



A N

ENQUIRY

INTO THE

NATURE and IMPORTANCE

OF THE

Trinitarian Doctrine.





A N

E N Q U I R Y

I N T O T H E

N A T U R E and I M P O R T A N C E

O F T H E

Trinitarian Doctrine.

It was the design of the former Discourse to consider the nature of *speculative* doctrines; and to shew that the belief of such Truths may be required of us by God. We are next to enquire into the nature of the Doctrine relating to the *Trinitarian* Controversy, whether it *be* so purely *speculative*, or *notional*, as our Adversaries represent it. We shall industriously avoid repeating what has been already offered, any farther than our present subject makes it necessary. Thus much I must desire the Reader to remember, that by *Notions*, or

Speculations, they understand such *Truths* as have no connection with *practice*, such as are confined to the mind; of which kind they imagin the *Trinity*, and other *mysterious* points of *Christianity*, to be; thence inferring the *Innocency* of *Error*, or *Ignorance* concerning them. This is the Scheme upon which so great a stress has been laid; and yet, were it capable of being supported by the clearest and strongest arguments, after all it will not serve the cause for the sake of which it was invented. For, tho' we should grant, that *Notions* or *Speculations*, for the reasons alledged by them, are not capable of being made *terms* of *Salvation*, they have not considered distinctly, or so much as attempted to consider, the *principal* question; which is, whether the Doctrine relating to the *Trinity*, be such a point of *meer Speculation*? Wherefore, it might be thought sufficient, in answer to what they have said upon the subject of *speculative* doctrines, to deny that the *Trinitarian* doctrine is intirely *speculative*, or confined to the mind, because it has a *necessary connection with practice*, to which *Speculation* is directly opposed. A point so absolutely necessary to the purposes of their Scheme we might reasonably require them to prove, before they can be thought justly to deserve any answer from us; they go upon this supposition, that the *Trinity* and other *mysterious* doctrines of *Christianity* are purely SPECULATIVE; if we deny

deny their *postulatum* (and we have as much right to *deny*, as they have to *assert*, without proof) their whole fabrick falls to the ground. But, tho' the labour of the proof lies properly upon them, I shall offer a few things to their consideration, concerning the nature of the *Trinitarian* doctrine, to shew, that it is a matter of *practice*, as well as *Speculation*; a point which greatly affects the Scheme of Christianity, and consequently our eternal Salvation.

THAT *Christian worship* is a *practical* matter, will hardly be denied by these *speculative* writers; neither need I here distinguish between *mental*, and *bodily* worship, between the *internal* addresses of our minds, and such as are accompanied with *external* actions: because *both* kinds, if *either* of them, will be allowed to have a connection with the doctrine of the *Trinity*. That *Christian worship* is connected with the belief of the doctrine of the *Trinity*, may easily be demonstrated from principles agreed on by both sides. I think, I may venture to call it an *allowed* principle, That *God* is to be *worshipped*; from whence it must necessarily follow, that if there be three co-equal *distinct persons* in the *Godhead*, and it be sufficiently revealed that there *are*, they have, *each* of them, an *equal* claim to our *worship*. Were there no particular command in the *Gospel* for the worship of the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, yet, whoever believes them to be *truly* and *properly* *God*, the

one God with the *Father*, he must think himself obliged to worship them *equally* with *God the Father*. This would be a deduction, tho' *human*, yet necessary and obvious. The Argument is short and easy.

OUR God is to be worshipped by us.

THE Son and Holy Ghost, with the Father, are our God:

THEREFORE the Son and Holy Ghost, with the Father, are to be worshipped by us.

IF the *premises* be revealed, *viz.* That *God* is to be worshipped, and that the *Son* and *Holy Ghost* are *God*, the *conclusion* is undeniably clear, that the Son and Holy Ghost are *equally* intitled to worship: which shews, that a doctrine, or practice, may be *necessary* to *Salvation*, tho' it be not contained in *express* words in *Scripture*. For, a *deduction* from *express* words, where it is clear and obvious, may as properly be said to be *revealed*, as the *express Truth* from whence the *deduction* is so clearly and easily drawn. Whatever God has given us a sufficient capacity of *knowing*, such a Truth, in respect to all the purposes of a Revelation, and to our obligation to the belief of it, he has *sufficiently revealed*, and may require the belief of it, as a necessary term of his favour and acceptance. I shall not here enlarge upon this observation, but my Argument gave me a fair opportunity of hinting it, and our Adversaries have made it very seasonable.

NOT that the point of *worship*, especially in respect to the *Son*, rests altogether upon the authority of any human *deductions*, but is supported both by *example* and *precept*. I do not intend to enter into the particulars of this matter (which have been so fully examined by more able hands) tho' I am obliged to mention them. I shall refer the Reader to the 7th of the *Acts* and the 59th Verse; the 3d of the 1st *Epistle* to the *Thess.* and the 11th Verse, and the 10th of *Rom.* and the 13th Verse; where he will find the *Invocation* of *Christ* both *practised* and *recommended*. At the 5th of the *Revelations* and the 10th Verse: 'The *Lamb* of *God* is declared to be *worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory*. At *Heb.* 1st and the 6th there is an express command to worship him: *And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the Angels of God worship him*. From the Authorities now cited, we might prove, that the same *sort* or *degree* of *divine worship* is due to the *Son* which we pay to the *Father*: but my design obliges me only to prove, what has been generally *allowed*, that the *Son* is to be *worshipped*. Now, if *Christian worship* be thus *connected* with the doctrine of the *Trinity*, and if worship be a matter of *practice*, then the doctrine of the *Trinity* is not a point of *mere Speculation*, confined to the *mind*; consequently their *Scheme* about *speculative doctrines*

doctrines can be of no service in a controversy concerning the duty and importance of believing the doctrine of the *Trinity*.

BUT it seems, it is pretended by some, that it is *lawful*, but not *necessary*, to worship the *Son* and the *Holy Ghost*; a thing perfectly *indifferent*, whether it be done, or omitted by us. This is a notion entirely novel, unscriptural, and absurd. The *Arians* have the credit of the discovery, they being the first who ever taught, that *divine worship* is an *indifferent* action.

THE *Heathens* were directed, either by the light of *Nature*, or by *Tradition*, to pay *divine worship*; and, tho' they were many times mistaken in the *proper object* of their worship, and paid it where it was not *due*, yet they always considered it as a matter of *Duty*, a *Tribute due* to their God, or Gods, and not as a *civil compliment*, that might be omitted without any *injury* or *offence*.

THE *Jewish* Law did not make any alteration in respect to the *general duty*, but only instructed the people in the right manner of performing it, and directed them to the *proper object* of their worship. The world *before* paid *divine worship*; and whether they paid it to *one* or to *more* Beings, they paid it always as a *debt due* to them. The Law of *Moses* instructed the *Jews* to whom this *debt of Homage* was due, and after what manner it was to be paid; not
to

to *many*, but to *one* God, the Lord of Heaven and Earth. They were absolutely *commanded* to worship the *true* God, and as absolutely *forbidden* to worship any *other* Being; because divine worship is God's *rightful claim*, arising from the relation we stand in towards him; and therefore, if we neglect to give him That homage to which he has a *natural Right*; or if we give his *Right* to *another*, to whom it is not due, we *injure* him, and are guilty of a *breach of duty*.

THE *Christian Revelation* makes still *farther* discoveries concerning the object of worship. The *Jews* were instructed, that *one* God only was the *true* God, to whom *alone* they were to direct their worship: the *Gospel* confirms That instruction, and informs us, that the *three Persons* in the sacred and ever-blessed *Trinity* are the *one true God*. The *Jews* worshipped *one* God, and *Christians* worship *three persons* in *one Godhead*. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*: This is the plain Law of *both* Covenants; but *our* Lord God is *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct persons* united in *one undivided nature*. Thus every dispensation considered *divine worship* as an *indispensable duty*, and only directed mankind to pay it to a *proper object*; not leaving them *at liberty* either to give, or *with-hold* it at *pleasure*. That the *true* God has a *Right* to be worshipped; that it is our *duty* to give unto him *That Right*; and that we *injure* and *offend* him by giving to any *other* be-

ing what he claims as due *only* to *himself*; these are truths, one would think, too obvious to be disputed. If the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, with the *Father*, be the *true God*, whom *Christians* are to worship, then they have a *Right* to our worship; if they be *not* the true God, then they have *no Right*: again, if they have a *Right* to our worship, we ought in point of *duty* to give it; if they have *not* a *Right*, we ought not to give it them, because we thereby *injure* the *true God*, who is justly *intitled* to our worship, and has declared, that he will not *give his glory to another*. Upon This state of the case, the *Arians* must either give up the *lawfulness* of worshipping the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, or allow the *necessity* of doing it. From hence also, I might shew the absurdity of their distinction between *Subordinate*, and *Ultimate* worship, because the *object* of *Christian* worship being only the *one true God*, the *same kind*, and *degree* of divine worship must be due to *each person* in the *Godhead*. An *unity* of *nature* in the *object* must have an *unity* of *worship*; and if there be not an *unity* of *nature* in the *three persons*; if either *Son*, or *Holy Ghost*, be not, with the *Father*, the *one true God*, they ought not to be worshipped at all, because *all* divine worship is *appropriated* to the *one true God*. But at present I am only to prove in *general*, that worship is due to the *Son* and *Holy Ghost*, which is the necessary consequence of their concessions concerning the *lawfulness* of worshipping them.

FROM

FROM what has been offered I think it appears undeniably true, that the doctrine of the *Trinity* is not a matter of *mere speculation*, because it has a necessary connection with *Christian worship*; that it is not a point of an *indifferent* nature, but of great *moment* and *importance* to the honour of God, and the salvation of Christians. For, however difficult it may be thought to state the notion of *essential* or *fundamental* doctrines, so as to determine positively upon every particular instance that may come under debate among Christians; yet there can be no doubt whether it be a point of very considerable consequence so to regulate the unity of the *Christian worship*, as that there may be no excess on one side, nor defect on the other.

WHEN I first entered upon this subject, I had thoughts of considering how much more effectually the purposes of Christianity seem to be answered upon the *orthodox*, than upon the *Socinian*, or *Arian* Scheme; in that it heightens the love of God in the Redemption of Mankind, and best agrees with the several passages of Scripture relating to it; in that it is more satisfactory to our guilty fears of punishment for our sins, lays a surer and more certain foundation of hope of pardon and eternal life, and raises a greater abhorrence of the guilt of Sin, which could not be remitted without the payment of such an inestimable price by way of satisfaction: I say all these purposes are thought by many great and good men, to be more ef-

fectually answered, by supposing the *divine nature* it self to be *personally* united to the *human nature*, for the work of our *Redemption*, than if our *blessed Redeemer* were only a *mere Creature*, however excellent and exalted. But, as I was willing to advance nothing, if possible, that may be liable to be disputed, I chose rather to put the cause upon the single point of *worship*, against which, I think, there cannot lie any reasonable objection.

I DID not intend to have detained the Reader any longer, but I find my self obliged to take notice of a *defence* of the *Innocency of Error asserted*, wherein the Author would be thought to *disown* the *Scheme* which he advanced in that discourse. He says in This defence (which indeed I never saw till after I had printed off my observations upon his Discourse) p. 7. *That it was not his design or thought, that all sorts of Error, except those which immediately relate to practice, are unblamable*; and he introduces the present Bishop of *Sarum* challenging the learned and excellent Bishop of *Oxford*, to name *one serious Author* who has laid down any such position: a challenge not to be accepted without manifest disadvantage to the person who accepts it! for, had *twenty* writers instead of *one* been named, not *one* of them, perhaps, would have been allowed the character of a *serious* writer. And as to the above cited *declaration*, of his Lordship's *Friend*, by the help of one single word, *properly* placed (I will not say with

with design) the *defender* may still maintain the opinion, with which he is charged, tho' he *seems* here to have given it up. The charge against this writer is, that he asserts the innocency of *merely speculative Errors*, such Errors as have *no connection with practice*. In answer to it, he says, it was not his thought, *that all sorts of Error, except those which IMMEDIATELY relate to practice are unblamable*. Thus by changing the state of the question he may, as far as I can tell, only have *concealed* his opinion, instead of *declaring* it. An *influence*, and an *immediate influence*, are not equivalent expressions. A Doctrine may *relate to practice*, tho' not *immediately*; it may have *connection with practice*, tho' a more *distant and remote* one; consequently This writer may be of the opinion, that *all Errors are innocent*, except those which some way or other have a *relation to practice*, tho' he does not maintain the innocency of *all* such Errors as do not *immediately* relate to it. The general opinion therefore, with which he is charged, he is still at full liberty to hold without any contradiction to the declaration, which he has since made in his defence. But let his *real* meaning be what it will, the *publick* is no farther concerned with a man's opinions, than to take them from the common and usual acceptation of his expressions. If a writer *expresses* one thing, and *means* another, the *world* is not in fault for misunderstanding him, but *he* for writing before he is capable of conveying his meaning intelligibly;

bly; and the Errors, into which he may be the occasion of leading ignorant or careless readers, are no less dangerous than if they were his *own real sentiments*. This writer, in the above-mentioned discourse, has frequently asserted, in the most express terms imaginable, that *Errors merely speculative, or confined to the mind*, which elsewhere he calls *notions*, in opposition to such as have *an influence upon practice*, are, and must be *innocent*. This general position he has over and over again laid down, and assigned reasons in support of it. Truths *speculative* and *practical*, he sets in *opposition* to one another; but this *distinction* is wholly destroyed, in respect to the *innocency* or *guilt* of such Errors, if the *innocency*, or *guilt* of them be owing *wholly* to something else, without any regard at all to their *speculative*, or *practical* nature. And after an opinion so plainly expressed, shall it be a sufficient vindication of *himself*, or satisfaction to the *world*, that he has in the same discourse laid down *contrary* positions? I am sensible, he *has* advanced *contradictory* opinions; whether *ignorantly* or *designedly*, it is impossible for me to determine; however, This *inconsistency* does not hinder the propagation of a *beloved Scheme*, but only serves for an *evasive defence*, whenever it is attacked. This, I say, has been the conduct of *some* writers, when they wanted to guard a *novel*, or *dangerous* opinion against publick censure. As to *This* writer, if he pleases, he shall be allowed to plead *ignorance*, but then he must be contented to take

the *disgrace* that usually attends it; and not attempt to throw it upon those who understand his writings according to the known and settled acceptation and construction of words. He has plainly expressed an opinion, which he does not *believe*, or does not care to *own*: the *publick*, not excepting some of his particular admirers, *did*, and do *still* understand him in the same sense, which I apprehended to be his meaning, after the most careful and impartial perusal of his book: the notions contained in it appeared to me to be of a very destructive tendency: I have seriously examined, and I hope fully confuted them: if after all, the publick has mistaken his meaning, I can only say, either *he* could not express himself intelligibly, or *they* want common apprehension.

BUT if these writers do *really* mean no more, than that *all involuntary* Errors are *unblamable*, that a man cannot be *punished* for what he cannot *help*, any more than a *stone* is accountable for not having a power of *self-motion*, is there any discovery in *all This*? Is it for *This only* that they are celebrated, extolled, rewarded? that their performances are so industriously recommended and circulated by the *party*? Is it for the denial of any thing *like This* that they are so angry with those who are called the *Orthodox Clergy*, that is, the *Body* of the Clergy of the *Church of England*? In our turns we have a right to call upon them to name the Authors of any credit and reputation among us, who have
asserted,

asserted, that *Hereticks*, or *Schismaticks*, tho' they have used *all possible* means of information, may justly be *punished*. In respect to their *future* condition, we only say, they have not a *right* to *That particular degree* of happiness which is promised in the *Gospel*, because they do not perform the *conditions* upon which it is promised; and because they can claim a Title to it *only* from an *express promise*. Not to confer a *favour*, does not come under the proper notion of *punishment*, unless there be a claim of *right* to that favour, and then it ceases to be a *favour*. If, for reasons of wisdom and government, God thinks it fit to inflict any *Evil* upon his Creatures, which he had a *right* to inflict; or if he deprives them of any *Good*, or with-holds it from them, when they could not claim any *right* to it, he does not *punish* them, but only refuses to *grant* them certain benefits, which are acts of *Bounty*. So likewise, with regard to the *laws* of the *land*, they are not *punished* for disbelieving any of the *established* doctrines, or for *separating* themselves from the *established* worship, but only excluded from certain *privileges*, which the *Civil Magistrate* has the *discretionary* disposal of: for we apprehend, the *Legislature* does no *injury* to any *Subjects* by depriving them of *privileges*, which it has a right to give, or to with-hold, according to discretion; and which it is in duty obliged to give, or with-hold, according as the ends of Government shall seem to require.