doth he not, in his own express words, sort the inquirer with one, whom he will not deny to be a learned divine, p. 43. of these his present considerations, col. 1. “The author of the 28 propositions, and Mr. H—w, “as he calls the inquirer, are honest men, and real trinitarians.” By which former character he hath, I dare say, ten thousand times more gratified his ambition, than by calling him learned too. And I believe he will as little think this a novel opinion, as a singular one. Nor shall I thank him for acknowledging it to have been the opinion of the fathers, generally, not only *Ante-Nicene* and *Nicene*, but *Post-Nicene* too, for some following ages, unto that of P. Lombard, so obvious it is to every one that will but more slightly search.

For my part, I will not except Justin Martyr himself, whom I the rather mention, both as he was one of the more ancient of the fathers; and as I may also call him, the father of the

modalists ; nor his notion even about the Homo-ousian-Trinity, as he expressly styles it. Εκθ. π15. For though it will require more time than I now intend to bestow to give a distinct account of every passage throughout that discourse of his, yet his expression of the *τρόποι υπαρξεως* must not be so taken, as if it were to be torn away from its coherence, and from itself. When therefore he says the *το μεν αγεννητον, και γεννητον, και εκπορευτον*, *the being unbegotten, begotten, and having proceeded*, are not names of the essence, but *τρόποι υπαρξεως*, *modes of subsistence* ; he must mean they are not immediately names of the essence, but mediately they cannot but be so. For what do they modify ? not nothing. When they are said to be modes of subsistence, what is it that subsists ? We cannot pluck away these modes of subsistence from that which subsists, and whereof they are the modes. And what is that ? You will say the *μια υσις*, the *one essence*, which he had mentioned before ; and that one essence is, it is true, as perfectly one, as it is possible ; for what is of itself, and what are from that, to be with each other, that is, that they are congenerous, as the sun and its rays, (according to that Heb. 1. 3. *απαυγασμα της δοξης*, *the effulgency of glory*) or as mind, and (where there is nothing else but substance) consubstantial thought or word. Therefore this oneness of essence must be taken in so large and extensive a sense, as that it may admit of these differences. For so he afterwards plainly speaks, if “ *ο μεν, αγεννητως εχει ; if the one* (the Father) hath his existence without being begotten, *ο γεννητως, another* (the Son) by being begotten, *το δε, εκπορευτως*, but *that* (the Holy Ghost) by having proceeded, here it befalls us to behold differences (*τα της διαφορας*) or the things that import difference.” There must be a sense, therefore, wherein he understood this essence to be most truly one ; and a sense wherein he also understood it to have its differences, and those too not unimportant ones, as being unbegotten, and being begotten, signify no light differences.

And in what latitude of sense he understood the oneness of essence, whereof he had before spoken, may be seen in his following explication, when what he said he would have been *σαφεστερον*, *more manifest* ; he makes Adam's peculiar mode of subsistence to be that he was *ε γεννητος, αλλα διαπλασθεις*, *not begotten*, but *made* by God's own hand ; but for them that were from him, he intimates theirs to be, that they were begotten, not made. If then you inquire concerning the same essence that was common to him and them, you still find that man is the *υποκειμενον*, *the subject*, whether of formation, as to him, or of generation, as to them. And who apprehends not in what latitude of sense the human nature is one, which is com-

mon to Adam, and his posterity? Though the divine nature is incomparably more one, which is common to the Father, Son, and Spirit, as we have formerly insisted, and shall further shew it cannot but be, in all necessary, and continually depending emanations.

Yet I might, if there were need, again (as to this part) quote the considerator to himself. For I suppose he will not disown the considerations in 1693. in which, page 15. col. 1. are these words, "Dr. Cudworth by a great number of very pertinent and home-quotations, hath proved that his explication (I mean that part of it which makes the three persons to be so many distinct essences, or substances) is the doctrine of the principal, if not of all the fathers, as well as of the platonists." And it is added, "and I (for my own part) do grant it." Upon the whole then, I reckon that as to this first part, we stand clear not only to the rest of the world, but with this author himself, that to be a real trinitarian is not so unheard of a thing, or what no learned divine of any persuasion ever dreamt of before the inquirer. But now for the

Second part. The delicious society supposed to be between (or rather among) the three persons. Is this a dream! And so strange a one! Why, good Sir! Can you suppose three persons, that is, three intellectual subsistences, perfectly wise, holy, and good, coexisting with, inexisting in one another to have no society? or that society not to be delicious? He says, How can it be? I say, How can it but be? Herein I am sure the inquirer hath far more company than in the former. For whether the three persons have all the same numerical essence, or three distinct; all agree they most delightfully converse. Will he pretend never to have read any that make love (as it were intercurrent between the two first) the character of the third? In short; Is it the thing he quarrels with as singular, or the word? At the thing, supposing three persons, he can have no quarrel, without quarrelling with the common sense of mankind. For the word, he hath more wit and knowledge of language than to pretend to find fault with that. For let him but consult expositors (even the known critics) upon the mentioned place Prov. 8. (whom, in so plain a case, I will not be at the pains to quote and transcribe) and take notice whether none read those words, *fui in deliciis*. Therefore I believe the considerator will be so ingenuous, as to perceive, he hath, in this part of his discourse, grossly over-shot, or undershot, or shot wide of his own mark, if indeed he had any, or did not (letting his bolt fly too soon) shoot at rovers, before he had taken steady aim at any thing. In short,

all this dust could be raised but with design only because he could not enlighten his readers, to blind them.

But now when he should come by solid argument to disprove the hypothesis, by shewing that three individual divine natures, or essences, can possibly have no *nexus*, so as to become one entire divine nature, and, at the same time, (which this hypothesis supposes) remain still three individual divine natures and essences, he thinks fit to leave it to another to do it for him, who, he says, if he cannot prove this, can prove nothing. And when we see that proof, it will be time enough to consider it.

In the mean time I cannot here but note what I will neither, in charity, call forgery in the considerator, nor, in civility, ignorance, but it cannot be less than great oversight; his talk of *these three*, so united as to *become one*: the inquirer never spake (nor dreamt) of their *becoming one*, but of their *being* naturally, necessarily, and eternally so.

Then he comes to put the question, as (he says) it is between the inquirer and the socinians. And he puts it thus, How three distinct, several, individual, divine beings, essences, or substances, should remain three several individual substances, and yet, at the same time, be united into *one* divine substance called God? One would have thought, when he had so newly waved the former question, as wherein he meant not to be concerned, he should presently have put a new one, upon which he intended to engage himself. But we have the same over again, even with the same ill look of an equivalent phrase unto *becoming-united into one*, to insinuate to his reader, as if his antagonist thought these three were *de novo* united, not *in*, but *into one*. Which he knew must have a harsh sound, and as well knew it to be most repugnant to the inquirer's most declared sentiment. Nor will it be any presumption, if I take the liberty to set down the question according to the inquirer's mind, who hath as much reason to know it, as he; and I am sure it will be more agreeable to the tenour of his discourse now referred to, "Whether the *το θεον*, or the Divine Being, may not possibly, for ought we know, contain three natures, or essences, under the names of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, so far distinct, as is necessary to found the distinct predications or attributions severally given them in the Holy Scriptures, and yet be eternally, necessarily, naturally, vitally so united, as notwithstanding that remaining distinction, to be one God." And let us now see what he hath to say;—to the inquirer's illustrations of it, as possible: and—what he brings to prove it impossible.

1. As to the former part. He first falls upon what the inquirer

had said concerning the vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual natures in ourselves. And upon this he insists so operously, as if the whole weight of the cause had been laid upon it, and seems to think the inquirer had forgot the question, when he mentioned it; because he says, those are only distinct faculties, not persons, or substances (though persons were not in his question) without ever taking any notice of the inquirer's waving it, with these words, "that he would content himself with what was more obvious." But this is all art: to raise a mighty *posse*, and labour to seem to those that he believed would read what he wrote only, not what the other did, most effectually to expunge what he saw was neglected, though not altogether useless, as we shall see anon.

In the mean time, it is observable how needlessly he slurs himself in this his first brisk onset. He says, "No man ever pretended—that the vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual faculties (or powers) are so many distinct, individual persons, substances, or essences, we grant, &c."

What did no man ever pretend that these three distinct natures, the vegetative, sensitive, intellectual, were in man, three distinct substances, or souls, concurring by a certain subordination in him? What necessity was there, that to heighten his triumph, in the opinion of his credulous followers, he should, with so glorious a confidence, put on the vain and false shew of having all the world on his side; and herein either dissemble his knowledge, or grossly betray his ignorance in the mere history of philosophy; and most imprudently suppose all his readers as ignorant, as he would seem! What, did he never hear of an Averroist in the world? Doth he not know that physician and philosopher, and his followers, earnestly contended for what he says no man ever pretended to? Or that divers other commentators upon Aristotle, have some abetted, others as vehemently opposed them in it? Not to insist also that some thought the *Intellectus Agens*, and *Patiens*, the active and passive intellect, to be distinct substances, belonging to the nature of man, as others had also other conceits about the former? And if he look some hundreds of years back, as far as the time, and extant work of Nemesius, bishop and philosopher (as he writes himself) of the nature of man, (who lived in the time of Gregory Nazianzen, as appears by an epistle of his written to him, and prefixed to that little book of his) he will find that author takes notice there were divers that took man to consist of mind, soul, and body, and that some did doubt, Ποτερον προσελθων ο νους τη ψυχη, ως αλλος αλλη νοεραν αυτην εποισεν, &c. whether the mind supervening to the soul *sa* one to the other, did not make the latter intelligent. Cap. 1.

And in several other parts of that work, easy, if it were necessary to be recited, he speaks it as the judgment of some, Καθ' ἐξυλὴν εἶναι ὡς λόγον ψυχῆν, *that the unreasonable nature in man did exist by itself, as being of itself an unreasonable soul, not a part of the reasonable, accounting it one of the greatest absurdities, τῶν ἀτοπίαιτων, that the unreasonable soul should be a part of that which is reasonable.* cap. 16.

And he carries us yet much further back, referring us to Plotinus, (Enn. 6. lib. 7. cap. 5, 6, 7, &c.) in whom any that will, may read much more to that purpose in many places. It matters not whether this opinion be true or false, but a great mistake (or misrepresentation) it was, to say no man ever pretended to it. And be that as it will; if all the readers will suspend their judgments, that a trinity in the Godhead is impossible, till the considerator shall have proved, by plain demonstration, the concurrence of three such spirits (a vegetative, sensitive and intellective) vitally united in the constitution of man, is a thing simply impossible, I believe he will not in haste, have many proselytes.

I, for my part, as his own eyes might have told him, laid no stress upon it; but only mentioned it in *transitu*, as I was going on to what is obvious, and in view to every man, the union between our soul and body. Nor was I solicitous to find this an exact parallel, as he fancies I was obliged to do. What if there be no exact parallel? Will any man of a sober mind, or that is master of his own thoughts, conclude every thing impossible in the uncreated Being, whereof there is not an exact parallel in the creation? If any man will stand upon this, come make an argument of it, let us see it in form, and try its strength.—Whatsoever hath not its exact parallel in the creation, is impossible in God, &c.—He will sooner prove himself ridiculous, than prove his point by such a medium.

It is enough for a sober man's purpose, in such a case as we are now considering, if we find such things actually are (or might as easily be, as what we see actually is) among the creatures, that are of as difficult conception, and explication, as what appears represented in the inquirer's hypothesis concerning a trinity. It is trifling to attempt to give, or to ask a parallel exact *per omnia: in all things*. It abundantly serves any reasonable purpose, if there be a parallel *quoad hoc*, namely, in respect of the facility or difficulty of conception. And though the vegetative, sensitive, and intellective natures be not so many distinct substances, a trinity is not less conceivable in the Divine Being, than three such natures, or natural powers, in the one human nature.

And whoever they be that will not simplify the Divine Being into nothing (as the excellent author of the 28 propositions

speaks) must also acknowledge the most real perfections in the Divine Being, though not univocal, but infinitely transcendent to any thing in us. And are they no way distinct? Let any sober understanding judge, will the same notion agree to them all? Is his knowledge, throughout, the same with his effective power? Then he must make himself. For who can doubt he knows himself? And is his will the self-same undistinguishable perfection, in him, with his knowledge? Then the purposes of his will must be to effect all that he can. For doth he not know all that he can do? And the complacencies of his will must be as much in what is evil, as good, even in the most odious turpitude of the vilest, and most immoral evils! For he knows both alike. I know what is commonly said of extrinsical denominations: but are such denominations true, or false? Have they any thing *in re* correspondent to them, or have they not? Then some distinction there must be of these perfections themselves. If so, how are they distinguished?

And there appears great reason, from God's own word, to conceive greater distinction of the three *hypostases* in his being, than of the attributes which are common to them, as is said, Sober Inquiry, vide page 353. In reference whereto, it is not improper or impertinent to mention such differences, as we find in our own being, though they be not distinct substances. Less distinction in ourselves may lead us to conceive the possibility of greater in him, in whom we are wont to apprehend nothing but substance.

What he adds concerning the union of soul and body in ourselves, (which he cannot deny to be distinct substances) is, from a man of so good sense, so surprisingly strange, and remote from the purpose, that one would scarce think it from the same man; but that he left this part to some other of the club, and afterwards wrote on, himself, without reading it over; or this was with him (what we are all liable to) some drowsy interval.

For when he had himself recited as the inquirer's words, or sense, "If there be this union between two so contrary natures and substances, as the soul and body, why may there not be a like union between two or three created spirits?" he, without shadow of a pretence, feigns the inquirer again to have forgot the question, because soul and body are not both intelligent substances. And why, Sir, doth this argue him to have forgot the question? It is as if he expected a man to be at the top of the stairs, as soon as he touched the first step. In a series of discourse, must the beginning touch the end, leaving out what is to come between, and connect both parts? What

then serve mediums for? And so farewell to all reasoning, since nothing can be proved by itself. He expected, it seems, I should have proved "three intelligent natures might be united, because three intelligent natures might be united!"

But say I (and so he repeats) if there be so near union between things of so contrary natures as soul and body, why not between two or three created spirits? The question is, as he now states it himself, why may not three intelligent substances be united? And hither he (with palpable violence) immediately refers the mention of the union of soul and body; and says he, "Why Sir, are body and soul intelligent substances?" And, say I, But why, Sir, are not the three (supposed) created spirits intelligent substances? And now, thinks he, will my easy admiring readers, that read me only, and not him, say, What a baffle hath he given the inquirer! What an ignorant man is this Mr.—to talk of soul and body, as both intelligent substances? But if any of them happen upon the inquirer's book too, then must they say, How scurvily doth this matter turn upon himself! how inconsiderate a prevaricator was he that took upon him the present part of a considerer, so to represent him! And I myself would say, had I the opportunity of free discourse with him in a corner, (which because I have not, I say it here) Sir, is this sincere writing? Is this the way to sift out truth? And I must further say, this looks like a man stung by the pungency of the present question. "If soul and body, things of so contrary natures, that is, of an intelligent and unintelligent nature, can be united into one (human) nature, why may not three created spirits, all intelligent natures, be as well united into some one thing? It appears you knew not what to say to it; and would fain seem to say something, when you really had nothing to say, and therefore so egregiously *tergiversate*, and feign yourself not to understand it, or that your antagonist did not understand himself. The inquirer's scope was manifest. Nothing was to be got by so grossly perverting it. Is there no argument but *a pari*? Might you not plainly see, he here argued *a fortiori*? If contrary natures might be so united, why not much rather like natures?

When you ask me this question, "Do not body and soul remain two substances, a bodily, and a spiritual, notwithstanding their concurrence to the constitution of a man? I answer, Yes. And I thank you, Sir, for this kind look towards my hypothesis. If they were not so, the mention of this union had no way served it. You know it is only union, with continuing distinction, that is for my purpose. I doubt you nodded a little, when you asked me that question; and I do *annuere*.

But when the discourse was only of a natural union, what, in the name of wonder, made you dream of a christmas-pye ? Had you wrote it at the same time of year I am now writing, I should have wondered less. But either you had some particular, preternatural appetite to that sort of delicate ; or you gave your fancy a random liberty, to make your pen write whatever came to your finger's end, and that whirled you unaware into a pastry, and so, by mere chance, you came to have your finger in the pye. Or you thought to try whether this wild ramble might not issue as luckily for you, as Dr. Echard's jargon of words fortuitously put together (to ridicule Hobbes's fatal chain of thoughts) at length ending in a napkin ; which was mightily for your turn, in your present case.

But upon the whole matter, when you let your mind so unwarily be *in patinis, among the pots*, your cookery quite spoiled your philosophy. Otherwise, when you had newly read those words in the Sober Inquiry, as I find you had page 307. "Waiving the many artificial unions of distinct things, that united, and continuing distinct, make one thing under one name, I shall only consider what is natural" you would never have let it (your mind, I mean so fine a thing) be huddled up, and sopped, with meat, plums, sugar, wine, in a christmas-pye ; or have thought that the union of a human soul with a human body was like such a jumble as this. I believe when some among the antients made use of this union of soul and body, (as I find they have) to represent a very sacred, namely, the hypostatical one, they little thought it would be so debased ; or that any thing would be said of it so extravagant as this. And, if we design doing any body good by writing, let us give over this way of talk, lest people think, what I remember Cicero once said of the epicureans arguing, that they do not so much consider, as *sortiri, cast lots* what to say. But now it is like we may come to some closer discourse. We see what is sad to the inquirer's elucidation of his hypothesis to represent it possible, which by mere oversight and incogitance (as I hope now appears) was too hastily pronounced an oversight, or incogitancy.

2. We are next to consider what he says to prove it impossible. And so far as I can apprehend the drift of the discourse, what he alleges will be reduced to these two heads of argument: namely,—that three such *hypostases* (or *subsistents*, as I have chosen to call them) can have no possible nexus, by which to be one God : (1.) Because they are all supposed intelligent : and (2.) Because they can neither be said to be finite, nor infinite. He should not therefore have said the hypothesis was mere incogitance and oversight ; for he knows I saw, and con-

sidered them both. ; (In the Sober Inquiry itself ; the former, page 308. the latter, page 325. with page 344.) and thought them unconcluding then, as I still think. Nor do I find the considerer hath now added any strength to either of them. But I shall, since he is importune, go to the reconsideration of them with him. And

(1.) As to the former, I cannot so much as imagine what should make him, confessing (which he could not help) the actual union of an intelligent and unintelligent being, deny the possible union of intelligent beings. He seems to apprehend many dangerous things in it, that if he cannot reason, he may frighten a man out of it, and out of his wits too. It will infer associating, discoursing, solacing. But where lies the danger of all this ? or to whom is it dangerous. He says it introduces three omniscient, Almighty Beings, as I expressly call them, associating, &c. But he cites no place where, and I challenge him to name any persons among whom, I so expressly called them. He may indeed tell where I blamed him for representing some of his adversaries, as affirming three Almighties, and denying more than one ; but that is not expressly calling them so myself. And he may know in time it is one thing expressly to call them so, and another to put him (as he is concerned) to disprove it.

Aye, but it will further infer tritheism. It will make three Gods. And if this be not to make three Gods, it can never be made appear that the pagans held more Gods—Yes, if there be no natural, vital *nexus*, if they be not united in one, of which the pagans never talked : or, if they be co-ordinate, not subordinate, as Dr. Cudworth speaks. And I add, if that subordination be, not arbitrary, but by necessary, natural, continual emanation of the second from the first, and of the third from both the other ; so as that their goings forth may be truly from everlasting, as is said of the one, and may as well be conceived of another of them.

I would have the trinitarians be content with the reproach of falling in, *quoad hoc, in this particular*, with Plato ; and not envy their antagonists the honour of more closely following Mahomet. And, Sir, there is more paganism in denying this, and the divine revelation upon which it is grounded, than in supposing it.

No. But there can be no such *nexus*. Conversation, association, mutual harmony, agreement, and delectation—cannot be conceived, but between beings so distinct and diverse, that they can be one in no natural respect, but only in a civil, or economical. This is loud, and earnest. But why can there not ? Setting aside noise and clamour, I want to know

a reason, why intelligent beings may not be as intimately, and naturally united with one another, as unintelligent, and intelligent? And if so, why such union should spoil mutual conversation and delight? Perhaps his mind and mine might not do well together; for he cannot conceive, and I, for my part, cannot but conceive, that most perfect intelligent natures, vitally united, must have the most delightful conversation, harmony, and agreement together; and so much the more, by how much the more perfect they are, and by how much more perfect their union is.

Whereas then I expect a reason, why intelligent beings cannot be capable of natural union, and no other is given me, but because they are intelligent. And again, why such beings naturally united cannot converse, and no other is given me, but because they are naturally united, that is, such things cannot be, because they cannot be. But how much the less such reasons have to convince, they have the more to confirm me, that the hypothesis I have proposed is not capable of being disproved. And for my increased confidence I must profess myself so far beholden to the considerator.

This, in the mean time, I do here declare, that I see not so much as the shadow of a reason from him, why three spiritual, or intelligent beings cannot be naturally and vitally united with each other, with continuing distinction, so as to be really and truly one thing. If they cannot, I would know why? that is, Why they cannot as well, or much rather than the soul and body, so as to be one entire man. If they can, such a created union is acknowledged possible; which is all that part of our discourse contends for. And it is enough for our present purpose; for this will be a union of *ομοιοτητα*, that is, of things of the same nature, the soul and body are *ετεροτητα* that is, things of very different natures. And it sufficiently prepared our way, as was intended, to advance further, and add,

That if such a created or made union be possible, it cannot be understood why a like uncreated or unmade union should be thought impossible.

And if it be possible, the noisy clamour, that a trinity in the Godhead is impossible, or that it will infer tritheism, must cease, and be hushed into everlasting silence. Or if it shall still be resolved to be kept up, to carry on the begun humour, can only serve to frighten children, or unthinking people; but can never be made articulate enough, to have any signification with men of sense. For when the Father is acknowledged on all hands to be the original, or fountain-being, existing necessarily, and eternally of himself; the Son existing by eternal promanation necessarily of, and from, and in the Father; the

Holy Ghost of, and in them both ; these, because they all exist necessarily, cannot but be each of them God, and, because they exist in necessary, natural, eternal union, cannot but be one God.

And he that shall attempt to make tritheism of this, will sooner prove himself not the third part of a wise man, than from hence prove three Gods. We may truly and fitly say the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God. But that form of speech, the Father is a God, the Son is a God, the Holy Ghost is a God, I think unjustifiable. The former way of speaking well agrees with the *homo-ousiotes* of the Deity, the substance whereof is congenerous. You may fitly say of three drops of the same water, they are each of them water. But if you should say they are each of them a water, one would understand you to mean they were all drops of so many different sorts of water. I do upon the whole judge the substance or essence of the three *hypostases* to be as perfectly *one*, as can possibly consist with the emanation of some from other of them. But now next,

(2.) In his way to his second topic of argumentation, he is guilty of a strange sort of omission, that is, he twice over says he will omit, what he greatly insists upon, as a mighty matter, that this (meaning the inquirer's hypothesis) is heresy among those of his own party, whether they be the nominal, or the real trinitarians, who all agree, that each of the divine persons is perfect God, in the most adequate and perfect sense ; and this too, as such person is considered *sejunctly*, or as the Athanasian creed speaks, by himself, &c.

To this I only say, in the first place, that, if this weigh any thing, it ought in reason to be as heavy upon him, as me ; for I believe the same people that will call this account of the trinity heresy, will call his denial of it heresy much more. But if he be not concerned at that, I am the more obliged to him, that he hath a kinder concern for me than himself. And if he really have, let it ease his mind to know, that let the opinion be heresy never so much, I, for my part, am however resolved to be no heretic, as he, and they may well enough see, by the whole tenour of that discourse.

But yet I humbly crave leave to differ from him in this, as well as in greater matters. I am apt enough indeed to think that the *nominal* trinitarians will judge the opinion of the *real* trinitarians to want truth ; and the *real* will, perhaps, more truly judge *theirs* to want sense. But neither the one, nor the other will say that each of the divine persons is perfect God, in the most adequate and perfect sense. For both cannot but agree that God, in the most adequate and perfect sense, includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ;

but they will none of them say that each, or any of the persons is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And I am very confident, he that shall so represent them, will betray them by it into such inconveniencies, and so much against their mind and intent, that if ever they did trust him, as I believe they never did this considerator, to express their sense for them, they never will do it more. As for Athanasius himself, whose creed he mentions, though he often speaks of an equality of the persons in point of Godhead; yet he also often, (tom. 2. p. 576.) most expressly excepts the differences (which I take to be very important) of being unbegotten, begotten, and proceeding: And which is a difference with a witness, in his questions and answers; he asks, "How many causes are there in God?" (Q. 11. ποσα αιτια,) and answers, "one only, and that is the Father." And then asks" (Q. 12. ποσα αιτια) "How many effects, or things caused?" And answers "two, the Son and the Spirit." And adds, "the Father is called a cause, because he begets the Son, and sends out the Spirit: the Son and Spirit are said to be caused, because the Son is begotten, and doth not beget; the Spirit is sent forth, and doth not send." Now can he be thought all this while to mean an absolute equality? And whereas he uses the term μοναδικως, which our author renders *sejunctly*, or *by himself*, that he may make it seem opposite to what is said by the inquirer, page 373. I, for my part, say, as Athanasius doth, that each of these persons is μοναδικως *singly God*, and Lord; but I say not, as he doth not; (and he denies what the Sober Inquiry denies, in the mentioned place,) "that any one of the persons sejunctly, is all that is signified by the name of God," which words this author slyly leaves out, for what purpose he best knows. But his purpose, be it what it will, can no longer be served by it, than till the reader shall take the pains to cast back his eye upon the Sober Inquiry. vide page 318. And I must here put the considerator in mind of what I will not suppose him ignorant, but inadvertent only, at this time; That one may be sejoined, or abstracted from another two ways, or by a twofold abstraction, precisive, or negative: that we may truly say of the Father, Son, or Holy Ghost, that the one of them is, or is not God, abstracting from both the other, according as you differently abstract. If you abstract any one of the persons from both the other by precisive abstraction; and each of them is God or Lord, μοναδικως or singly considered: but if by negative abstraction; you sever any one from the other, so as to say the one is God, and not the other, or any one is all that is signified by the name of God, I deny it, as before I did; for so you would exclude the other two the Godhead; which is but what was expressly enough said, Sober Inquiry, page 317. The Father is God, but not ex-

cluding the Son and the Holy Ghost, the Son is God, but not excluding—&c.

And if (as this author quotes) we are compelled by the Christian verity so to speak, I wonder it should not compel him, as it is Christian verity, or at least as it is verity, as well as the rest of christians, or mankind. Why hath he only the privilege of exemption from being compelled by truth? Athanasius's word is ἀναγκάζομεθα. *we are necessitated*; and if the considerator's own translation grieve him, he might relieve himself by considering that all necessity is not compulsive. And because he hath brought me to Athanasius, I shall take the occasion to say, I cannot apprehend him to have any sentiment contrary to this hypothesis. His business was against the arians, or the ariomanites (as he often called them, as symbolizing also with Manes.) And because with them the controversy was, "whether the Son and Spirit were creatures?" in opposition hereto he constantly asserts their consubstantiality with the Father, never intending (for ought that appears) that their being was numerically the same with his; but of the same kind, uncreated, coessential, coeternal with his own. For so he expressly speaks in his *Quæstiones aliæ, other or additional questions*, that is, asking (quest. 6.) "How many essences ποσας ουσιας, that is, how many sorts of essence (as the answer will direct us to understand it) do you acknowledge in God?"

The answer is, I say, "one essence, one nature, one form" (μορφην) and adds, "one kind," (εν γενος) which sufficiently expounds all the rest. He acknowledged no different kinds of essence or nature in the Godhead, but that one only, which was eternal and uncreated; agreeably to what he elsewhere says against the followers of Sabellius. "It is impossible things not eternal-beings, not partaking Godhead, should be ranked, or put in the same order with the Godhead." * Afterwards speaking of the Father and the Son, he says, τοιςτος εστιν οιος κακεινος, the *one* is such (not the same) as the *other*, the *other* such as he. And that the Son was not to be conceived under another species (καθ ετερον ειδος) nor under a strange and foreign character (ξενον χαρακλινσα) but was God as the Father. And I appeal to any man's understanding and conscience, If that great author believed a numerical sameness of essence, common to the three persons, what should make him blame the sabellians for making the Son μονοουσιον, not ομοουσιον, when by the latter in that case, he must mean the same thing as by the former? †

* Contra Sabellii Grégaies. † Εκθ. π. 15. Tom. 1. p. 241. Edit. Paris

In the forecited questions, he expressly says we were to acknowledge in the Deity *τρεῖς άτομα*, *three individuals*. Answer to question 7. *ubi prius*. And elsewhere he as distinctly asserts *τρεῖς πρᾶγματα* *three things*. And what could he mean by three things, not three deities, (as he often inculcates) but he must certainly mean three entities, three essences; for by three things, he could not possibly mean three non-entities, or three nothings. His great care plainly was to assert the true Deity of the Son and Spirit, or their pre-eternity, or that it could never be said (ὅτι οὐκ ἦν) there was a time when they were not, which he inculcates in a hundred places, still insisting that one deity, one essence was common to them, but still with distinction; and as warmly inveighs against Sabellius and P. Samosatensis, as against Arius, every whit.

And that which puts his meaning quite out of doubt, speaking * how the Father, Son and Spirit, though of one and the same sort of essence, are three *hypostases*, he plainly says the nature wherein they partake is so one, as the human nature is one in all men. We men, saith he, consisting of a body and a soul, are all *μίας φύσεως, καὶ ὅσις of one nature and substance, or essence*; but we are many *hypostases*. And to the same purpose (Dial. 2. de Trinitate) his *anomæos* comparing the Father, Son and Spirit, to a bishop, presbyter, and deacon, he brings in the orthodox saying, they have all the same nature, being each of them man; as an angel, a man, and a horse, have different natures.

In the mean time, because men are not inseparably, and vitally united with one another, as the Divine Persons are, and cannot but be, by reason of the necessary, eternal, perpetual emanation of the two latter from the first, they cannot admit to be called one man, as the three persons in the Godhead, are and cannot but be one God. Inasmuch as these three Divine Persons partake real Godhead (as existing necessarily each of them) they are each truly God: but because they partake it in necessary, eternal, vital union; and so that the first is the *radix*, the second perpetually springing from the first, and the third from both the other, they are therefore together one God as branches, though really distinct from each other, and the root, are altogether notwithstanding but one tree, and all *omoousial*, or *consubstantial* to one another; which is an illustration familiar with the antients. And if there be any, now a days, that will call this heresy, (though as I said, I will be no heretic however) yet if I must make a choice, I had rather be a heretic with the Ante-Nicene and Nicene fathers, and Post-Nicene, for ought appears to the contrary, through some following centuries, than be reputed orthodox with P. Lum-

* Tractat. de Definitionibus, Tom. 2. 45. ubi vid. plura.

bard, &c. whom a German divine, not of meanest account, calls "one of the four evangelists of antichrist."

But having now done with what he said he would omit, but did not, (though he might to every whit as good purpose) we come to what he overlooks not, because (he intimates) he cannot. And let us see whether he looks into it, to any better purpose, than if he had quite overlooked it. He is indeed the more excusable that he overlooks it not, because (he says) he could not. In that case there is no remedy. Nor do I see how he well could, when the sober inquirer had once and again so directly put it in his view, and, as was said, objected it to himself. But he thinks, however, to make an irrefragable battering-ram of it, wherewith to shiver this doctrine of the trinity all to pieces, and he brings it into play with the two horns before mentioned. The Father, he says, for instance, is either infinite in his substance, his wisdom, his power, his goodness, or he is not. With the like pompous apparatus, and even in the same terms, I find a series of argumentation is by a noted sceptic adorned, and set forth against the being of any God at all. *εἰ ἐστὶ τί θεῖον, ἢτοι πεπερασμένον ἢ ἀπειρον, &c.* *If there be any Divine Being, it is either finite or infinite, &c.** And he reasons upon each head, as the matter could admit, and probably thought as well of the performance as our author doth of his.

But let us see how much to the purpose our author uses it in the present case. The inquirer had represented three really distinct subsistents in the Godhead as possible, for ought we know, not presuming to determine herein, this way or that, beyond what is plain in itself, or plainly revealed. And so still he thinks it may be, for ought he knows; for he professes not to know any thing to the contrary. Yes, saith the considerator, but I do. No doubt, if any man. But say I, How know you? I know, saith he, they can neither be finite, nor infinite, therefore there can be no such thing at all. But, say I, Do you know what infinite is, or can you comprehend it? Yes, very well, says he, for I have an infinite all comprehending mind. † What a cyclopic understanding is this! Nay, and he pretends he can comprehend the very being of God (otherwise all religion must cease) after he had granted, "we (including himself) cannot comprehend the least spire of grass." And yet that being of God is nothing else with him, but existence, (that is not to be nothing) which he there vafruously in-

* Sext. Empir. adversus Mathematicos, Lib. 8.

† Considerations on the Lord Bishop of Worcester's Sermon p. 7, 8.

serts, but very imprudently ; for every one sees he said it only to avoid the purpose he was to speak to, and so said it not to any present good purpose at all ? As if it had been the bishop's word, and all one with God's being. It is true that his being includes his existence : but hath he therefore a clear, distinct and adequate conception what God is, because he, indistinctly, conceives a being, vulgarly signified by the name of God, doth exist ? Bring the matter to creatures, and because he knows, as he may by the sight of his eye, that such a creature exists, doth he therefore understand its nature ? Existence is to be *extra causas, distinct from its causes*, and this is common to all creatures ; as to be necessarily, and without a cause, is peculiar to God. If therefore existence, and their being be all one, all creatures are the same, and differ not from one another ; for to be *extra causas* is that wherein they all agree. And extend it further, as existence is to be, in *rerum natura*, abstracting from being caused, or uncaused ; and so God, and creatures will be all one. And see whether this will not make all religion cease too ?

But if he say, though existence abstractly taken, distinguishes not God from creatures ; yet his existence doth distinguish him. Very true ; but that leads us back to the consideration of his being, of what sort that is. Which therefore, if he had pleased, he might as well have let stand before as it was ; and might have considered that existence, and that which doth exist, are not of the same import. Or that it is not all one, to say that God doth exist, and what he is that doth exist.

But it will be worth the while to examine a little further this author's comprehension of infinities. He says it is to have a clear, distinct, and adequate conception of them, so he comprehends the infinite attributes of God. His eternity, that is, that duration by which he is without all beginning, and end. This tells us what it is not. But doth it tell us what it is ? It is as though he should say, An infinite duration is a boundless duration : A grammatical definition ! or rather a mere translation of latin into english. And so he might teach a mere latinist what boundless is, by turning the english back again into latin. And greatly hath he edified his disciple ! As much as he should, without such change of language, by saying invasion is invasion. And doth he give any better account of infinite wisdom and power ? Are his conceptions of them clear and distinct ? It is possible to know much, and not be very wise. I do not think *that* therefore, which he gives, a very good account of wisdom. Again, knowing is doing somewhat. He speaks not now of making this or that, but more generally of doing any thing. Nor doth any one know any

thing, but what he can know. Therefore his wisdom is power; for so is an ability to know, power, as truly, as an ability to do any thing else. Here is confusion therefore, instead of distinction. And to the comprehending any thing, I should think it as requisite a man's conception be true, as distinct. Now when he pretends to have distinct conceptions of God's infinite wisdom and power, if also his conceptions be true, those infinite attributes are distinct. I am sure he comprehends them not, if, whereas he clearly conceives them distinct, they are not so. But if they are distinct, they are distinct, what? Substances? or accidents? If the former, according to him, distinct divine substances must be distinct Gods. If the latter, let him weather the difficulties as he can of admitting accidents in the Divine Being. Either way, he must as little pretend to believe an omnimodous simplicity there, as the inquirer. But would he then have him give better and fuller conceptions of these infinite attributes, or rather of the infinity of them, which is his present business? No, no, that is none of the inquirer's part. He pretends not to comprehend infiniteness. It is enough for *one*, among mortals, to offer at that *ingens ausum, so great a thing!*

When again he says his conception of the infinite, divine wisdom, power, &c. is adequate, telling us they are those properties whereby God knows, and can do, whatsoever implies not a contradiction to be known, and done: I ask, but doth he comprehend in his mind all those things which it implies not a contradiction for him to know and do? If not, what is become of his adequate conception? He may so comprehend all that the most learned book contains, because he knows the title, or something of its cover; and he hath a very adequate conception of all that is contained in the universe, because he hath some general notion of what is signified by the word world. Let him then pretend as long as he please to comprehend infiniteness, no sober man will believe him, and the less, because he pretends it. If he put his mind upon the trial, and deal justly and truly when he hath tried, I would ask him, let him put the notion of infiniteness upon what he pleases, space, for instance, whether, as he thinks away any whatsoever bounds of it, new ones do not immediately succeed; and let him think away those, whether still he doth not presently conceive new? Yes, but he can divert and think no more of it, that is, he can think what infinite is, by not thinking! And yet if he did understand infinites never so well, it would be no small spite to him if a man did but assert the infiniteness of one of the persons, (the Father) and only *επ'εχ'ον* as to the other two, as knowing their intimate union with him, makes his wisdom,

power, &c. as truly theirs, as if it first resided in themselves ; his argument is quite undone by it to all intents and purposes.

But I shall however, further state and weigh this case of—knowing, or not knowing, three such hypostases cannot be infinite : and—shew what might cast a thinking man upon, supposing they may be all infinite for ought one knows : and—then consider the difficulty that is in it.

1. As to the former. That the Father virtually (or eminently rather) comprehends all being, created and uncreated, there is no doubt. Nor again, that what is from him, by perpetual, natural, necessary emanation, cannot but be *homooousial* to himself, the Athanasian differences only supposed, of being unbegotten, and begotten, &c.

2. But how to understand these is the difficulty ; that is, How the same numerical nature is both begotten, and not begotten ; nor will I determine it. Let them do it that can better. I, for my part, as I have said, assert nothing in this matter, only have proposed to be considered what may be thought possible herein.

But if any would set themselves to consider this matter, I would have them take the difficulty they are to consider, entirely, and as it truly is in itself ; that they may not be short in their reckoning. And to that purpose to bethink themselves what is the proper character (as Athanasius, and before him Justin Martyr phrase it) or *modus* of the Son (for instance) that it is to be begotten. This methinks should bear very hard upon the mere modalists, who hereupon must say, that to be begotten is the only thing begotten, and so consequently that to be begotten, is the thing that is peculiarly said to be incarnate, and that suffered, &c. For they must assign that which distinguishes the Son from the Father, otherwise they will make the Father be begotten, which is somewhat harder than to be *patripassians*, or to make him to have suffered.

But it must also be upon the matter even the same difficulty, to say, “the same numerical nature, with the *modus*, is begotten.” For then the same numerical nature must still be both unbegotten, and begotten, which is very hard. And if they reply, Yes, but under a distinct *modus* : Well ; but what is that distinct *modus* ? And when they find it is but to be begotten, they must be hugely abashed, as one of less deep thought than they would think. For so, the nature being common both to the Father and the Son, all that is peculiar to the begotten, from the begetter, will still be but to be begotten ; that is, when the question is asked, What only is begotten ? the answer will be but as above, To be begotten. It hath hitherto, therefore, been only inquired, whether it will not

seem easier to suppose each subsistent to have its own singular nature, though *homoousial*, as, the two latter being by emanation from the first, it cannot but be? Which hath been often inculcated, and is plain in itself. Mere arbitrary productions may be very diverse from their original, but purely natural, especially emanative, cannot be so. And then the only considerable difficulty which remains is this now before us, namely, the finiteness or infiniteness of these three *hypostases*: it is plain they cannot be all finite. But here our present adversary places his principal pains and labour, to prove, what he knows no body will deny, that they cannot be so. And hence he carries away glorious trophies, that three, or three thousand finites, will never make one infinite.—*Spolia ampla, ample spoils!*

But how knows he they are not all infinite? That, in short, which he hath here to say, is but this, and can be no more than this, till his thoughts have run through and compassed the never-utmost range of infiniteness, namely, That he knows they are not, he knows not what! But how can he soberly say that? How can he either affirm or deny of another what he doth not understand? Is this his demonstration of the impossibility of a trinity in the Godhead? Suppose the Father infinite, cannot the other two be infinite also, for ought he knows? How doth he know they cannot? By the same medium, by which he knows it, he may make other mortals know it too, if he think fit to communicate it. Which, from so mighty confidence, especially when he pretends it to be so easy, I have hitherto expected, but in vain. Is it because the first is infinite, therefore the two other cannot be so? I am sure he ought not to say so, whatever others may, or whatsoever the truth of the thing is (which we shall inquire into by and by) for he hath over and over acknowledged more infinites than one; as when he ascribes infinite comprehension to the mind of man (as hath been noted,) page 8. of these considerations. He doth not indeed say the mind is simply in itself infinite, but it is so in respect of its comprehension, which comprehension must therefore be infinite. How agreeable or consistent these terms are, the infinite comprehension of a finite mind, we are not to consider; let him take care for that, who can easily make light of such trivial difficulties as these. But in the mean time this infinite comprehension is an infinite something, not an infinite nothing; and then so many minds, so many comprehensions, and so many infinites. No doubt he includes his own mind; and it is possible he may think some other minds as comprehensive as his own. And ought not to think it impossible, supposing an uncreated, eternal Word, and Spirit, in the Deity, that they may be infi-

nite, as well as the comprehension of his own and some other minds.* Besides what he seems to grant of infinite guilts, and punishments due, though he doth not grant the sacrifice of Christ to be anequivalent for them. All shews he thinks there may be many infinites, and even in the same kind.

But though to him, to whom it is not easy to guess what would be difficult, this would seem a very vincible difficulty ; it is of much greater importance, that we may do right to truth, to consider it, as it is in itself. And I acknowledge it (as I have said over and over) to be in itself, a great difficulty, as all sober men have been wont to do, that have had any occasion to employ their thoughts that way.

But my part herein hath less of difficulty in it ; which is only to expect, and examine, what another will attempt to prove from this topic, not to assert any thing myself. My opponent takes upon him boldly to pronounce, "there cannot be three distinct *hypostases* in the Deity." Why? say I. Because saith he, that will suppose each of them infinite, which cannot be. I say, Why can it not be? He perhaps may tell me, If any one be infinite, nothing can be added thereto, or be without its compass, much less can there be another infinite added to the former. I only now say, you talk confidently in the dark, you know not what: and so as to involve yourself in contradictions, do what you can :—in saying nothing can be added to what is infinite: and—in pretending to know, if any thing can be added, how much, or how little can.

First. In saying nothing can be added to, or be without the compass of, what is infinite. For then there could be no creation, which I cannot doubt him to grant. Before there was any, was there not an infinitude of being in the eternal God-head? And hath the creation nothing in it of real being? Or will you say the being of the creature is the being of God? I know what may be said (and is elsewhere said) to this, and it will better serve my purpose than his.

Secondly, In pretending to know what can, or cannot be added. Or that, in the way of necessary eternal emanation, there cannot be an infinite addition; though not in the way of voluntary, or arbitrary and temporary production. The reason of the difference is too obvious to need elucidation to them that can consider. But for your part (I must tell my antagonist) you have concluded yourself, even as to that which carries the greatest appearance of impossibility: come off as you can. You say, (considerations, page 8.) "a body of an inch

* These Considerations, p. 31, 32.

square, is not only not infinite in extension, but is a very small body; yet it hath this infinite power, to be divisible to infinity." So, I suppose, you must say of half that inch, or a quarter, or the thousandth part of it, much more of two, or twenty, or a thousand inches. You say, indeed, "this body itself is not infinite." Nor will I insist upon the trite and common objection against you. "How can any thing be divisible into parts which it hath not in it?" Which yet men have not talked away, by talking it often over. Still *hæret lateri, the arrow sticks*—Nor of an infinite power being lodged in a finite (and so minute a) subject. But, in the mean time, here are infinities upon infinities, an infinite power upon an infinite power multiplied infinitely; and still these infinite powers greater and less than other, as either the inch is augmented, or diminished. And he saith (Ibid.) "the mind of man hath the property of infinite or eternal duration." Therefore so many minds, so many infinities. And he must suppose the infinite duration of some minds to be greater than of others, unless he think his own mind to be as old as Adam's; or do not only hold their pre-existence, but that they were all created in the same moment. Which if he do, I am sure he can never prove. And so, for ought he knows, there may not only be many infinities, but one greater than another.

What therefore exceeds all limits that are assignable, or any way conceivable by us, as we are sure the Divine Being doth, it is impossible for us to know what differences that vast infinitude contains. And we shall, therefore, but talk at random, and with much more presumption than knowledge, when we take upon us to pronounce it impossible, there should be three infinite *hypostases* in the Godhead. Especially considering that most intimate vital union that they are supposed to have each with other, in respect whereof, the Son is said to be *ἐννοῦστος*, inexisting in the Father (as Athanasius's phrase is) agreeably to the language of Scripture, John 14. 11. and elsewhere. And which, by parity of reason, is to be conceived of the Holy Ghost too, who is also said to search all things, even the deep things of God, 1 Cor. 2. 10. In respect of which union, and the *ἐμπεριχέουσις* *mutual permeation* which may thence be collected, whatever of real perfection, wisdom, power, goodness, &c. is in any one, is each one's as truly as any one's, all being originally in the Father, as the first and everliving Fountain of all. And was said, Sober Inquiry, p. 312.

But whereas the considerator urges, "If the Father be infinite in his substance, in his wisdom, his power, his goodness, he is God in the most adequate and perfect sense of the word." I

say, Well, and what then? If therefore he mean the Son and the Holy Ghost must be excluded the Godhead, let him prove his consequence if he can. And he may find the answer to it, Sober Inquiry, page 319. I shall not transcribe, nor love, when I have written a book, to write it over again. His notion may fit pagans well enough, or those who are not otherwise taught. Christians are directed to understand that the Deity includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Their equality I acknowledge with the mentioned Athanasian exception; notwithstanding which, that they equally communicate in the most characteristic difference, of the Deity, from all creatures, namely, necessity of existence, is conceivable enough.

To sum up all, the considerator I understand, even by the whole management of his discourse, and especially by the conclusion of that part wherein the inquirer is concerned, to have most entirely given up this cause, as ever did any man. The inquirer's only undertaking was to maintain "the possibility of a trinity in the Godhead," in opposition to his former, daring assertion, of its being impossible, and nonsense.

He now, in conclusion, says, the inquirer saw there must be a *nexus*; intimating, if there can, that he hath gained his point; but, it is added, "he durst not venture to say what it was." To which I must say,

That this is most uncautiously said; I will not say, deceitfully, though I know it is said untruly; and he might have known (or remembered) too, that he (the inquirer) often spoke of it, as a necessary, natural, eternal, vital, and most intimate union. He further says, he only explains it by the union of soul and body. Which again,

First. Is so great a misrepresentation, that I wonder he would say it here, when he himself but two or three pages off recites as the inquirer's word, "If God could unite into one, two such contrary natures, let any man give me a reason why he might not (much more) first make, and then unite two, and if two, why not three Spirits, &c." Is this only to explain it by the union of soul and body?

But by the way that "first make, and then unite" was none of the inquirer's, but appears thrust in to make what was manifestly possible, seem impossible. *Sic notus*—let two substances be created entire, with no natural propension to each other, they are capable of no natural union, without change of their natures. Who sees not, it were a contradiction to suppose them, the same still, and not the same? But suppose them created with mutual aptitudes to union, and united, what should hinder but they may continue united, without being confounded?

Secondly. And it is said impertinently, as well as untruly ; for what if he had not explained it at all, it is therefore impossible, which it belonged to him to prove, or he did nothing ; and he hath done nothing towards it. I have asked him before, and now I put it again seriously to him, whether he do in his conscience believe this a good argument “such a union, that is natural, necessary, &c. hath no pattern or parallel in the creation ; therefore it is impossible in the nature of God ?”

For what he adds, “That the soul and body in a man are not united into one substance or essence, nor possibly can be ;” the cause indeed depends not on it, but lies remote from it. Methinks however it is very feat, and shews him pinched, that he can be brought to this ! Hath a man no substance ? Is he a shadow ? Or hath he no essence ? Is he a non-entity ? or is his essence a body ? Then a body is a man. Or is his essence a spirit ? Then, a spirit is a man. If he say either of these, I wish he would tell us the quantity of those propositions, that we may know whether he means that every body is a man, or every spirit is a man ? I am sure where the essence is, there must be the *essentiatum*. Or whether soul and body united, make nothing different from either, or both disunited ? Or whether a man be only such a thing as a pye ? Or why might not a pudding serve as well, if made up of several ingredients ? He hath greatly indeed obliged mankind for such an honour done them ! If indeed the cause depended on it, he would have good store of philosophers to confute, and all that have any concern for their own kind, before he could disprove the possibility of the supposed union in the Deity, and you have nothing for it but his bare word : which (at least, without the addition of his name) will not do the business. Nor, if he could also bring us a demonstration against the union of soul and body, can he thereby prove such a union as we suppose in the Godhead impossible. The case is quite another. The union of the soul and body was never by me called essential ; for I well know, if they were essentially united, in the strict sense they could never be disunited. But it is commonly called a substantial union, and I called it natural in respect of the principle, *nature*, in contradistinction to *art*. As for the supposed union we speak of in the Deity, that, being necessary, original, eternal, it must be essential, or none ; but with such distinction as before was supposed. For it was union, not identity, that was meant, which union, with such distinction, till they be proved impossible, the inquirer’s cause is untouched. And is certainly to any such purpose, not in the least touched by the considerator. Whether there be any such union that may admit to be called essential among the creatures, doth

neither make nor mar. We have never said there was, nor doth the stress of the cause lie upon it.

I find indeed an ingenious, merry gentleman animadvert upon a postscript written against the Sober Inquiry, and upon a letter in answer to it, who at a venture calls all essential union, essential contradiction, and substantial nonsense. Who this is, I will not pretend to guess, only I guess him not to be the same with the considerator, for this, besides other reasons, that he calls the author of the considerations a great man; and I scarce think he would call himself so. His wit, and sportful humour, I should have liked better in a less serious affair. For *this* he boldly pronounces, in immediate reference to the trinity itself, (that the world might know he hath a confidence, at least, equal to his wit) I can easily abstain from asserting that any created unions are to be called strictly essential, because then they must be simply indissoluble. And I see not but whatsoever things the Creator hath united, he may disunite, if he be so pleased. Yet one might have expected this author to have been a little more civil to him whom he styles the late famous Dr. More, who hath published to the world his express sentiments in this matter, that created spirits have real amplitude, made up of indiscernible parts, essentially united, so as not to be separable, without annihilation of the whole. One would think he should not have treated him so, as to make his essential union, substantial nonsense. But there are those left in the world, who have that veneration for the doctor, as to think it no indecent rudeness to this gentleman, not to put his judgment in the balance against the doctor's, or to distinguish between his calling it nonsense, and proving it so.

But if any wonder that they who think there is no such thing as an essential union among creatures, do yet think there may be in the uncreated Being, they will shew themselves mighty wise in their wonder, that is in wondering that the creatures are not God. And if they further hereupon inquire, why we will then make use of unions not essential, among creatures, to illustrate that which is supposed essential in the uncreated being, and expect very particular, distinct accounts of every thing so represented; they will shew themselves as wise in their expectations, that is, that they think nothing can serve to illustrate, unless it be like in all respects.

That question still returns. Is every thing to be judged by any man of sense impossible in God, whereof he hath not given distinct and explicit accounts, and illustrations from somewhat in the creatures? And another will be added, Is there any thing originally in God, not essential to him? But when the

world is so full of instances of substantial unions, without confusion, or identification, that he cannot so much as name me a created substance, that he can be sure exists absolutely simple, I am sure it can be no contradiction to suppose that there may be uncreated, necessary, eternal union, without confusion or identification; and that it would be, as he phrases it, essential contradiction, or substantial nonsense, to say that things united necessarily (though distinct) can possibly ever admit of separation. And if our modern anti-trinitarians (for I will not call them by the inept name of unitarians, which as rightfully belongs to them whose adversaries they are pleased to be, as to themselves, and therefore cannot distinguish the one from the other) would allow it to be their method to understand the doctrine of the orthodox ancients, before they decry and hoot at it, they would find that as they allow sufficient distinction of the sacred *hypostases*; so the union they assert, is not such as identifies them, but only signifies them to be inseparable. So speaks Athanasius himself, "we think not as the sabellians, that the Son is of one and the same essence with the Father, but consubstantial—nor do we assert three *hypostases* separated as with men, bodily, lest with the gentiles, we should admit polytheism, &c." *κεμερισμενος. Εκθ. π. 15.*

So do Liberius and he agree in sentiment. The one says, "The Son is not separated from the Father's hypostasis." * The other, "We hold not the Son divided from the Father, &c. †

And upon the most impartial, faithful, and diligent search and consideration, I do solemnly declare there needed not more of rationality, or intelligibleness in this doctrine, to keep it from being ridiculed, as contradictory, and nonsense; but only less prejudice, and more modesty in the opposers of it, with more reverence of the divine Majesty, upon this (obvious) apprehension, that if it be true, it must be sacred, divine truth.

This author would fain have me with him to the play-house, whither really I have no leisure to accompany him, nor much temptation; for I perceive it hath filled his mind with ideas not useful to my purpose; nor, I think, to any good one of his own. If there he learned to jest away that which should be the best part of himself; and of which Socrates, dying, told his friends it would be gone far enough out of their hands, and for that which was left behind, they might bury, or do with it what they pleased. If there he was taught to ridicule the holy

* Liber. Epist, ad Athan. *ε μεριζειται*

† Rescript. Ath. ad Liberium. *ου διακε χωρισμενος.*

apostle's distinction of an *ο εσω*, and *ο εξωθεν*, *an inner and an outer man* ; and when he hath thrown the former of these out of his notion of himself, for my part, I must think of that which is left, that the silly Indian is the less silly creature of the two.

And besides, as he is too much given to play, to mind any thing of serious discourse, so I find he is not throughout honest in his play neither ; but that even when he pretends to sit out, and be but a spectator, only taking care that there be fair play, he falls in himself, and plays booty. Nor do I find he hath any thing of argument in his discourse, which hath not been considered already in the discourse I have had with the considerator. I therefore take leave of them both together, and of you too, Sir, being in great sincerity

Your affectionate

Humble Servant,

The Inquirer.

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THE "Letter to the clergy of both universities," came not to my sight, or notice, till some hours after the last sheet of this discourse was brought to me from the press ; I have not time therefore to say much to it, nor yet should say more than I do had I never so much. The author seems to think what he was now doing, as to the inquiry, superfluous, because he said it was so fully done by an abler hand, &c. In the mean time he was in ill case, that he was neither able to write to any purpose, nor be silent : a most deplorable double impotency ! But he hath notwithstanding his modesty, shewn a double ability, to invent and make an hypothesis of his own fingers' ends, and then most dexterously to combat that shadow. Three inadequate Gods, is indeed (to use his own phrase) his own invention, constantly disavowed by the inquirer, who, with the generality of trinitarians, calls the three subsistents in the God-head, God ; being each of them necessarily existent, but none of them alone exclusively, a God.

What art he hath, is shewn in fighting this his own figment. As also that of parts of the Deity, other than conceptible, which no man can avoid. So we have his dream of a third part of a God, about which he so learnedly raves in his dreams, as to disprove, as effectually, any God at all. For I appeal to what sense he hath left himself, whether power alone be God exclusive of wisdom and goodness ? Then it is an inadequate,

or a not complete notion of God ; then, by his profound reasoning, not eternal. No more are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost parts, unless you be enamoured of the bull, impartible parts, that never were parted, nor ever can be. As what are necessarily united (though unconfounded) cannot without nonsense and contradiction, be said to be parted. His fiction, that what is from the eternal Father by necessary emanation, cannot be eternal, but must have a beginning, is of the same stamp. He did not need when he wrote, to have abandoned all logic and common sense, that would have told him *relata sunt simul natura : things related are of the same nature*. His so confidently taking it for granted on all hands, that all infinities are equal, shews his little compass of thought, and how unacquainted he is with the difficulties of a controversy, wherein yet he will be so over-meddlesome. *Qui pauca respicit, &c. one who takes a partial view. &c.* But who so bold as—? I leave him to compound that difference with his abler considerator, whether one inch and two inches be equal? and so bid him good night.