

**AN**  
**EXTRACT**  
**FROM A CELEBRATED**  
**MODERN ENGLISH PUBLICATION,**  
**ENTITLED**  
**A PLEA**  
**FOR THE**  
**DEITY OF JESUS,**  
**AND THE**  
**DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY.**

**BY THE**  
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# A PLEA

FOR THE

## DEITY OF JESUS, &c.



THE unity of God is a first principle in all true religion, whether natural or revealed. The scripture is full of it.—*Thou shalt have none other God but me.\*—Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God, there is none else besides him. Know therefore this day and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else.—Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord.—See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me.—There is none besides thee.—Who is God save the Lord, and who is a rock save our God?—Thou, even thou, art Lord alone.—Thou art God alone.—Before thee there was no God formed, neither shall there be any after thee.—Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no God. I know not*

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\* One considerable objection against the Arian scheme, is, that it stands in opposition to the first and great commandment; introducing two Gods, and two objects of worship; not only against scripture, but also against the unanimous sense of the Christian church, from the beginning, and of the Jewish before; which together are the safest and best comment we can have upon scripture.

Waterland's Eight Sermons, preface, p. 30.

*any.—I am the Lord, and there is none else ; there is no God besides me.—I am God and there is none like me ; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.—Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.*

The first and fundamental principle of religion then is, that there is a God. The second that there is but one living and true God. And the third, that religious worship and divine honours, are to be paid to this one living and true God alone. Either, therefore, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the true scriptural sense of the words, are this one living and true God, though in a way inexplicable by us, or else we transgress these fundamental laws of nature, and of God, every time we pray and ascribe glory to either the Son or the Holy Spirit.

This being, confessedly, the real state of the case, it no longer remains, I should think, a matter of indifference, whether side of the question we take. The doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and the blessed Spirit, is by no means that speculative and insignificant thing some would persuade us it is. It seems rather to enter most essentially into the whole scheme of redemption. All the other doctrines of the gospel depend upon it.

“The divinity of Christ is a scripture truth as much as the divinity of the Father; and one is no more a metaphysical speculation than the other. Besides that, it is strangely improper and absurd to call these principles pure speculations, which are of so great importance for the regulating our worship, that we can neither omit to worship Christ, if they are true, without the greatest impiety ; nor perform it, if they are false, without being guilty of idolatry.\*”

“Many apprehend the doctrine of the Trinity to be what is called a speculative doctrine only ; that is to say, a doctrine concerning which men may think, and conjecture, and reason, and dispute for their amusement, but of no effect or importance in a religious life. This is a considerable mistake in judgment ; and to prove that it is so, let us only ask one question :—What is the doctrine

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\* Waterland's Eight Sermons, preface, p. 25.

of most importance to man, in his religious concerns? Undoubtedly, it is that of his redemption from sin and sorrow, from death and hell, to righteousness and joy, immortality and glory. But of such redemption what account do the scriptures give us? By whom was the gracious scheme originally concerted, and afterwards carried into execution? Was it not by the three persons of the ever-blessed and adorable Trinity? It was not an after thought, a new design, formed upon the transgression and fall of our first parents. That event was foreseen, and provision made accordingly: for upon the very best authority we are informed, that Christ was *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*; that is (for it cannot be otherwise understood) slain in effect, in the divine purpose and counsel. It is likewise said, that *grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began*. The words intimate, that, previous to the creation of the world, something had passed in our favour above; that the plan of our future redemption was then laid; that some agreement, some covenant, relative to it, had been entered into; *grace was given us*, not in our proper persons, for as yet we were not—we had no being—but in the person of him who was afterwards to become our representative, our Saviour—in *Christ Jesus*. Now the plan must have been laid, the covenant entered into, by the parties who have been since graciously pleased to concern themselves in its execution. Who these are we cannot be ignorant. It was the Son of God who took our nature upon him, and in that nature made a full and sufficient oblation, satisfaction and atonement, for the sins of the world. It was the Father who accepted such oblation, satisfaction and atonement, and in consequence, forgave those sins. It was the Holy Spirit, who came forth from the Father and the Son, through the preaching of the word, and the administration of the sacraments, by his enlightening, healing and comforting grace, to apply to the hearts of men, for all the purposes of pardon, sanctification, and salvation, the merits and benefits of that oblation, satisfaction and atonement. Say no more, then, that the doctrine of the Trinity is a matter of curi-

osity and amusement only. Our religion is founded upon it; for what is Christianity, but a manifestation of the three divine persons, as engaged in the great work of man's redemption, begun, continued, and to be ended by them, in their several relations of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; three persons, one God? If there be no Son of God, where is our redemption? If there be no Holy Spirit, where is our sanctification? Without both, where is our salvation? And if these two persons be any thing less than divine, why are we baptized, equally, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost? Let no man therefore deceive you: *This is the true God and eternal life.*"\*

"The divinity of Jesus," says Dr. Hawker, "I conceive to be the chief corner-stone in the edifice of Christianity. Remove this from the building and the whole fabric immediately totters. The foundation is shaken to the very centre. There appears at once an evident disproportion between the end and the means, the importance of the object proposed, and the person by whom it was accomplished. And then the great doctrine of atonement and expiation, by the blood of its author, and all the rich promises of the gospel, are done away."†

"The faith of the holy Trinity is so fundamental to the Christian religion, that if Christianity be worth contending for, that is. For if God have not an eternal Son, and an eternal Spirit, the whole mystery of our redemption by Christ, and of our sanctification by the Spirit, which in its consequences is the whole of the gospel, and distinguishes it from all other religions, is utterly lost;"§

\* Bishop Horne's Discourse on the Trinity, p. 43—45. See also Trapp on the Trinity, p. 4—6.

† Sermon on the Divinity of Christ, page 8.

§ Sherlock's Socinian Controversy, p. 1.

Let the reader, who has any doubts upon his mind concerning the importance of the Doctrine of the Trinity, read carefully Bishop Bull's Judgment of the Catholic Church of the three first centuries, concerning the necessity of believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is the true God, and Dr. Waterland's Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity, and he will receive all the satisfaction he can reasonably expect or desire. The Socinians pretend to despise these books. They do well. It is much easier to pretend to despise such authors, than to answer them.

*"The Word Jesus is not the Scriptural Term"*

and we are reduced again to a mere system of moral philosophy.

We acknowledge, indeed, and glory in the truth, that the gospel contains a system of moral philosophy, and the most perfect, by many degrees, with which the world was ever favoured. The morality of the gospel of Christ, says Locke, does so excel that of other books, that to give a man a full knowledge of morality, he need read no other book but the New Testament: but we insist upon it, as a truth of all conceivable importance, that it contains far more; that it opens a new and living way, whereby sinners may be reconciled unto God, through the alone mediation of his only-begotten Son. And the divine origin of it is displayed by its wonderful suitability to the situation of man. All that he wants it contains. Not that it is designed to bring about infallibly the salvation of the whole human race, neither the salvation of all those who come within the sound of it. Rather, it is intended as a scheme of redemption for curable dispositions only. And therefore God hath afforded us all the evidence of its veracity that his wisdom saw needful for such dispositions, rather than all the evidence his power might have afforded for the conviction of the careless, obstinate, high-minded and conceited enquirers after truth. And, in pursuance of this design, its doctrines are admirably calculated to try the obedience of our understanding, as its precepts that of our will. Dr. Watts has the same idea:—"It is as possible," he says, "and as proper, that God should propose doctrines to our understanding, which it cannot comprehend, as duties to our practice, which we cannot see the reason of; for he is equally superior to our understanding and will, and he puts the obedience of both to a trial."\*

Lord Bacon speaks to the same purpose: "The prerogative of God," says this great man, "comprehends the whole man; and is extended, as well to the *reason*, as to the *will* of man: that is, that man renounce himself wholly, and draw near to God. Wherefore, as we are to *obey his law*, though we find a reluctance in our *will*;

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\* Appendix to Watt's Life by Johnson and Palmer, p. 120.

so we are to *believe his word*, though we find a reluctance in our *reason*: for if we believe only that which is agreeable to our *reason*, we assent to the *matter*, not to the *author*, which is no more than we would do towards a suspected and discredited witness.—Sacred theology is grounded on, and must be deduced from, the Oracles of God; and not from the light of nature, or the dictates of reason.—*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*”\*

Now, as man consists of two distinct yet essential parts, so the vices to which we are prone respect both these parts of our constitution. For we may be very free from the vices peculiar to the body, and yet extremely addicted to those of the mind. The former are more peculiar to the vulgar, the latter to the learned and philosophic part of our race. By subjection to the one, we resemble the brute creation; by obedience to the other, the apostate spirits. We ought, therefore, to be serious, and lay aside all pride and conceitedness in our understanding, as well as superfluity of naughtiness in our passions, and attend with humility and prayer to the things which God hath revealed concerning himself.—The truths of his word are sufficiently plain to the humble and sincere enquirer; but there is obscurity enough to baffle and confound the most enlarged minds of those, who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own conceits. *Clouds and darkness are round about him, though righteousness and equity are the habitation of his throne.—None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.—The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he learn his way.—And God said, Go and tell this people, who are proud, wicked, conceited and self-righteous, Hear ye, indeed, but understand not; and see ye, indeed, but perceive not: make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.*

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\* Advancement of Learning, p. 463.

All these scriptures were most awfully fulfilled, when our Saviour was upon earth. The modest enquirers after truth among the Jews sufficiently discovered, from the writings of Moses and the Prophets, that he was the true Messiah.// But yet, it is a notorious fact, that the bulk of the people, and especially the more learned and polite part of the nation, rejected him as an impostor and deceiver. They did not reject him for want of evidence that he was the Messiah; for there was evidence enough to satisfy any impartial enquirer; but they rejected him through pride of heart, and carnal views and expectations. They approved not his appearance and pretensions. His views were upon another world, theirs were upon this; and therefore they rejected him, without faithfully examining whether he were the Christ or not. In vain did our blessed Saviour reason, expostulate, and appeal to his own miracles, and their sacred writings.— They had made up their minds; and he must either erect a worldly standard, or he shall not be Christ. Instead of learning from the scripture what the character of Messiah was to be, they brought their own erroneous ideas to the word of God, and were determined it should speak their language. No evidence was sufficient.— Lazarus is raised from the dead before their eyes. No; this will not do. Rather than give credit to his mission, both Lazarus and Christ must be put to death. Not so, however, Nicodemus, Nathaniel, Joseph of Arimathea, and other pious Jews; they were sincere, upright, humble men; they patiently examined into the nature of his doctrine and pretensions; and they saw and believed. All the rest of the nation, with a few other exceptions, God gave up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. The consequence was, they rejected him who alone was able to save them. They imprecated his blood upon their own guilty heads; and they died in their sins, under every possible mark of the divine displeasure.\*

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\* Consult Jones on the Trinity, preface, p. 21--22.

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*// did Peter know Christ by the writings of Mary or  
he not know him by the Immediate Revelation  
of the Holy Spirit?*



THE UNITY OF THE DIVINE ESSENCE AND PLURALITY  
OF PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD.

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*Fletcher's irresistible reasoning against Dr. Priestley.—  
Dangerous opinions.—Pernicious influence of Socinianism.—Doctrine of the Trinity not a speculative doctrine.—The belief of it compatible with reason.—  
Illustrations of the doctrine.—Leslie's summary of reasoning upon the doctrine of the Trinity.*

WE may have abundant evidence, in the word of God, concerning the unity of nature and plurality of persons in the Godhead,\* and yet, through inattention, pride of understanding,† affectation of singularity, and their dreadful consequence, judicial blindness, we may reject the evidence, despise, ridicule and sneer at the doctrine, and die in our sins.

Obloquy and ridicule, says Bishop Horsley, seem to be the trials which God hath appointed, instead of persecution, in the present age, to prove the sincerity and

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\* The doctrine of the Trinity is an imperfect discovery, not a contradiction. See Horsley's Tracts, p. 70.

† There is a little cheap pamphlet, said to be written by Mr. Jones, author of the Catholic Doctrine of a Trinity, entitled, A Preservative against the Publication dispersed by modern Socinians, which I would wish to be in the hands of every person whose mind is conversant in these speculations. I don't know that every position in the book is strictly defensible; but, upon the whole, I think it is well suited to counteract the ill tendency of those writings it is designed to oppose. Dr. Priestley has animadverted upon one or two passages in this little work, and shown the rashness of an assertion, and the weakness of the reasoning in those paragraphs. And in my judgment the Doctor has very justly reprov'd the author, in those particular instances. But then it does not follow, that because he has given a very fair answer to one or two of the weakest arguments in a book, that he has given a satisfactory reply to the more substantial and important parts. In like manner, the Doctor has answered the same Mr. Jones' Catholic Doctrine of the Trinity. He has given us some strictures upon a few of the looser and more feeble conclusions of the book, and then he would make the inattentive reader believe he has subverted the whole. This is a very unfair mode of proceeding. A generous adversary would attack a few, at least, of the strongest positions of his antagonist, and leave the others to fall by their own weight.

In the same mode of proceeding, it is a very easy matter to answer the most conclusive book that ever was written.

patience of the faithful. The advocate of that sound form of words, which was originally delivered to the saints, hath to expect that his opinions will be the open jest of the Unitarian party : that his sincerity will be called in question ; or if a bare possibility of his being in earnest be charitably admitted, the misfortune of his education will be lamented, and his prejudices deplored. All this insult will not alarm nor discompose him. He will rather glory in the recollection, that his adherence to the faith of the first ages hath provoked it. The conviction which he will all the while enjoy, that his philosophy is Plato's, and his creed John's, will alleviate the mortification he might otherwise feel in differing from Dr. Priestley ; nor suffer him to think the evil insupportable, although the consequence of this dissent should be, that he must share with the excellent Bishop of Worcester, in Dr. Priestley's pity and indignation.\*

But amidst all such proud and inveterate hostility, we should be more serious and earnest in our enquiries, and betake ourselves to the word of God with deeper humility and greater ardour of zeal ; we should lift up our hearts to the fountain of light, for that wisdom which is profitable to direct, submitting our reason to the sovereign dictates of revelation ; and not only be careful to learn the will of God, but, when we have learnt it, faithfully and honestly practise it ; that so we may expect, according to a variety of scripture declarations, to be *led into all truth*.

Dr. Priestley, in his controversy on the Trinity, takes for granted and lays it down as a first principle, that the doctrines of the Trinity and Atonement are impossible, and such as no miracles can prove ; and then he proceeds to mangle and distort the holy scriptures, to make them speak a language agreeable to the notions he has formed, to the utter subversion of common sense. The Doctor is certainly a very laborious and ingenious man, and upon some subjects, has few equals ; but ingenious men have sometimes strange whims, and render themselves extremely ridiculous. This is the case with the learned

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\* Tracts .p. 72.

gentleman in question. Few writers, perhaps, have been so glaringly inconsistent with themselves as he has been. And the late Mr. Fletcher, vicar of Madely, hath set his inconsistencies in a very striking point of view.—It is one of the loudest dictates of *reason*, says this truly pious author, that as we cannot grasp the universe with our hands, so we cannot comprehend the Maker of the universe with our thoughts.

Nevertheless, a set of men who make much ado about reason, after they have candidly acknowledged their ignorance, with regard to the Divine Nature, are so inconsistent as to limit God, and to insinuate that he can exist only according to their shallow, dark and short-sighted ideas. Hence it is, that, if he speaks of his Essence otherwise than they have conceived it to be, they either reject his revelation, or so wrest and distort it, as to force it to speak their preconceived notions; in direct opposition to the plain meaning of the words, to the general tenor of the scriptures, to the consent of the Catholic Church in all ages, and to the very form of their own baptism.

Is not the learned Dr. Priestley a striking instance of this unphilosophical conduct? Great philosopher in natural things, does he not forget himself in things Divine? Candid reader, to your unprejudiced reason we make our appeal. With a wisdom worthy of a Christian sage, he speaks thus, in his *Disquisitions on Matter and Spirit*: *Of the substance of the Deity, WE HAVE NO IDEA AT ALL; and therefore all that we can conceive or PRONOUNCE, concerning it must be merely HYPOTHETICAL.\** But has he behaved consistently with this reasonable acknowledgment? and may we not, upon his just concession, raise the following query?

When a Doctor has granted that we have *no idea at all of the Divine substance, &c.* is he not both inconsistent and unreasonable, if, so far from *pronouncing hypothetically* concerning it, he absolutely declares, that the Divine substance, of which he has NO IDEA AT ALL, is incompatible with the three Divine substances, which the

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\* P. 109, 110.

scripture calls *the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost*? But Dr. Priestley, after having granted the former proposition in his *Disquisitions*, absolutely renounces the latter, in his *Corruptions of Christianity*. Is not, therefore, Dr. Priestley both inconsistent and unreasonable?

The learned Doctor, continuing to speak as a true philosopher, says, We know there must be a first cause, because things do actually exist, and could never have existed without a cause, and all secondary causes necessarily lead us to a primary one. But of the nature of the existence of this primary cause, concerning which we *know nothing* but by its effects, we cannot have *any conception*. We are absolutely confounded, bewildered and lost, when we attempt to speculate concerning it. This speculation is attended with *insuperable* difficulties. Every description of the Divine Being in the New Testament gives us an idea of something filling and penetrating all things, and therefore of *no known mode of existence*.\*

Upon these second concessions, we raise this second argument. A Doctor, who grants that we *know nothing* of the first cause but by its effects, that we have no conception of its nature, that it has *no known mode* of existence, and that this speculation is attended with *insuperable* difficulties—must have an uncommon share of assurance, or inattention, if he pretend to urge the Catholic Church out of the belief of the Trinity, because we have no clear conception of its nature, because it has *no known mode* of existence, and because, in our present state, the speculation of it is attended with some *insuperable* difficulties. But Dr. Priestley has made all these fair concessions in his *Disquisitions*, and yet he pretends to argue us out of our faith in the Trinity, because we have no clear conception of its nature, &c. Hath not, therefore, the Doctor an uncommon share of assurance, or of inattention?

Continuing to speak like a Christian philosopher, he says, ‘In two circumstances that we do know, and pro-

\* P. 111. 146.

bably in *many* others, of which *we have no knowledge at all*, the human and Divine Nature, finite and infinite Intelligence, *most essentially* differ. The first is, that our attention is necessarily confined to one thing, whereas he who made and continually supports all things, must equally attend to all things at the same time ; which is a most astonishing but necessary attribute of the one Supreme God, of which we can form *no conception*, and consequently, in this respect, *no finite* mind can be compared with the Divine.\* Again, ‘the Deity not only attends to every thing, but must be capable of either producing or annihilating any thing : so, that, in this respect also, the Divine Nature must be *essentially different* from ours.—There is, therefore, upon the whole, manifold reason to conclude, that the Divine Nature or Essence, besides being simply unknown to us, has properties *most essentially different* from every thing else.—God is, and ever must remain, *the Incomprehensible*.’\*

Upon this set of unavoidable concessions, made by Dr. P. we raise this third argument. A philosopher who grants that God is *the Incomprehensible*—that human and Divine Nature (of consequence human and Divine Personality) most essentially differ—and that the Divine Essence has properties most essentially different from every thing else : A philosopher, I say, who publicly grants this, must be one of the most prejudiced of all men, if he rejects the sacred Trinity, into whose name he was baptized, because the Trinity is in some sense incomprehensible, and because he insists that three Divine Persons must be divided and separated like three human persons ; just as if he did not himself maintain, that the Divine Essence, or Personality, hath properties most *essentially different* from men, angels, and every thing else.

We shall produce but one more set of the philosophical concessions, of which Dr. P. loses sight in his theological works.

In the first place, says he, ‘It must be confessed, with awful reverence, that we know but little of ourselves, and

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\* P. 106, 107, 108.

therefore *much less* of our Maker, even with respect to his attributes. We know but little of the works of God, and therefore certainly *much less* of his Essence. In fact, we have *no proper idea* of any essence whatever. It will hardly be pretended that we have *any proper idea* of the substance even of matter, considered as divested of all its properties.\*

From these last concessions, and from the tenor of Dr. Priestley's Corruptions, it appears, that men, who confess they know little of God's works, and less of his Essence ; and who have not even any proper idea of the essence of a straw, pretend, nevertheless, to *know clearly* what is inconsistent with the Divine Essence ; insomuch, that setting up as reformers of the three creeds, they try to turn the doctrine of the Trinity out of the church, and the Lamb of God from his divine and everlasting throne.

Now is not this as absurd, as if they said to the Catholics, We have indeed been all baptized in the name of the God of the Christians, that is, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* :—but we new Gnostics, we modern Reformers, who know *nothing* of the Father's Essence, or even of the essence of an insect—we are nevertheless so perfectly acquainted with the Divine Essence, as to decide, that it is absolutely inconsistent with the nature of the Father, to have a living Word, or a proper Son, and a rational Spirit ; and, therefore, reforming our God himself, we strike the Word and the Holy Ghost out of the number of the Divine Persons, whom at our baptism we vowed to serve jointly forever.

O, ye Philosophers of the age, can men of sense admire your philosophy, any more than men of faith admire your orthodoxy ? May we not hope, that, when the blunders of your Logic are brought to light, they will be a proper antidote for the poison of your errors ? And will your admirers be still so inattentive, as not to see, that your capital objections against the Trinity are sufficiently answered by applying to them the short reply you make

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\* P. 103, 104.

on another occasion? This is an argument which derives all its force from *our ignorance* !\*

Some modern authors, of considerable name, have attempted to prove, that all the scripture requires, in order to our acceptance with God, is, to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, and to obey his moral precepts :† But there appears to be dangerous fallacy in their reasoning. For, to believe this single proposition, that Jesus is the Messiah, implies a belief also of all that Jesus and his Apostles both did and taught. And we can no more with safety reject their doctrines than their mission. From the truth of their mission we must infer the truth of what they taught. And professedly to reject any part of the latter, is, virtually, to reject the former.

Now, it is certain, that if we credit the writings of the Apostles, we must suppose there are several opinions destructive, as well as absolute infidelity. And, moreover, it very frequently happens, that erroneous principles beget erroneous practices. Impure fountains cannot send forth pellucid streams. From the very infancy of Christianity this observation was strongly exemplified in the various errors that arose among those who were professed believers in Christ Jesus. He was aware of the growth of noxious weeds, and cautioned his followers against them. *Beware of false prophets, said he, which come to you in sheeps' clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.* The Apostles likewise frequently do the same. And, according to their predictions, whole shoals of erroneous opinions broke in upon the church, even in its earliest days. Simon Magus, the first author of all heresy, fell from the Christian faith almost as soon as he had embraced it. Hymeneus and Philetus denied the resurrec-

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\* Fletcher's Vindication of the Catholic Faith, published since his death, by Mr. Joseph Benson.

† See Priestley's Importance of Free Enquiry, passim.

Dr. Fiddes very justly observes, that an assent to that one article (namely, that Jesus Christ was the promised Messiah) was, in effect, and implicitly, an assent to all which that article contained; the whole Christian religion.

Body of Divinity, vol. 1. p. 407.

tion.\* Others, whom the Apostles have not pointed out by name in the sacred writings, maintained the necessity of circumcision, and of observing the law of Moses. Others maintained that Jesus Christ had not come in the flesh; that is, had not assumed a real body and soul. Others denied Jesus to be the Christ, or the begotten son of God: saying that Jesus was a mere man, on whom the Christ descended when he was baptized by John in the river Jordan. All these, and their doctrines, are spoken of, and reprobated by the Apostles, in different places of the New Testament; some are declared to be accursed; others are called seducers and antichrists; and of all of them in general, and particularly of the professors of the two latter heresies, John says, *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.*† Hence, I think, it appears as clear as any proposition in Euclid, that some doctrines are fundamental, as well as certain practices, and that the belief of them is as necessary to salvation, as obedience to the moral precepts of the gospel. Indeed, without true faith there can be no legitimate practice, any more than an effect without a cause.

Irenæus was a learned and pious bishop, in the second century, and wrote five books upon the heresies which had prevailed from the origin of Christianity to his own times. I have often thought, that we should be extremely careful how we admit any religious principles which he denies, or deny any which he admits. Now, it is very certain, that he ranks the Ebionites among the heretics of former times, and therefore, were he living now, he would consider the Socinians in the same light; for they are in the present day, what the Ebionites were of old. Dr. Priestley, indeed, gets over this difficulty with the greatest ease imaginable, as he does over every other. Diffi-

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\* The resurrection of the body is what no force of human wisdom could have discovered; yet reason tells us it is possible, and within the power of God to effect it; therefore the understanding may fully assent to it, without knowing the bounds of Omnipotence, or in what manner he will accomplish and bring it to pass.

Ellis' Knowledge of Divine Things, p. 261.

† Barnard's Letters to Dr. Priestley, preface, p. 1 and 2.



culties insuperable to others, are none to him. Mountains shall be plains, or plains shall be mountains, as suits his convenience. Facts, however, are stubborn things. And if Irenæus does really rank the Ebionites in his catalogue of heretics, Dr. Priestley's denying it, or setting light by his judgment, will be of little avail. Let the reader then judge what the good old Bishop and glorious martyr's opinion was, from the extracts he will find out of his writings in a subsequent part of this work.

One great objection which I have long had to the principles of our modern Socinians,\* is, that they marvel-

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\* The Socinians frequently make their boast of Dr. Clarke, as though he were a favourer of their scheme; whereas it is well known, that he was no friend to their degrading doctrines. He held both the reality of the Trinity and the Atonement, though not exactly in the orthodox sense. And speaking of our modern Ebionites, he says:—*The Socinian writers have very unreasonably presumed to collect, that our Saviour was no greater a person than a mere man, born of the Virgin Mary, without any divine existence, and exalted by the power of God to this state of dignity in heaven. But this their inference, I say, is very unreasonable; for though the derivation of our Lord's power from the Father, must and ought to be acknowledged; that all men's confessing Jesus to be Lord may be to the glory of God the Father; yet from those other texts of scripture, wherein it is affirmed that by Christ God created all things; that he was in the form of God, before he appeared in the form of a servant; that he was with God, and had glory with God before the world was; from these texts, I say, it undeniably appears, that our Lord's having all power given him, both in heaven and earth, cannot signify the original exaltation of one who had no being before he was born of the Virgin; but the exaltation of him into the form of God, who voluntarily emptied himself of that glory he had before, and with unparalleled humility took upon himself the form of a servant, and suffered in that form for our sakes, and therefore was worthy to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing, because he was slain, and redeemed us to God by his own blood, out of every tongue and kindred and people and nation.*

Grotius too is frequently mentioned as a great champion for the Socinian cause; but without any just reason: for both in his catechism and Poems, as well as in his Comment on the first chapter of John, he declares his faith in the Holy Trinity, in as ample a manner as any man can reasonably desire. Let the reader consult his writings, especially the three places just mentioned, and Stillingfleet on the Trinity, pages 137—143, where he is sufficiently vindicated from the charge of Socinianism.

Sir Isaac Newton is likewise oftentimes named as a favourer of the same scheme; for no other reason, I suppose, but because he wrote against the authenticity of the famous verse in the first Epistle of John. We are informed, however, in the Critical Review for September, 1790, on the Religious Sentiments of Laymen, that the Arians and Socinians have each claimed Sir Isaac Newton as their own; but Whiston has told us, continues the Reviewer, that Sir Isaac was irreconcilably angry with him, because he said that he was an Arian.

Milton, Watts, and Locke have sometimes been claimed as patrons of Socinianism; but without any just foundation. Indeed, those who can rank John and Paul in that degrading list, will have little difficulty in claiming any other writers whom they may think an honour to their opinions. For a vindication of Milton from the charge of Socinianism, see Burgh's Sequel, p. 262—266. For a vindic-

lously debase the Christian scheme. Socinianism cuts to the very root of all that is distinguishing in the gospel. It destroys the necessity, and even the importance of a miraculous interposition, and gives the infidel too great reason to exclaim, that all that was extraordinary was superfluous; and that the apparatus was too expensive and too splendid for the purposes to which it was applied.\*

The salvation of man is constantly represented in holy scripture, as something infinitely important, and the means for procuring that salvation as being equally so. All the Patriarchs and Prophets, with the whole Jewish economy of types and shadows, were preparatory to the Messiah's advent; and all the angels in heaven administered to the great design, lost in astonishment at the Divine proceedings. This apparatus appears to me by far too splendid and magnificent, if our blessed Saviour were nothing more than a mere man. All the infinite glory of the gospel scheme vanishes; the scriptures, which I used to consider as the word of God, and replete with wisdom worthy of their author, lose their majesty, and seem calculated rather to mislead than inform. I conclude, therefore, that the principles of Socinus and his followers are false and dangerous, and highly unworthy the espousal of men, who are concerned for the honour of God, and the advancement of true religion.

"All the mysteries of the New Testament are pure and noble, august and becoming the majesty of the God of gods. The venerable mysteries of the incarnation, the sacred Trinity, the resurrection and glorification of human bodies, are not vain speculations to amuse the fancy; but are the essential doctrines and fundamentals of the purest religion in the world; that are graciously designed and directly tend to improve the understanding, and rectify the will; to raise gratitude and all devout

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cation of Watts, see the Rev. Samuel Palmer's account of his last sentiments on the Trinity, in Dr. Johnson's Life of Watts, with Notes, p. 42—110. And for a vindication of Locke, see his own Second Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity, p. 668, where he tells us, that it is very hard for a Christian who reads the scripture with attention, and an unprejudiced mind, to deny the satisfaction of Christ; a position utterly inconsistent with every idea of Socinianism.

\* Professor White's Notes to his excellent Sermons, p. 63

affections to God. They have a certain and full influence on the present and future happiness of mankind. It is observable that in the Epistles that treat most fully and magnificently of the sublime doctrines and awful objects of our faith, there is always in the conclusion a choice collection of morals and sound precepts of pure life ; which are the true consequences of those most lofty and venerable truths and essentials of the Christian creed. Those awful and venerable secrets, which *the angels desire to look into*, are by free-thinkers, and profane pretenders to philosophy, made to be no secrets at all ; and so the majesty of the thoughts of the sacred writers, and the propriety and nobleness of their language are debased, and comparatively, sunk into meanness and contempt. The goodness of God the Father, and the condescension of our Saviour in redeeming the human race, are depreciated, and infinitely undervalued ; and by consequence, the obligations of mankind to love, obedience and gratitude for infinite mercies, are horridly weakened and lessened. All principles and heretical depravations of the gospel mysteries naturally tend to vice and corruption of manners. But if Jesus Christ, according to the plain language, the whole contexture and design of the sacred books, be true, natural, eternal God, without any quibble or evasion, then how adorable is the love of God the Father, who spared not his own Son for our salvation ! How infinitely great and obligatory the condescension of God the Son, who took our nature and suffered for us ! How stupendous the charity and grace of God the Holy Ghost, who inspires Christians with a due sense of this great salvation ! and with qualifications to entitle us to it, and make us capable, fully and with eternal satisfaction to enjoy it !”\*

But the grand objection to the doctrine of the Holy and Undivided Trinity is, the seeming absurdity and contradiction of the thing, that three shall be one, and one three. Now, this may be either true or false, absurd or otherwise, according as it is explained and understood. If we said, that three are one, and one three, exactly in the

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\* Blackwall's Sacred Classics, vol. I. p. 320.

same sense, the thing is not only absurd, but impossible ; it is a contradiction. But to say, the Divine Being is only one in essence and three in person ; that he is three in one respect, and only one in another respect, is no absurdity, no contradiction ; but may be an eternal truth, founded in the nature of things. And if this were well considered, there would be an end to all opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity, from the seeming absurdity of the thing. It is confessed on all hands, that the doctrine is abstruse and incomprehensible. So is the doctrine of the Divine Nature, upon any hypothesis whatever. Yet we do not say, it is absurd. We are obliged to submit our understandings, and silently acquiesce and adore. So with respect to the three Persons, *who bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost* ; the scripture assures us they *are one*. And as reason as well as scripture assures us, there can be but one God, we therefore conclude, these three Persons are partakers of one common essence. Though they are three in one respect, yet they are only one in another.

This will not appear so strange, perhaps, if we consider, that there are several objects in nature, besides the Divine Being, which are three and one ; not three and one in the same respect, but three in one respect, and only one in another. This may render the doctrine of the Trinity more easy of comprehension ; at least, make it appear not so absurd as sometimes it is represented by rash and inconsiderate mortals. Illustrations, indeed, do not prove the truth of any doctrine ; they only render it more easy of admittance into our minds and belief, when we see other objects, with which we are well acquainted, under similar circumstances.

Let us then look round us, and examine if there be any objects in nature, which are strictly one in essence, and yet three in properties. What think we of the Sun ? It is certainly one of the most lively images in nature of the Holy and Undivided Trinity.\* It is one in essence, and is the great fountain and source of both light and

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\* The excellent Grotius has given us the same illustration of the doctrine of the Trinity, in his *Institutio Baptizatorum Puerorum*. The translation runs thus.

heat to the world. As it is the fountain and source of all its properties, it may be considered as representing the eternal Father, who is the fountain of the Deity, and the great original of all Being. The light which issues from the Sun, may be considered as representing the second Person in the Divine Nature; for our Saviour is called *the Sun of righteousness*, and *the light of the world*: and the heat proceeding from the Sun, and which accompanies the light, may be considered as representing the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the Divine Nature, who proceeds both from the Father and the Son, and gives light to the world. The light and heat both proceed from the Sun. Unless the Sun existed, there could not be either one or the other. And on the other hand, if there is a Sun in the firmament, there must be both light and heat: for it is of the very nature of this vast body to produce these two properties. So that the Sun, light and heat are coexistent, they cannot be divided. As long as there is a Sun, there must be its essential properties. The Sun, indeed, is not the light, neither the heat, but it is the cause and source of both. They are all distinct, yet undivided. The Sun depends not upon the light, or heat, or both, for its existence; but yet it cannot be without them; they are, as we said before, its essential properties; and if it could be supposed to lose those properties, it would cease to be a sun.

The several similitudes which the ancients used to illustrate this matter, manifestly show, that they never dreamed of the Son's being created. Those similitudes are all of them low, and infinitely short of what they are intended to represent. Some of them are too coarse, and such as might better have been spared. But writers are not always upon their guard. They had a pious design in adapting their comparisons to the very meanest capacities. The comparisons of fountain and stream, root and

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“Why is one God set forth in persons three?

“In holy writ thus known is he.

“That *three* are *one*, what reason can us teach?

“God is above all human reach.

“Can it by no similitude be shown?

“The sun, light, heat are *three*, yet *one*.”

branch, body and effluvia, light and heat, fire and flame, &c. served more particularly to signify the consubstantiality. Those of mind and thought, light and splendour, were more particularly calculated to denote coeternity, abstracted from the consideration of consubstantiality.\*

Now, apply all this, not by way of proof, but by way of illustration; by way of aiding our conceptions of the Divine Being, and we shall find there is a wonderful similitude. The Father is the Fountain of the Godhead. The Son and Holy Spirit spring from him, and depend upon him. He depends not upon them, but they upon him. He springs not from them, but they derive their being from him. If it could be supposed that the Father were annihilated, the Son and Spirit could no longer exist, they would be annihilated likewise. But as the Father is independent of the Son and Spirit, and they are absolutely dependent upon him, as the fountain of the Deity, so neither can he be without them. They naturally and essentially proceed from him, as the light and heat naturally and essentially proceed from the Sun.—The Father cannot be without the Son and Spirit, any more than the Sun can be without its essential properties. The Father was everlastingly a Father, the Son everlastingly a Son, and the Holy Ghost everlastingly a Spirit. So that though the Father is the Fountain of the Deity, yet all the Three are undivided, inseparable, coequal and coeternal together.

Tertullian illustrates the procession of the Son from the Father by several comparisons, which serve, indeed, to convey some light into the subject, but yet fall infinitely short of a just and adequate representation:—The Word, says he, was always in the Father, as he saith, *I am in the Father*. John xiv. 10. And the Word was always with God, as it is written, *And the word was with God*; John i. 1. and never was separated from the Father, or another from the Father, because *I and the Father are one*. John x. 30. This assertion will be a defence of the truth, the guardian of the Unity, by which we declare the Son to be deduced from the Father, but

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\* Waterland's first and second Defences, passim.

not separated. For as even the Paraclete teacheth, God put forth his Word as a root puts forth the stem, and a fountain the river, and the Sun a ray; for these several species are the extensions of the substances from which they proceed. Nor should I scruple to call the fruit the son of the root; a river the son of the fountain, and a ray the son of the Sun; because every origin is a parent; and every thing which is brought forth from an origin, is a progeny: much more the Word of God, who hath even with propriety received the name of the Son. Yet neither is the fruit sundered from the root, nor the river from the fountain, nor the ray from the Sun, so neither the Word from God. Therefore, according to the manner of these examples, I profess that I call God and his Word, the Father and his Son, two. For both the root and stem are two things, but conjoined; and the fountain and river are specifically two things, but not divided; and the Sun and ray are two forms, but cohering together. It is necessary, that whatsoever proceeds shall be second to that from which it proceeds, but not that it shall be therefore separate. But where there is a second, there are two; and where there is a third, there are three. But the Spirit is third from God, and the Son, as the fruit from the stem is a third from the root, and a stream from a river a third from the fountain, and a gleam from the ray a third from the Sun. There is yet no alienation from the radical source from which it deduces its peculiarities. So the Trinity, running down from the Father by compacted and connected degrees, in no wise opposes the monarchy, while it supports the state of the dispensation.\*

Take another illustration of this mysterious and incomprehensible doctrine. It is said, when God created man he made him in his own image and likeness. And from the history of creation it is pretty clear, that each of the eternal Three was concerned in that great undertaking. May not something more then be meant than is usually supposed, when God said, *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness?* As the Holy Trinity was engaged in the creation of our natures, may we not

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\* Adv. Prax. cap. 2.

from these expressions expect to find a lively representation of that Trinity in those natures? Whether it was designed or not, it is certain there is a striking illustration of the doctrine of the Trinity, both in our souls and bodies. I say illustration, because there cannot be an exact resemblance.

The body, for instance, consists of length, breadth, and thickness. These three properties are all essential to matter. We cannot destroy one without destroying the whole : nor can we by any means make its essential properties either more or less. Here, then, as well as in the Sun, are three and one. Not three and one in the same respect, for that, as was before observed, would be a contradiction ; but three properties and one essence, and this is no contradiction.

The soul of man, likewise, is another lively image of the unity of nature and the plurality of Persons in the Deity : for it consists of three essential faculties ; the understanding, the memory, and the will.

Grotius represents the powers of the mind nearly in the same manner :

May we not some such thing in mankind see ?

LIFE, REASON, WILL, in one are three.

Are Father, Son and Spirit equal? they

With equal might one sceptre sway.

Dr. Francis Gregory, in his Divine Antidote, speaking upon the difficulty of comprehending the doctrine of the Trinity, says, the resurrection of the dead is a doctrine attended with such intricacies, and so many difficulties, that human reason scarcely knoweth how to admit it for a certain truth, though, indeed it be so. In Paul's time it was thought to be a thing incredible, and Celsus styles it in Origen a thing impossible, and yet we believe, not only that it may, but must be. Now, as there are some things in nature, which are looked upon as types, emblems, and representations of the resurrection ; so likewise are there some instances in nature, which, though they cannot be urged as proofs for the certainty, yet may serve as useful illustrations, to help our weak apprehensions, and somewhat facilitate our belief, as to the possibility of the Trinity. As for instance : There is



in every living man a rational, a sensitive, and a vegetative soul; and yet the soul of man is but one: so here, there is in the Deity a Father, a Son, and a Holy Ghost, and yet the Deity is but one. Only here is the difference; reason, sense and vegetation are but three essential and distinct faculties, or powers, of one and the same soul; whereas Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are three essential and distinct subsistences in one and the same Godhead; and for the belief of this, the scripture is our only authentic warrant.\*

The understanding may be considered as the leading, father faculty, the memory and the will as dependent. They are all equally necessary to the existence of a human soul, but yet absolutely distinct. The understanding is not the memory, neither the memory the will; nor is the will either the understanding or the memory.—Without the understanding there can be no memory, and without both there can be no will, nor can either the memory or the will exist without first supposing the understanding. So the soul of man, quite as well as the Holy Trinity, may be called one in three and three in one, all coequal and coessential. Destroy one and you destroy the whole.

These two illustrations, from the soul and body of man, are pursued more at large by Leslie, in his Socinian Controversy discussed; a work which every man should read carefully, and either answer, or think himself capable of answering, before he rejects the doctrine of the Holy and Undivided Trinity. I confess, however, that, in my judgment, no man ever did, or ever can, fairly answer what that gentleman has written upon this subject. A man of learning and ingenuity may cavil with such a writer, and treat him with ridicule and contempt; he may possibly overturn some of his weaker positions; but he can no more give him a fair, solid answer, such as ought to satisfy a reasonable man, competent to judge, than he can prove that two and two do not make four. Mr. Hammon can prove there is no God—Voltaire and Paine can prove that the Bible is all a lie—Dr. Priestley that Jesus

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\* Page 248.

Christ was a mere man, and Paul an inconclusive reasoner—but how ? by what arguments ?

The same Mr. Leslie hath given us a summary of his reasoning upon the doctrine of the Trinity, in a letter to Mr. Gildon, the celebrated Deist, who had been converted to Christianity by reading that Gentleman's book, entitled, *A Short Method with the Deists* : and as it may afford satisfaction to some persons, who might not otherwise have an opportunity of seeing it, I will transcribe the substance of it in this place :—We must acknowledge, says this great man, that there are many things in the Divine Nature far out of the reach of reason : for how can finite comprehend infinite ? Who can think what eternity is ? a duration without beginning, or succession of parts or time ! Who can so much as imagine or frame any idea of a being neither made by itself, nor by any other ! of omnipresence ! of a boundless immensity.

Yet all this reason obliges us to allow, as the necessary consequences of a first cause.

And where any thing is established upon the full proof of reason, there ten thousand objections or difficulties, though we cannot answer them, are of no force at all to overthrow it. Nothing can do that, but to refute those reasons upon which it is established. Till then, the truth and certainty of the thing remain unshaken, though we cannot explain it, nor solve the difficulties that arise from it.

And if it is so upon the point of reason, much more upon that of revelation, where the subject matter is above our reason, and could never have been found out by it.

All to be done in that case, is, to satisfy ourselves of the truth of the fact, that such things were revealed of God, and are no imposture.

And as to the contradiction alledged of three being one, it is no contradiction, unless it be said, that three are one in the self-same respect : for in divers respects, there is no sort of difficulty, that one may be three, or three thousand ; as one army may consist of many thousands, and yet it is but one army. There is but one human nature, and yet there are multitudes of persons who partake of that nature.

Now, it is not said, that the three Persons in the Divine Nature, are one Person; that would be a contradiction: but it is said, that the three Persons are one in nature. They are not three and one in the same respect; they are three as to Persons, and one as to nature. Here is no contradiction.

Again; that may be a contradiction in one nature, which is not so in another: for example; It is a contradiction that a man can go two yards or miles as soon as one, because two is one and another one; yet this is no contradiction to sight, which can reach a star as soon as the top of the chimney, and the sun darts his rays in a few moments from heaven to earth. But more than all these is the motion of thought, to which no distance of place is any interruption, which can arrive at Japan as soon as a yard's distance; and can run into the immensity of possibilities.

Now, there are no words possible, whereby to give any notion or idea of sight to a man born blind; and consequently to reconcile the progress of sight or light to him from being an absolute contradiction; because he can measure it no otherwise than according to the motion of legs or arms, for he knows no other: therefore we cannot charge that as a contradiction to the Incomprehensible Nature, of being three and one, though we found it to be so in our nature; which we do not, because, as before said, they are not three and one in the same respect.

Now, let us consider further, that though there is no comparison betwixt finite and infinite, yet we have nearer resemblances of the three and one in God, than there is of sight to a man born blind: for there is nothing in any of the other four senses that has any resemblance at all to that of seeing, or that can give such a man any notion whatever of it.

But we find in our own nature, which is said to be made after the image of God, a very near resemblance of his Holy Trinity, and of the different operations of each of the Divine Persons.

For example; To know a thing present, and to remember what is past, and to love or hate, are different opera-

tions of our mind, and performed by different faculties of it. Of these, the understanding is the father faculty, and gives being to things, as to us; for what we know not, is to us as if it were not. This answers to creation. From this faculty proceeds the second, that of memory, which is a preserving of what the understanding has created to us. Then the third faculty is that of the will, which loves or hates, and proceeds from both the others; for we cannot love or hate what is not first created by the understanding, and preserved to us by the memory.

And though these are different faculties, and their operations different; that the second proceeds from the first, or is begotten by it; and the third proceeds from the first and second in conjunction, so that one is before the other, in order of nature, yet not in time; for they are all congenial, and one is as soon in the soul as the other: and yet they make not three souls, but one soul: and though their operations are different, and the one proceeds from the other, yet no one can act without the other, and they all concur to every act of each: for, in understanding and remembering there is a concurrent act of the will, to consent to such understanding or remembering; so that no one can act without the other; in which sense, no one is before or after the other; nor can any of them be or exist without the other.

But what we call faculties in the soul, we call Persons in the Godhead; because there are personal actions attributed to each of them; as that of sending, and being sent, to take flesh, to be born, and the like.

And we have no other word whereby to express it. We speak it after the manner of men; nor could we understand, if we heard any of those unspeakable words which express the Divine Nature in its proper essence; therefore, we must make allowances, and great ones, when we apply words of our nature to the Infinite and Eternal Being. We must not argue strictly and philosophically from them, more than from God's being said to repent, to be angry, and the like. They are words in condescension to our weak capacities, and without which, we could not understand.

But this I say, that there are nearer resemblances afforded to us of this ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity, than there is between one of our outward senses and another; than there is to a blind man of colours, or of the motion of light or sight. And a contradiction in the one will not infer a contradiction in the other; though it is impossible to be solved, as in the instance before given of a man born blind, till we come to know both natures distinctly.

And if we had not the experience of the different faculties of the mind, the contradiction would appear irreconcilable to all our philosophy, how three could be one, each distinct from the other, yet but one soul: one proceeding from, or being begot by the other, and yet all coeval, and none before or after the other. And as to the difference between faculties and persons, substance and subsistence, it is a puzzling piece of philosophy. And though we give not a distinct subsistence to a faculty, it has an existence; and one faculty can no more be another, than one person can be another. So that the case seems to be alike in both, as to what concerns our present difficulty of three and one: besides what before is said, that by the word person, when applied to God, for want of a proper word whereby to express it, we must mean something infinitely different from personality among men. And therefore from a contradiction in the one, suppose it granted, we cannot charge a contradiction in the other, unless we understand it as well as the other: for how else can we draw the parallel?

What a vain thing is our philosophy, when we would measure the Incomprehensible Nature by it? when we find it nonplust in our nature, and that in many instances? If I am all in one room, is it not a contradiction that any part of me should be in another room? Yet it was a common saying among philosophers, that the soul is all in all, and all in every part of the body. How is the same individual soul present at one and the same time, to actuate the distant members of the body, without either multiplication or division of the soul? Is there any thing in the body can bear any resemblance to this, with-

out a manifest contradiction? Nay, even as to bodies, is there any thing more a self-evident principle, than that the cause must be before the effect? Yet the light and heat of the Sun are as old as the Sun: and supposing ~~the Sun~~ to be eternal, they would be as eternal.

And as light and heat are of the nature of the Sun, and as the three faculties, before mentioned, are of the nature of the soul, so that the soul could not be a soul, if it wanted any of them; so may we, from small things to great, apprehend without any contradiction, that the three Persons are of the very nature and essence of the Deity, and so of the same substance with it; and though one proceeding from the other, as the faculties of the soul do, yet that all three are consubstantial, coeternal, and of necessary existence as God is; for that these three are God; and God is these three; as understanding, memory, and a will are a soul; and a soul is understanding, memory, and will.\*

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\* Leslie to Gildon.