

X 12  
A  
S E R M O N

OF THE

*Credibility of the Mysteries*

OF THE

CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

Preached before a

LEARNED AUDIENCE.

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3  
Nobilissimo Viro,  
D. ROBERTO BOYLE.

Vere ac Solide Pietatis,

Summæ eruditionis,

Instaurandæ sanioris Philosophiæ, <sup>philosophia</sup> <sup>sanior philosophia</sup> <sup>humana</sup>

Optimè de literis tam Sacris quam

Humanioribus merendi

Famâ longè celeberrimo,

Magno ævi Exemplo & Ornamento :

T. S.

Hanc Concionem ( unâ cum Appendice )

coram Academicis Oxoniensibus,

solenni S. Marci Evangelistæ Festo,

In sacello Collegii B. Mariæ Magdalensæ

Superiori anno habitam,

In debite observantiæ ΜνημόCυρον,

Lubens merito dedicat consecratque.

Annus.

Annus superior  
i. y<sup>e</sup> last year.

# ERRATA.

P. 7, l. 10. — *ten*, p. 16, l. 12, *belief*, p. 17, l. 7, *the ordin*, l. 23, *ingenious*, p. 21, l. 24, for *is*, read *his*, p. 26, l. 10, *revealed*, p. 28, l. 15, *when*, p. 34, l. 14, *belongs*, p. 42, l. 5, for *I*, read *we*, p. 45, l. 12, *the only*, p. 48, l. 24, — *iv*,  
The Appendix refers to Page 47.



## A S E R M O N

Preached before a

Learned Audience.

1 TIM. III. the former part of the 16. verse.

*Without Controversie great is the Mystery of  
Godliness.*



OW much the Doctrine of  
Christianity tends to the im-  
provement of Reason and  
Learning, how it has brought  
into the World a better and  
more certain knowledg of God and of our  
selves, how it has advanced the common no-  
tices of nature, and has chased away with the  
clear evidences of its truth those thick shades

B

of

*1 Tim. 3-16.  
mystery godliness*

## The Credibility of the Mysteries

of error, that had darkned the understanding, and has removed all those prejudices, that were taken up from sense and a very partial and deceitful observation of things, may be fully demonstrated by comparing the former estate of Mankind, before the coming of *Christ* in the flesh, with the present, wherever it is received in its truth and power. Men before were led by opinion and conjecture and fancy only, as to matters of Religion and the concerns of another World : They had fears upon them indeed of a divine justice, that would revenge the violation of the law of nature either here or hereafter ; and a reflection upon the strange traverses and difficulties of life had taught them to expect another life after this : but their eyes were dim however, and they could not see far into futurity ; they could have no clear deductions of particular truths for want of a right knowledg of true and certain principles : hence it was, that they were so inconstant and wavering, and knew not well where or what to fix on. But *Christ* by his appearance and manifesting the will of *God* to us, bath brought life and immorta-

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lity to light through the Gospel, and children and persons of an ordinary reach and capacity may now easily apprehend those things, that is, in reference to *God* and his attributes, the misery we are in by sin, the means of our recovery from this woful estate of life, the immortality of the Soul, and the like ; which before those great *Philosophers*, notwithstanding all their vaunts and quests after learning, notwithstanding they set up Schools and were ambitious to give names to Sects, had but a very imperfect knowledg of.

But while these truths were received by those, that were willing to be taught, and to submit themselves to the dictates of reason, and convictions of miracles, which were added to give all possible satisfaction to the understanding, others, who were resolv'd before hand not to be convinced, who had rather remain in their ignorance and idolatry and their sins, then be converted to a new Religion, and reduced to such strictness of life, as that requires, from their debaucheries and brutish pleasures, who had rather fall down before a Statue or a Picture, because their Fathers had

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done so before them, and because it was the established Religion of their Country, than acknowledg and adore a *Crucified Saviour*, reject it upon the account of the *Mysteries of Faith*, without ever examining the weight of the arguments, that would have enforced them upon their belief: They could not in the mean while but acknowledg the happy and glorious change, that *Christianity* had wrought in the World, how much it exceeds and goes beyond all the morality of the wisest and best Lawgivers and Founders of Republicks, how it not only laies down rules for the right ordering of life, but furnishes its votaries with a power to practise them; not only shews us a way to walk in, but takes us by the hand and leads us in it: but the difficulties, it seems, that are to be met with in conceiving some of its mysteries, offended them. This was their pretence and their plea for their infidelity; they would have demonstration for every thing, they would be taught and convinced by Syllogism, their Pride and their Self-conceit and the opinion they had of their own learning would not permit them to believe.

They

*of the Christian Religion.*

They made their understanding the measure of all truth, and what did not suit with those narrow and low principles they had taken up, was scornfully rejected by them. *The Jews*, saies the *Apostle*, 1 Cor. 1. 22, 23. require a Sign, and the *Greeks seek after Wisdom*; but we preach *Christ crucified*, unto the *Jews* a stumbling-block, and to the *Greeks foolishness*. But how irrational was the demand of both? for what greater sign could there be to the *Jews*, than the fulfilling of all the *Prophecies* in the person of *Christ*, even to the minute circumstances of his life and death, and those mighty miracles that shewed forth themselves in him? what greater wisdom could the *Philosophers* pretend to or desire, than the wisdom of *God in a mystery*, as it is called, 1 Cor. 11. 7. than those clear discoveries of the divine nature and the essential perfections of the *God-head*, than the admirable contrivances of the redemption of mankind by the sufferings and death of *Christ*, the Son of God, than the ways and means of recovering the dignity of our nature, and of living here like men, and of living hereafter like Angels? Such a wisdom, as will not only gratifie our earnest desires and pursuits



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want of reason in those, who make use of them.

But now after so many myriads of Converts to the *Christian Faith*, after the attestation and consent of so many ages, who have examined severely the principles, on which it is founded, who would expect that any one should dare now to question the truth of it again, that men who have been baptized into it, should abjure and renounce it, should no longer acknowledg Christ their Saviour, should deny him to be God, or that he had any commission from Heaven to institute a new Religion, should act over the part of the Jews, and arraign the Son of God as an impostor, and side with the Heathen Philosophers against Christianity, as a doctrine not to be endured and embraced, and make use of their very arguments for the defence of their infidelity? But we know whence the malice and the infidelity of these

Theists proceed; they have abandoned themselves to a wicked life, they are immersed in sensual pleasures, which they make the only end of life. They are convinced, that *Christianity*, which is a *Doctrine according to Godli-*

ness

## of the Christian Religion.

ness is not consistent with such practices, which yet even nature and right reason utterly condemn.

The *Mysteries of Faith* do not so much trouble these men, as the severity of its commands. These they cannot away with, their lusts help them to arguments against the other, and they content themselves with little pieces of Sophistry, and think to vindicate the ill course of life, they have taken up, this way. Natural conscience and an ordinary reflexion upon the works of nature will not permit them, it may be, to deny a *God*, though they live, as though there were none: They will acknowledg him, it may be too in a good humour, the Creatour of the World, but not the Judge and Governour of it; they look upon themselves, as only born to gratifie their sensual appetite; They declare equally, for a liberty of living and thinking as they please. They will have no restraint laid upon their understanding, or their lives. *Christianity* is too strict, and therefore too difficult for them; They may have the wit perchance, but not the morality of the *Philosophers*, whose very lives notwithstanding

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withstanding

Theists.

They are not so much  
denied to be a god or a  
saviour or he had any  
commission from heaven  
to institute a new religion  
Their infidelity proceeds  
from their abandoning  
themselves to a wicked life,  
in which they are immersed  
in sensual pleasures  
which they make the only  
end of life.

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withstanding will condemn them as much as the *Christian doctrine*. Their evil education and custome and prepossession, those great hinderances of truth, made their refusing *Christianity* the less inexcusable upon the account of its mysteries, while they acknowledged the rules and institutions of it to be according to the highest reason, and the exaltation of the humane nature, while these men pretend its mysteries to be therefore incredible, because the rules of it, which thwart their lusts so much, are so severe. Little or no good I know is to be done upon these men by perswasion or argument, of which they are scarce capable, who turn all things into Burlesque and ridicule: They it seems are too witty (for so they call their boldness and want of judgment) either to understand or embrace the principles of Christianity; but their ill lives shew, that were they as clear as the principles of Geometry, so long as a strict and holy life is as necessary and essential to the being of a *Christian*, as a right and sound faith, they would except and cavil at them, and at last reject them; and if the *Gospel* be *bid*, be esteemed

after

## of the Christian Religion.

after so many clear and undoubted revelations, after such evident proofs and convictions, an obscure and incredible doctrine, *it is bid to them that are lost*, or rather, ἐν τοῖς ἀπολλυμένοις, *in them that are lost*; it is only so to such desperate and obstinate wretches, whom reason it self cannot satisfy, *in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.* 2 Co. iv. 3, 4.

But these are wild and extravagant persons, of debauched understandings and lives, and only to be confuted by the severity of laws; and of the two the *Christian* religion has suffered more by the secret underminings of *Hereticks*, than by their bold attacks. These are the more dangerous enemies, who deny the truths and mysteries of it, upon a pretence of wariness and caution, and go *soberly about to destroy it*. But all their objections, how plausible soever, must at last resolve into obstinacy and pride: They fancy things must be, and are, as they would have them, or else

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they

The Truth:

that the principles of truth  
are evil education,  
custome & prepossession.

Holiness.

A holy life is necessary  
to the being of a Christian.



## The Credibility of the Mysteries

they cannot be at all: They vainly suppose themselves able to search into the depths of all divine and humane knowledg, and being once prepossessed with this conceit, they grow peevish and angry because the *Christian Religion* proposes things to their belief, which they cannot grasp, and are too big for their understanding; and rather than forego this beloved *Principle*, they will destroy the *Fundamentals of Christianity*, and to apply that of

\* In *Apologetico* cap. 5. where he mentions an old decree of the *Roman Senate*, *Ne qui Deus ab Imperatore consecraretur, nisi à Senatu probatus*; and hereupon he tells us, that the Emperor *Tiberius* moved by the report of those [mighty] works, which declared the truth of our *Saviour's Divinity*, he received out of *Paul* *sine, detulit ad Senatum cum prerogativa suffragii* first though the Senate were not disposed to admit him into the number.

kind, because this seems incongruous to them; it is a difficulty, that doth puzzle their understanding; it is above the strength of their fancy; their reason, they say, tells them, this cannot be; allowing of no such thing as *faith*, which is the great duty of the *Gospel*, and forgetting, that *Christianity* is, as it is undoubtedly, the great mystery of *Godliness*.

Thus under a pretence of clearing the truth of

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of *Religion*, and making it the more easily intelligible, to *Turks and Jews*, they resist it in the true notion of it, and corrupt and destroy it; to whom fully agrees that character, which *St. Paul* gave of the followers of *Simon Magus*, *2 Tim. iii. 8.* Κατεφθαρμένοι ἔσονται, ἀδόκιμοι ὡς ἐν τοῖς πύργοις, men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith; such whose understandings are wholly vitiated and perverted, notwithstanding the great and fierce claims they laid to knowledg, as if they were the only men, that understood the will and mind of *God*; such who reject the establiſh'd truths of the *Gospel*, who have no regard to the heavenly doctrine of the *Evangelists and Apostles*, the truth of which they sealed and confirmed with their blood; but do μεθοδεύειν τὰ λόγια τῶν Κυρίων πρὸς ἰδίαν ἑρμηνείαν, to use the words of *St. \* Polycarp* in his Epistle to the *Philippians*, that is, by their fraudulent devices model the oracles of *God* according to their own fancies and lusts; who set up a new Religion, which the *Catholick Church of Christ* never knew or was

\* Ὅτι ἂν μεθοδεύειν τὰ λόγια τῶν Κυρίων πρὸς ἰδίαν ἑρμηνείαν, καὶ λέγειν μὴ ἀναγκαίον μᾶλλον καὶ ἰσχυρὸν, ὅτι οὐ συνεβόηται ὁ Θεὸς τῷ Σατανᾷ: ex editione Reverendissimi Usserii & Machani, p. 20. This perchance more particularly respects *Marcion* the heretick; for by that name he called him to his face: as we read in *Irenaeus* 3. lib. adv. haereses, cap. 3.

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acquainted with, and endeavour to destroy the faith of Christianity, and think in the mean while they have reason on their side for so doing: and how far by their arts and subtilties and plausible insinuations, by this their *slight and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive* (for it is nothing else, however blancht over and disguised with shews of sober reason) they have prevail'd upon this Age, is too sad to confider; so that now it chiefly concerns us to secure the ground-work, the principles of the doctrine of Christ, and to oppose this growing evil, to watch and stand fast in the faith, and quit our selves like men, and not to be like children, carried away with every blast and wind of doctrine, and especially of the vain doctrine of Socinus, as it will appear, when the varnish and false colours are washt off, but to be established in the truth of the holy Gospel, as the Church hath taught us to pray in the Collect of this anniversary of St. Mark.

To evince therefore the unreasonableness of their pretensions, I shall endeavour in the following discourse to make out these two particulars.

1. That the great mysteries of Religion can-

The great mysteries of Xnty are no prejudicial to its truth & it.

not

## of the Christian Religion.

not, and ought not to be any way prejudicial to the truth of it.

2. That the Christian Religion requires <sup>Xnty requires us to believe its mysteries upon just grounds.</sup> us to believe these mysteries, upon such grounds, as we cannot reject, without doing violence to our faculties, and consequently, that the rejecting and disbelieving them must be unreasonable.

1. The great mysteries of Religion cannot and ought not to be any way prejudicial to its truth. <sup>These great mysteries of Religion ought not to be prejudicial to its truth.</sup>

They who find fault with Christianity for proposing such great mysteries to our beliefs, and would have all things so plain and obvious, that they should command and force assent, should first trie their reason in solving the difficulties of nature; and if notwithstanding all their labour and toil, after the most accurate researches into the nature of sensible beings, of things that we daily see and handle, of things that seem to lie level with our understanding, and are no way disproportionable to it, they cannot pretend to a perfect knowledge of them, if the ordinary operations of nature be so abstruse, and unintelligible, and these depths are

not

mysteries.

nature.

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not to be fathomed, if her secrets are beyond the discovery of the most piercing judgment and reason; *Religion* with greater reason must be allowed to have its mysteries; there being such a vast disproportion between things relating to God and his nature, and the things of the world. The contemplation of nature is curious and useful; it is a part of the service and worship we owe to God the Greatour, to admire his wisdom and power in the beautiful frame and order of things, which is best done by enquiring into their natures and properties, into their powers and operations and qualities, by examining the curious contexture and the fitness and usefulness of their parts, and there is nothing in the whole universe, but deserves to be considered, and very much conduces to this end.

This is the business of *Philosophy*, and what contemplative minds labour in the search of, to discover and make out how things were at first made, and are still continued in their being, and to find out their peculiar virtues, whereby they produce such a variety of effects, and how they may be altered or improved for

the

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the farther use and benefit of mankind. Nothing of which can be effected, at least but very imperfectly, and in a way scarce tolerable, by acquiescing in general observations, derived from weak and slight notices, without descending to severe trials and experiments, or by relying upon the principles of *ordinary Philosophy*, that are confessedly unintelligible, and which instead of explaining nature, do but perplex and confound the understanding, and which have nothing to maintain and keep up their credit, but the authority of a name and the immoderate love of antiquity. But whatever *hypothesis* we fix upon, they who have the deepest insight into nature will be forced to confess, they see but a little way, and all that they can pretend to is but conjecture and probability, that when they may seem to arrive at some satisfaction in the order and connexion of things, it is very possible and likely, that things may be made and exert their causalities otherwise, than they suppose, be their fancy never so ingenious, and their reason never so profound and strong (for who will be so presumptuous, as to limit either the wisdom or

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power

Nature  
The only way to  
the knowledge of  
the natural world is  
to observe it

Nature lists

The mind of a naturalist  
is always ready to  
observe and record

TX  
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power of God, that he can do no more, or must do what they fancy?) that there are thousands of things, that they cannot give any satisfactory account of, and that the more they seek to comprehend the reason of things, the more they are at a loss, the more they are dissatisfied, and the effect of their study is nothing but disorder and trouble of mind.

Now if we are convinced of the weakness and insufficiency of our reason in our ordinary speculations, if it fails us, when we attempt to give an account of our selves, and the operation of our minds, and when we have to do with plain matters of sense, how unfit and unable must it be to comprehend and make out things, that stand at that infinite distance from it, to which it bears no proportion? They may as well pretend that all these great difficulties and perplexities, we meet with in the conceptions of things, should be taken away, that all men ought to be born complete Philosophers, and be inspir'd with the perfect knowledge of things, which they cannot attain to after several years, spent in labour and study, that nothing should exist, but what we can conceive,

ceive, and that the truth and possibility of things should not derive from the will and pleasure of God, and from that Idea he has in his divine understanding, but only take their measures, and be judged by those narrow conceptions, we borrow from sense. Men are not to be disputed out of the belief of their senses, that there is no such thing as motion, or continuity of parts in extended matter, because of the great difficulties, that attend the conception of them, and things are daily produced and by degrees arrive at the perfection of their being, and perform actions suitable to their respective natures, though Philosophers disagree in their opinions, and are dissatisfied one with another, and cannot tell how or in what manner they do all this.

2. Thus Nature has its Mysteries; and who will undertake to explain Secondly, the Mysteries of Providence, and account for all those extraordinary events, which have hapned in all ages of the world; O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and power of God! how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his wayes past finding out! Rom. xi. 33. It is presumption to enquire too

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busily

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busily into the ends and reasons of God's proceedings with men, as well as impiety to find fault with them. This should satisfy us, that God, who is of infinite perfection, neither does nor can do any thing, that is unjust; that he governs the World by an infinite wisdom, that he permits men to act according to the liberty of their will; and that they stand accountable to him for the actions of their lives; and that they are but his instruments to bring about his eternal purposes and decrees; and that nothing comes to pass without his ordering or foresight; and that all those cross dispensations are for wise ends, best known to himself. Why things are thus, for instance, why the Jews were selected by him to be his peculiar people; why the coming of the Messias in the flesh was deferred so long; why so many Heathen Nations lie yet unconverted, and the like, must be referred wholly to his divine will and pleasure, which is guided by rules of eternal rectitude and wisdom. Let it abundantly content us in all changes and chances of this mortal life, in all those distinguishing acts of Providence, that are every where visible between Nation and

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and Nation, or between man and man in respect of the outward conditions and states of being, that God will have it so. God is wonderful in his doings with the children of men. These things call for our admiration; They are secrets not to be enquired into; which way so ever we look, whether up to heaven, or down upon the earth and sea, and observe what is done in each, or whether we turn our eyes inward, we shall find our selves surrounded with wonders, too great for our knowledge, and enough to baffle and confound our curiosity, and to convince us, that there is as well an infinite distance between God and us, in respect of wisdom, as of power. Now would these men have the state of things altered and changed, and the world new modelled, and new laws given to mankind, and a new nature too, and all things reduced to an easier order, and regulated by their fancies, that so nothing may be above their capacity and understanding? What is this, but the effect of a foolish pride, that is discontented and troubled, that so many things are out of <sup>its</sup> reach and power, and that will scarce be brought to acknowledge, that God can

can do, more than they fancy or comprehend?

3. Besides, those who object against the instituted religion of our Saviour, the greatness of its mysteries, may use the same arguments against the principles of natural religion. That there is an infinite being, in whose Idea is essentially included all possible perfection, is the voice and dictate of nature, right reason, and conscience, and evidenced by the constant and uninterrupted order and course and frame of the universe, and by the universal consent of mankind, who have rites and ceremonies of religion, their Priests and their Sacrifices, to whom they offer up prayers and oblations, to whom they appeal for justice when injured, and to whom they flee for refuge and succour, when they are distressed and in danger, as it were by instinct, and without any deliberation. But notwithstanding this evidence and clearness and demonstration of the existence of a God, they will not pretend to understand fully the nature of the Godhead. That God is infinite in essence and power, and that all things owe their being to his will, they must be forced to confess, or else deny his being, and fancy an infinite

infinite series of causes, infinite periods of motions, and an infinite succession of generations, which is absurd and contradictory and impossible, though they have only a negative notion of infinity. Our understandings cannot reach so far, as to have a complete and comprehensive notion of it; and when we cannot give satisfactory accounts concerning the affections of a natural body, as motion, place, time; much less can it be expected, that we should do this concerning eternity, immensity, or the other necessary and essential attributes of God: so that the difficulty of conceiving a thing does not any way hinder the truth and possibility of its existence. However the most scrupulous and inquisitive may be satisfied, that there are such attributes, and that consequently upon a reflection, not only on the nature of God, but on the scant measures of knowledge in creatures, it is necessary, they should be above our reach and comprehension. As we may discover much in a curious piece of art, or wonder of nature, as the Load-stone, or any Electrical body: we may find out some virtue in a plant, or mineral, or peculiar sort of

conclusion  
the difficulty of  
conceiving a thing  
does not any way  
hinder the truth  
and possibility of  
its existence

Religion  
there are  
many in natural  
religion  
God  
An infinite being  
is not to be  
looked for  
in nature, right  
reason & conscience, as  
evidenced by the  
frame of the universe &  
the universal consent of  
mankind.

Godhead  
The nature of  
Godhead cannot  
fully understood  
by finite beings

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of earth ; and yet oftentimes after a laborious search, the best *Naturalists* are forced to confess, that there is or may be at least a great deal more, than what they have discovered.

*Understand* But here, they say, that the understanding neither does nor can admit of any thing incredible ; and we say so too. God doth not, and consequently the *Christian Religion*, which is the *doctrine and revelation of God*, does not propose any thing to us, as the object of our faith, that is really impossible in it self, and involves in it a perfect and manifest contradiction ; and nothing less can or ought to be judged incredible. But when they pretend, that no proposition ought or can be believed farther, than it may be cleared up to the understanding by the evidence of natural reason, or of the things themselves contained in it, we reject it as an unjust and unreasonable demand, which will fully appear by shewing the falseness of both parts of the supposition.

1. It is utterly false, that nothing is credible, but what can be proved and made out by reason.

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reason. There are indeed several degrees of credibility, according to which the mind does admit some things with a greater ease and freedom than others. But however be the matter proposed never so unlikely or unusual, if the authority be just and good, it must not therefore be pronounced incredible, because perchance it is not fully agreeable to the present state of affairs and practice of the World, or because I have some little prejudice against it. For as in a matter of fact, where there are sufficient proofs given of a Relators both honesty and knowledge, when I have all the assurance in the World, that such a matter is capable of, and that he could not mistake in understanding it, and that his words and thoughts do not in the least disagree, when I can object nothing but a groundless surmise, that possibly, and for ought I know, it may be otherwise, this will challenge my assent, and be a sufficient warrant to me to believe it, whether I have a clear *Idea* of it or no : for this unlikeliness and seeming repugnancy of it, may arise from my being ignorant of several circumstances, the knowledge of which would render it probable and easy :

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credibility  
several degrees of  
credibility

Relator  
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to honest and - usually  
clearly -

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so is it in matter of Doctrine; whatsoever is proposed by God, becomes thereby immediately credible, and my assent is rational and just, though the thing be above my apprehension; and this I must ascribe to the greatness of the object, and the imperfections of my reason, which neither is nor can pretend to be an arbiter and judge in such matters, which are too high for it: so that before a man can safely pronounce a doctrine, that is revealed, incredible, and reject it as such, he must question the power and veracity of God, and maintain, that nothing is possible, but what we can comprehend; and thus under a pretence of caution, betray the greatest immodesty in the world, when he himself believes several other things, upon the bare testimony of men, which neither his wit nor curiosity, nor his reason can ever be able satisfactorily to make out and demonstrate.

2. It is equally false, that no Proposition ought to be believed, but what may be cleared up to the understanding by the evidence of the things themselves. The falseness of which assertion I shall fully evince in these three particulars; by shewing

1. That

## of the Christian Religion.

1. That it destroyes the nature of Faith. *the contrary of nature of faith.*

2. It takes away the blessedness and reward annexed to it. *it takes away the blessedness annexed to it.*

3. It reflects on the Wisdom and Sovereignty of God, who may, if it pleases him, propose such things to us, and command us to believe them. *it reflects on god's wisdom & sovereignty.*

1. It destroyes the nature of Faith. To believe in general, in the proper notion of it, is to assent to things upon the discovery and attestation of others, which are not evident and apparent of themselves; that is, when I have no demonstrative or sensible knowledg of things, I admit and judge them to be true, not because I either saw them, and can assure my self of them by any of my other senses, or because they are so evident to my reason, that I must needs embrace them, as a principle or conclusion in Philosophy, but because I have received them from another, who informs me and gives me this account of them, for whose sake I assent to them as real and certain. By which it is distinguished from science, which is grounded upon the evidence and clearness of the



the apprehension of the respective propositions or objects, when things are so plain that they do necessitate our assent, as that the opposite members of a true and perfect contradiction cannot belong to the same thing at the same time, that equals added to equals make equals, that in a triangle, three angles are always equal to two right angles, and the like. And the like assurance and certainty of knowledg is gained, when we draw conclusions according to rule and the laws of method from first principles, which are assented to, as soon as they are proposed, and the terms understood; when~~er~~ there is an immediate dependance and connexion of things, and one thing naturally follows another; Then we are said to know a thing, when we can run it up to its first principles, can trace its original and cause, and understand its effects and operations.

This distinction being so just and natural, to call for evidence and demonstration in things proposed to be believed, is to confound different assents of the mind, to turn *Religion* into

into Science, to destroy the truth of History, and Tradition, and Revelation, and to fall into *Scepticism*, and doubt whether any thing be certain, but what we see and can prove and represent by a Scheme, and at last question whether our Sense, and what we call our Reason do not deceive us, or else, which is the effect of a greater phrensie, run our selves into this gross absurdity, that we are as wise as *God*, and that he can do no more, than what our gross fancies will have him.

That then some of the grand articles of Religion are not so clear, as *Propositions in Metaphysics* or *Theorems in Geometry*, or indeed are not clear at all, cannot be objected against their credibility. They are in themselves as certain and as infallible; nay more certain and more infallible, if infallibility may be supposed to admit of degrees; but in reason, it cannot be expected, our knowledg of them should be as explicit and as clear: *Supernatural Truths* are not, cannot be determined or judged of by proofs, derived from nature or sense; they have proper

# The Credibility of the Mysteries

per proofs of their own, as all other arts and sciences have.

To judge of these things therefore by our narrow conceptions, is a most false and unwarrantable way of procedure; and indeed it cannot seem strange, that so much *Error* and *Blasphemy* and all that direful train of *Heresies*, in matters relating to *God* and *Religion*, which have so much disturb'd the peace of *Christendome*, should spring from this one absurd and corrupt principle. Hence it was

(a) See the excellent discourse of *Plato* about this subject, toward the latter end of his second book *de Republica*, p. 377. &c. tom. secundus ex editione *Servantii*.

also, that <sup>(a)</sup> *Orpheus*, and the other *Greek Poets* have dressed up their *Gods* in the habit and figure of men, and

cloathed them with all the infirmities and passions incident to humane nature, and hereby made way for all the debaucheries and superstitions, that lust could possibly suggest, or a troubled fancy invent. They made use of no other faculty to judge of *God*, but a gross imagination;

(b) In his Epistle to *Herodotus*, as it is extant in *Diogenes Laertius* — ἡ ἀμείνων ἀναγκασιᾶν καὶ περὶ τῆς καὶ ὁρῶν καὶ καὶ τῆς μαρτυροῦν, ἀλλ' ἡ ἀμείνων καὶ ὁρῶν καὶ τῆς μαρτυροῦν ἐν ταύτῃ γινώσκων. edit. *Londonensis*

<sup>(b)</sup> *Epicurus* upon this very slight pretence excluded *God* from having any thing to do in the ordering and

# of the Christian Religion.

and governing of the world, because he fancied, this could not be done without anxiety and trouble, like the due management of a great charge or employment, which takes up ones whole time, and requires contrivance and study and foresight to keep things in an equal poise, to prevent disorders, to apply remedies to the least inconveniences, that otherwise might quickly grow and improve into a mischief, and to secure all by an equal distribution of rewards and punishments; forgetting that *God's* power is infinite and inexhaustible; that *his eyes reach from one end of the world to the other*, and see into the very essences of things; that all things are at his absolute disposal and command; that trouble only arises either from fear of success, or when we are overwhelm'd with business, or our strength is not proportionable or any way sufficient to sustain so great a weight. *Actius* presently rejects the eter-

p. 285. — This he establishs as one of his *maximas* or main principles of his Philosophy, τὸ μακρότερον καὶ ἀπὸ θαλάσσης καὶ ἀπὸ ἀστροῦ καὶ ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων ὁρᾶν καὶ ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων ὁρᾶν καὶ ἀπὸ ἀνθρώπων καὶ ἀπὸ πάντων ὁρᾶν. and laid down therefore in the first place by his great admirer and follower *Zueretus* in the beginning of his philosophical Poem, to make the better way for the *Atheism*, which was to follow, that is, to exclude *God*, with a fairer pretence, from having any thing to do, either with the framing or governing of the world, and to deny a providence that censure, which *Cotta* in *Tully* mentions to have bin past upon him by several, being exactly true — *Viduo nonnullis videri Epicurum, ne in offensionem Atheismum cadere, verbis reliquisse. Deat, re sustulisse. lib. 1. de Nat. Deorum*, speaking of this very *Atheistical aphorism*.

nal

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nal

*The Credibility of the Mysteries*

*nal generation of the Son of God, because this does not in all things agree with natural generations ; and because it cannot be so with men, he impiously and dogmatically concludes, it is an impossible notion, and thinks he has reason for his blasphemy and peremptoriness, by laying down seven and forty arguments for it, as they are numbred and confuted by \* Epiphanius in his Panarium. The same gross fancies have the Mahometans of this article of faith to this day, who deride the Christians, by asking impious questions concerning it, and even in their Devotion renounce it with a great deal of earnestness, with a far be it from thee, what the Christians impute to thee ; as if man were the measure and standard of all things, even of God himself, who made him, and who is of infinite perfection, beyond the utmost reach of fancy, or conception. His actions and understanding must needs as much transcend ours, as does his essence. His ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts. Isa. lv. 8.*

2. This Hypothesis of theirs, that nothing is or ought to be believ'd but what is cleared up to the understanding by the evidence of the things

\* In brevitate  
nuncietur,  
que est  
LXXVI.

*of the Christian Religion.*

things themselves, does wholly take away the Blessedness and Rewardableness annex to Faith.

One necessary condition to make any action capable of reward or commendation is, that it flow from a principle of liberty ; and herein man, who is endowed with reason, the only true foundation of it, has the preeminence above all other creatures, that act only by instinct, or the force of appetite, or by necessity of \* Nature ; He becomes hereby as it were Lord of himself, and can act or not act, according as he is guided by counsel and rational motives, or meerly as it pleaseth him ; and according either to the right or ill use of this liberty, he is to be judg'd, whether he has deserved well or no. That Chrystals shoot out into curious and exactly regular figures, that the flakes of Snow are Hexagonal, and ten thousand other Rarities of Nature, are not to the commendation of the things themselves : They shew admirably the wisdom of the first contriver of them : the Artist, not the Pendulum, is praised, though it measures time so exactly, and performs all its various motions without any interruption or inequality, because this neces-

\* Principiorum  
Philosophie  
parie  
prima, sect.  
XXXVII.

F family

## The Credibility of the Mysteries

fairly arises from a due proportion of weights and wheels, and from a just adaptation of the several parts of it; 'tis the perfection of a man, that he acts freely, and consequently that he is virtuous out of choice, notwithstanding all the allurements and inclinations of sense. And the like is to be said of the several *assents* of the mind; if the truths of *Religion* were in themselves so clear and evident, that we could not but assent, whether we would or no, if they could be prov'd by arguments, deriv'd from sense or nature, where then would be the *blestness of Faith* our *Saviour* speaks of, which belong to those, who *have not seen, and yet have believed*? when we have a clear and distinct perception of a thing, then we know it; and he must be very stupid and very pertinacious, that will not submit to the truth, and evidence, and conviction of a demonstration. How ridiculous would it be to raise a dispute, and heap up arguments against clear evidence, and pretend dissatisfaction in the midst of so great certainty, as science affords? If there were no difficulty in the notions, where were that *Obedience of Faith*, the Apostle *St. Paul* mentions?

where

Job. 20. 29.

## of the Christian Religion.

mysteries

where would be our submission and humility? for a trial of which I am persuaded, that many *Mysteries* are now proposed by God, which hereafter as a reward of our Faith shall be more clearly made out to us, and that this shall be one principal part of the glory that shall attend the blessed in the other world, when we shall be divested of those circumstances, that now hinder the exertions of Reason, when our understandings shall be enlightned, and our capacities enlarged, and our thoughts heightened and exalted; not that it is possible for the most refined and raised intellect ever to attain to a full and comprehensive knowledge of them (for the *Angels*, those glorious spirits, who attend the throne, and are continually in the presence of God, humbly veil their faces and adore) but that what we now know by Faith and Revelation only, we shall have a somewhat clearer insight into, and be as fully and satisfactorily convinced of, as for instance, that there is a *Trinity of Persons in one undivided Essence*, as if we understood the manner of their several subsistences.

3. It reflects upon the Wisdom and Power

F 2

of

it reflects upon the Wisdom and Power of God

# The Credibility of the Mysteries

of God, who may, if he please, propose these things to us and command us to believe them. For that God may do this, who can question? or deny, that we are as much obliged to give up our judgments and understandings, as our wills, to his will, to assent to any speculation or truth of doctrine revealed by him, as to any mode of instituted worship commanded by him, or any precept of Morality; and that I am not to object and throw in my little conjectures and probabilities, because it is not altogether, or in the least, evident to my reason, when the nature of the thing renders it impossible that it should, or if it did not, yet his command should be enough to force my assent? now to fancy, that nothing is or ought to be credible, but what can be made out and cleared up to the understanding by the evidence of the things themselves, destroys this supposition, which has its certainty from, and is supported by, several of the divine attributes. The Wisdom and Power of God are both infinite, and therefore he knows more, and can do more, than what we possibly can conceive: otherwise we must equal our little knowledge, which we chiefly

## of the Christian Religion.

chiefly derive from the images and representations of things in our minds, and which every contemptible insect and vegetable is too big for, with his; and upon the same account, we must fancy our power equal too: which is the effect of an irrational pride and madness, like that of the *Apostate Angels*, and by consequence, throw off our dependence upon him, and deny to yield obedience to his laws, because they do as much cross our vicious and corrupt inclinations, as the *Mysteries* of our *Faith* do our narrow conceptions and sentiments. An infinite understanding only can fully comprehend an infinite perfection; such a proportion between the faculty and the object being altogether necessary: for if it could be comprehended by a finite intellect, it would immediately cease to be infinite. How insufferable then is such an insolence! How vain and foolish are such imaginations! and every high thing, as the *Apostle* speaks, extravagant fancies and conceits, that get into the brain, that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God, which ought to be captivated and made subject upon the highest Reason in the World to the obedience

ence and doctrine of Christ : which will appear by descending to the

2. Second Particular, I proposed to make good, that the Christian Religion requires us to believe its Mysteries upon such grounds, as we cannot reject without doing violence to our faculties, and consequently, that the rejecting and disbelieving them must be unreasonable.

Now the grounds are chiefly these two.

1. That we believe and admit the divine Revelations.

2. That we yield obedience and submit our understandings and all the powers of our minds to the Will of God.

1. That we believe and admit divine Revelations ; because God is of infinite veracity, and to deceive is repugnant to the holiness of his Nature ; there is an utter impossibility in it. Now if we repose so much trust and confidence in a friend, because we have tried him, and know that he is a man of great integrity, and that he abhors the very thought of deceiving any one with the least falsehood, and speaks exactly according to his knowledge without any reserved or secret meaning or equivocation, or

con-

concealing part of the proposition in his mind that it may be otherwise understood than he intends it ; much more with all the readiness of submission of mind imaginable are we to receive, whatever comes from God, without the least demur, or doubt, or contradiction. This an infinite and eternal rectitude does justly challenge from us ; for God may as soon deny his being, as falsify his word ; so that whoever goes about to question or disbelieve any thing that God has revealed, will run himself upon one of these two gross and absurd impieties, either doubt whether God himself has an exact and perfect knowledge of those things, he has propos'd to our belief, or whether he has been just and true to deliver what he knows. It is a most rational conclusion of St. John 1 Epist. v. 10. he that believeth not God, has made him a liar. No difficulty then can or ought to deter me from the belief of a thing, if God has once revealed it ; nor can the mind of man possibly desire a greater satisfaction than this.

2. That we yield obedience and submit our understandings and all the powers of our minds to the will of God, for

I.

2 There are 1000's  
of things above  
our understanding.

2 The more our  
knowledge is abstracted  
from sensible & more  
difficult is our  
apprehension.

3 God may command  
us to assent to things  
above our comprehension.

1. That there are thousands of things de  
facto above our knowledge and conception can-  
not be deemed by any, without the highest  
immodesty, an unjust postulatam.

2. That all or at least most of our knowledg  
depriving from sense, the more things are freed  
and abstracted from the entanglements of gross  
matter, the more difficult is the conception ;  
because they fall less under the examination of  
our senses, from which we receive so great pre-  
judices in our infancy and childhood, which  
make that deep impression on our fancies, that  
they are not easily to be removed.

3. God by virtue of his absolute dominion  
and sovereignty may command us to assent to  
things above our reach, and conception, and  
knowledg. *Faith* is not to choose its *Object*, no  
more than a mans will can prescribe and set  
to him a Law, because its whole and only  
power consists in the liberty of obeying or not  
obeying of a Law prescrib'd by a superiour  
Power. Whatsoever Doctrine therefore is  
delivered and revealed by *God*, becomes im-  
mediately credible, by reason of the authority,  
that does accompany it, and enforce it upon

us.

us. The Articles of *Faith* carry along with  
them sufficient motives of *Credibility*, but then  
these motives must not be fetched from the na-  
ture of the things themselves, as if they were to  
be so evident, that our Reason might fully dis-  
cover their connexion and dependance, but  
from without ; that is, my *Faith* is rightly  
grounded, and an obligation lies upon me to  
believe, what is proposed by God, if it be evi-  
denced so to be, by just and rational proofs ;  
and if the authority be certain and infallible :  
God therefore declaring his Will, and confirm-  
ing the Revelations he has made of it by his di-  
vine Power, this latter is a sufficient proof, and  
a just and rational ground of my Belief ; for  
how absurd would it be for any one, because  
he cannot comprehend and make out a thing  
fully, which in the nature of it, and by reason  
of our weakness and incapacity, is incompre-  
hensible, and which he ought to acknowledg to  
be such, unless he will presume to measure E-  
ternity and grasp Infinity with a span, therefore  
to doubt of so plain a truth, as this is, that the  
divine Power cannot be made use of to confirm  
any *Proposition*, but what is exactly true and cer-

G

tain ?



tain? so that this is not to forego our Reason, as the Socinians plead, for nothing is more agreeable to the principles of right Reason, but to act according to it; and therefore to say that we Believe & know not what, if they mean, that the objects of our Faith cannot be proved to exist with the same kinds of proofs, as what is presented to our senses, or as a propriety may be demonstrated of the subject of a speculative Science, this cannot be any prejudice at all to our belief, because in all Faith, whether Humane or Divine, there cannot be the same clearness and evidence, but that there are such Objects of our Faith we are as certainly assured, as if we had a particular demonstration of each.

Now that the *Mysteries of Christianity* are confirm'd by such an authority, and therefore are to be believed by us, and consequently that the *Christian Religion* requires our assent to no more, than what is apparent to be *God's Will*, we have this assurance, that they were attested and made good by the miracles of our Saviour; by these he proved his Commission to be deriv'd from Heaven. This was the belief of the *Jews* in general, both Learned and Unlearned, *Nicodemus*

was

was fully convinced of the truth and evidence of it, *Joh. iii. 2. Rabbi, we know, that thou art a Teacher come from God, for no man can do those miracles, that thou dost, except God be with him.* In the case of the blind man, who was restored to his sight, the doubt was rational, *How can a man, that is a sinner do such miracles?* *Joh. ix. 16. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing, v. 33.* that is, he could not do such things, as are above the power of a meer Man, which we see him do. It was nothing, but a most unjust prejudice to our *Saviours Person*, and to the meanness of his Birth and Parentage, arising from a false principle concerning the temporal Kingdom of the *Messias*, through a misunderstanding of the Prophecies, that made them, against their Belief and Conscience, reject the authority of so many evident and often repeated miracles; and though they would not acknowledge him for their *Messias*, that came in a way of humility and meekness, so opposite to their humours and expectations, who thought of nothing, but triumphs and revenge; yet they are forced to acknowledg, that the *Messias* could not do greater; and lastly our *blessed Saviour* appeals

G 2

to

Saviour  
of Saviour proved his  
mission to be deriv'd from  
Heaven by miracles.

33.  
Cohn 9. 16.  
If you were not of  
God, you could not do  
these things, as are  
above the power of a  
meer man, which we  
see him do.

to miracles, as to his credentials, as being a most rational motive to work faith in the minds of the most scrupulous; if ye believe not me, believe the works that I do. This then is a sufficient confirmation of our Saviours mission, and of the doctrine He and the Apostles delivered from him, and preach'd through the several parts of the World, which they travelled, and after put in writing for the benefit and greater satisfaction of all succeeding Generations. Nor are we now at this great distance of time to call for new signs from Heaven, or to desire a farther confirmation of what hath been received so universally for so many successions of Ages. The holy Scriptures are the authentick Registers of the Doctrine and Revelations of God, and that I may add this by the way, were they but of humane authority, they deserved not to be drolled upon, but to be treated with an equal, if not a greater, respect, than Polybius, or Livy, not only upon the account of their Antiquity, but for those excellent remarks they contain, and the Theists of our Age may as well doubt, whether there were such a man as Cyrus and Alexander, as Moses and Joshua, and question whether

whether Cicero wrote those Orationes, and the other excellent Books, that go under his name, or Virgil those admired Poems, as whether St. Mathew or St. John, who were the known Disciples of Christ, and conversed daily with him for above three years together, wrote those Gospels, which contain the History and Acts of his Life and Death.

Upon these evidences our assent is raised, which make it rational and just; our Faith is resolv'd into the testimony of God, which is only the rule of it, we believe nothing, but what our Saviour and his Apostles taught, for which we have the authority of their words, and what the whole number of Christian People embraced and received, as the just and true meaning of them. Now because we cannot reconcile these exprefs and clear Revelations of the Gospel, laid down in plain expressions, as that Christ is the son of God, was in the beginning with God, before the world was made, God manifested in the flesh, God blessed for ever, and that he and the father are one (not to descend to the other Articles, which are laid down as clearly) with our narrow conceptions of things, is most irrationally.

nally to conclude against God in favour of our selves, meerly for this only reason, because we cannot tell or understand, how it can or should be, when he hath told us expressly it is so. Here-upon they heap up strange and absurd interpretations of *Scripture*, and which are impossible to be true; they deny to words their proper, and natural and genuine significations; they fancy nothing but improprieties and ambiguities of expression; and admit of absurd notions for all their high vaunts and pretences to reason, which destroy the very design and institution of *Christianity*. Thus our most *bleſſed Saviour*, the only begotten son of God must be only *for*  $\kappa\tau\ \chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ , or  $\kappa\tau\ \pi\rho\omicron\chi\omicron\pi\eta\nu\ \kappa\acute{\alpha}\chi\epsilon\iota\nu\ \beta\acute{\iota}\epsilon$ , God only by grace and favour, and for the holiness and

(a)  $\tau\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \delta\ \chi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \sigma\epsilon\phi\acute{\iota}\rho\omega\ \lambda\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega\iota$   
 $\tau\ \delta\alpha\delta\acute{\iota}\delta\epsilon\lambda\alpha\varsigma\ \kappa\iota\ \chi\epsilon\iota\rho\acute{\alpha}\nu\ \psi\acute{\iota}\nu\ \Theta\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\ \kappa\tau\ \sigma\epsilon\sigma\chi\omicron\pi\eta\nu\ \kappa\tau\ \sigma\omega\alpha\theta\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \delta\iota\alpha\gamma\epsilon\gamma\omicron\rho\eta\varsigma\ \tau\ \delta\iota\omega\delta\epsilon\nu\ \sigma\epsilon\phi\acute{\epsilon}\ \alpha\upsilon\theta\acute{\epsilon}\nu\ \gamma\alpha\gamma\alpha\nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\nu\epsilon\iota$ . Epiphanius in heresi *Eticorum*. q. x. c. lxxx. (scd. XVIII, ex edit. Petovii. Parisiis 1622. pag. 142.

(b) Epiphanius in heresi *Aimerum*, q. x. c. lxxx. (scd. XVIII, p. 741.

(c) Gregorius Abulpharagius, in historia *Dynastiarum*, Arabicæ, p. 129. edit. Oxon. 1663. Eusebii in *Annelibus Alexandrinis* Arabicæ, edit. Oxon. parte p. i. p. 397. & 441.

only the name, but the essential Attributes of the

the *Godhead* are ascribed to him. Thus the Doctrine of the *Ever blessed Trinity*, which is clearly

contain'd in the form of <sup>(d)</sup>

*Baptism*, as- might fully be made good against the exceptions and cavils of *Wolſegenius*, and in *St. Job. v. 7.* (a)

(e) Verse written by the same hand that wrote all the rest of the *Epistle*, as it is most evident from the verses in conjunction with it, which would be altogether defective and imperfect without it, however it be omitted in the *Alexandrine Manuscript*, rather by chance (for that is not the

(d) This argument drawn from the *Form of Baptism*, is generally made use of by all the ancient *Fathers*, against the blasphemy of *Sabellius*, *Arius*, and the rest of the *Hereticks*, who had departed from the true faith, established at first, to follow phantasies and inventions of their own. But reserving these numerous citations for another work, I shall content my self at present to say with the Author of the *Breviarium fidei adversus Arianos*, who lived above 1200 years since, put out by the most learned *Sirmondus*, to whom the world is so much obliged, for his publishing several writings of the ancients, out of MSS. — Qui [Spiritus sanctus] si Deus non esset, non in baptismo in uno nomine Trinitatis patris & filio sacrosanctus, sicut scriptum est, nisi regulam baptismi posuit ipse Dominus & iter, inquit, baptizate omnes gentes in nomine Patris, & Filii, & Spiritus Sancti. Quod solum testimonium deberet hæreticis sufficere ad credulitatem insuperabilem Trinitate, quia nec ipsi audent aliter baptizare, ne regulam Domini corumpere videantur. Et uti unum nomen dicitur, ibi & major & minor excluditur.

(e) Of this see the Appendix.

than design, as if it had favoured the Heresie of the *Antitrinitarians*;) this Doctrine of the *Trinity*, I say, must be exploded, because they cannot satisfy their bold curiosity, as why the emanation of the *Deity* stops at three *Hypoſtaſes*, that is, why the *Divine Essence* is not communicated to more than *Three Persons*, and how it can be *Communicated*

Christ

It is not a very  
 fact. only, when  
 How much only, the  
 name but the  
 essential attributes  
 of God have are  
 ascribed to him.

Trinitarian.  
 \* Trinitarian as it is believed  
 as it is very true in man of  
 Christ's person.

nicated, and yet altogether remain *Undivided*, and the like. That this *Article* was explicitly believed in the very beginnings of *Christianity*, may, to omit at present other wayes of proofs, be evinced hence, that the *Heathens* of those times used to upbraid the *Christians* with the belief of so unlikely a *Doctrine*. Thus *Critias* in the Dialogue *Philopatris* (which if not *Lucians*, was written however in *Trajan's* time, whose victories and successes in the *East*, and particularly in the taking of *Ctesiphon* and *Babylon* and other places from the *Persians*, and in repressing the incursions of the *Scythians*, as hapning just at that time, are there mentioned) when *Tricphon* had expressed the belief and sense of the *Christians* about this *Article*, by ad-juring ὑψιμέδοντα Θεὸν μέγαν ἀμβροτον, ἔστανόνα υἱὸν πατρὸς, πνεῦμα ἐκπορευόμενον, ἐν ἐκ τριῶν, καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς ἰεῖα; ταῦτα νόμιζε Ζήνων καὶ ἡγεῖ Θεόν, makes a mock at it, and replies with a great deal of impudent raillery, ἀεὶ μέειν μὴ διδάσκεις, καὶ ὁμοῦς ἡ Ἀεὶ μετῆ, καὶ γὰρ ἀεὶ μέεις, ὡς Νικόμαχος ὁ Γεράσιονος, ἐκ διδακτῆ λέγεις ἐν ἰεῖα, ἰεῖα ἐν; μὴ τὴν τετρακτὴν φῆς τὴν Πυθαγόρου; ἢ τὴν ὀγδοάδα καὶ τετρακάδα.

So

So far is that from having the least truth in it, which the *Enemies* and *Opposers* of this *Doctrine* affirm, without the least shew of Reason and Authority, that it derives wholly from *Pythagoras* and *Plato*, and was learned in their Schools, and afterwards drest up by the *Fathers*, who were admirers of that *Philosophy*, and not heard of till the *Third* or *Fourth Century*. So that upon the whole it will appear, that the *Christian Religion* has just and sure evidences, and therefore to fancy, which is the only thing they can alledge in behalf of their *Unbelief*, that nothing is or can be believed, but what ought to be fully comprehended by the Understanding, is so foolish, so unjust, so unreasonable a thing, that nothing but intolerable Pride and Obstinacy can possibly suggest such a Thought, and consequently that before any one can become an *Arrian* or a *Socinian*, he must fore-go his Reason, and forget that *God* is of infinite Perfection, and forget too, that he himself is a Man.

To draw towards a Period. *Christianity* being a *Great Mystery*, and necessarily such :

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I. It

Modest<sup>50</sup>

# The Credibility of the Mysteries

It is but a natural inference, that all our enquiries into the Articles of it be sober and modest; that we expect not a comprehensive knowledg of them; that we be not too buſie and curious in our Searches into the Secrets of God; that being conſcious to our ſelves of the defects, and ſhallowneſs, and weakneſs of our Reaſon in leſſer matters; how imperfect and untrue oftentimes our collections are of ſenſible beings, to which our faculties may ſeem proportionate; and to what errors and deluſions we are ſubject, by taking up falſe notions, by fancy and prejudice; we learn to be *wiſe unto ſobriety*, and *not to think of our ſelves, above what we ought to think*. It was nothing at firſt, but an overbold curioſity, not content with *Revelation*, and with juſt proofs of it, that raiſed in the mind thoughts of Diſbelief; but it ſtopt not here; it ſoon improved into a proud conceit of maſtering all the difficulties of *Religion* by the ſtrength of Reaſon; and to this we may juſtly impute the original and growth of all thoſe *Hereſies* and *Blasphemies*, that have been vented from the very firſt Preaching of the *Gospel* to this day.

## of the Chriſtian Religion.

51

day. It is a vain thing to think to do this; 'tis a paſſing beyond the bounds which God and our own Nature hath ſet us; a piece of Sacrilegious raſhneſs, as *Salvian* juſtly words it, in his third Book *De Gubernatione Dei*, ſpeaking of the various diſpenſations of Providence: *Hoc ipſum genus quali Sacrilegæ temeritatis eſt, ſi plus ſcire cupias quàm ſinaris*. The Articles of Faith, as they are not to be tried, ſo neither to be proved by the Principles of Mathematicks or Natural Philoſophy. It is as great folly to attempt it, as to expect it, both ariſing from a wantonneſs of Wit, which quickly looſes it ſelf in a Labyrinth of wild Opinions, and pleaſing it ſelf with new Notions and Ideas, is more and more perplexed and entangled, and is ſcarce ever reducible to a right and ſober temper.

What ill ſucceſs the *Schoolmen* have had in their attempts this way upon the Articles of Religion, *Chriſtendome* has long ſince had ſad experience of; theſe men guilty of the other extream would ſcarce acknowledg any thing of *Mystery* in it; all things ſeemed ſo clear to them, as if they had had a particu-

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Sacrilege

Salvianus ſacrilegæ temeritatis eſt, ſi plus ſcire cupias quàm ſinaris. The Articles of Faith, as they are not to be tried, ſo neither to be proved by the Principles of Mathematicks or Natural Philoſophy.

## The Credibility of the Mysteries

lar Revelation ; they have thrown open the *Vail*, that covers the *Ark* ; they define boldly, and obtrude their Conjectures for Oracles. *St. Paul* and *St. John* shall be explained and proved by the Writings of *Plato* and *Aristotle* ; thus prostituting the Majesty of the Sacred *Scriptures*, and corrupting the Simplicity of the *Christian Religion* by their niceties and subtilities of Distinctions, and exposing it the more to the Cavils of *Hereticks*, who observing the falseness of their Principles, and the weakness and incompetency of their Proofs, are more encouraged to reject the truth of it. Hereby too a *Contentious* and *Disputative Theology* has been introduced in the *Schools* ; and unnecessary and bold questions started, impossible to be resolved with any satisfaction, which perplex and confound the Understanding, and are so far from *Building* us up in our *Holy Faith*, and from explaining the Doctrine of it, that it has scarce suffered by any one thing more. Some things we may understand, but we see more to admire, which with all our art and subtility we can never attain to. It is enough, that the *Chri-*

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## of the Christian Religion.

*stian Religion* doth perswade us by Rational Arguments to the acknowledgment of its Doctrine, that it laies down sufficient grounds of the certainty and necessity of our Belief, that it gives us all the assurance we can, with any modesty, pretend to, and all the proofs the nature of the things, proposed to our belief, are capable of and will bear. 'Tis Faith in *Christ*, that He is the *Son of God* and the *Saviour of the World*, that denominates us *Christians* ; to deny this, how excellent a Person soever we make him for Meekness and Holiness of Life, is to renounce *Christianity*, and in effect to turn *Mahometans* ; for they acknowledg *Christ* to have been a *Great Prophet*, to have been *born of a Virgin*, to have been *assumed into Heaven*, and the like. *Satis fit pro universis rationibus Author Deus* ; as the same *Salvian* has

it. This is that, that is equivalent to ten thousand *Demonstrations* ; this will level all those objections, that are raised against the *Mysteries of Christianity* ; that will silence all the *Sophistry of Corrupt Reason*, and cut off all those Arguments, which presumptuous Men are wont to make ; and certainly if we rightly

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Deus.

Author says ye best reason  
satis fit pro universis  
rationibus Author Deus.

## The Credibility of the Mysteries

consider it, the Mysteries of Christianity, as they are proposed in the Scriptures, are by reason of the great difficulties, that attend the conception of them, so far from being incredible, that they ought thereby to become more credible; that is, they are more worthy of the infinite Majesty and perfection of God, by how much they are above the reach of our Faculties.

2. Let us remember that Christianity is a Mystery of Godliness, and consequently that the Great Mysteries of it ought to have an influence upon our Lives and Practices. As on the one hand, to say, that these Great Articles of our Faith are nice Speculations, and the explicit Belief of them, as they are proposed, not necessary, and to question that Sense of them, in which they have always been received by the Catholic Church, is to undermine the Fundamentals of Christianity; So on the other side, it takes off very much from the obligation to Obedience, and dulls those affections, which a reflexion on these Great Mysteries must needs cause in the mind.

That God should send his Son into the world

## of the Christian Religion.

world to discover this Mystery to us in Person, and in order to our Redemption, was the Effect of an Infinite Wisdom, and of an Infinite Love; that God should be Manifested in the Flesh for our sakes, and submit himself to the weaknesses, and imperfections, and contumelies of the humane nature; that the Second Person of the Trinity, Co-essential and Co-eternal with the Father, should condescend to assume flesh, and therein to suffer; a reflection on this cannot but fill us with admiration and love. One great part of the Worship we owe to God consists in our admiring his infinite Perfections; all our Praises and Thanksgivings are but the outward significations of this, and faint expressions of our thoughts, which loose themselves in the contemplation of them. Now these Mysteries afford us eternal matter for our admiration. Besides, what greater obligation to Obedience can there possible be, than the Revelation of this Mystery, upon which our Salvation is founded? A Holy and Religious Life then is the best evidence of our belief of these Articles of Christianity beyond all subtilty of Disputation. This especially

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2. Let us remember that Christianity is a Mystery of Godliness, and consequently that the Great Mysteries of it ought to have an influence upon our Lives and Practices.

Worship  
Admiring his infinite perfections  
one great part of the worship we owe to God consists in our admiring his infinite perfections

Life  
A holy life is the best evidence of our belief of these articles of Christianity beyond all subtilty of disputation

pecially concerns us, who are dignified with the *Holy Priesthood*, who are *Ministers of Christ*, and *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*. This shews, that we do more than barely assent to the truth of them, when they produce in us all, both *Priests* and *Lay*, these effects, for which they were principally discovered ; that so living in obedience to the will of *God* revealed to us by his *Son*, whom he sent out of his own Bosom, and in all holy conversation and godliness, we may at last be admitted to the sight and fruition of his *glorious Godhead*, to sing Praises and Hallelujah's to the *blessed Trinity* for ever and ever, Amen.

Ap-

## Appendix.



T must be confessed, that this  
Verse is not to be met with in  
several Old MSS. as particu-  
larly in the mentioned Alex-  
andrine, now in the Kings Li-

brary at *St. James's*, brought out of *Egypt* by *Cy-  
rillus Lucari*, when he removed from the See of  
*Alexandria* to the *Patriarchate* of *Constantinople*  
who was strangled by the *Turks* in the year  
1638, and sent to *K. Charles I.* though not so  
antient, I believe, as is pretended, as if it had  
been wrote by the hand of *Thecla*, an *Egyptian*  
Woman of an honourable Extraction, and a  
Martyr for the *Christian Faith*, condemned to  
the *Amphitheatre* under *Dioclesian*, as *Eusebius* re-  
lates in the Supplement to the Eight Book of  
his *Ecclesiastical History*, which is found in se-  
veral Copies, if it be his (*cap. 3.*) before the first  
Council of *Nice*, which is barely said and con-  
jectured; and I suppose, that it may be pro-  
ved, that the *Vatican exemplar* is the more Genu-

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ine of the two, and comes nigher the Original. It is omitted also in an ancient Manuscript in the Archives of our Colledge Library, containing the *New Testament* entire (except the *Apocalypse*) with the *Psalter* and several *Hymns* collected out of the *Old Testament*, the words ἐν ᾧ γὰρ being also wanting in the eight verse, and in several others. Upon this the Enemies of this Doctrine triumph and boldly pretend, that it was inserted by the *Catholicks*; Thus to mention only one for all, *Socinus* himself in his Commentary on these words—*Satis constat illa esse Adulterina, & ab hominibus, qui suum dogma de trino & uno Deo quicumque ratione defendere & propagare volebant, in hunc locum infarsita*. But let the appeal lye to any indifferent Person, which is most likely, that those, who professed their belief of this Doctrine, which was grounded too upon several other Texts of *Scripture*, and was derived down to them from the first Ages of the Church, and which they contended for with so much earnestness, should without any necessity dare commit, such a Forgerie, which could not but be taken notice of by their watchful Enemies, or that this should be done

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by the Opposers of this Doctrine, who were arraigned in general, by all the *Catholick* Writers, who had to do with them, as falsifiers of the sacred Records, and were so much concern'd to do it in defence of their private tenets and fancies, and especially to raze this Text, with which they were so oppress'd, out of several Copies, from which by Transcripts it might easily be propagated into others: And consequently it is not to be admired, that several of the Fathers, no not *Athanasius* himself, nor *Cyril* of *Alexandria*, nor *St. Hilary*, who defended with so much learning the truth of this great Mystery, did not make use of this Testimony, they lighting upon some of these Transcripts; which is to be said also for *St. Austin*, in his Book 3. Chap. 22. against *Maximinus* an *Arian Bishop*, for *St. Leo* in his Epistle to *Flavian Bishop* of *Constantinople*, against the Heresie of *Eutyches*, Ep. 10. Cap. 5. for *Eucherius de questionibus N. Testamenti*, and for *Oecumenius* in his Commentary on this Epistle, and several others. The same reason holds for the omission of it in the *Syriack*, *Arabick*, and *Aethiopic* Translations, the two former of which, as they are now extant, as

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is most probable, were made long since the times of *Arius*, notwithstanding the pretensions of some to a far greater Antiquity, the last is confessedly of a later Date. The scarcity of Copies in those days, and the malicious industry and cunning of the *Hereticks* render the conjecture sufficiently probable, if no Copy were to be found with this Verse entire, and that we had only the authority of some of the Antients, who cite it as authentick, as having met with it in their Books. The *Divines* of *Lovain* in collating the *N.T.* with a great number of *Latin* Copies, found it only wanting in five. *R. Stephanus* in his Edition of the *N.T.* had the use of fifteen or sixteen old *Greek MSS.* above half of which retain'd it. So the Edition of the *N.T.* at *Complutum* compared with antient *MSS.* printed in the beginning of the Restauration of *Polite Literature* in *Christendome*, at the expences of the great *Cardinal Ximenes*, only with this variation, ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσι οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ θεῷ, ὁ Πατήρ, ὁ Λόγος, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον Πνεῦμα; καὶ οἱ ἑαυτοὶ εἰσι. Thus *Erasmus* confesses he met with a Manuscript in *England*, which he calls by the name of *Codex Britannicus*, which had the

the whole seventh Verse, as we now read it, and the eight Verse, the latter part thus altered, καὶ ἑαυτοὶ εἰσι οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῷ θεῷ, Πνεῦμα, Ἰδὼς, καὶ Αἷμα εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων. I shall lay no stress upon two Writings, which pass under the name of *Athanasius*, where this Verse is cited, because it is not to be met with in those larger works of his, which are acknowledged genuine, the one is an account of a disputation, according to the title, had with *Arius* in the *Council of Nice*; but the title is faulty, as appears from the Discourse it self; nor was *Arius* the Person disputed with there, but one of his followers; and the reason of the mistake of the title may be ascrib'd to an ignorant *Librarian*, putting down *Arius* for *Arianus*, and the Dialogue not real, but supposed, as was usual amongst the *Fathers*, introducing the *Hereticks* pleading their Cause, and the *Orthodox* refuting their Cavils and defending the Truth. And if this may pass for likely, there can be no great reason to suspect the Authenticalness of it, the words are, πρὸς δὲ τοῖς πᾶσι Ἰωάννης φάσκει καὶ οἱ τρεῖς τὸ ἐν εἶσι. The other is in a Book extant only in *Latine* <sup>(1)</sup> lib. 1. de unitate Deitate

(2) 1<sup>st</sup> l. p. 147. Paris. 1627.

(1) T. 2. p. 55.

*Deitate Trinitatis ad Theophilum, dicente Joanne Evangelista in Epistola sua, tres sunt, qui testimonium dicunt in Cælo, Pater, & Verbum, & Spiritus.*

But this piece, I confess, is very justly rejected as none of his, though perchance wrote not many years after his time. St. Cyprian, who suffered Martyrdom about the year of Ch. 258. Galienus and his Son Valerianus being then Emperours, about sixty years before the calling of the Council of Nice, in his book *de unitate Ecclesie Catholice*, cites this Text expressly, as found in the Copies of his time: — *Dicit Dominus, Ego & Pater unum sumus, & iterum de Patre & Filio & Spiritu Sancto, & hi Tres unum sunt.* It is not any way material to the design and purpose of this Scholion to inquire, in what sense St. Cyprian understood these words, but only to vindicate the antiquity of the Copies, that retained this reading, though it might easily be proved that it was a thing usual with the *Fathers*, as no one can be ignorant, who has turn'd over their Writings, to interpret places of Scriptures sometimes, not according to their primary intent, but by way of accomodation. Which testimony is so clear and convincing that Sandius in his

his *Appendix quaestionum Paradoxarum*, uses all his art and skill to avoid the force of it, by pretending, that several things have been changed, added, taken away, and some other way varied in the *Epistle*, as appears by the observation of *Posssevinus*, who took the pains to compare the printed Copies with four MSS. and the acknowledgment of others, *Perkins, James, and Rivet*: from which premises he concludes very boldly upon a meer possibility, that this place was never cited by that blessed Martyr, but put in by some body else; *Quam facile itaq; etiam hic locus interferi potuit ab his, qui non exhorruerunt sacras literas corrumpere propter metum Hereticorum.* But first this is barely said without the least proof, and without the authority of any MS. Secondly neither *Pamelius* nor *Rigaltius*, nor any other, as I know of, who put forth St. Cyprian, make mention of any various reading in this place, all agreeing in it. Now that this Epistle is St. Cyprians is undoubted: St. Cyprian himself referring to it, and that the reading is the same now, as it was in the old Copies written above eleven hundred and forty years ago, appears from *Fulgentius*, who not only cites this seventh verse in his

Scripture

The fathers sometimes  
interpret places of Scripture  
by way of accomodation  
not according to their primary  
intent.

p. 772.

his book *de fide Catholica adversus Pintam Episcopum Arianum*, in his testimonies *de Trinitate*, and in his book *de Trinitate ad Felicem Notarium*, c. 4. which thus begins, *En habes in brevi alium esse Patrem, alium Filium, alium Spiritum sanctum, alium & alium in personâ, non aliud & aliud in natura*; & idcirco ego, inquit, & pater unum sumus; unum, ad naturam referre nos docens, sumus, ad personas: similiter & illud. *Tres sunt*, inquit, qui testimonium dicunt in Cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt. Audiat Sabellius, sumus: audiat tres: & credat esse tres personas, & non sacrilego corde blasphemet, dicendo, ipsum sibi esse Patrem, ipsum sibi Filium, ipsum sibi Spiritum sanctum, tanquam modo quodam seipsum gignat, aut modo quodam a seipso ipse procedat, cum hoc etiam in naturis creatis minime inveniri possit, ut aliquid seipsum gignere valeat. Audiat scilicet & Arius unum, & non differentis filium dicat esse naturæ, cum

(a) p. 559. \* Editione Theophili Rinaudi, Soc. Jeû, Parisiæ 1671. printed with St. Leo's, Maximus Taurinensis, and four others which make up the *Oppus Trinitarianum*.

p. 447.

natura diversa unum dici nequeat, (a) but cites this very place of St. Cyprian, in his book *contra objectiones Arianorum*, in his answer to the tenth or last objection. His words are these, *In Patre & Filio, & Spiritu sancto unitatem*  
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*substantiæ accipimus, personas confundere non audemus; beatus enim Johannes Apostolus testatur, dicens, tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in Cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt. Quod etiam beatissimus Martyr Cyprianus in Epistola de unitate Ecclesiæ constituit, dicens, qui pacem Christi & concordiam rumpit, adversus Christum facit: qui alibi præter Ecclesiam colligit, Christi Ecclesiam spargit. Atque ut unam Ecclesiam unius Dei esse monstraret, hæc confestim testimonia de Scripturâ inferuit, dicit Dominus, Ego & Pater unum sumus, & iterum, de Patre & Filio & Spiritu sancto scriptum est, & hi tres unum sunt.* If it be said, that St. Cyprian cited only the latter part of the 8. v. where the *vulgar Latine* has those very words, *& hi tres unum sunt* (b) and that thus *Facundus, Episcopus Hermianensis*, in the time of *Justinian*, to whom he dedicates his book, which he wrote *pro defensione trium capitulorum Concilii Chalcedonensis*, seems to understand it, without taking any notice of the 7. v. citing this place of St. Cyprian, though by a lapse of his memory he saies it is to be found in *Epistola sive libro, quem de Trinitate scripsit*: I reply first in general, that [in] might easily be left out by the oscitancy of the *Librarii*, not to say, razed out by the Hereticks; the *Syriack Interpreter* reading in his *Greek Copy*, what we find in

(b) lib. 1. p. 16. ex Edit. J. Sirmondi Parisiis 1629.

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ours, as to the latter part, *καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς ἓν ἔνι*, and accordingly translating it so, *tres sunt testes, Spiritus & Aqua & Sanguis, & hi tres in uno sunt* *بحسب* *Bechad*, and so the *Arabick* Interpreter *واحد في* *in uno*, only the *Æthiopick* conforming to the present reading of the *vulgar Latine*. But what will they say to the *Alexandrine MS.* which they so much adore, which has the same reading, *οἱ τρεῖς εἰσι οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι*; which are the words also of our *MS.* so in the Copies, which *Oecumenius* followed *οἱ τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες, τὸ πνεῦμα, καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ, καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσι*. *St. Hierom's* translation leaves out in the 8.v. *et hi tres unum* or *in unum sunt*, and so the *Greek* of *Arias Montanus*, and the *Complutensian Edition*; in the Margin of which later it is noted, that *Aquinas* in the exposition of the second decretal *de summa Trinitate* against *Abbot Joachim*, who perversely interpreting the end of the 7.v. of the unity of will and consent, alledges the end of the 8.v. for his authority and justification, had made this observation, *sed hoc in veris exemplaribus non habetur, sed dicitur esse appositum ab Hereticis Arianis ad pervertendum intellectum sanum auctoritatis præmissæ de unitate essentiae trium personarum*. I suppose the great

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respect *Aquinas* had for the *vulgar Latine*, made him rather suspect the whole to be added, than that it was ill translated, which he would easily have acknowledged, had he consulted any *Gr. MS.* But this kind of learning they were not acquainted with in that Age of Scholastical ignorance and barbarousness. Secondly, as they take it for granted, that this was the reading of the *vulgar Latine* at that time, so they more vainly and weakly suppose, that *St. Cyprian* made use of the same *vulgar Latine* edition, the contrary of which appears in several of his citations, and it is more likely, that he might translate so literally the latter part of the 7.v. and not at all regard the 8.v. or the vulgar translation, and so it appears from the testimony of *Fulgentius*, cited above, that he understood it.

Afterward when several, out of an evil design to overthrow the *Mystery* of the most blessed and adorable *Trinity*, omitted in their translations of the *Scriptures* into the *Latin Tongue* this Verse (a liberty which, it seems, every Pretender almost made use of, and it may well be suspected, that an *Arian* then, as a *Socinian* now, in his translation would be over-favourable to his own opinions, by leaving out and putting in what might make for them, and accordingly

dingly interpreting what was retained to their best advantage: <sup>(a)</sup> St. Hierome in his preface to the *Canonical Epistles*, vindicates the antient reading, and laics open the baseness and perfidiousness of these men. I shall here put down the whole Preface; *Non ita ordo est apud Græcos, qui integrè sapiunt, & fidem rectam seclantur Epistolarum septem, quæ Canonice nuncupantur, sicut in Latinis codicibus invenitur: Quod quia Petrus primus est in numero Apostolorum, primæ sunt etiam ejus Epistolæ, in ordine cæterarum; sed sicut Evangelistæ dudum ad veritatis lineam correximus, ita hæc proprio ordini Deo juvante reddidimus. Est enim primæ earum una Jacobi, duæ Petri, & tres Johannis, & Judæ una. Quæ si sicut ab eis digestæ sunt, ita quoq; ab Interpretibus fidelitè in Latinum verterentur eloquium, nec ambiguitatem legentibus facerent, nec sermonum sese varietas impugnaret, illo precipuè loco, ubi de unitate Trinitatis in primâ Johannis Epistolâ positum legimus, in quâ etiam ab infidelibus translatoribus, multum erratum esse à fidei veritate comperimus; tria tantummodo vocabula, hoc est, aqua, sanguinis, & spiritus in ipsâ suâ editione ponentibus, & Patris verbiq; ac spiritûs testimonium omittentibus, in quo maxime & fides Catholica roboratur, & patris ac filii ac spiritûs sancti una divinitatis substantia comprobatur. In cæteris vero Epistolis, quantum*

(a) This Preface is printed in an old edition of the N. T. with the interlinear Gloss, and I find it in several MSS both in the Bodleian and our own College Library before the *Catholic Epistles*. The Style is exactly St. Hierome's and questionless his, and acknowledged as such, both by Erasmus and Socinus, however omitted by Erasmus in his edition of St. Hierome's works at B. 1. fol.

à nostra aliorum differt editio; *Leætoris prudentiæ delinquo. Sed tu Virgo Christi, Eustochium, dum à me impensius Scripturæ veritatem inquiris, meam quodammodo senectutem invidorum dentibus corraddendam exponis, qui me falsarium corruptoremq; sacrarum Scripturarum pronunciant. Sed ego in tali opere nec æmulum meorum invidentiam pertimesco, nec sanctæ Scripturæ veritatem poscentibus denegabo.* Erasmus and Socinus are so urged with this testimony of St. Hierome, that they are forced to make use of very pitiful and disingenuous arguments to invalidate it. Socinus had said before — *fortasse ante Hieronymum vix ullus invenietur, qui testimonium istud hoc in loco planè agnoverit*, the falsity of which conjecture, however so warily laid down, has been disproved; hereby craftily concealing the citation out of St. Cyprian, he very boldly accuses St. Hierome of Forgery, who having got a Copy or Copies, in which this verse was added, *adversus fidem aliorum omnium exemplarium, tam Latinorum, quam Græcorum, lectionem particulæ istius tanquam germanam defendere & promovere cæpit, conquærens publicè eam culpâ & fraude hereticorum abrasam à vulgatis codicibus fuisse.* But St. Hierome has sufficiently confuted the falleness and boldness of this Cavil. He was used to this kind of language, as if he

he had corrupted the Scriptures, but he was no way moved by it; though this accusation of those of his own time perchance may not so much be referr'd to this place, as to his translation in general, and may proceed not so much from heretical malice and pravity, as envy of several of his contemporaries, who were orthodox in the faith, but were no friends to his new translation. He charges the omission upon these *unfaithful Translators* (questionless *Sabellians* and *Arians*) and upbraids them with it as a thing manifest and notorious, and easily demonstrable; and certainly he would not have made himself so obnoxious, unless he had grounded his confidence upon the authority of several *Greek Copies*: with what little pretence of reason therefore *Erasmus* and *Socinus* fancy *St. Hierome* to have changed the publick and common reading, let any indifferent person judge. But supposing that the Copies of those times varied, which *Erasmus* grants (and therefore *St. Hierome* is most falsely and unjustly accused by *Socinus* to have been the author of this interpolation) He enquires, *quonam argumento docet utrum sit rectius, utrumve scriptum sit ab Apostolo, præsertim cum quod reprehendit, tum haberet publicus usus Ecclesiæ?* To this it may be answered, 1. that some

vitia-

vitiated and defective Copies, ought not to prejudice the authority of entire and better Copies, whether *Latin* or *Greek*. 2. that *St. Hierome* had reason to prefer and vindicate that reading, which gives such an evident proof of this great Article of the *Christian Religion*, agreeable to the doctrine of the *Catholic Church*, derived down to them by an *universal Tradition*, and acknowledged as such, by all, excepting a few, whom either discontent, or pride and conceitedness of their own parts, and a love of innovation and of being the author of a Sect, had drawn into the contrary heretical opinion. Besides, his words are so clear, that one might justly wonder, that *Erasmus* should pretend any difficulty or perplex sense in them, as he does in his, *non satis video, quid sibi velit hoc loco Hieronymus*; but that we have too just cause to suspect, how that great *Scholar* was biast and perverted in his judgment, concerning those great mysteries of Faith; though he is so wary and cunning, as not to discover himself too openly. He indeed is forced to confess the nature of the *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost* to be simple and undivided, and the essence the same, though he is peremptory, that it cannot be proved from this Text, *constat hic agi de fide testimonii, non de substantia personarum,*

(a) de illa (eōq.) ut mihi quidem videtur non agitur hoc in loco: quod & gl'is ista interlinearis, quoniam vocant, agnoscitur.

sonarum, herein followed by<sup>(a)</sup> Beza, and with a great deal of ceremony confesses it to be pious to submit our understanding to the judgment of the Church, as soon as she shall declare herself (as certainly she has done in this in her publick Creeds, to the great shame and conviction of Hereticks, who reject her authority) yet still for all this demureness, he pleads for a liberty of interpreting Scripture, as if the truth were not yet wholly reveal'd, and the Church might err in her declarations, *nec interim nefas est citra contentionem scrutari verum, ut Deus aliis alia patefecit* (which is also the pretence of Socinus and his followers:) and accordingly he interprets several places of Scripture in favour of Arius and the other Hereticks, and particularly this, *cum totus locus sit obscurus, non potest admodum valere ad revincendos Hereticos* (the same pretence being made use of for all places, though never so plain) and endeavours to elude the force of that famous place in 1 Tim. 3. 16. by expunging the word Θεός, as much as in him lies, that is, by pretending it was added by the Arian Hereticks. So that we need the less value the censure he passes upon S. Hierome in this matter, where nothing but pure zeal for the truths of God could make him so concern'd and fervent—*Ille sæpe nu-*

mero

mero violentus est parumq; pudens, sæpe varius, parumq; sibi constans.

Idacius Clarus a Spanish Bishop, who died about the year 388, at what time the elder Theodosius and Valentinian were Emperours, cites both verses, though as to their order transposed, and with a little alteration, in his book against Varinadus an Arian Deacon, response 3.—*Item ipse* (i.e. Johannes Evangelista, whole Gospel he had just before cited) *ad Parthos, tres sunt, inquit, qui testimonium perhibent in terrâ, Aqua, Sanguis, & Caro, & tres in nobis sunt: & tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater, Verbum & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt;* which very citation is made use of, as being borrowed hence, by the author of the collections of the decretal Epistles, which beyond all doubt are proved to be counterfeited<sup>(a)</sup> and supposititious, in the 1 Epistle of Hyginus, and by this is to be corrected, *Item ipse ad Parthos, tres sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in terram, Aqua, Sanguis & Caro; & tres in nobis sunt, qui testimonium perhibent in cælo, Pater, Verbum, & Spiritus, & hi tres unum sunt.* There is like variety of reading in both verses in several old Copies, some leaving out ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ and Ἐν τῷ γῆς or ἐν τῇ γῇ, others retaining them: For this [*in terrâ*] Socinus confesses to be

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found

Tom. 4. Bibliothecæ veterum Patrum, Paris. 1610, pag. 372.

(a) Consulte Epistolarum Pontificalium censuram à D. Blondello editam Genevæ, A. Chr. 1628, pag. 190.



found in quibusdam emendatis exemplaribus, though that we may gain nothing by this confession, he tells us immediately after, it is not extant in emendationibus. It might easily be foreseen, that if either had been left, and particularly this latter; the one would have infer'd the other justly and necessarily, and therefore it cannot seem strange, if the first corrupters of this Scripture, to make all sure, and to render their false and perfidious dealing the more unsuspected, omitted both; so too in that ancient MS. Grotius made use of, though he gives us no proof of its antiquity in that place, and suppose it were written a thousand years since, we are not to be swayed by it, as if it were authentick,  $\delta\tau\iota\ \tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\ \delta\iota\ \mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\acute{\epsilon}\nu\epsilon\varsigma\ \tau\omicron\ \Pi\acute{\nu}\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha\ \kappa\acute{\iota}\ \tau\omicron\ \upsilon\delta\omega\varsigma\ \kappa\acute{\iota}\ \tau\omicron\ \acute{\alpha}\mu\iota\gamma\alpha$ , and no more, who thereupon conjectures these words  $\kappa\acute{\iota}\ \delta\iota\ \tau\epsilon\acute{\iota}\varsigma\ \epsilon\upsilon\ \epsilon\iota\sigma\iota$ , with the former verse to have been added by the Arians to prove the father, son and holy ghost, to be one in consent only, but afterwards removed and altered by the Catholics, and added to the former verse, which is said without any the least proof either from reason or antiquity, and has nothing to maintain the fancy, but the great name of the Author of it.

That which \* Sandius and several others allege

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in the first place, that eo omisso meliorem esse verborum connexionem, the connexion is far better, if the 7 v. were omitted, and that therefore it ought to be so, and was antiently omitted; if the supposition were true, is not only vain and frivolous, but very bold and immodest to ry the spirit of God to such a way of writing, as pleases their humours and fancies best, and favours most of humane artifice, and by the same argument they may reject not only verses, but whole chapters in the N.T. for the meanness and inaccuracy of the stile, and the seeming carelessness of the method, which is not always conformable to the rules of the Gr. eloquence.

2. *Indignum est summo Deo esse testem, inio coram quo iudice testis foret?* is a groundless and bold cavil; for this witnessing is nothing else but the declaration of God to mankind by evident signs and tokens concerning our Saviours being the true Messias, and of his being born in the flesh, and that he came from him. This God has attested and sufficiently made known to the World, and in this sense the Word often occurs in the Scriptures, without the least indignity offered to the Divine Nature. The only pretence he has for his fancy is a base and unworthy comparison he conceives in his mind between Gods

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being

\* In appendix Interpretationum Fata doctrinae p. 381.

being a witness, and mans being a witness in our Courts of Judicature, forgetting the genuine and easie sense of the word, as I have above expressed

3. That it is highly probable that this verse was inferred by a Sabellian, the contrary whereof is most true. 4. That in several MSS. and Editions of modern languages, there is a transposition of these two verses. The same before was acknowledged to be found in some Greek copies, which no way proves the pretended interpolation, but only that antient copies do not all agree. 5. That this v. does very highly favour the Arians, but this is such a strain of fancy, that he may as well allege the first words of the Book of Genesis, to prove Aristotles opinion of the eternity of the World. If men out of a pre-judicate opinion, against the doctrine of the Catholick Church, allow themselves to interpret Scripture according to their own fancies, it cannot seem strange to any, that they should go about to prove and justify their blasphemies from the plainest texts of Scripture, that in the judgment of all sober persons, who are free from those prejudices, do most evidently refute them.

F I N I S.