

THE
SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE
OF THE
TRINITY
VINDICATED.

IN OPPOSITION TO
MR. WATTS'S SCHEME
OF ONE DIVINE PERSON
AND TWO DIVINE POWERS.

By ABRAHAM TAYLOR.

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To the Reverend

Mr. JOHN HURRION.

S I R,

YOU are very well acquainted with the occasion of first publishing these papers, and have been pleased to express your approbation of them; therefore, as I now own them, I take the freedom to inscribe them to you; and I hope you will excuse my doing it without your knowledge, and will look upon it as a mark of the sincere friendship I bear you, and of the great esteem I have for you.

DEDICATION.

I should have been very glad, there had been no occasion given, for the following remarks, on a person of our own denomination; but to have let such unscriptural fancies, as he has unhappily run into, pass without animadversion, would have look'd as if we were ready to palliate any defects in those of our own number; and as if we thought it of greater consequence, to keep from disputes among our selves, than to preserve the faith, which we have received from the Scriptures, pure and undefiled.

It may perhaps be pretended, that we ought for the sake of peace, to cover the defects of our brethren, and that we should in charity overlook their failings; this is indeed true in many cases, but this plea ought never to be used, for such as trouble the churches of Christ with unscriptural novelties,
and

DEDICATION.

and disturb the peace of Christians, by introducing things contrary to what they have received, and learned from the unerring oracles of truth: peace is much to be desired, and highly to be valued, but it should not be sought, at the expence of truth; and charity is a most amiable virtue, but it should never be used as a screen for errors.

It would be very happy, if men, to whom God has afforded good talents, would make use of them in the support of what is really contained in Scripture, and would not be forward, to employ their wit and invention, in forming schemes to explain things, over which infinite wisdom has thrown a shade. Men may please themselves with the thoughts of being able, to invent methods of solving the difficulties, which attend the great mysteries of revelation; but there can no
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real advantage redound from hence, because they meddle with things out of their reach, and invade a province that does not belong to finite mortals, who ought to submit their understandings to the word of truth, but should never affect to be wise above what is written.

We shall always find, that men who waste their time, in projecting methods of explaining what is really inexplicable, have such a fondness for the products of their own fancies, that they think they meet with very hard measure, if the vanity and insufficiency of their hypotheses be laid open; but unless they reckon themselves to be the persons with whom wisdom must die, they ought not to be against others using the liberty which belongs to men and Christians: who certainly have as much right, to defend the
truths

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truths of the Gospel, as they have to cloud and obscure them.

I know, Sir, your regard for the faith once deliver'd to the saints, is so great, that there is no need to make any apology to you, for my publishing the following work ; I believe it was a regard to the truth, which I defend, made you overlook the imperfections of what I wrote, with an honest intention, and induced you to declare your approbation of it. I wish what is now added, may not be unpleasing to you.

That you may be favour'd, every day, with more light into the great doctrines of the Gospel; that you may be blessed with a sufficient measure of health, to make use of the good talents entrusted to you ; that your ministry may be abundantly succeeded ; and
that

DEDICATION.

that you may be long continued a witness for the truth, and an useful labourer in the church, where your lot is cast, is the sincere prayer of,

Reverend Sir,

Your sincere friend,

And unworthy brother,

ABRAHAM TAYLOR.

T H E

P R E F A C E.

TH E doctrine of the blessed Trinity is a matter of such importance, that all who wish well to Christianity, ought ever to be on their guard, against any attempts made, either to weaken their faith, or to puzzle their minds, as to this great and adorable mystery: And they, who without any ill design, give out erroneous hypotheses, relating to this prime article of faith, ought no more to be left to vent their fancies without controul, than others who oppose this truth, thro' malice, should be suffered to pass without contradiction.

It was because I really thought the reverend Mr. Watts obscured the doctrine, which he imagin'd he might, perhaps, be able to clear, that I appear'd against his books: and when I finish'd my treatise against him, I had little apprehensions, that I should have farther concern with him: for as I did not think he would be for launching into controversy, so I was determin'd, not to concern my self with any other person, who should thrust himself into the debate. As there was occasion, this winter, for a new impression, I took the opportunity to review what I had wrote, and to look into Mr. Watts's books. This made some thoughts occur to me, which, I chose rather to throw together, in the form of a preface, than to trouble the world with them separate.

This small tract was publish'd without my name, not because I was ashamed of any thing contained in it, but that it might make its own way into the world, and that the censorious might have the less opportunity to run it down, without weighing the merits of the cause concerned. It has met with so favourable a reception from many among our selves, and from some of the church of England, whose judgments I value, that I can sit very easy and unconcerned, under the bitter invectives, which have been utter'd against it, by the admirers of the gentleman I undertook to refute.

I have however the satisfaction to find, that tho' this worthy and ingenious person has many, who deservedly esteem him, on other accounts, yet ^a he has few, very few, who admire him, or who will indeed defend him, as to the things wherein I am concerned with him.

When the first edition was publish'd, I lived not in London, and so I could be guilty of no unfairness, in the title I took to my self, of a dissenting country gentleman. I have now thought it proper, to throw off my disguise, and to set my name, in order to let the world see, that I scorn to do, or say, any thing, under cover, which I am afraid of doing, or saying, in open view. I would not do any thing in private, without considering, I am in the presence of the searcher of hearts; therefore I look upon my self to be under the same restraint, as a Christian, whether I choose to be known

^a That many who admire Mr. Watts, are not pleased with his attempts relating to the Trinity, appears from hence, that tho' some thousands of most of his other works have been sold; yet an impression of five hundred, of the second part of his dissertations on the Trinity has not gone off.

or unknown, as an author : and consequently all I am concern'd about, is to use my liberty, in taking that method, which I apprehend most conducive, to serve the cause I engage in.

I was not guess'd to be the author of this performance, till some time after it was publish'd, and, by that means, I had the better opportunity, to take notice of what was objected to it, by such as fell in my way. Upon taking the strictest review of what I have wrote, and upon laying together, what I have found, has been objected to it, in conversation, or otherwise, I am forced, by the conviction of my own mind, still to affirm, that I have neither misrepresented Mr. Watts, nor treated him either unfairly or abusively.

Some have thought me guilty of falsehood, when I said ^b I had not the honour of Mr. Watts's acquaintance; but this is founded on a mistake; for tho' it may be known to many ministers, that I have often been in the same place with him, tho' he may declare he has conversed with me in more places than one; and tho' some civilities may have passed between us, yet I do not apprehend this comes up to an acquaintance; for I was never with him, in private, half an hour, in my whole life, and I never thought talking with a person a little now and then, in publick places, and in promiscuous company, render'd another acquainted with him.

It has been industriously given out, that I have treated Mr. Watts with bitterness; but I could never find any ground for this charge: I declared, at first, ^c that, tho' I would treat him with

^b Page 112 of this Edit. p. 107 of the first Edit.

^c Page 4. al. 6.

candor, yet his character for piety should not make me afraid of laying open his mistakes or of speaking freely of some things he had advanced.

I cannot see I have done more than this, or have said any thing against what he has publish'd, inconsistent with a sincere value for his person; for certainly, my esteem for another man does not deprive me of the liberty, which belongs to me, as a man, and a Christian, to shew his mistakes, when I take what he advances, to have an ill tendency.

I know, to have the darling productions of our own fancies demolish'd, is not agreeable to the corrupt part, which is in the best of us; but, however, it is certain, that shewing a man his error, is acting a friendly part towards him, whether he may think so or no. Perhaps Mr. Watts may fancy himself more injured, by the frankness I have used with him, than by the wheedling insinuations of a few flatterers; but I would remind him of what was said by a much^d wiser man, and one who had seen more of the world than he or I, that, "faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful."

We have had a great deal said, about the best method of treating an adversary; but I cannot find any one has given us rules, which can universally be observed. I take it, that we are as much mistaken, in thinking only smooth things must be said to him, as others might formerly be, in imagining he ought to be dealt with in a wrathful manner; christian charity no more lies in soothing a man's vanity, than christian zeal consists in treating him with anger and bitterness.

^d Prov. xxvii. 6.

A man who has given too great a scope to his fancy, and has promised great matters, and has not answer'd his big pretences, is the most unfit person in the world, to judge whether he has met with right treatment or no; because his fond attachment to the products of his fancy, is apt to bias his judgment; if his vanity is tickled with high commendations of his parts and piety, he may be ravished with the false pleasure of having his pride gratified: if he meets with persons who oppose him, and yet cringe to him, it is well if he does not insult them: if he falls among neuters, who have no zeal for revealed truths, and who to make a tool of him, will applaud him for searching after truth, and will sneer at the commonly received faith, under the name of orthodoxy, these he will think to be the unprejudiced men, the persons of free thought, and impartial enquiries, tho' perhaps their impartiality lies only in their flattering him. On the contrary, he is apt to look upon such as deal plainly and faithfully with him, in laying open his mistakes, and shewing he has rashly waded beyond his depth, as bigotted sour mortals, who, thro' envy or ignorance, will not fall in with him, tho' he labours, by reasoning and clear ideas, to defend those very doctrines, which they maintain, and on which they lay a very great stress.

I will not presume to say, I know the true way of writing controversy; but if I may be permitted to speak my mind, I think it no more lies in cringing to an antagonist, than in reviling him: these two extremes are equally to be avoided, the one being as unworthy of a man, as the other is unbecoming a Christian. To call a man hard names, and to bring in personal matters,

matters, with which the publick is not concerned, is not consistent with the character of a gentleman, much less with that of a Christian; but it does not follow from hence, that we must divest our selves of all courage, and must speak and act beneath men, when we attack an author of name and reputation. If a man boldly publishes falsehoods, he should be told roundly of them; if he begs his question, he has no right to complain, if he is exposed; and if he advances precarious hypotheses, giving them out as some great matters, and yet leaves them destitute of proof, he ought to be made sensible, that he engages in things too high for him; and this not the less, in case he should affect to be reckon'd only a seeker after truth; for that man can never be thought an unbiass'd and prudent searcher after what is true, who delights in vending precarious fancies and uncertain fictions of his own, which he cannot support by just arguing; on the contrary, he must be number'd among the superficial intruders into things, which they have not seen, and it is well, if he is not vainly puff'd up with a fleshly mind.

There are many things, in which a man of a working imagination may indulge his fancy; and when he does this, in an innocent way, he ought not to be severely exposed, tho' there may perhaps be nothing solid, in that with which he amuses himself: but when a person comes to play with things sacred, and to set his fancy to work, on the important doctrines of revelation, the products of his imagination must be weigh'd in the balance of truth and justice; let the consequence be what it will, as to affecting his reputation: for the character of none on the earth is of such importance, as doctrines which
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are necessary to be believed, in order to salvation.

When a person has courage to tell unwelcome truths, it is very easy for those whose senses are gall'd, by what he says, to set him forth in an ugly dress: If he endeavours to shew the world, that a projector, who has given out, that he has hit on the right method of solving difficulties, which 'till he, great genius, appear'd, were judg'd insuperable, has fail'd of answering his big pretences, having, on the contrary, puzzled the cause he undertook to clear; and if he takes the freedom to call such an abortive attempt by its right name, it is no hard matter, for one who has given a just occasion for such a censure, to complain, in tragical terms; especially if he is master of that false rhetoric which is apt to move the weak and unwary, he may stile it calling fire down from heaven, and thundering out reproachful anathemas against opposers, and may misrepresent plain dealing, under the odious characters of bitter and unchristian zeal: but these are mean addresses to the lower passions, and tend to no other end, than to captivate the injudicious, and to fill them with impressions that are not just. Truth needs no varnish, and is never afraid of being display'd in its true colours: but when men give way to fancies, they are always in fear of having their inventions canvass'd, and are very angry, if any one honestly endeavours to sift their chaff.

There has been one great objection made against my attacking Mr. Watts, which is; he is a good man, an useful minister, one whose labours God has greatly own'd and bless'd, and therefore I should not have oppos'd him, lest it might tend to prejudice people against him,
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and thereby might obstruct his usefulness: but I can see no weight in this objection; for I cannot think, that if I shew a man to have fail'd, in engaging in a matter, of which he has not made himself master, it can thence be concluded, that he is not master of any thing else. If I am able to judge, Mr. Watts is not the fittest man in the world, to engage in elaborate controversy, because he gives too great a scope to his fancy, and so runs into uncertain schemes, without considering the difficulties that attend them; but it does not follow from hence, that he is not an ingenious poet, and that he is not fit to treat of practical matters, where the ornaments of wit and fancy may usefully imbellish his subject. If thoughtless persons will conclude, that if a man is out in one thing, it is impossible for him to hit right in another, I cannot help it. I must be content, to think, that a man may have excellent talents for one part of knowledge, who may have no notion of other parts, as really useful, in their place.

The great character a person may bear, as an useful minister, should never be used as a screen to cover his error, or mistakes. I do not question, but the Apostle Paul look'd on the great Apostle of the Jews, as a very useful minister of the gospel of reconciliation; yet when Peter, being left to his own spirit, acted not uprightly, he withstood him to the face, and openly rebuked him, before those, to whom he did not set a good example. If the Apostle of the Gentiles had a right to oppose one of the greatest ministers that ever was, when he did amiss; certainly it does not follow, because any common minister's usefulness may have been great, that others are deprived of the liberty of shew-
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ing the mistakes, he may unwarily have run into.

As I can rejoice in Mr. Watts's publick usefulness, so I will be so frank as to own, that if I had not had a regard to him, as one counted a good man, and an useful minister, I should never have given my self the trouble, to have remark'd on such a performance, as his dissertations on the Trinity. When a bad or a worthless man writes against an important doctrine, with learning, art, subtilty, and dexterity, there is need of an antidote against his person: but if such a man runs upon ungrounded fancies, he ought to be flighted; because the character of the man will guard others, who are serious, against receiving infection from him; but when one who is counted a good man, is so far left by God to his own spirit, as to run into mistakes, the higher character he bears for piety, the more care should be taken, to prevent his errors having a support, from the reputation of him who vents them: and tho' he may make great pretences to charity, humility, self-diffidence, and sincere searching after truth, yet still Christians ought to be stir'd up to be on their guard; that by these things they may not be led, unwarily, to give up matters of the highest moment, and to sacrifice doctrines of the last concern, to the reputation which some men may have for piety and good temper, who yet have not humility and modesty enough, to keep them from being wise above what is written.

I really think Mr. Watts has run into great mistakes, in what he has publish'd, on the prime article of our faith: but as, I hope, he has fallen into them unwarily, and without any bad design, I cannot think any well meant attempt to shew

his errors, in order to reclaim him from them, ought to be counted a thing tending to obstruct his usefulness ; were not what he has deliver'd unpleasing to such, as might be in the way of receiving good from him, it would never be fear'd, that the laying his mistakes open would render him less useful. Consequently an endeavour to bring him off, from what may give offence to such, to whom his ministry might otherwise be of advantage, ought candidly to be interpreted, as giving a helping hand towards the farthering his usefulness, as it tends to remove that out of the way, which may, by some means or other, obstruct it.

It has been a fault too many, before Mr. Watts, have been guilty of, to set their heads to work, about methods of solving the difficulties, which have been urged by heretics against the doctrine of the Trinity. All who have done thus, might not have a bad meaning, but as they set out on a wrong foot, it is no wonder, that they have exposed themselves to censure.

Mr. Watts ^e, in giving us an account of the distinctions, which we can suppose to be in the Godhead, has mentioned three, which to him ^f scarce seem to afford a sufficient difference, for the various ascriptions, which are given to the Father, the Word, and the Spirit, in Scripture: one is, a distinction of names and outward relations, as when God is call'd creator, redeemer, and sanctifier; another is of names and inward relations, such as paternity, filiation, and spiration; and the other is of modes or attributes, such as wisdom, power, and goodness: all these he, very rightly, rejects; but whether the

§ other distinction he proposes, which represents the divine essence, and its mind and will, as the blessed three, is really a greater distinction than the other, he would do well to consider: there may be a plain reality in this distinction, and so there may be in the other distinctions he thinks not sufficient; for certainly the attributes of God, such as justice and mercy, are really distinct from one another. He mentions another distinction, which is that of three minds, or three substances, but this he ^h justly lays aside, as approaching too near Tritheism.

Some may, perhaps, think it strange, that our author, in recounting the several schemes, invented to explain the Trinity, has omitted the commonly received doctrine, which makes the sacred three, to be real persons, and yet to be one God; but there is no need to wonder at it, if we consider, that the other schemes are attempts to explain what the Scripture has not revealed, whilst the catholic doctrine is no other, than an account of what the Scripture has actually declared, without pretending to intrude into things, about which the oracles of truth are wholly silent.

I confess, the more I think on the imperfection of human knowledge, and the more I see of the insufficiency of the schemes framed, by those who are for prying into things unrevealed, to explain the mode of Scripture mysteries, the more I am convinced, that it is much the safest way ⁱ, to rest contented with what the Scripture

§ Page 214.

^h p. 215.

ⁱ It must be acknowledged, that the article of the real and absolute Divinity of our blessed Redeemer, God manifest in the flesh, in opposition to the relative sense of God by office, is certainly a great mystery of godliness, or religion, if we respect

has actually revealed, as to things we could not have known, without such revelation. If we receive a revealed truth on the authority of God, who reveals it, our assent to it must be founded on his authority only, and must not be made to hang partly on that, and partly on our comprehending, how such a thing can be. If a man of known veracity, who has been in a remote part of the world, whither I am never likely to go, were to give me an account of any strange animal, which he had seen, and which I never heard of before; would it not be doing him a great injury, and acting contrary to decency and good manners, for me to discredit his report, when I have nothing to urge against it, but that I cannot tell how there can possibly be such a creature, as he affirms he has seen. If rejecting such a testimony, would be casting an undue contempt on an honest, tho' fallible man, cer-

the manner of the essential union of three adorable persons in one Godhead: But if this sublime mystery be look'd upon as an object of revelation, it will then, as to the certainty of it, be no wonderful thing; for what God declares concerning his own nature, who alone knows it, must be true, and those to whom he declares it, ought to believe his revelation without diffidence or hesitation; and tho' it is true, that the most clear and capacious understanding cannot comprehend and explain the mode, how one God exists in three distinct persons; yet it is as true, that if this article is reveal'd by him, it is the indispensable duty of men to believe it, tho' they cannot conceive how it can be so; for we believe upon certain grounds, the existence of a multitude of things, the manner of whose existence we cannot penetrate or comprehend. We believe God's eternity and immensity, but are unable to form any positive equal idea of either. We believe that by his omnipotent power, he created the world out of nothing; yet it confounds all human faculties to conceive, how beings should be made, otherwise than from preexistent matter: and we readily acknowledge that many things there are, tho' we are altogether ignorant how they are. Sir Richard Blackmore's *modern Arians unmask'd*, p. 59, 60.

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cainly I offer a high affront to the Majesty of heaven, if I refuse to assent to what a God of infinite truth has actually declared, merely because he has not thought fit to let me into the knowledge, how such a thing can be.

As to so great a point as the doctrine of the Trinity, we should neither let our imperfect corrupt reason sit judge upon it, nor suffer an undue curiosity to form schemes to explain it. I shall here use the words of a very able and judicious ^k writer. “We must not (says he) venture upon bold explications of the Trinity, lest a luxurious fancy prove too strong for our faith. When we acknowledge the doctrine of the Trinity to be a mystery which is incomprehensible, and yet go about to explain it, we contradict our selves, because we pretend to explain what we own to be inexplicable. Many who presume to explicate and illustrate the doctrine of the Trinity by similitudes, obscure it, because they exceed the bounds of Scripture light: when they endeavour to explain all things about it to reason, they express many things which are unsound as to faith. The doctrine of the Trinity is a truth to be adored with the greatest humility, but not to be ventilated with rashness, and a daring curiosity: We must not nicely enquire into it, but, with a modest humble faith, adore and admire it, at a distance, as that which has a veil of secrecy spread over it. As it is a flighting ingratitude, to be careless about what God has manifested, and to neglect what he has revealed; so it is a provoking arrogance, to be too inquisitive about what God has hid.”

^k Mr. R. Taylor in his discourse of the mysteriousness of the Gospel revelation. In his works, Vol. V. p. 188, 189.

The more we examine into the Scripture proofs of the true Divinity of Christ, and the holy Spirit, the more we answer the characters of men and Christians; but when we trouble ourselves with unrevealed authorities, as we do but grasp at clouds, and beat the air; so we are in a fair way to be turned from the true faith, to fictions of our own brains. There is a mystery too deep in the manner of the three persons union and distinction, for finite understandings to fathom; we may as well attempt to drink up the ocean, to lift the earth, or to span the sun. I cannot but admire the following excellent words of a very polite and judicious divine¹, of the ancient church. “I scarce think on the unity of the divine nature, but I am overwhelmed with the light of three divine persons: I scarce begin to distinguish the three persons, but I am carried back to the one nature. When one of the three persons presents itself to my mind, I think this to have the whole Godhead, my intellectual sight is fully taken up, and I miss the greater part [the other two persons]: I cannot so far comprehend the greatness of one person, so as to leave more to another. When I gather up the three persons in my mind, I see one light, which united light I am not able to separate or comprehend.” Whenever we find curiosity prompting us, to search into the mode, how three persons can be one God, we ought

¹ 'Ου φθάνω τὸ ἐν νοῆσαι, καὶ τοῖς τρεῖσι περιλάμψομαι· οὐ φθάνω τὰ τρία διελεῖν, καὶ εἰς τὸ ἐν ἀναφέρωμαι. “Ὅταν ἐν τῷ τριῶν φαντασθῶ, τῷτο νομίζω τὸ πᾶν, καὶ τὴν εἴψην πεπλήρωμαι, καὶ τὸ πλεῖον διέφυγεν· ἐκ ἔχω τὸ μέγεθος τῶν καταλαβεῖν, ἵνα δῶ τὸ πλεῖον τῷ λειπομένῳ· ὅταν τὰ τρία συνέλω τῇ θεωρίᾳ, μίαν ὁρῶ λαμπρότητα, ἐκ ἔχων διελεῖν ἢ μετρήσαι τὸ φῶς ἐνιζόμενον. Gregor. Nazianz. Orat. xl. Vol. I. p. 688. Ed. Par.

to check such a temper, by considering what it is we are for prying into; it is no less than the nature of the infinite God, and can we be so vain as to fancy, that our finite understandings can take in ^m infinity; or imagine, that by searching we can find out God, or discover the incomprehensible to perfection? We ought rather to sit down contented with that measure of light, which God has afforded us; and it will be our greatest wisdom, silently to adore, at a distance, where we must not presume to draw nigh to gaze.

I know, searching into the mode of Christian mysteries, has too often been the disease of those who have wrote upon them. There is something in it that pleases the pride of men at first; but when they have gone too far to make a handsome retreat, and know not how to go forwards, they are fill'd with much greater perplexities, than those were, which they wanted to get over. It is with them, as it is with tra-

^m Man! foolish man!

Scarce know'st thou how thy self began;
Scarce hast thou thought enough to prove thou art;
Yet steel'd with study'd boldness, thou dar'st try
To send thy doubting reason's dazzl'd eye,
Through the mysterious gulph of vast immensity;
Much thou canst there discern, much thence impart!
Vain wretch, suppress thy knowing pride,
Mostly thy learned lust:
Vain are thy thoughts, while thou thy self art dust.

Prior's Poems, p. 1, 2.

How narrow limits are to wisdom given?
Earth she surveys, she thence would measure heaven;
Thro' mists obscure, now wings her tedious way,
Now wanders dazzl'd with too bright a day;
And from the summit of a pathless coast
Sees infinite, and in that sight is lost.

Prior's Solomon, Book I. p. 174.

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vellers, who cross the Alps, or any other great chain of mountains. At first they conceive a great deal of pleasure, at the novelty of the view of nature, as it were, half in ruins; and they are delighted with the prospect of hills, rocks, and woods, thrown together, in a confused magnificence, that has something more majestic, than can be found in the regular works of art; but when they have passed through many dangers, and see nothing but bleak and naked tops, and only discover hills rising over hills, and mountains heap'd on mountains, they grow discouraged, and begin to wish, they had not travel'd so far; and were it not for reincountering the dangers they have already pass'd thro', they would turn back, and not pursue their journey. Thus when men, to gratify a needless curiosity, have travell'd through many mazes of imagination, to find solutions of things above their understandings, they meet with nothing but barren tracts, and so know not how to go forward, while their pride hinders them from turning back. There are no worse guides in searching after truth, than a projecting fancy, and warmth of imagination, therefore we ought not to follow such false lights; but while we are only travellers to a better place, where we hope to see our redeemer as he is, we should be content to know but in part, as an excellentⁿ ancient writer expresses it; "What is the union of the Son with the Father, what is the communion of the Father with the

ⁿ Μόνος παραπεμπόμενος τῷ τῷ----εἰδέναι τίς ἡ τῷ παιδὸς πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἐνότης, τίς ἡ τῷ πατρὸς πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν κοινωνία, τί τὸ πνεῦμα, τίς ἡ τῶν τούτων ἐνωσις καὶ ἀγάπησις. Athenagoras, Apol. c. 11. p. 46. Ed. Oxon.

Son, what is the Spirit, and what is their unity and distinction.

I allow that there is a *modus*, wherein the doctrine of the Trinity is true, but then I can never think this *modus* is to be known and comprehended by any finite minds: it is only known to the three divine persons themselves, and can never be clearly explain'd by man; neither can we expect the divine aid, to assist us in our searches into things, which the divine wisdom has not thought fit to reveal. Had it been proper for us to have known, how the three divine persons can be one God, it would have been revealed, as well as that there are three divine persons, who are the one God: but since Scripture has not revealed, how these three can be one, it is labour idly spent, for us, poor shallow mortals, to go about to determine accurately, how far the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one, and how far they are three.

It is strange, that a humble refraining from searching after what we have no light from Scripture to trace, should be call'd, by Mr. Watts^p, lying down satisfied in darkness; surely we may search into what is fact, without knowing how it is. When our great philosopher, Sir Isaac Newton, so happily explain'd the motions of heavenly bodies, by the theory of gravitation, and yet own'd he knew not the cause of gravity, did he require us to lie down satisfied in darkness? When Mr. Watts tells his hearers, they have immortal souls, whose well-being they ought to seek; does he require them to lie down in darkness, because neither he, nor any one else, can tell them how those

^p Preface to Mr. Scott's Sermon, p. vi.

souls are united to their bodies? These things ought to be consider'd coolly, and it should not be thought sufficient, to put them off with an arch expression.

But Mr. Watts ^a tells us, that, "In this enlighten'd age of search and enquiry, men will not be satisfied to hear us make use of inexplicable and mysterious terms, and tell them, that the sense of them is never to be known: they will not think that doctrine can be of so much importance to us, which must be wrapt up in perpetual darkness, and can never be understood." That our age is an age of search and enquiry, I own; but that it is an enlighten'd age, I can hardly allow, seeing the black clouds of Deism and Arianism hang so thick over us. As to the doctrine under consideration, no one ever fetter'd it with more inexplicable terms, than our author, nor do I know of any writer, who has wrapt it up in greater darkness. When we give the clearest proof from Scripture, that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are three persons, that they are all divine, and yet are but one God, because there can be but one true God; it is the greatest injustice done us, to charge us with wrapping up the doctrine of the Trinity in darkness, because we own our idea of the mode, how the sacred three are one, is not clear, but confuse, inadequate, and indeterminate, and are content to look upon the infinitely great God, as the incomprehensible unknown.

Our author farther urges, that, "since the Scripture bids us grow in the knowledge of God our Father, and of Christ our Saviour, men will not count it a profane thing to attempt

^a Ibid. p. vii.

to turn aside the veil of ignorance, and endeavour, at least in some measure, to know God, and understand what they are required to believe concerning him." I am satisfied, upon reflection, he will scarce think, that what the Scripture calls growing in the knowledge of God and Christ, is to be meant of a searching into the manner how they are one; for it would give us an odd notion of Scripture, to suppose we are commanded by it, to press after the knowledge of a thing we can never know, without revelation, and which yet is not revealed. I do not think it is profane, to attempt to turn aside any veil of ignorance, but I can not help thinking, it is arrogant and irreverent, for us to be eager in prying into things, before which the infinitely wise God has thought fit to draw a veil of secrecy. As the doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery of revelation, vastly transcending our finite understandings, our ideas of it can never be clear; therefore I can scarce think the shadows which overspread our minds, as to the mode of this mystery, will fly away, tho' the morning of the later glory should approach; because as this matter is a thing not reveal'd, we can never be let into it without a new revelation; and that we have no more reason ever to expect, than we have need to desire it.

However, let the case be as it will, I can hardly think we should turn aside the veil of ignorance, if we were to say, that when the Son of God declared himself to be one ^r with the Father, the most agreeable exposition of such a text is, to make the word Father signify the Godhead, which is common to the Father, the

^r John x. 30.

Son, and the Spirit, because this wraps up the text in darkness, instead of clearing it; neither can I think, we should better understand what we are required to believe concerning the Father and the Son, if we were to enter ever so far into such questions ^f as these: “Whether the Godhead which is ascribed to the Son be the full, complete, and adequate idea of the Godhead which is of the Father; or whether, in some Scriptures, it may mean an inadequate idea of Godhead, which may be supposed to be call’d the Word or the wisdom of God; or whether it be the entire Godhead, under the special idea of wisdom.” I do not apprehend, the discussing such obscure and unprofitable questions, would produce any beams of light, which we should meet with longing eyes, and salute with holy joy.

The inventive fancies of men, may work hard to put Scripture truths in an agreeable dress, but fiction can only deck them with spurious rays; they appear divinely bright, in their own native cloathing: and their beauty is sullied, when they are set off with that borrow’d blaze, and that false glare, which is cast round them by the wit of man. Certainly the draughts of infinite wisdom do not need to be retouch’d, by the fingers of men, whose understandings are so impair’d, by the fall, that they often call light darkness, and darkness light.

I would be willing always to lie open to conviction, but till it can be fairly made out to me, that any good has accrued to Christianity, by mens striving after clear and bright ideas of things which infinitely surpass their reason, I

^f Mr. Watts’s Sermons, Vol. III. p. 432.

must take the liberty to condemn all such attempts, as dangerous, as well as useless. The striving after the knowledge of what God had not reveal'd, was the ¹ spring of the apostacy of our first parents, and was the occasion of sin and death, being transmitted to us their unhappy posterity: therefore we ought to be afraid of an undue curiosity, and should start back from it, as it was the source of all the woes and miseries, which we feel, in our tiresome passage, thro' the wilderness of this world.

It has been insinuated, by Mr. Watts, that it is necessary we should have some scheme of the Trinity to go upon, otherwise it is hardly possible to silence gainayers; but I do not think we should put our selves in a way better to answer our adversary's cavils, against the catholic doctrine of the Trinity, by running into the very thing, which has given birth to all the heresies and errors which have sprung up, as to this article, in all ages. What was it occasion'd the rise of Sabellianism, Arianism, Tritheism and Socinianism? it was this, men of vanity and self-conceit, would not be content to take the matter on the foot on which Scripture has left it, but would be for forming schemes, which might bring it down to their conceptions. Certainly we are not in a fair way to convince those who oppose themselves, if we betake our selves to the very thing which has occasion'd all the opposition, that has been made to our common faith, and has been the cause of all the heresies

¹ Remember that the curst desire to know,
Offspring of Adam, was thy source of woe;
Why wilt thou then renew the vain pursuit,
And rashly catch at the forbidden fruit?

Prior's Solomon, B. I. p. 174.

that have pester'd the church, from the beginning till now ^v.

I do not think any thing more unhappy in a divine, than to turn projector, and to go about to say, what may be, and what must be, as to Scripture-mysteries. When a man cannot get an adequate idea of what he searches after, it signifies very little for him to boast of his having acquired brighter ideas of it, than he fancies others have attained. It is no disgrace for us to own our imperfect knowledge of matters that vastly transcend our finite capacities; it is rather an evidence of our prudence, as well as of our humility: whereas to set up for solving all difficulties, shews a man not to be overfraught with modesty, and not to be rightly sensible of the imperfection and frailty of human understanding.

Some may, perhaps, think, that when I speak against Mr. Watts's attempt, to gain clear and adequate ideas of the Trinity, I mistake him; because it may be hard for them to allow, that a person of his reason and modesty would engage in a matter, where there is so little ground to expect satisfaction. I never said, that he peremptorily affirm'd, he had actually attain'd, clear and bright ideas of the mode of this mystery; for I would not charge him with what might favor so much of vanity and arrogance; but

^v This must be for a lamentation and prognostic of desolation, if not prevented by infinite grace and mercy, that after so many years Gospel-light, there should be regard to false teachers, privily bringing in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them; privily indeed, pretending an enquiry after sensible ideas of spiritual and supernatural truths of eternal life, suborning also a spectre of rational demonstration to determine and judge of things invisible, which can only be the objects of faith in the word of God. Sir Edward Harley's preface to his scriptural and rational account of the Christian Religion, page v, vi.

that

that he aim'd at this, and had some hopes, he might, perhaps, have reach'd his aim, I humbly conceive is pretty plain, from several passages in his books: he has told us^u, "his aim has been, to gain, and give, as clear and distinct ideas, as he can, of the words the Scripture uses:" and what he means by clear and distinct ideas, we can hardly be at a loss to know, if we consider, that he says^w; "it is his opinion, that a fair, easy, and intelligible scheme of the Trinitarian doctrine, agreeable to holy Scripture, would be the noblest and the securest ground against Arian and Socinian errors, for then there would be no pretence to deny it." I know not what to make of these words, if he does not mean, that such a scheme is to be desired, which may convey to us adequate ideas of the mode of this doctrine; by the way, however, I cannot but observe, that if such an easy intelligible scheme, is the noblest and securest ground against errors, it will follow, that as the Scripture has not reveal'd such a scheme, it has not furnish'd us with the noblest and securest ground against heresies; but I know, Mr. Watts has too much esteem for the word of God, to admit any thought, which may derogate from its perfection, and may reflect on the infinite wisdom of him who reveal'd it, how unwarily soever he may have express'd himself.

Our author farther tells us^x, "he should rejoice, to see so clear and bright an explication of this article arise in the Christian world, as might overcome and scatter all the difficulties and darkneses that have hitherto hung about it,

^u Dissert. Part. II. p. 226.

^x p. 238.

^w Pref. p. x.

and might set it in so divine and triumphant a light, as should penetrate every soul, diffuse universal conviction, and demand a ready and unshaken assent." Such a scheme must lay every thing relating to the most mysterious doctrine of revelation, as level with every capacity, as it is that two and three make five: He who could form such a scheme, must have clear and adequate and not analogical, ideas.

I know Mr. Watts has told ^y us, he is far "from boasting, that he has exhibited such a hypothesis as he wishes for." And he is so good as ^z to allow, "that, perhaps, it is above the privilege of a mortal state, to expect the accomplishment of such a wish;" but yet he ^a owns "he has made a humble essay towards it;" and he is not without some hopes, that he may have succeeded therein.

If Mr. Watts meant no more than a distant and analogical resemblance, by what he calls clear and bright ideas, he has been only raising a dust to no purpose, and has given us hopes of a prodigious discovery, when, at the same time, he meant to go no farther, than those whom he seems to represent as being willing to stop shorter than they ought. It would be very odd for him, to blame such as are content, to take the doctrine of the Trinity, on the foot on which it stands in Scripture, without prying into the mode of it, which is not reveal'd, for wrapping it up in darkness; if by his own clear ideas, he meant ideas infinitely below being clear; and by his bright conceptions he intended no more, than such as must be supposed, to have in them, a far greater mixture of shade than light.

^y Pref. p. xi.

^z p. 240.

^a Pref. p. xi.

That Mr. Watts has been far from gaining clear and adequate ideas of the Trinity, I readily allow; but that he was entirely without hopes of his having attain'd them, does not appear, from any thing I have met with, in his writings: that it was possible for him to come short of what he desired, he indeed has granted, as every man of common modesty ought; but that he utterly despair'd of accomplishing his wish, is not to be gather'd from any thing he has said: Therefore I must still be of the opinion, that I have done him no injury, in representing him, as searching after a scheme, which might furnish us with adequate ideas, how the sacred three can be one God, or might represent this matter, in such distinct ideas, as would remove all appearance of inconsistency.

Perhaps Mr. Watts might be induced to aim at clear ideas of the doctrine of the Trinity, from an observation, which as his friends have given out, he made long since, that this point is never call'd a mystery, in Scripture: but if it follow'd, that any doctrine must be no mystery, or less a mystery, because it is not expressly stiled in Scripture, a mystery, it would follow, that the eternity of God, which is reveal'd, and yet has not, in Scripture, the name of a mystery given to it, is less mysterious, than the calling of the Gentiles, and the leaving the Jews in obstinacy, which is stiled ^b a mystery hid from ages.

The relation between the Father and the Son was, in all probability, meant, by ^c the Apostle Paul, when he spoke of the "mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ." And the

^b Ephes. iii. 9.

^c Col. ii. 2.

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incarnation, or the union of the divine and human natures, in the person of the Son, who is God manifested in the flesh, is expressly stiled, by the same ^d Apostle, a great mystery of Godliness. This may be sufficient, to make a considerate man cautious, of enquiring, too curiously, into the mode of the Son's union with the Father, or of his assuming the human nature into union with his divine person.

I have been charged with greatly misrepresenting Mr. Watts, in frequently saying, he makes the Word and the Spirit properties of the Father: but whether I have abused him or no, the reader may judge, from his own ^e words, “When we are endeavouring to explain [the pure distinctions in the divine nature,] in a rational manner, and to form and adjust our clearest ideas of them, I think we may use the term divine properties, or rather divine powers, for this end; perhaps this word, powers, comes nearest to the genuine ideas of things, so far as we can apply human words to divine ideas; and this word, powers, makes the distinction greater than properties, and I think 'tis so much the better; but we have several precedents for the use of both these terms, among ancient writers.” It is plain, that tho' Mr. Watts would rather use the word, powers, to express the pure distinctions in the divine nature, than the word, properties, yet he thinks the Son and Spirit may be stiled divine properties, safely enough; especially seeing, as he thinks, there are precedents for the use of this term, as well as the other, in ancient writers. I should have been glad he had produced his instances, of the an-

^d 1 Tim. iii. 16.

^e Dissert. P. II. p. 205.

cients calling the Son and Spirit, divine properties, for I really know not how he can make good his assertion. However, since he has allow'd, that the term properties may be used, and has not shew'd, that by powers he means any thing more than what others mean by properties, I cannot think I have done him any injustice, on this head: had he proved, that his favourite term, powers, had express'd any thing higher, in reality, than what others call attributes, or properties, there had been some shadow for a charge of misrepresentation; but since, as far as I am able to judge, he has not done this, I apprehend, I have done him no wrong.

In the summary view, which I ^f gave of our author's scheme, in twelve articles, I chose not to dress it up in expressions of mine, but to give it entirely in his own words, except as to ^g the first article, which I then took, and still take, to be his genuine sense. I gave not his words any odd turn, for that would have been unfair, and entirely unnecessary; for many of the terms he has used, are uncouth enough of themselves, and need not be render'd more awkward than they are. I have, indeed, represented him as contradicting himself, in saying, that the Word and Spirit, tho' they are divine properties, yet they are not merely divine attributes. He does not say so, in one and the same place, but in the passage ^h quoted just before, he has allow'd, they may be call'd divine properties; and in another place he has ⁱ told us, he “does not

^f p. 37, 38. al. 39, 40.

^g There was a mistake, as to this matter, in the first impression, p. 39. occasion'd by the copy being interlined, which is rectified in this edition, p. 37.

^h p. 205.

ⁱ p. 225.

conceive of them merely as two attributes of the divine nature;” so that, I have not, in the least, misrepresented him: and must leave it to him to reconcile such an inconsistency.

Since I wrote, Mr. Watts having taken occasion to speak of several heterodox schemes of the Trinity, has ^k declared, his full persuasion, that the Sabellian explainers have not hit upon the true solution of the difficulties attending this doctrine, but have gone into mistaken extremes: by this it is evident he does not apprehend himself, to have advanced any thing tending towards Sabellianism. I wish, he had shew’d, that there is no resemblance between that scheme and his, for nothing could more have tended to have removed the dislike, which the generality of Christians have shew’d to his dissertations. I am afraid, if we knew more of what Sabellius taught, we should find a great deal more likeness, between his hypotheses, and that embraced by our author, than I could wish, or he may be willing to think. In the account which Epiphanius has left us, of the heresy of Sabellius, he has told us, the opinion of him and his adherents, was to this purpose; “That the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit are the same, that these three names belong to one person, as there are in man, body, soul, and spirit; that the body denotes, as it were, the Father, the soul, as it were, the Son, and the Spirit in man, the Spirit in the Godhead^l”. If this account is ge-

^k Pref. to Mr. Scott’s Sermon. p. vii.

^l Δογματίζεσθαι ὅτι ἕτοις, καὶ οἱ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ Σαβιλλιανοὶ, τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι πατέρα, τὸ αὐτὸν υἱόν, τὸ αὐτὸν εἶναι ἅγιον πνεῦμα· ὡς εἶναι ἐν μιᾷ ὑποστάσει τρεῖς ὀνομασίες, ἢ ὡς ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ σῶμα καὶ ψυχὴ καὶ πνεῦμα· καὶ μὴ τὸ σῶμα ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸν πατέρα, ψυχὴν δὲ ὡς εἰπεῖν τὸν υἱόν, τὸ πνεῦμα δὲ ὡς ἀνθρώπου, ἕτοις δὲ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα ἐν τῇ θεότητι. Epiphanius. Haer. lxii. Sect. 1. Vol. I. p. 513. Ed. Par.

nuine, as there is no reason to question, it comes to much the same, with the hypothesis advanced by Mr. Watts. Allowance must be made for some clumsiness, in the ancient Sabellians way of talking ; by body they, in all probability, meant the substance, or person of man ; for the word, which we render body, as is well known, is sometimes used in such a sense ; and it is generally agreed, that, formerly, soul and spirit were not used, to express two different spiritual substances, but different faculties of the same spiritual being ; so that the Sabellians thought it a proper way, to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, to make the substance of man, to denote the Father, and the intellectual powers, or faculties, to express the Son and the Spirit. How little this scheme differs from Mr. Watts's any one may judge : nay, it is plain, that the Sabellians did not pretend, to describe, what they call'd the Son, and the Spirit, by the faculties and powers of the human soul, exactly, but only by way of analogy : in which, they aim'd at the same thing, which he has endeavour'd after.

If any should think this is invidious, I cannot help it ; if it is matter of fact, there can be nothing invidious in it. If Mr. Watts's scheme is scriptural, it is not the worse, for having been formerly call'd Sabellianism ; if it is not scriptural, it is not the better, for being call'd by the name of one, who has a reputation for piety. When a scheme is advanced, which is unscriptural, it cannot be disagreeable to such, as value the ancient faith, to find, that it has shew'd its head in the world formerly, but has been dazzled and confounded, by the prevailing light of truth, shining forth in its native simplicity.

Our

Our author has, in a sermon on the doctrine of the Trinity, endeavour'd to put his sentiments in a less offensive dress ; but he goes no farther than to say ; ^m the Son is spoke of as a person, and the Spirit is represented in a personal manner, as a divine person ; that the sacred three are several times represented in a personal manner, and are spoke of as three persons : all this is consistent enough with the notion of a figurative, or theatrical, personality ; so that, for what I can see, the charge against him, of denying the proper and real personality of the Son and the Spirit, remains still in force.

I was much surprized, when I found Mr. Watts declaring, in the ⁿ preface to the third volume of his sermons, that his end, in publishing this particular discourse on the Trinity, “ was to let the world know, that he never changed his belief and profession of any important part of this sacred article.” The reason of my wonder was, what I formerly met with, in the preface ^o to the second part of his dissertations : He there supposed, as well he might, it would be objected to him, that he had not, in those dissertations, express'd the doctrine of the personality of the Son and Spirit, so strong, as he had done, a few years ago, in his book call'd, the Christian doctrine of the Trinity. To this exception among other things, he there answer'd, in the ^p following words. “ I think it proper to acknowledge, that I was, at that time, inclined to suppose those personal representations in Scripture (especially so far as relates

^m See p. 420, 423, 426, 434. of the 3d Volume of Mr. Watts's Sermons.

ⁿ Pref. p. ix, x.

^o p. xii.

^p p. xiv.

to the blessed Spirit) were really to be understood in a more proper and literal sense, than I now find necessary; and on that account, I did then express the doctrine of three persons, or three distinct intelligent agents, in terms a little stronger and more unlimited, than my judgment now approves of; for since that time I have more carefully consider'd the Jewish idioms of speech, wherein powers, virtues, and properties are frequently personalized, or represented in a personal manner." This answer to the objection, and the other answers, with which I am not concern'd, he has introduced with a pathetic harangue, against persons being obstinately attach'd to old opinions, in which he has these 9 words; "I thank God, that I have learned to retract my former sentiments, and change them, when, upon stricter search and review, they appear less agreeable to the divine standard of faith." How it is possible to reconcile all this, with his declaring he had never changed his belief and profession of any important part of this sacred article, I confess is beyond my understanding: all I can make of it is; either, that Mr. Watts, when he wrote his preface to his sermons, had forgot what he had said in the preface to his dissertations; or else, that he looks upon the doctrine of the personality of the Son and the Spirit, whether real or figurative, to be a matter of no importance; and if so, I think it was hardly worth his while, to introduce the retraction of what was no way important, with so much solemnity and formality.

I am sensible, that Mr. Watts has borrow'd several of his fancies, relating to the person of

9 Pref. p. xiii.

Christ God-man, from the late Mr. Fleming the younger: I wonder he should find any pleasure or satisfaction, in reading such an author; if he has had the patience to peruse his Christology carefully over, he is the first that I have heard of, who ever did. I should have been glad, if that gentleman, in his enquiries, had made out his claim to modesty, as well, as he did to freedom. He was a man who had read a great deal, but not with so much judgment, as might have been wish'd; he was a great projector in divinity, and took delight in unrevealed, and, consequently, in unprofitable curiosities; and I believe an impartial and judicious searcher after truth, upon reading his books on Christ's person, would no more commend him for making any great progress in light and sacred knowledge, than so good a poet as Mr. Watts, would reckon him an ingenious man, merely from reading his paraphrase of Solomon's song.

Perhaps Mr. Watts may think, as Mr. Fleming did, he is as much at liberty, to coin new hypotheses relating to the person of Christ, as others are, to embrace the common doctrine of his eternal generation, because he may say, that is not reveal'd in Scripture. I grant, the explanations with which some have fetter'd this point, are not reveal'd, but I am more fully satisfied than ever, that the Scripture has ^f declared Christ's Sonship, as to his divine nature; how else could he be stiled ^t God's own proper Son, or call God ^u his own proper Father; besides as a ^w Son, faithful over his own house, he is op-

^f See the following treatise, p. 60, 61. al. 62, 63. and my true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 177—180.

^t Rom. viii. 32.

^u John v. 18.

^w Heb. iii.

posed to Moses, who was faithful, as a servant, over his master's house; now were Christ Son of God, only as mediator, or as a superior creature, he could, as such, be faithful only, as a servant. In short, the Scripture has declared, that “^x tho’ he was a Son, yet he learned obedience by the things which he suffer’d:” but it would be worse than tautology, to say, that tho’ he was Son only, as God’s righteous servant, or the highest of his creatures, yet he learn’d obedience. No rational man can desire plainer hints of Christ being the Son of God, as to his divine nature: and therefore no countenance is given by our embracing the common doctrine of his eternal generation, to support any man in vending such an unscriptural scheme, as that is, which supposes Christ to be called the Son of God, on account of the divine Logos having united itself to a created Logos, or a glorious superangelic Spirit.

I had some thoughts, when I first wrote, to have consider’d Mr. Watts’s detail of the sentiments of the primitive Christian writers, relating to the complex person of Christ; but having been engaged since, in a different branch of the Trinitarian controversy, and considering that Mr. Watts’s account was only founded on surmises and conjectures, I have, on second thoughts, laid aside my design of examining it; for I believe such an attempt would not answer the labor and pains it would require. I shall only take this opportunity of stating, as briefly as is possible, the sentiments of the ancient Christian writers, who lived before the rise of Arianism, as to this head.

The ancients all to a man maintain’d, that

^x Heb. v. 8.

e

Christ

Christ was of the same substance with the Father, and was invested with the same divine perfections. This has been proved to a demonstration by the learned and accurate Bishop Bull, ^y who has never been fairly answer'd, and, I am satisfied, never will; and I am sorry that so many, who have never taken the pains to sift the matter, have spoke so slightly of his admirable performance, because they find the adversaries still make pretences to the suffrage of antiquity; for if the proof from antiquity must be set by, because opposite sides plead it; it would follow, that Scripture it self should be laid aside, because all parties make pretences to patronage from it.

Tho the ancients all held the Son to be the same God with the Father, yet they did not make him to be the same person, but declared him to be a distinct person from him. This may appear, in the general, from Irenaeus having made it heresy in Simon Magus, to make the Father and the Son the same person, as well as from Justin's censure, which he pass'd on such as made the Son the Father, ^z or represented him as only a divine power. The same thing may be gather'd from the books of Tertullian against Praxeas, of Hippolytus against Noetus, and of Novatian against the Sabellians. This last, as well as Origen, and Dennis of Alexandria, were so warm for the Son's real personality, that, to maintain it, they used expressions, which were thought

^y Vid. Defens. Fid. Nicen. Sect. iii, iv. See also Dr. Waterland's first and second vindications of Christ's Divinity, under Queries, ii. viii.

The reader may see the passages of the ancients, as to these points, briefly collected in my true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 184, 185. 194. 208, 209. 276, 277, 278. 306. 308. 318, 319. 323, 324. 330, 331. 334. 352.

^z See the following treatise, p. 27, 28. al. 31.

to verge, too much, towards a contrary extreme. Some have been thought not to have express'd the doctrine of the Son's personality strong enough, as, for instance, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Tatian, and Clement of Alexandria; but this surmise is entirely ^a groundless.

As to the eternal generation of the Son of God, there is not an exact uniformity in the sentiments of the ancients; the greatest ^b part of the writers we have remaining, have declared in favor of this, in the fullest manner: so that it is a great mistake, to think this is a point ^c derived from the schoolmen.

Some of the ancient writers made the sonship of Christ to consist in his coming forth from the Father, bearing his commission, to create the

^a This has been proved, with great judgment, by the learned Bishop Bull. Defens. Fid. Nic. Sect. iii. cap. 5. — 10.

^b See the passages of the ancients on this head, in the following treatise, p. 90, 91, 92. and in my true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 181, 182, 183.

^c It has been thought, I abused Mr. Watts when I said, p. 16. al. 18. he insinuated, the notion of the eternal generation and procession of the Son and the Spirit, was derived from the popish schoolmen; but whether I have or no, will best appear from his own words, "the common explication of the eternal generation of the Son, and eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, authorized in the Latin churches, was derived down to us thro' the popish schoolmen, tho' 'tis now become a part of the establish'd or orthodox faith, in most of the protestant churches.——Their account of the generation and procession, that is, of the manner of the derivation of the Word and Spirit from the Father, seems to me, at present, to be a set of words, of which I can attain no ideas, invented by subtil and metaphysical schoolmen." Dissert. P. II. p. 156, 157. Here Mr. Watts makes the generation and procession, to be synonymous to what he calls the manner of the derivation of the Word and Spirit from the Father, so plainly, that there is no pretence for a charge of doing him injustice. If he owns elsewhere, p. 75. that several ancients spoke of the eternal generation of the Son, I can only say, I am sorry he is inconsistent with himself.

world: they argued, that ^d he who could fill up this commission, must be God; and this may very well account for their speaking of the Son, under the highest characters, at the same time, that they consider'd him, as acting, some way, in a ministerial capacity.

From hence it appears, that there is no necessity, in order to solve what some call the jarring expressions of the ancients, to suppose, they might have a confused notion, without understanding it, of a complex Logos, or of a super-angelic Spirit being united to the divine Word, and supplying in Christ, the place of a human soul. There is not the least ground to conclude, ^e they ever dreamed of such an hypothesis. They very often argued that Christ must have a true human body, and a rational soul, but the generality of them never supposed, this soul to be the first of creatures, for time and rank: nay it cannot be proved, that any of the ancients held the soul of Christ to be

^d See my true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 183.

^e Mr. Watts (Diff. P. II. p. 104.) quoted Mr. Baxter, as saying that Justin, Tatian, Theophilus, Irenaeus, Clement, Origen, Dionysius, &c. held, that Christ had a superangelic Spirit, united to his divine nature, before his incarnation. As this is false in fact, I concluded from hence, (p. 93. al. 90.) that Mr. Baxter was an incompetent judge of the matter, and express'd my wonder, that if the matter had been so plain, no body should ever have stumbled upon it. Now what I censured in Mr. Baxter was, his saying, that the ancients held this scheme, but I never said the scheme itself had never been embraced, for I long ago knew that Dr. More, Bishop Fowler, Bishop Gastrel and Mr. Fleming, believed it. As to the learned and modest writer of the second letter to the author of the history of Montanism, tho' he has a favourable opinion of this hypothesis, yet he never said the ancients generally embraced it, only he has quoted Origen, in favour of the pre-existence of Christ's human soul, and he thinks a passage of Hermas may be interpreted this way. See p. 43. --- 46.

pre-existent, except, perhaps, Hermas, and certainly Origen. The hypothesis of a super-angelic Spirit, supplying in Christ, the place of a human soul, was the figment of Arius and his followers; and the worthy confessors, who opposed them, did it by shewing, that what they call'd a created Word, was in reality no creature, but the true God, one with the Father in nature, however distinct from him in person. They never supposed that in Christ there was a created Word, begot in a way different from other creatures, which was to him instead of an human soul; but they held that Christ, as man, had a true body and a rational soul, and that the Word, who assumed into union with himself the human nature, was above the rank of Angels, or of Archangels, being, indeed, the true and supreme God, who brought them, and all other things into being.

The ante-nicene writers, have used expressions, sometimes, which state ^f the union of the two natures, the divine and the human, in the person

^f Εἷς ἰατρός ἐστιν σαρκικός τε καὶ πνευματικός, γενετὸς καὶ ἀγέννητος, ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος Θεός, ἐν θανάτῳ ζωὴ ἀληθινή καὶ ἐν Μαρτίᾳ καὶ ἐκ Θεῶ· πρῶτον παθητὸς καὶ τότε ἀπαθής, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν. Ignat. Epist. ad Ephes. cap. 7. p. 14. Ed. Oxon.

Διὰ λόγῳ Θεῷ σαρκοποιηθεὶς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς σωτὴρ ἡμῶν, καὶ σὰρκα καὶ αἷμα ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας ἡμῶν ἔχεν. Justin. Apol. I. p. 128, 129. Ed. Oxon. p. 96. Ed. Thirlby.

Christus Jesus, Dei filius, propter eminentissimam erga figmentum suum dilectionem eam quae esset in virgine generationem sustinuit, ipse per se hominem adunans Deo, & passus sub Pontio Pilato, & resurgens, & in claritate receptus, in gloria venturus salvator eorum qui salvantur, & judex eorum qui judicantur, & mittens in ignem aeternum transfiguratores veritatis, & contemptores Patris sui & adventus ejus. Irenaeus. Lib. III. c. 4. p. 178. Ed. Benedict.

Ἦνωσεν οὖν — τὸ ἄνθρωπον τῷ Θεῷ — ἐκ μὴ συννηώθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῷ Θεῷ, οὐκ ἂν ἠδυνήθη μεταρξεῖν τὸ ἀφθαρσίας. Idem, ibid. cap. 18. p. 211.

of Christ, as strongly and fully, as can be desired; but they do not treat upon this matter professedly, but only as the subject fell in their way; for such heresies as were started, as to this point,

Propter hoc Verbum Dei homo, & qui Filius Dei est, filius hominis factus est, commixtus Verbo Dei. Idem. ibid. c. 19. p. 112.

Non alius erat qui cognoscebatur, & alius qui dicebat, "nemo cognoscit Patrem;" sed unus & idem, omnia subjiciente ei Patre, & ab omnibus accipiens testimonium, quoniam vere homo, & quoniam vere Deus. Idem. Lib. IV. c. 6. p. 234, 235.

Ἀνακρινεῖ τοὺς Ἑβραίους πῶς δύνανται σωθῆναι, εἰ μὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἦν ὁ τῶν σωτηρίων αὐτῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἐργασάμενος; ἢ πῶς ἀνθρώπου χωρήσει εἰς Θεόν, εἰ μὴ ὁ Θεὸς ἐχωρήθῃ εἰς ἀνθρώπον. Idem. Lib. V. c. 33. p. 271.

Θεὸς ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ καὶ ὁ ἀνθρώπος Θεός· καὶ τὸ θεῖον τοῦ πατρὸς ὁ μεσίτης ἐκτελεῖ· μεσίτης γὰρ ὁ Λόγος ὁ κοινὸς ἀμφοῖν· Θεοῦ καὶ ὁ υἱός, σωτὴρ ὁ ἀνθρώπων. Clemens Al. Paedag. Lib. I. c. 1. p. 251. Ed. Oxon.

Utriusque substantiae census hominem & Deum exhibuit; hinc natum, inde non natum; hinc carneum, inde spiritalem; hinc infirmum, inde praeferentem; hinc morientem, inde viventem. Tertullian. de carne Christi, cap. 5.

Filio — miscente in semetipso hominem & Deum. Idem c. Marcionem. Lib. II. c. 27.

Qui factus est ex semine David, hic erit homo, & filius hominis: Qui definitus est filius Dei, secundum spiritum, hic erit Deus & sermo Dei filius. Videmus duplicem statum, non confusum, sed conjunctum in una Persona, Deum & hominem Jesum. Idem c. Praxeam, c. 27.

Οἱ Μάγοι ἦκον ἐπὶ τῶν Ἰσραήλιαν — φέροντες τὰ δῶρα αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ἔσταις ὀνομασθῶ, συνθέτω τινὶ ἐκ Θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπου θνητοῦ προσήνεκον. Origen. c. Celsum, Lib. I. p. 46. Ed. Cant.

Οὐ χωρίζοντες τὸ υἱὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ· ἐν γὰρ μέγιστα μὴ τῶν οἰκουμένων, γεγένηται πρὸς τὸ Λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ ἡ ψυχὴ ἐν τῷ σώματι τοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Idem. Lib. II. p. 64.

Εἰς τὴν τελειότητα υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἠγεώσθη φάσκοντες τῇ ἀκρᾷ μελοχῇ τὴν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ψυχὴν, ἐκ ἑστὶ χωρίζομένην ἀπὸ ἐκείνης αὐτὴν· ὅθεν θαυμάσιον ἵδμεσι γὰρ οἱ ἱεροὶ τῶν θείων γραμμμάτων λόγοι, καὶ ἄλλα, διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν φύσιν τυγχάνοντα, εἰς ἐν ἀλλήλοις εἶναι λελογισμένα καὶ ὅτι οὐκ εἰσι δύο ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς τὴν πάσης κτίσεως πρωτότατον Θεὸν λόγον. Idem Lib. VI. p. 309.

Ἀμφότερα θεῖον καὶ ἀνθρώπινον, διὰ τὸν ἀμφοτέρως, θεῖως δὲ φημι καὶ ἀνθρώπινως, ἐνέργησε κατὰ αὐτὴν τὴν ἑνὴν ἀληθινὴν καὶ φυσικὴν ὑπαρξιν. Θεὸν ἀπειρον ὁμοῦ καὶ ἀειγενέστον ἀνθρώπον ὄντα τε, καὶ

in the early ages, did not make much figure in the world.

When the younger Apollinaris broach'd an error, on this head, in supposing the divine nature was to Christ instead of an human soul; and when Nestorius pretended, that the two natures, in Christ, were two persons, and Eutyches, on the contrary, made them to be but one nature, then it was, that this controversy came to be carefully discuss'd: and what zeal the true catholics shew'd against all innovations, is known to every one who is versed in church history.

But it is time to return to Mr. Watts: I am sorry, I was^s forced to charge him with being guilty of several^h self-contradictions. I know it must

νοόμενον τὴν οὐσίαν ἑκατέρω τελεῖως τελείαν ἔχοντα, μὴ δ' αὐτῆς ἐνεργείας ἡγαν φυσικῆς ἰδιότητος. ἔξ ὧν μένουσιν αἰεὶ κατὰ φύσιν δίχα προσπάης τὴν αὐτῶν ἴσμεν διαφορὰν, ἀλλ' οὐχ' ὥς τινὲς φασὶ κατὰ σύγκρισιν. Hippolytus c. Beronem fragment. I. Vol. I. p. 226. Ed. Fabric. vid. & p. 228, 229.

Deus cum homine miscetur; hic Deus noster, hic Christus est, qui mediator duorum, hominem induit quem perducatur ad patrem Cyprian. de Idol. Vanit. p. 289. Ed. Pamel.

Et Homo & Deus Christus ex utroque genere concretus, ut mediator esse inter nos & Patrem possit. Idem Testimon. Lib. II. c. 10. p. 355.

Tam enim Scriptura etiam Deum annunciat Christum, quam etiam hominem ipsum annunciat Deum: tam hominem descripsit Jesum Christum, quam etiam Deum quoque descripsit Christum Dominum. Novatian. de Trinitate, cap. 11.

Qui mediator Dei & hominum effectus exprimitur, in se Deum & hominem sociasse reperitur, Idem, c. 16.

Merito filius Dei per adsumptionem carnis, filius hominis, & filius hominis, per receptionem Dei Verbi, filius Dei effici potest. Idem, c. 18.

Christum Jesum Dominum ex utroque connexum --- ex utroque contextum & concretum --- hominem & Deum Scripturae --- cognoscant. Idem, c. 19. vid. c. 20, 23.

^s Page 115. al. 110.

^h I shall here set down, in two columns, some passages of Mr. Watts, which I know not how to reconcile. I will not say, they are all of them express contradictions, because some are
bc

be grating to any one, to have such an accusation laid against him; because a man's talking inconsistently with himself, argues him to have either undertook a matter which he did not un-

pretty obscure, and I may mistake his meaning, but I believe none can say they are clearly consistent.

1. To vindicate this metaphorical sense in which the word person is attributed to the sacred three, consider, &c. *Diff. P. II. p. 194.*

2. When we are endeavouring to explain the pure distinctions of the divine nature, in a rational manner, and to form and adjust our clearest ideas of them, I think we may use the term divine properties, p. 205.

3. We may suppose the sacred analogy and use of this word [Spirit] to be derived both from the body and the soul of man. It is derived from the soul, as it signifies an intelligent principle of action; it is derived from the body, as it signifies breath, p. 118.

4. The chief knowledge we can attain to of the blessed God, is by analogy to our own souls, p. 224.

The nature of our souls teaches us to conceive the nature of God, p. 218.

1. The Father is properly call'd a person, an intelligent voluntary agent, with little or no alteration of the common sense of the word in human language, p. 187.

2. When I represent the Word and Spirit, by divine wisdom and power, I do not conceive them merely as two attributes of the divine nature, as justice, goodness, eternity, infinity, &c. but as such distinct faculties, or more distinct, than the understanding and will are in human spirits, which two are call'd powers rather than properties of the soul, p. 224, 225.

3. It [the inward distinction between God and his Word and Spirit] seems to be something less than is between three conscious minds, p. 120.

4. 'Tis hard if not impossible, for us in some cases, to say infallibly, that this or that is true concerning God the Father, his Word, or his Spirit, because it is true concerning creatures, that this or that cannot be true concerning God the Father, his Word, or his Spirit, because, perhaps, it cannot be true of
derstand,

derstand, or not to have been so careful, in reviewing his writings, as he ought to have been, tho' I could have been glad no occasion had

creatures, for the most exalted ranks of creatures that we know are very poor imperfect shadows of the Creator, p. 235.

5. The term power denotes a distinct principle of physical agency in the subject, whereby it is render'd capable of acting in this or that manner. ~ the faculty of moving the body, is properly call'd a power of the soul, p. 225.

5. When a spirit wills to move a body, it has no innate efficient power of its own, to put the least atom in motion, p. 139.

6. When we have been accustomed all our lives to a particular set of words and ideas, 'tis pretty hard to persuade our selves to make any little change in our ideas or words, even tho' the greatest advantages might be gain'd by it towards the defense of the Gospel; and tho' it might remove some of the chief embarrassments which attend any particular article of faith, p. 176.

6. Perhaps an introduction of any new terms into our common and popular discourses on this doctrine, would give a greater uneasiness and confusion to the minds of Christians, than would be easily counterballanced by the advantages we might expect from any unusual words which might be introduced under a pretence of clearer ideas, p. 206.

7. I readily grant and believe that the greatest part of them [the ancients] do not seem to have any distinct idea of a complex Logos, or a double nature in Christ before the incarnation, p. 104, 105.

7. There appear plain traces and evident footsteps of the same divine and inferior Logos, among the primitive Christian writers, p. 107.

8. Now 'tis evident concerning the Logos or Christ, as he is the wisdom, mind, or reason of the Father, that he must be truly and properly divine, &c. p. 62.

8. It seems manifest that the Logos is a power of the divine mind, 63.

9. It is not evident that they [the authors of the Targums] believed, that he [the Messiah] should be the true and the eternal God, p. 19.

9. The learned Mr. R. Fleming seems to come nearer to these ancients, [the authors of the Targums and Philo,] and explains them more agreeably

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been

been given for such a charge, yet as it is well grounded, I have no reason to retract it.

I think it agreeable to Scripture, to explain the personality of the Word in a figurative manner. Pref. p. xv.

10. The common explication of the eternal generation of the Son, ---- was derived down to us, from the popish schoolmen --- their account of the generation and procreation, that is, of the manner of the derivation of the Word and Spirit seems to me to be a set of words, of which I can attain no clear ideas, invented by subtle and metaphysical schoolmen, p. 157.

11. Another thing wherein religious worship seems to be paid to the holy Spirit, is this, viz. that the Apostle prays for the blessing to descend from the holy Spirit on the Corinthians, in the same way and manner in which the blessing of the Father and Son are pray'd for, 2 Cor. xiii. 14. If this be a petition or prayer, 'tis a prayer to the sacred three; and the Holy Ghost is the object of this worship as well as the Father or Son.

It seems evident also that the holy Spirit was worship'd in some texts of the old Testament, ---- as Isa. vi. Psalm xcvi. &c. Christian Doctrine, p. 95, 96.

12. It may be charged upon me that I have not in these dissertations, exactly confined my self, in every punctilio, to the same sentiments which I had publish'd some years ago; that I

to Scripture, when he supposes the eternal essential Logos to be a person in the Godhead, and to be united to the created Logos, p. 46.

10. The post-nicene writers speak more of the eternal generation than the primitive ancients did, p. 75.

11. We cannot find in Scripture any such positive or express precepts or examples of petition and praise, so directly address'd to the person of the holy Spirit, as there are to the Father, and to the Son. Christ. Doct. p. 219, 220.

12. I thought it proper to publish it, [a sermon on the Doctrine of the Trinity and its use,] at this season [1727.] to let the world know, that tho' I have enter'd into some further

I have

I have, in the course of the debate, had occasion, several times, to take notice that Mr. Watts has used the same evasions, with respect to some texts of Scripture, which the Socinians have used before him; this has been thought by some to be bearing a little too hard upon him; but as it is a matter of fact, it is doing him no injury: if where I have said, he has advanced any thing, after the Socinians, it could be proved, that none of that party ever said things to the same purpose with what he has said, I would submit to any censure; but since the case is really as I have represented it, I am not to answer for facts bearing hard on any man.

have express'd the doctrine of the personality of the Son and Spirit in stronger terms heretofore, than in these papers.-----I thank God I have learned to retract my former sentiments and change them, when upon stricter search and review they appear less agreeable to the divine standard of faith.-----I acknowledge I was at that time (1722.) inclined to suppose those personal representations in Scripture, (especially so far as relates to the blessed Spirit) were really to be understood in a more proper and literal sense, than I now (1725.) find necessary; and on that account, I did then express the doctrine of three persons, or three distinct intelligent agents, in terms a little stronger and more unlimited, than my judgment now approves of. Preface to the second part of his Dissertations, p. xii, xiii, xiv,

enquiries into this divine subject, in my late writings, and made humble attempts to gain clearer ideas of it, in order to vindicate the truth and glory of this sacred article, yet I have never changed my belief and profession of any important part of it. Preface to the third Volume of his Sermons, p. ix, x.

I have express'd my ⁱself, I own, with a little warmth, as to the treatment Mr. Watts has thought fit to bestow on some old testament saints, and on some of the authors of the inspired volumes. A just indignation forc'd those expressions, I have used, from me, and I see no need to alter them, or to be ashamed of them. I was heartily grieved, to find a serious man cast out flirts, which are fit only to be utter'd by Deists and Infidels. It is unaccountable, that a minister of the Gospel should adorn some of the noble heroes of sacred antiquity, with the odious epithets of rude, rash, and bloody, only because they spared not those foes, whom God commission'd them to destroy ; it is strange he should represent the sweet Psalmist of Israel, as one who shew'd a spirit contrary to that of the Gospel, because, under divine inspiration, he utter'd imprecations against rebels and traytors, who were enemies to God and religion, as well as to him ; and it is very odd, that he should speak in such disrespectful terms of the great Apostle John, as to insinuate, that, he, a poor jewish fisherman, might not be acquainted with the Greek learning, when he could not but know, he had been enabled to speak Greek for near sixty years. Such flouts can only be pleasing to those who decry and banter divine revelation. I should be very much troubled and ashamed, if any could prove, I had treated Mr. Watts in the way he has treated those, whose remembrance ought to be precious, to all who consider, that the Scripture has embalmed their names, by declaring that they all died in the faith.

In the close of my book, I put some serious questions to Mr. Watts, which I thought any Christian had the liberty to do to another; among other things, ^k I enquired, whether he had communion with the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, without knowing whether he held communion with persons or with properties: some have thoughtlessly hence concluded me to have question'd, whether he ever had communion with God; but on the contrary, I supposed he had, and from thence argued, that he ought to have known before, whether he held communion with three divine persons, or with one person and two faculties.

I now take my leave of all that Mr. Watts has as yet wrote, on the doctrine of the Trinity, not intending to concern my self any farther with what he has publish'd; neither shall I take notice of any subalterns, who may thrust themselves into this affair; I hope, he will not occasion any more grief to such as wish well to the interest of religion; but will consider how unsafe it is to aim at reaching those heights, to which ^l the weak pinions of imperfect reason can never soar.

^k Page 116. al. 111.

^l This matter is finely express'd by Mr. Watts in the following hymn.

How wond'rous great, how glorious bright
Must our Creator be,
Who dwells amidst the dazzling light
Of vast infinity?
Our soaring spirits upwards rise
Tow'rd the celestial throne,
Fain would we see the blessed Three;
And the almighty One.

Some,

Some, perhaps, may wonder, I have taken no notice of a pamphlet, which some time since was publish'd against me; but that piece, tho' it be fill'd with impotent malice, yet it is so extremely low, that it can only move pity, but can never raise anger in me: I should not have mention'd it, had not those who drew it up, affected to speak, as if Mr. Watts commission'd them; I am willing to believe, they have greatly wrong'd him in this; for I had rather think persons, whom I know nothing of, have been guilty of falshood, in this matter, than harbour a suspicion, that Mr. Watts, a person whom I value, has left off to behave himself, with the decency of a gentleman, and with the good spirit of a Christian; which would have been the case, if he had abetted so scurrilous a performance, as that is, which is wrote in his defense.

I was not so void of thought, as to imagine, that I could engage in this subject, without having a load of reproach thrown at me; but to be affected much with the scourges of the tongue,

Our reason stretches all its wings,
 And climbs above the skies,
 But still how far beneath thy feet
 Our groveling reason lies.
 Lord, here we bend our humble souls,
 And awfully adore,
 For the weak pinions of our mind,
 Can stretch a thought no more.
 Thy glories infinitely rise;
 Above our lab'ring tongue;
 In vain the highest Seraph tries,
 To form an equal song.
 In humble notes our faith adores
 The great mysterious King,
 While angels strain their nobler pow'rs
 And sweep th' immortal string.

Book II. Hymn 87.

when

when a man is conscious of his innocence, would only shew him to be of a little spirit. I have no reason to expect, that while I defend the truth, I shall be free from obloquy. It is only in the country of rest which is above, that we shall never have the storms of malice to blow against us, nor the keen blasts of envy and detraction to beat upon us: the happiness of that blessed land will not consist, barely, in the noise of controversies ceasing, but, chiefly, in there being no occasion given for controversy; because all who have wash'd their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, will entertain no one thought, tending to lessen the personal glories of their great Savior, who redeem'd them from hell, or of the blessed Spirit, who conducted them to the pure realms of joy and peace.

Whilst we are travelling to the heavenly gates, thro' this land of trouble and distress, especially if we engage under our Redeemer's banner, we must expect to pass thro' evil report and good report. As to my own part, I hope, thro' the help of that good master, whose honor I defend, I shall not, on the account of any ill treatment I may meet with, be afraid or ashamed to bear my testimony to this glorious doctrine, that the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit are three proper and real persons, tho' they are one God, blessed for evermore.

January 1. 1728.

ABRAHAM TAYLOR.

ERRATA.

PAge 31. marg. lin. 3. read of the Logos, or the Word.
p. 32. lin. 22. r. seem generally to have stood. p. 49.
marg. add John xv. 26. p. 78. lin. 7. r. Porto.

THE
DOCTRINE
OF THE
TRINITY
VINDICATED.

AGAINST MR. WATTS'S SCHEME,
OF ONE PROPER DIVINE PERSON,
AND TWO DIVINE POWERS.

THERE is nothing more becoming a Christian, than a free impartial examination of the grounds of his faith, and the reasons of his hope: a faith that will not bear trial is very suspicious; but then matters of faith must not be tried by reason only, but must be brought to a proper test, the written word of God; to the Law, and to the Testimony the Appeal must be made; and what meets with support from thence, must be firmly believed by us; tho' the manner of it may be far above our comprehension, who are creatures of yesterday, and know nothing.

As the Doctrine of the Trinity has in it as much importance, as any one Scripture doctrine, a Christian cannot engage in a nobler employment, than in an enquiry into the true Scripture account of this adorable mystery. This is more especially needful, at a time when the doctrine is violently

attack'd, and is, with intolerable boldness, charg'd with absurdity, nonsense, and contradiction. At such a season, every one, who is able, should put on the whole armour of light, and contend earnestly and manfully for the honour and majesty of that blessed Saviour, by whom he is redeem'd, and of that holy Spirit, by whom he is sanctified.

It is with pleasure, I have seen, and read the many defences which the late revival of the Arian heresy has produc'd among us: and as I always receiv'd most satisfaction, where least was said to explain the modus of this mystery, I had great expectations from the reverend Mr. Watts's book, call'd, *The Christian Doctrine of the Trinity*; because I found the design of it was given out to be, to vindicate the divine rights and honours of the three persons, by plain evidence of Scripture, without the aid and incumbrance of human schemes. Such a performance, had it answer'd the title, would have been exceeding pleasing to me. Upon perusing the book, I found the author had engag'd in a matter, of which he did not seem to me to have made himself thoroughly master: I found he treated some things superficially, that had been set in a much better light by others; but what most troubled me was, I saw he unwarily made too many, and too great concessions to the adversaries of the truth.

When the book call'd, *An Appeal to a Turk or Indiar*, came out, in opposition to him, which was wrote with some subtilty and dexterity, I was in hopes it might have put him upon re-examining this matter; but I was disappointed, when I found him, instead of that, soon publish three dissertations, in which he rather chose to lay down some precarious and obscure notions, about the personality of the Son and Spirit, and
about

about the person of Christ God-man: I could have wish'd he had let alone giving his fancy so much scope, in matters where a fertile working invention has nothing to do: I could not help thinking that "a man, who, thro' long weakness of body, is rendered incapable of applying himself above six or seven hours in a week, to any peculiar study, distinct from his necessary work," might have been not only well excus'd, "for being slow in the publication of any thing, in such a controverted doctrine," but might have been very well excus'd, from meddling with a controversy of such weight and moment at all.

I had thoughts then, to take some notice of his methods of explaining the Sonship of Christ, and the constitution of his person, which seem'd to me very exceptionable; but as he express'd himself in that piece pretty obscurely, and as I saw he was going on to furnish new matter, I judg'd it might be best to see how he would explain his scheme, and clear his thoughts, as he made farther advances.

When the second part of his dissertations came out, I found I was not mistaken in the judgment I had made of his scheme, from what I saw in his first part. As in this he had, in a very shocking manner, deny'd and explain'd away the real personality of the Son and Spirit, I expected, some abler hand would have undertaken to clear the truth, from the confusion he had thrown upon it. Not finding any one appear against him; and knowing he had occasioned great offence, trouble, and concern to many serious persons, who have at heart the welfare of our common Christianity, I thought it was highly

necessary to take some notice of his performance. I was afraid the truth might suffer from Mr. Watts's deserved reputation, in that many well-meaning persons, among ourselves, might be drawn aside by so great an authority; and I thought it would be very surprizing to those of the Establish'd Church, who have a zeal for the catholic doctrine of the Trinity, to see such dangerous explications pass, without animadversion, among the Protestant Dissenters.

As it is my opinion, that religious disputes may be carried on, without heat or reviling, on the one hand, and without complimenting an adversary so, as to give up any defensible point, out of a false civility, on the other; I shall be very careful of misrepresenting Mr. Watts, or treating him in an unchristian manner, and shall make it my endeavour to treat him with all candour and mildness; however, his character for piety and seriousness shall not make me afraid to lay open his mistakes, or to speak freely of the ill tendency of some things he advances. In the mean time, I would hope from the character Mr. Watts bears, that he will be brought to see the great inconveniencies, which necessarily follow from the opinions he has advanced.

It can hardly be expected that I should follow our author's confus'd method: had he rang'd his thoughts in a due order, it would have been some ease to me; but as the matter is, I must take the best method I can: Because he has, in my opinion, set out on a wrong bottom, in endeavouring to give an hypothesis of the doctrine of the Trinity, that might have clear ideas annex'd to it, I shall premise some thoughts on the nature of mysteries, and of the obligation we are under to believe many things, discoverable

ble by reason and by Scripture, of the modus of which we have no clear ideas; and I take the doctrine of the Trinity to come under this class: I shall then evidence that Mr. Watts has not afforded us an hypothesis attended with clear ideas, but has darken'd matters more than they have, whose unhappiness it is, to want those clear ideas, which he hopes he has attained: I shall next undertake to shew, what his scheme is, and shall prove, that he has denied the real personality of the Son and Spirit: then I shall demonstrate their real personality from Scripture: afterwards I shall examine his account of the person of Christ God-man: and in the conclusion, I shall throw together some considerations on a few miscellaneous passages, which seem to me to deserve notice, and which do not come under the former heads.

I hope I shall not omit any thing material; but I find I must often consider fancies instead of arguments. I have nothing else in view, but a sincere search after truth, in this undertaking; and if any success may attend it, I would ascribe it all to the divine assistance, which can enable the weak things of this world to confound the wise and the mighty.

That there are many things in Reason, and Scripture, which are incomprehensible; that the Doctrine of the Trinity is peculiarly so; and that it is a fruitless Attempt, for Mr. Watts to endeavour to give us clear Ideas of it.

THERE is nothing of which men have more full evidence, than of the imperfection of their knowledge; and the more knowledge they attain to, the more real conviction they have, that the things they are utterly ignorant of, are more than the things they imperfectly know. The things that make up the material world, are the things we must be supposed to have the clearest notions of, because they come under the view of our senses; but yet, if we take an exact survey of one of the meanest things in nature, we shall find a great deal in it, that we can give no manner of account of, which yet we are forc'd to believe as fact, on the evidence of our senses; and when we have certain evidence that a thing is, it is no plea for our disbelieving it, that we cannot comprehend how it is. As for instance, no man can pretend to tell, what it is that makes the particles of matter cohere, and keeps them from falling in pieces; and yet, I believe, whoever would be so hardy as to deny that they actually cleave together, would be sufficiently laughed at for his incredulity. We have not as yet, from all the searches into nature, receiv'd light enough to guide us into an explication of the manner, in which our limbs
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move; and yet, would it not be most ridiculous, for a man that is in motion, stiffly to maintain that he stands still, because he cannot give an account how he moves? Tho' we cannot have any full, and adequate ideas of the cohesion of the parts of matter, or of the way in which animal motions are performed; yet we have sufficient evidence, that the parts of matter really cohere, and that our limbs actually move. So that it must be granted, that we have ideas of many things clear enough to command our assent, nay, our firm and indubitable persuasion; where yet we have no notion how the things, of the truth of which we are persuaded, are.^a

If we raise our thoughts higher, to immaterial Beings, and duly consider ourselves, we must conclude, that there is a spiritual thinking substance, that goes to our constitution, which, by its rational powers, makes a certain discrimination between us and brutes; and yet we are very little acquainted with the nature of those souls we carry about with us; nor can we give an account how they apply themselves to the organs of our senses, to produce motions in our material parts, subject to the command of the will. In the mean time, this is certain, that we can move our hands, our feet, nay, our whole bodies, just as our wills direct. This instance, as it shews the imperfection of our knowledge, so it gives us a convincing proof, that we may be positive of the certainty of a matter of fact, when we can give very little, scarce any account, how that matter of fact is brought about.

If we are so in the dark about the common operations of nature, and if we can give so lit-

^a See my true Scripture doctrine stated and defended, in opposition to the Arian scheme, p. 3.—12.

the account of our own constitution, it is not to be wonder'd at, that we should be more in the dark about things of an higher nature. If there are depths that we cannot fathom, in finite things, surely we should not pretend to a perfect comprehension of things infinite; but we ought rather to bring ourselves firmly to believe, and receive those mysteries, that can never be span'd by the short measure of our reason.

It is surprizing, when men have the greatest proof how imperfect their knowledge is, that they so generally aim at what is above their reach; and that they cannot learn wisdom and humility enough, to forbear catching at things too big for their grasp. Ignorance and pride put persons on endeavouring to give an account of every thing; whereas, on the contrary, prudence and wisdom make a man unshaken in his belief of a mystery, of the reality of which he has full evidence, and keep him from unhinging his brain, and racking his understanding, to give an account of the modus of it.

The necessity of believing mysteries, is a thing against which conceited mortals make loud outcries; and it has been a subject for many tragical complaints. Indeed, where the terms of a proposition are not at all understood, there can be no assent of the mind, neither can a contradictory proposition ever be believ'd; for what a man knows to be false, he can never really give his assent to. As for example, an assertion that two and three do not make five, is rejected by every one that has the use of reason; not because he does not understand the terms of the proposition, but because he does understand them, and thereby knows them to be false. Nothing can be the subject of our belief, which our
reason,

reason, or our senses tell us is false ; so that when sense tells us, that the bread in the Eucharist, after consecration, is bread still, and not the body of our Lord and Saviour, it is a vain thing for any to tell us, we must bring faith to believe it ; for nothing that is false to reason and sense, can be true to faith.

When we make these concessions to the despisers of mysteries, still we maintain, that there are things we must believe, which after all enquiry we cannot fully comprehend ; and this the hardiest scoffer at the mysteries of revelation must himself grant, unless he will run the matter so far as to settle in Atheism ; for when he hath display'd his rhetoric ever so much against mysteries, if he be not an Atheist, he receives mysteries of reason, which are altogether as incomprehensible, as any can be suppos'd, that are known only by divine revelation.

A mystery of reason is a truth, of the reality of which we have a sufficient evidence from reason ; but which we can no more fully comprehend, than we can utterly disbelieve. A mystery of revelation is a truth reveal'd in the Scriptures, which we could never have known, had it not been by God reveal'd to us ; and which after it is reveal'd we are incapable of comprehending fully. Of both these kinds of mysteries we have ideas ; that is, we have ideas of the certainty of them, but our ideas of them are confuse, inadequate, and indeterminate. Such mysteries we may see the greatest reason to believe, tho' we may be so far from having clear ideas of them, that our ideas may be only general and inadequate ; and tho' they may carry in them ideas seemingly, but not plainly, and really, repugnant.

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The great mysteries of reason, are the nature and attributes of God; these are as great mysteries as any known merely by revelation, if not greater. The self-existence of God is a mystery of reason, about which our ideas are so indeterminate, that while some plead that the idea of it is positive, others, with more appearance of reason, take the idea of it to be only negative; but all persons except Atheists, firmly believe it, taking up with inadequate ideas of it. To say there is a cause of the first cause, is an express contradiction; and yet it is a thing we can't comprehend, how any thing can exist, without a ground and reason of its existence. The simplicity of God is another mystery that comes under this class: that God is a pure uncompounded Spirit, is granted by all; yet whoever would go about to explain this matter, would find how dark and general his ideas of it are, when yet it is a thing to which all that own the being of a God give a full assent. The immensity or omnipresence of God is another mystery: that the omnipresent substance is not extended, carries in it a seeming contradiction; yet if a man were to assert, that the divine substance is extended, he would find himself involv'd in far greater difficulties, than he strives to avoid; so that here likewise, a general and inadequate idea is all that we can obtain. The omniscience of God is another mystery, and will remain so, let us enquire ever so much into it: that God foreknows, and consequently pre-determines all actions, that seem contingent, and that man, notwithstanding, is a free agent, are things that seem repugnant, and they are difficulties we can never fully get over; yet they are things we are forc'd to give our assent to, and to rest satisfied

with a general indeterminate notion of them. There is one instance more which I shall give, and that is the eternity of God ; this I take to be the greatest mystery of all ; an eternity past is what we all are obliged to believe, but it is a thing of which we have as little notion, as of any one thing to which we give assent ; it not only puzzles our philosophy, and makes our reason reel, but makes even our imagination giddy. From this enumeration of particulars, it appears, that in reason there are mysteries, of the reality of which we have sufficient evidence ; when yet we have very dark, inadequate, and indeterminate ideas of the manner how they are. Those persons then that receive these sublime incomprehensible truths, and do not deny that they are, because they are in the dark how they are, are guilty of a most intolerable and unreasonable partiality, when they reject the mysteries of the Christian religion, merely because the modus of them is not to be laid level with their understandings.

The mysteries of the Gospel are, as was before hinted, such truths as could never have been discovered by the light of reason, without the farther help of revelation. As in reason we are bound to receive, and believe whatever God reveals, it necessarily follows, that what he reveals, we must believe, on the authority of his word, without enquiring how it can be ; for if we have a right to refuse our assent to a doctrine reveal'd, 'till the manner how it is comes to be made known to us, it would follow, that God could not command our assent, without being accountable to us, to give us the reason why he requires us to receive this or the other doctrine. The true way of regarding matters only known by revelation, is to consider them as matters of

fact, and our enquiry ought to be, whether such and such doctrines are really reveal'd or not; and if we find they are really reveal'd, it is no excuse for our disbelieving them, to pretend we have not clear ideas how they can be.

Amongst all the doctrines of the Gospel, the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity in unity, is most mysterious; but yet it is a doctrine of the utmost importance; the salvation of men is most nearly concerned in this matter. I do not think there are greater difficulties in this, than in the attributes of God, or indeed so great; but of the doctrines of pure revelation, it may be said to be most mysterious; and indeed, it can hardly be otherwise; for what finite mind can take in infinity? much less can fallen mortals, who are but mushrooms of a night's growth, comprehend the antient of days; yet such is the pride, and conceited ignorance of men, when they are left to themselves, that they must affect to know every thing, tho' in comparison, they know nothing; and accordingly, no doctrine has been more a stumbling-block to the proud pretenders to reason, than the doctrine of the Trinity. Some daringly blaspheme it, as having nonsense, absurdity, and contradiction involv'd in it; whilst others darken and obscure it, by endeavouring to get more clear ideas of it, than seem compatible with a state of imperfection.

The Scripture fully agrees with the voice of natural reason, in asserting the unity of God, and in declaring against a plurality of gods; but tho' it speaks in the fullest manner against Polytheism, yet in it three are spoke of in the language of personality, the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit; to whom the titles of supremacy are, without restriction, given; of whom the essential

tial attributes of the Godhead are alike predicated; and by whom the works, which can alone be done by a divine power, are represented to be perform'd. God is one, and yet there are three Persons represented in Scripture, as having true and proper Divinity; therefore these three divine Persons must be the one true and supreme God. In this great mystery, the ideas are seemingly repugnant; but no man can venture to say they are really so, because none could ever yet settle a principle of individuation. We see plainly, that every one person in Scripture is represented as God, or as having divine perfections; we know also, that there is but one God; but how the plurality of divine persons can be reconciled with the divine unity, we have but inadequate ideas. However, the darkness of our ideas, how these three can be one, no way weakens the proofs of the Divinity of each of them, or the evidences for the unity of God; unless we are foolish enough to think, and daring enough to say, that we can fully and completely comprehend the nature of the infinite God.

I readily acknowledge, that we are unable to form any clear ideas how three can be one; but unless we had a more full and comprehensive knowledge of the nature of God, than we have of ourselves, we ought not to take upon us to say it cannot be so: Scripture has thus reveal'd it, and a humble submission of our understandings to the wisdom of God most highly becomes us: How these things can be, is a matter that surmounts our understanding; therefore it is insupportable arrogance for insolent wretches to say, that if this proposition, that Christ is God by nature, of the same essence with the Father, could be fairly prov'd to be the doctrine of
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Christianity, they would firmly believe the whole new Testament to be an imposture, and reject it as such; because such a proposition directly overthrows the first principle of natural religion, that there is but one God. What is the drift of such daring miscreants setting their mouths against heaven but this, that if God does not speak according to their sentiments, he must presently be an impostor? Such rude attacks on our faith are only to be despised, because they cannot do much harm; our chief danger is from the attempts of men more curious and conceited, than wise and humble, who go about to explain that which is inexplicable; or endeavour, in a crafty way, to rob the Son and Spirit of their true Divinity.

If we take a view of the different oppositions that have been made to the Deity of the Son and Spirit, we shall find them all to have taken their rise from confounding person and being together; and from an obstinate holding to this as a settled maxim, that one person must be a separate being. The Sabellians on this foundation explain'd the Trinity, by one person under three names: and the Arians going upon the same maxim, made the three divine persons three separate beings; one the supreme God, and Father of all things, and the other two the highest of all his creatures. And were we to view all the mistaken notions concerning the Trinity, they would all appear to take their rise from the arbitrary conclusion just now mentioned, which vain men have drawn from no other foundation than this, that among men, three persons are actually three separate beings.

As the doctrine of the Trinity has been, in all ages, opposed, and malign'd, by the disputers
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of this world; so it has been darken'd by the attempts of some to illustrate it, and has been obscur'd by their presumptuously imagining, that they are the men that can give us clear ideas of it. This must be the case, as long as men will give more scope to their fancies, than their judgments. The event of all these attempts is, to leave things darker and more obscure than they were found; and I do not think it will be otherwise, whilst men aim at clear ideas of what infinitely transcends their comprehension.

I am sorry to find the ingenious Watts, in the second part of his dissertations on the Trinity, endeavouring after ^b “an hypothesis of explaining the Trinity, which may have clear and distinct ideas affix'd to it.” He says, “it would be an invaluable happiness to the Christian world, if such an hypothesis were current among us.” How far he has succeeded in such an attempt, shall be consider'd in the sequel. For my own part, I think it impossible to find such an hypothesis; for, since the Scripture assures us, that we ^c cannot by searching find out God, nor discover the Almighty to perfection; it is vain and fruitless to attempt to explain the manner, how the sacred Three are related one to another. Mr. Watts himself, as he tells us, ^d “formerly satisfied his inquisitive thoughts, with the general notion of this matter being incomprehensible.” I wish he had still rested there; for certainly it is safest, not to wade too far into the deep things of God. The common orthodox way of speaking of the eternal generation of the Son, and the eternal procession of the Spirit, from the Father and the Son, has counte-

^b Pref. p. ix.

^c John xi. 7.

^d Dissert. p. 160.

nance enough from Scripture, to justify our keeping to this language, which has been so long in use, provided we keep from explaining the modus of this generation and procession. It is a mean and unjustifiable thing in our author^e to insinuate, that this is derived to us from the Popish schoolmen; and that the explanation is popish and scholastic, merely because the subtil triflers, who are understood by the name of schoolmen, run into a great many unintelligible ways of explaining the generation and procession. Mr. Watts might have known, that the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit, were things maintain'd long^f before the schoolmen attempted to give an account of the manner of them, or framed that set of words of which he can attain no ideas.

The truth is, the schoolmen were guilty of the same mistake that Mr. Watts runs into: they aim'd at satisfactory solutions: they could not be content, without being wise above what is written; and 'till I can find it made out, that the Scripture has given us any light into explanations of the modus of this mystery, I can but reckon all attempts of this nature to be unprofitable, as well as dangerous. I believe the doctrine of the Trinity, § “an article which has had such difficulties attending it in all ages, may be clear'd by labour and prayer, and the daily study of the Scriptures;” so as that our

^e Page 157. ^f It will appear, that Mr. Watts is entirely mistaken, in calling the eternal generation of the Son a popish, scholastic doctrine, if the passages of the antenicene Fathers expressing this doctrine in full terms, be consulted, which are quoted towards the close of the fifth chapter of this treatise. See also my true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 181, 182, 183. § Pref. p. xix.

faith in it may be strengthen'd, and our doubts concerning it scatter'd; but I do not think we are call'd to pray for clear ideas of the modus of it, for that is above our narrow and contracted understandings: were it otherwise, the Scripture would have been as explicit, in declaring the manner, how the Son and Spirit are one with the Father, as it has been in asserting their essential and proper Divinity.

One end Mr. Watts proposes, in finding out a scheme of explaining the Trinity, which may have clear and distinct ideas annex'd to it, is, " ^h that we may not be perpetually running to this refuge, that it is all mysterious and inconceivable, and therefore we must not search into it." I do not take this to be any better than an invidious representation of the matter; for the Scripture proofs of the Divinity of the Son and Spirit are so full and strong, that we may be certainly assur'd of it; and the reality of their personal distinction is easily conceivable, tho' the manner how these divine Persons are united, be acknowledg'd to be inconceivable. We cannot search too diligently into the Scripture accounts of the Deity of the Son and Spirit, because our search may be bless'd, for the increasing and confirming our faith; but it is vain and fruitless to search the Scriptures for an explication of the relations the sacred Three bear one to another, or of eternal generation and procession, for we shall never find such explications there.

Another end Mr. Watts proposes to himself, in aiming at clear ideas of the Trinity is, to furnish himself with better answers to the objections made against it. Thus he tells, us, ⁱ " that

^a Pref. p. ix.

ⁱ Pag. 238.

his faith, as a Christian, had contented itself with more general ideas of this doctrine, without enquiring (so far at least) into the modus of it, had it not been for the various objections rais'd against the possibility of it, in any form or modus whatever." These words are far from carrying any clear idea in them; for surely none that receive the Scriptures, deny the possibility of a Trinity under their own form or modus: as for example, a Sabellian thinks the Trinity possible under his form, and the Arian thinks it possible under his modus: this therefore, I suppose, is not the sense of the words. I can think of no other meaning, than that they who deny the proper and essential Deity of the Son and Spirit, object against the possibility of that scheme of the Trinity, under any modus or form whatever. The properest way to deal with such is, to prove from Scripture, that the characters of true and proper Divinity really belong to three Persons; and if they still object against the possibility of it, it shews, that whatever they pretend to, they set not out on the foot of Scripture, but are for making that bow to their reason. If the certainty of a thing be prov'd from Scripture, I take it to be vain, to endeavour to make it intelligible to a person, who, after such proof, is so hardy, as to deny the possibility of it.

Our author cannot but be sensible, that there are as great difficulties attending the simplicity, omnipresence, omniscience, and eternity of God, as can be pretended to belong to the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity; but he will hardly say the objections any daring Atheist can make against these, are the stronger, or our proofs for them the weaker, for our want of clear ideas.

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And the case is someways the same in the doctrine of the Trinity; the proofs of the reality of it may be very strong, whilst our ideas of it may be far from being clear. As he takes up with confuse and inadequate ideas of the attributes of God, who is great, and we know him not; so it might have been better, if he had taken up with inadequate ideas of the Trinity, and had been content with ^k “thinking, that the doctrine of the proper Deity of the Son and Spirit, is supported by some convincing arguments drawn from the word of God, tho’ the manner of explication be attended with much difficulty.”

After all, Mr. Watts seems to me to give up the matter, and to leave it absolutely uncertain, whether clear ideas are to be obtain’d or not. After all his search, he says, ^l “he is far from determining what is the true and inward distinction between the Essence of God himself, who is called the Father, and his Word and Spirit.” And he grants, ^m “that we know not how great is the distinction between different powers and principles, in so sublime and incomprehensible a nature as the Godhead:” so that he can pretend to no more knowledge, than they who have not so clear ideas as he thinks he has. Nay, he insinuates, ⁿ “that the difference between the divine Powers (which are what he calls persons) is a problem too high and too hard for us to resolve, who know heavenly things only by way of distant analogy to things earthly, and have not yet learn’d the unspeakable words, which Paul heard in Paradise.” If this be so, then since, as he says elsewhere, ^o “there is some

^k Perf. p. 9.
^o p. 178.

^l p. 120.

^m p. 129.

ⁿ p. 121.

difficulty and darkness attending our enquiries into the metaphysical nature and essence of the Son and of the blessed Spirit, and of their unity with, and distinction from the Father; and since the Spirit has not condescended to reveal this mystery to us, in his word, in evident and express language; " I think we may be content to take this matter on the foot whereon it stands in Scripture, without affecting to discourse of it in clearer ideas, than those under which the holy Spirit has thought fit to reveal it.

C H A P. II.

That supposing we could attain to clear ideas of the Trinity, yet Mr. Watts has not answer'd his design of affording us such.

WHAT has been advanced in the preceding chapter makes it appear, that the Doctrine of the Trinity is a matter of so sublime a nature, that it is not possible for us to attain to clear ideas of the way and manner, how three persons can be one God; so that the safest way is to cleave to this assertion; what the Scripture has declared in fact to be, must be true, how little notion soever we may have of the modus of it. However, if we were to suppose it probable, that a scheme should be invented, that might have clear ideas annex'd to it, still I must maintain, that Mr. Watts has been far from furnishing us with such a scheme; nay, I cannot but think, he has brought in more darkness and inconsistency, than most who have wrote on this matter. This is a charge which

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cannot but sensibly affect any author, much more one who bears the character of a clean and polite writer; and therefore, for the support of it, I shall be very careful to produce our author's own words, without adding any thing that may serve to give them an obscure or uncouth turn; looking upon such an artifice to be too mean for me to use, as well as unworthy of the cause in which I am engaged.

Our author takes ^a notice of a distinction in the Divine Nature, which is "a distinction of modes and properties, as when the different attributes of the Divine Nature, such as power, wisdom, and goodness, are represented as a sacred Trinity." This he justly rejects, ^b as not affording a sufficient difference for the various ascriptions which are given to Father, Son, and Spirit in Scripture; therefore he tells us of another distinction, which is ^c, "that of Divine Powers, as when the Divine Essence, with its two different powers of mind and will, or principles of knowledge and efficiency, are represented as the blessed Three, the Father, the Word, and the holy Spirit." This he ^d thinks he can call real, in some sense, because there is a plain reality in the distinction, tho' it arise not to distinct substances. Now, I confess, I have no clear idea how this distinction is greater, or more real, than the other; for there is a real distinction between simple attributes, as well as between them, when put into action: so that here, I think, our author might, with as much clearness, have said, that tho' there is only a modal distinction between the attributes of wisdom and power; yet there is a real distinction between the principles of

^a Page 213.

^b p. 214.

^c p. 213.

^d p. 214.
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knowledge and effiçience. If any can form a clear idea of this way of talking, I am very much mistaken. I cannot think this will help us, ^e“ to behold the great God, in a more distinct and perspicuous view.”

He farther tells ^fus, “ that whatsoever clear ideas we frame of God, by the light of nature, we derive them from an inward reflection on our own souls, and their various properties and powers of understanding and will.” Now, tho’ I grant, that from the consideration of our own souls, we may get an imperfect idea of an immaterial substance, which may give us some faint image of the spirituality and immateriality of God, yet I do not see, that Mr. Watts has put us into a way of gaining any clear ideas of God; for we can find no resemblance between infinite wisdom, and perfect omniscience, and our shallow understandings, and ignorance of more things than we know; neither can our inability to put in practice what our finite understandings intend, give us a clear idea of the infinite power of God, who can do all things that his wisdom contrives, and his will designs; no more can the variableness of our wills, which are more fickle than the wind, help us to an adequate conception of the immutability of the Father of lights, with whom there is neither variableness, nor shadow of turning. He adds indeed, that we must “ suppose the transcendent superiority of God to ourselves;” that is to say, when we have gain’d clear ideas of God, we must suppose him transcendentally above our ideas. If this last thing be supposed, as it really must, by us finite creatures, I do not know how we can be said to have clear ideas.

Our author afterwards asks, §“ Since the human soul has two distinct powers; the knowing power, called the mind, and the active power, called the will, why may we not suppose the blessed God to have two distinct powers, called the Word and the Spirit; the one cognoscitive, and the other active.” And he goes on to tell us, ^h“ that as the human soul has in it intelligence and volition, and a power of moving the body; so if there were any single term which signified both intelligence and volition together, he would choose to apply that to the divine Word; and if any single term signified the power of operation, or moving the body, he would apply that to the holy Spirit, because he thinks this analogy and resemblance would come something nearer to the scriptural ideas of the Word and Spirit; the one being represented rather as an intelligent volitive power, and the other as an intelligent effective power.” What light this rumbling stuff is like to produce, I know not, if the ideas couched under this dark language be clear to our author, he has been very unhappy in choosing a dress wherein to clothe them. He acknowledges, ⁱ“ that his design is not so presuming, as to express what the powers of the Deity are in themselves, but only to exhibit a sort of distant human resemblance of them.” So that he is to be commended for his modesty here, in not presuming to give us clear ideas: and it must be readily acknowledg’d, that he has not attain’d to more than he has presum’d.

He insinuates, ^k“ that we may call the Word a divine power or faculty of knowing and contriving all things, the Spirit an executive power

§ Page 218. ^h p. 218, 219. ⁱ p. 219. ^k p. 223.
or

or faculty which wills and effects all things:" and he says, ¹ "when he represents the Word and Spirit by divine wisdom and power, he does not conceive of them merely as two attributes of the divine Nature, such as justice, goodness, &c. but as such distinct faculties, or perhaps more distinct, than the understanding and will are in human spirits, which two are called powers rather than properties of the Soul;" tho' in another place, he thinks ^m divine properties may be used to express the divine Persons. He owns, ⁿ "that the terms attribute, property, and power, may be used promiscuously for one another;" but he says, "when there is a distinction made between them, the terms property or attribute are applied to any sort of modes or qualities, that belong to a subject; and that the term power denotes a distinct principle of physical agency in the subject, whereby it is render'd capable of acting in this or that manner." After this manner, he supposes the attributes of God to be qualities belonging to him as their subject, but his Word and Spirit to be, in Scripture, represented as the physical principles of knowing, willing, and efficiency (tho' it is to be observed, that there is not any footstep of such a way of speaking in Scripture:) he calls them powers, because this sort of idea admits of a greater distinction, than the qualities we call attributes.

I have transcrib'd all this, to let every one see, that this ingenious author does not always deal forth clear ideas, or at least, does not clothe his clear ideas with plain language. I wonder why he fixes on the word power, to express what others call a divine Person; and my reason against

¹ Page 224.^m p. 205.ⁿ p. 225.

using it, I will give in his own words: °“ The word power is an ambiguous term, that sometimes signifies a faculty or principle of operation, and sometimes denotes the force and influence of that faculty. Now the word being so often used, and these two senses of it being somewhat a-kin, it's hardly possible to limit the precise bounds of each of these senses or ideas, in every place of Scripture.” That an ambiguous word, that bears senses so much a-kin, that it is hardly possible to limit the precise bounds of each of these senses, should be a proper word, to convey clear ideas to us of the distinction of the Son and Spirit from the Father, is very strange.

Upon the whole, I think Mr. Watts had a great deal of reason to desire, as he does, P his readers to pardon the necessary impropriety or unsuitableness of some of the terms “ used by him, when applied to the great and blessed God.” If “ all his aim has been, to gain and give as clear and distinct ideas as he can, of the words the Scripture uses, that he might secure himself and others from talking without ideas.” I cannot but think, he has utterly miss'd of his aim, and has unwarily promoted an end contrary to his design.

I might farther have pursued this matter, and might easily have taken notice of multitudes of other passages, that carry in them no clear ideas; but I shall not proceed in this tedious and disagreeable employment, my inclination is more towards looking out for things in an author that will bear commendation, than to pick out things worthy of reprehension. Mr. Watts is a person

I honour and respect; and it is not out of prejudice to him that I take notice of these things: he has been remarkable for a clear easy way of writing; therefore for him to talk so obscurely as he does, is a proof how little a man can do, when he wades beyond his depth; and that the most perspicuous writer will not continue like himself; when he affects to give clear notions of things, which will remain incomprehensible, let men of the most elevated capacities do all they can, to make them plain.

It is often seen, that men, who have gained a reputation in some particular matters, cannot be content with the praise they have justly acquired'd, but must aim at something out of their reach: if they have succeeded well in some things, they are apt to think nothing is beyond their abilities; and therefore, when they find others gravell'd at any difficulties, they fancy they are the happy men that must clear them up, and often, in attempting to solve them, raise greater difficulties, than they are, which they strive to remove, and shew they dip into things they have not duly fathom'd. Whether this is Mr. Watts's case or no, I shall not determine: his hymns have deservedly met with a general reception; his poems, tho' persons of a truly fine taste will easily discover many defects and unaccuracies in them, have been highly applauded, and his sermons have had an uncommon run. I hope these things have not made him imagine, he is able to solve the difficulties attending the most abstruse mysteries of revelation: if he has entertain'd such a conceit, a little reflection will make him sensible, that it is much easier to compose a work of genius and fancy, than to explain the manner, how the three glorious Persons subsist in one infinite

finite essence. Would he consider calmly and impartially, what he has been doing, and how little light he has struck out, by his new way of talking, I am persuaded, he would leave off striving after clear ideas of the doctrine of the Trinity, especially since, in order to obtain them, he has denied the real Personality of the Son and Spirit; which is the thing I am next to consider.

C H A P. III.

That Mr. Watts has denied the proper and real Personality of the Son and Spirit.

AMONG all the schemes framed by those who lean to their own understandings, in opposition to the true Scripture of the Trinity, there has only one been found out, that is not attended with insuperable difficulties on the bare foot of reason; and that is the making the Godhead to be one Person; but then this is so glaring a contradiction to Scripture, that it never has been able to keep its ground long together.

The first hint of this heresy was from Simon Magus, who after he was rejected by the Apostles, by a mixture of error and horrid Enthusiasm^a, gave out that he was the supreme God, who appear'd at Samaria, as the Father, in Judea, as the Son, and in other nations, as the holy Spirit. By this monstrous assertion, he seem'd to repre-

^a Simon Samaritanus magus ille---- a multis quasi Deus glorificatus est, & docuit, semetipsum esse qui inter Judaeos quasi filius apparuerit, in Samaria autem quasi pater descenderit, in reliquis vero gentibus quasi spiritus sanctus adventaverit, esse autem se sublimissimam virtutem, hoc est, eum qui sit super omnia pater;

sent the Godhead, as one Person having three names.

There were some persons in the time of Justin Martyr, who said, the Son was not a distinct person from the Father. He in one place, ^b after he had been confuting the Jews, who said, the Father was the Person that spoke to Moses in the bush, whom he affirms to be the Son, adds, that they who say the Son is the Father, know neither Father nor Son. And in another place he mentions some^c, who pretended, that the Son was a power sent from the Father, which was called an angel, because it was sent by the Father; a man, because it appear'd in what shape he pleas'd; and the Word, because by it he made

& sustineri vocari se quodcunque euri vocant homines. Irenaeus, Lib. I. Cap. 23. p. 99. Ed. Benedict.

Agreeable to this, we have a fragment of Simon preserved by Jerom, who in his commentary on that passage in Matth. xxiv. 5. Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, has the following words, Quorum unus est Simon Samaritanus, quem in Actibus Apostolorum legimus, qui se magnam dicebat esse Dei virtutem, haec quoque inter caetera in suis voluminibus scripta dimittens, ego sum sermo Dei, ego sum speciosus, ego paracletus, ego omnipotens, ego omnia Dei.

^b Οἱ ᾧ τὸν υἱὸν πατέρα φάσκοντες εἶναι, ἐλέγχονται μήτε τὸ πατέρα ἐπιστάμενοι, μήθ' ὅτι ἐστὶν υἱὸς τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων γινώσκοντες. ὅς ἐστι λόγος, πρωτότοκος ὢν τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ Θεὸς ὑπάρχει. Justin. Apol. I. Sect. 83. p. 122. Ed. Ox. p. 94. Ed. Thirlby.

^c Γινώσκω τινὰς φάσκειν, τὴν δύναμιν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων φανεῖσθαι τῷ Μωσῇ, ἢ τῷ Ἀβραάμ, ἢ τῷ Ἰακώβ, ἄγγελον καλεῖσθαι, ἐν τῇ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους προόδῳ, ἐπειδὴ δι' αὐτῆς τὰ παρὰ τοῦ Πατρὸς τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀγγέλλεται. Δόξαν δὲ, ἐπειδὴ ἐν ἀχωρήτῳ ποτε φαντασία φαίνεται. Ἄνθρωπος δὲ ποτε, καὶ ἄνθρωπον καλεῖσθαι, ἐπειδὴ ἐν μορφαῖς τοιαύταις σκηματίζομεν φαίνεται αἵσπερ βούλεται ὁ πατήρ. Καὶ λόγον καλοῦσιν, ἐπειδὴ καὶ τὰς παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ὁμιλίας φέρει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις. Ἀτμῆτον καὶ ἀχώριστον τοῦ πατρὸς ταύτην τὴν δύναμιν ὑπάρχειν. — ὁ πατήρ ὅταν βέληται, λέγουσι, δύναμιν αὐτοῦ προπεθεῖν ποιεῖ, καὶ ὅταν βέληται, πάλιν ἀνασέλλει εἰς ἑαυτόν. Justin Dial. cum Tryphone, p. 371, 372. Edit. Jebb. p. 412. Ed. Thirlby.

known

known his mind and will to men, and that it was not separable or distinguishable from the Father. So that according to the fancy of the persons Justin spoke of, the Son might have been called a cognoscitive power, or an intelligent volitive power, or a divine power of knowing and contriving all things, had they been so happy as to have used words, that have clear ideas annex'd to them. In opposition to these persons, Justin^d asserted, that what they called this power, was God, but distinct from the Father, and begotten by him, but not by division of his essence. And he proved that there are two in number who are divine, from those words in Genesis^e, "The Lord rained fire from the Lord."

These persons whom Justin touched upon, must be but inconsiderable, since we hear no more of them. But in the third century, the notion of the Deity being but one person, made some figure in Africa, being propagated there by Praxeas, after he had been for some time, disseminating his heresy, in Asia, and at Rome: He allow'd only a nominal distinction between Father, Son, and holy Spirit; and so made the Father, in effect, to be born of a Virgin, and to suffer death^f. The same notion was ad-

^d Ibid. p. 374, 375. Jebb. 413. Thiriby. ^e xix. 24.

^f Varie Diabolus æmulatus est veritatem: ——— ipsum dicit patrem descendisse in virginem, ipsum ex ea natum, ipsum passum, denique ipsum esse Jesum Christum. ——— ipse a primordio mendax est, & si quem hominem de suo subornaverit ut Praxean: nam ipse primus ex Asia hoc genus perversitatis intulit Romanæ humo; & alias inquietus: insuper de jactatione martyrii inflatus, ob solum & simplex & breve carceris tædium. ——— Itaque post tempus Pater natus est, & Pater passus; ——— dum unicum Deum non alias putat credendum, quam si ipsum eundemque, & Patrem & Filium, & Spiritum sanctum, dicat. Terullian. contra Praxeam cap. i. 2,

vanced, some time after Praxeas, in Asia, by
 & Noetus.

Shortly after Sabellius sprung up in Egypt, who maintain'd an unity of Person, much after the same manner with Praxeas and Noetus. As the orthodox ^h had been brought, in answer to the Praxeans and Noetians, to say, they did not maintain three gods, but *τρία πρόσωπα*, or three persons, Sabellius did not think it proper to deny; in words, that there were three persons in the God-head; but he denied they were real persons, and took the word *πρόσωπον*, or persona, only in a figurative sense, as signifying a manifestation, representation, or a theatrical character; so that he could not be reckon'd free of the charge of making the the Father suffer, any

ὁ ἑτεροί τινες ἑτέραν διδασκαλίαν παρεισάγξαν γενομένοι τινὸς Νοῆτος μαθηταί, ὃς τὸ μὲν γένεσθαι ἦν Συμυρναῖος οὗ πρὸ πολλῶ χρόνου γενόμενος· οὗτος φυσιωθεὶς εἰς ἐπηρμήετον ἤχθη, οἰήσῃ πνεύματος ἀλλωτρίᾳ ἐπαχθεὶς. Ἐφη δὲ Χριστὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι τὸ Πατέρα καὶ αὐτὸν τὸ Πατέρα γεγεννηῆσθαι, καὶ πεπονηῆναι καὶ ἀποτεθνηκέναι. — ταῦτα ἀκρίσαντες οἱ μακάριοι πρεσβύτεροι προσκαλησάμενοι ἐνώπιον τοῦ ἐκκλησίας ἐξήταζον· ὃ δὲ ἠρνεῖτο λέγων τὰς ἀρχαίς μὴ φρονεῖν· ὕστερον δὲ ἐμφωλεύσας ἐν τισιν καὶ συσκευάσας ἑαυτῷ συμπλανωμένους, καθάρων ὕστερον ἰσᾶν τὸ δόγμα ἐβέλετο. Ὅν πάλιν προσκαλεσάμενοι οἱ μακάριοι πρεσβύτεροι ἠλεγξαν. Ὁ δὲ ἀντίστατο λέγων, τί ἔν καὶνὸν ποιῶ, δοξάζων τὸ Χριστὸν; πρὸς ὃν ἀνταποκρίνονται οἱ πρεσβύτεροι· καὶ ἡμεῖς ἕνα Θεὸν οἶδαμεν ἀληθῶς· οἶδαμεν Χριστὸν· οἶδαμεν τὸν υἱὸν παθόντα, καθὼς ἔπαθεν, καὶ ἀναστάντα τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, καὶ ὄντα ἐν διξίᾳ τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ ἐρχόμενον κρίναι ζῶντας καὶ νεκρούς· καὶ ταῦτα λέγομεν ὅτι ἐμάθομεν. Τότε τῶτον ἐλέγξαντες ἐξέωσαν τὸ ἐκκλησίας, ὃς εἰς τοσούτο φυσίωμα ἠνέχθη, ὡς διδασκαλίαν συστήσαι. Hippolytus contra Noetum, cap. i. Vol. II. p. 5, 6. Ed. Fabric.

Ορᾶτε πῶς προπετές καὶ τολμερὸν δόγμα παρεισήνεγκαν, αὐτός ἐστι Χριστὸς ὁ Πατήρ, αὐτὸς υἱός, αὐτὸς ἐγεννήθη, αὐτὸς ἔπαθεν, αὐτὸς, ἑαυτὸν ἠγειρεν. Ἀλλ' ἔκ ἔτως ἔχει αἱ μὲν γραφαὶ ὀρθῶς λέγασιν· ἀλλὰ ὅν καὶ Νοῆτος νοεῖ. Ibid. c. i. p. 7.

^h See this matter well clear'd up by the learned Dr. Waterland, in his second defence, p. 212, 213. See also Dr. Berriman's, account of the Trinitarian controversy, p. 119, 120.

more than those before him. In order to guard against the subtil evasions of him and his followers, the Greek writers, among the orthodox, afterwards more generally used the word ὑπόστασις.

After the rise of Arianism, Eustathius and Marcellus of Ancyra, scrupled to say there were three hypostases, lest they should make three substances, therefore they were charg'd with Sabellianism; but it does not appearⁱ that they were really of that opinion; only some unguarded expressions were dropt by them, and too stiffly maintain'd, which were improved against them, by the malice of the Arian party, who endeavour'd to take revenge on them, for their bold appearance in behalf of the doctrine of a consubstantial Trinity.

The Manichees, a sect which had oddly made a jumble of Christianity and Paganism, if they had any sentiments relating to the Trinity^k, fell in with Sabellianism. The Priscillianists, much

ⁱ That Eustathius was not in the Sabellian Scheme, may appear from the following noble fragment, preserved by Theodoret (Dial. 3.) where he speaks of the word Logos, as God begotten and distinct from the Father.

Δόξαν ἡ ἐπίκτητον ὁ Πατήρ ἐκ ἐπιδέχεται, τέλει⊕, ἀπειρ⊕ ἀπειρόητος⊕ ὢν, ἀπροσένης κάλλους, καὶ παντοίας ἐπηρείας. Ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ὁ λόγ⊕ αὐτῷ, Θεὸς ὢν ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐξ αὐτοῦ, δι' ἃ γεγένασιν ἀγγελοι καὶ οὐρανοὶ καὶ γῆς ἀπειρα μεγέθη, καὶ πάσαι συλλήβδων τῶν γενητῶν ὕλαι τε καὶ συστάσεις. Ἀλλ' ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῷ Χριστῷ, ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγειρόμενος, ὑψοῦται καὶ δεξάζεται, τῶν ἐναντίων αἰχλύνῃ ἀντικρυς ἀραμένων.

^k What Manes's opinion was concerning the Triunity I do not find, from the fragments of his letters, and the acts of his dispute with Archelaus, which are remaining; but that the later Manichees fell in with Sabellianism, will appear from the following words of Faustus, preserved by Austin, in his treatise against him (lib. xx. c. 2.)

Igitur nos patris quidem Dei omnipotentis, & Christi filii ejus & Spiritus sancti unum idemque, sub triplici appellatione, colimus numen.

such another sort of people, entertain'd afterwards the same opinions ; but as each of these sorts of heretics had more of Paganism than true Christianity in their schemes, they were not much minded on this head.

I do not find the notion of one proper divine person was much regarded, till the revival of the anti-trinitarian errors, after the reformation ; then that ignorant enthusiastic blasphemer, Michael Servetus, seem'd sometimes to fall into this way ; but there is such a monstrous confusion in his sentiments, that it is scarce to be known what he held. The Socinian scheme, which is that of Paul of Samosata, and Photinus revived, and which had such a run in Poland, is near akin to the Sabellian ; and is in reality only a more clumsy intricate way of expressing the same thing : however, this is certain, that the English Socinians, who made such a noise in the close of the last century, came at length to settle in pure Sabellianism ; and on that foot the anti-trinitarians seem generally, till the Arian heresy, upon its late revival, was received with applause by many ; and since that time, it has been reckon'd more fashionable, by all the opposers of the doctrine of the Trinity, to profess a reverence for that hypothesis.

I would not be thought, by this short historical account of the opposition that has been made to the doctrine of the Trinity, on the foot of holding only one proper person in the Godhead, to be preparing a charge of Sabellianism against Mr. Watts. He differs much in expression from the Sabellians ; and tho I cannot see he makes much more of the Son and Spirit than they do, yet I charitably hope, he has not duly weigh'd and consider'd his own scheme.

He

He says¹, a man incurs the charge of Sabellianism, if he follows what he invidiously calls the scholastic scheme, which, he says, has been profess'd by most of the reformed churches, and which, he tells us, with a sort of a sneer, has been commonly called modern orthodoxy. He would have done well to have shew'd us, whether the scheme he advances is more clear of that charge. When a man goes beyond Scripture, in explaining this mysterious part of our religion, under the pretence of giving a rational account of it, his nicest care will hardly exempt him from the inconvenience of having some names of modern or antient error fixed upon him; and the reason is this, it is hardly possible that there can be any mistake relating to the doctrine of the Trinity advanced now, which has never been started before; for as to this matter, it may truly be said, there is nothing new under the sun.

I shall now proceed to shew what Mr. Watts's sentiments, as to the personality of the Son and Spirit are, in which I shall be very careful of doing him any injustice: what I affirm is, that he has not left the Son and Spirit any real personality. This I shall endeavour to shew from his own words, and shall not concern my self what name may justly be given to his scheme.

Upon a fancy of his own, that the complete Divine Nature may be represented, as including in it two Divine Powers, the Word and Spirit, and that we may suppose the human soul acting by the mind and will, to represent God the Father, acting by his two Divine Powers, the Word and Spirit, he tells us, ^m " 'tis evident the Father is properly called a person,

¹ Pref. p. viii, ix.

^m p. 187.

an intelligent voluntary agent, with little or no alteration of the common sense of the word in human language; ” but then he says, “ when the Word and Spirit are called persons, which are supposed to be really but divine powers of the Father, whose inward distinction we know not, the term person is used in a figurative or metaphorical sense, and not in so proper and literal a sense as when the Father is called a person. ” If in these words he does not deny the real personality of the Son and Spirit, I do not know of what use words can be. This notion he endeavours to render probable, ⁿ by a man’s being represented, as speaking to his own mind ^o, by the custom of the Eastern writers ^p, to personalize every thing, by the Jews being wont to distinguish the power of a spirit from that spirit, and by the primitive ^q writers describing the divine Logos as a personal power. All these things are either false, or unaccurate, or do not come up to the point; as might easily be shew’d, were it proper to take up the reader’s time in such a digression. Some of his other considerations, to support his figurative sense of the word person, may be just taken notice of. He says, ^r “ the common explication of the doctrine, which has been esteem’d most orthodox among the protestant churches, has supposed the distinctions of the sacred Three, not to arise to the complete, proper, and literal idea of person among men. ” This is very true; but what he adds, ^s that therefore it can be but a figurative metaphorical personality, which they allow, ” is a mistaken inference, or else a presumptuous sup-

ⁿ Page 187.

^s p. 192.

^o p. 188, 189.

^r Ibid.

^p p. 190, &c.

^q p. 193.

position, that no other notion of personality, than our author's, can be allowed.

By what Mr. Watts next ^t advances, it appears, that he only allows a separate person, such as we find among men, to be a literal and proper person, and admits no medium between that and a figurative person; which indeed is no person, but only something represented as a person. But all this is only supposing what he ought to have proved; and it shews the author's great value for himself, that he should fancy a begging of his question to be a proof of his scheme. At last, with a seeming distrust of the lameness of his proofs, he adds, " " that if there be any expressions in Scripture, either relating to the eternal divine Word, or the holy Spirit, which cannot be interpreted of a particular power of the Divine nature, represented in such a figurative personality, he would then enquire whether it might not be interpreted of the Divine nature itself, exerting that particular power." And in this sense, he says, " the personality will appear more complete and literal," which, I confess, I cannot see; for if God's exerting any power, or, which is all one, putting any faculty or attribute into act, should give it any thing like a complete and literal personality, there appears to me to be no reason, why we may not make as many divine persons, as there are attributes in God.

I shall now point at some expressions relating to the personality of the Son. He says, " " the eternal Logos can hardly be called a person, in the common and literal sense of the term, as a distinct man; or angel, but only in figurative

^t Page 194, 195.

^u p. 199.

^w p. 64.

metaphorical speech." And, * "that there is another sense, in which the Logos may be called a son, as well as a person, by a figure of speech; in that in the Eastern and Scriptural idioms, any thing that has a logical or physical sort of dependance, is sometimes called a son and daughter." Our author did well to doubt, whether the Scripture calls Christ the Son of God in this sense; for this would bring the sonship and personality of Christ low indeed. If any personal characters else are ascribed to Christ in Scripture, that are too strong and literal to be solved of such a figurative personality, he thinks, y his assumption of the human nature strengthens the personal characters; so that he allows no real personality of the Divine Word, but thinks the complex being of God-man may have proper and literal personality.

I come now to represent our author's sentiments concerning the Spirit's personality, which he denies in a very strong manner. He observes, z "that one of the most remarkable and important texts, wherein the holy Spirit is represented as a person distinct from the Father and Son, is in John's Gospel, a "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will shew you things to come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come: he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it to you." In order to evade the force of this Scripture, which stands in such a glaring contradiction to his scheme, he has the following astonishing words: b "This

* Page 65.

a xvi. 13, 14.

y p. 195.

b p. 167.

z p. 166.

bleſſed Spirit, or the divine efficient power, was to reſide in the church, as the deputy or reſident of the Father and Son. Upon theſe accounts it ſeem'd proper to our Saviour, who is the Divine Wiſdom incarnate, to deſcribe this Divine Power by a ſtrong proſopopoeia, and a noble allegory, as a meſſenger ſent from God on this glorious deſign.” He repreſents it as ^c “very hard to reconcile ſtrict and proper Deity with three ſtrict and proper personalities, in the Godhead itſelf, in a fair conſiſtence with reaſon and Scripture; therefore it ſeems to him moſt agreeable to the word of God, that we ſhould explain the perſonality of the Spirit in a figurative ſenſe, that we may better maintain his proper eternal Deity, and his unity with the Father.” And he ^d boldly aſſerts, “that the proper, diſtinct, and real character of the Spirit, is that of a Divine Power, and that ’tis only perſonaliz’d by idioms of ſpeech.”

I might have added a great many more paſſages to the ſame purpoſe with the foregoing, but I think it needleſs. I ſhall now give a compendious view of his whole ſcheme: I ſhall ſum it up in twelve articles, all of which, except the firſt, ſhall be in his own expreſs words; and a Creed, fuller of hard words, and obſcure ideas, I defy any one to draw from the ſchoolmen, whom Mr. Watts deſpiſes, for their confuſed notions.

I. The one God is properly but one perſon ^e.

^c p. 175, 176.

^d p. 151.

^e N. B. I don’t remember to have found this aſſertion, in ſo many words, in our author; but we muſt neceſſarily ſuppoſe it to be the foundation he all along goes upon, and I cannot think, he will reckon it any injury, if ſuch a ſuppoſition he made.

II. The

II. The complete Divine Nature, or the infinite Spirit, includes in it two Divine Powers, the Word and the Spirit ^f.

III. The Father is properly called a person, an intelligent voluntary agent, with little or no alteration of the common sense of the word in human language ^g.

IV. The Word and Spirit, tho' they are divine properties, virtues, powers, and faculties, yet they are not merely divine attributes ^h.

V. When the Word and Spirit, which are really but distinct powers of the Father, are called persons, the term person is used in a figurative metaphorical sense ⁱ.

VI. The Word is a cognoscitive, or an intelligent volitive power, or a divine power or faculty of knowing and contriving all things ; and includes knowledge and volition ^k.

VII. The holy Spirit is an active, or an intelligent effective power, or an executive power or faculty, which wills and effects all things, and includes the divine power of efficiency ^l.

VIII. The Word cannot be called a person in a literal sense, but only in figurative speech ; and if Christ be represented as a proper person, it is only as God-man ^m.

IX. The holy Spirit is a Divine Power, and is only personaliz'd by idioms of speech ⁿ.

X. Strict and proper Deity is scarce to be reconcil'd with three strict and proper personalities, in fair consistence with reason and Scripture ^o.

^f Page 186.

^g p. 187.

^h p. 205, 223, 224, 225.

ⁱ p. 187.

^k p. 218, 219, 223.

^l p. 218, 219, 223.

^m p. 64, 195.

ⁿ p. 151.

^o p. 175.

XI. If Deity, and three personalities be explain'd in a literal sense, it endangers running into Tritheism ^p.

XII. The ideas of the Divine Powers (the Word and Spirit) are often intermingled in Scripture. Sometimes the properties of the Word may be attributed to the Spirit, and those of the Spirit to the Word; for they are both the inseparable powers of an intelligent, almighty Being, and have an incomprehensible union and communion with each other^q.

Thus I have endeavour'd to trace the mazes and labyrinths of our author's obscure theme; and I am sorry I am forc'd to say, that it appears to me a precarious and a dangerous fiction: all that I can make of it is, that he entirely reduces the Son and holy Spirit to nothing, if he does not make them the Father himself; which indeed seems to me to be the certain and unavoidable consequence of his scheme. He is unwilling to think, that he makes the Word and Spirit merely two attributes; but what he calls powers, are no other than attributes put into efficiency, as I have more than once observed: nay, in one place^r, he calls them divine properties. He, in contradiction to himself, sometimes uses expressions (as I may more distinctly take notice hereafter) that seem to assert a real personality; but his main end and aim is, to subvert the real personality of the Son and Spirit, and to substitute a figurative personality in the room of it. I can make no other of his Trinity, but God the Father, and his two attributes, or properties of wisdom and power,

^p Page 194.

^q p. 223.

^r p. 205.

and what such a Trinity is more than the Sabelian Trinity, of God under three names, or the mad Muggletonians Trinity, of God acting under three administrations or dispensations, I confess I am not able to apprehend^f. This is not loading Mr. Watts with invidious consequences, but is the real and naked truth: if not, if he will fairly make it out that I have misrepresented him, I will frankly own my mistake, and shall beg pardon of him, and of the world, with a great deal more pleasure than I have made these remarks: But I must own, I look upon it impossible for him to say I have wrong'd him. As I take his scheme to be contrary to Scripture, I shall endeavour to shew its inconsistency with the word of God; which is the principal thing I design'd in these papers, and which I shall proceed to in the following chapter.

C H A P. IV.

The proper and real Personality of the Son and Spirit proved from Scripture.

I SUPPOSE none, after having read what I have said in the beginning of this work, will expect from me a description of the word person, when applied to the Son and Spirit, that may convey clear ideas of it: I look upon

^f I cannot but take notice, that Mr. Watts, in one place, entirely falls in with the pretence of these Enthusiasts: for in explaining 1 Joh. v. 7. he says, "There may be some special congruity in representing Father, Word, and Spirit, as three persons, in that place, because they succeed each other, and are chiefly witness'd in different successive economies or administrations, p. 173, 174.

such a thing to be utterly impossible for any finite understanding. As for a general definition of a person, I see no cause to reject that of the learned Dr. Waterland: ^a “a single person is an intelligent agent, having the distinctive characters, of I, Thou, He, and not divided or distinguished into more intelligent agents, capable of the same characters.” The Scripture speaks of the Father, Son, and Spirit, in this language of personality; and as we know there can be but one God, we, at the same time, know the divine persons are not separate, or divided persons; therefore, as the same author observes, ^b “the divine persons being undivided, and not having any separate existence, independent on each other, they cannot be look’d upon as substances, but as one substance distinguished into several supposita, or intelligent agents: ‘they are not persons in a different sense of the word person, they are persons in the common sense of the word person; but persons of a different kind, and differently circumstantiated from what human, or angelical, or any other kinds of persons are.’” I see no reason we have, to enquire farther into the meaning of the word person, when applied to the divine persons. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit, in their personal characters, are three intelligent agents; tho’ as they are united in substance, they cannot be called three separate persons, or three separate minds.

The pains of the defenders of the true Scripture doctrine of the Trinity have been chiefly employ’d of late, in proof of the true Deity of the Son and Spirit, and their unity with the

^a Second Defence, p. 366.

^b Ibid. p. 367.

^c Ibid. p. 368, 369.

Father, in nature, against those who make the three divine persons three substances, one supreme God, and two dignified creatures. The personality of the Son and Spirit has such strong Scripture evidence on its side, that notwithstanding now and then it has been denied, yet it is, by most of the disputers of this world, reckoned easier, on a Scripture foot, to deny the Son and Spirit to be really divine, than to rob them of a true personality. For my own part, I cannot but think the Scripture proofs for their true divinity, and real personality, are equally strong, and as full as they possibly can be.

In engaging Mr. Watts, I must enter on a new sort of argument; and I cannot but think my province as difficult, as it would be, to prove that the sun ever shines, to a person who would stiffly deny it. Often things that are most evident, are hardest to be proved, in a formal way, because we are at a loss to think of mediums, to prove what we count self-evident, or to find out exceptions to answer. This I take to be my present case: Mr. Watts has not, as far as I can find, gone into any direct proof, that the Son and Spirit are no other than divine powers: he has only repeated, over and over, his fancies and surmises, that they are so, and that they must be so, or else the sacred Three must be separate persons. He has endeavour'd to evade the force of some Scriptures, which he could not but think would be brought against him; but his own hypothesis he has thought fit to propose naked to us, and to leave it without the least shadow of proof, nay, without so much as an attempt to support it from Scripture.

I believe

I believe, I might safely have left the account I have given of Mr. Watts's scheme, with every judicious reader; for I am apt to think, the representing such a scheme in its true light, is all the confutation it needs, with those who have barely read their Bibles. But lest any should be drawn aside by what he has advanced, and lest he should complain of this way of proceeding, as only ^d battering down his scheme, without building up any other, I shall proceed to the Scripture proofs of three real divine persons, and shall afterwards consider the separate evidence for the real personality of the Son and the Spirit.

SECT. I.

The Scripture Proofs of three real divine persons.

I Shall not be afraid to begin my proofs of a plurality of divine persons, from those words in Genesis, ^a "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Here the grammatical sense implies, that one person is brought in consulting with another, or more, and inviting him, or them, to join with himself, in the formation of man; and in this sense Philo partly ^b understands the words, for he says, the words "let us make" signify plurality, and import the taking in of others as fellow-helpers. Indeed the

^d Page 177. ^a i. 26.

^b Πληθὺς διὰ τοῦ ποιήσωμεν ἐμφαινομένη. Philo de profugis, p. 312. Ed. Gr. p. 460. Ed. Francf.

Ἐμφαίνει συμπαράληψιν ἑτέρων ὡς ἂν συνεργῶν, Idem de mundi opificio. p. 11. al. 16.

same ^c author supposes God here to speak to his powers, which I do not question but Mr. Watts will be pleas'd with, having urged ^d a man's speaking to his own mind, as a consideration to support a figurative personality in God: but I believe it will be impossible for him, to bring any example, throughout the whole Scripture, where God is brought in speaking to his two powers, as to persons. Others suppose, God is here speaking to the angels; but this is an odd conceit, for tho' the angels sung together, and the morning stars shouted for joy, when God brought order out of confusion, and raised the beautiful fabric of this world out of a chaos; yet they could contribute nothing towards creation, and so were not fit to be consulted in so important a matter. The words themselves lead us to think, that God the Father consulted with some person, or persons, equal to himself; which can be none but the Son or the Spirit, or both of them. It has indeed been pretended, that God here spoke in the dialect of kings; but this construction will not do, for the Eastern princes most commonly spoke in the singular number; but if it would, it will not serve for this place, ^e "The Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us, knowing good and evil." It would be nonsense for any ^f single person to use such a form of speech as this. Upon the whole, I see no reason to desert the old interpretation of these texts, that one person in the

^c De confusione linguarum, p. 233. al. 345.

^d Page 187.

^e Gen. iii. 22.

^f Οὐκοῦν εἰπὼν, ὡς εἰς ἐξ ἡμῶν, καὶ ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἀλλήλοις συνέν-
των, καὶ τὸ ἐλάχιστον δύο μεμεύηκεν. Justin. Martyr. Dial. cum
Tryphone, p. 186. Ed. Jebb. p. 269. Ed. Thirlby.

Godhead is brought in speaking to another divine person, or to two others. They who are spoke to, are address'd in the strongest language of personality; and I am apt to imagine, it will not sound so well, if we say, God said to his own essential wisdom and power, The man is become like one of us; as if we allow the Father to speak so to his Son and Spirit, on the supposition of their being distinct persons. The same argument will hold good from this passage, ^g "The Lord said, Come, let us go down and confound their language." And to add no more, we have a plain diversity of persons mentioned, in the account ^h of the destruction of Sodom, "Jehovah rained brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven."

The passages I have produced make it evident, that there are real divine persons, who consult together; but they do not tell us expressly who they are; for this we must have recourse to the new Testament, which manifests them to us under the names of Father, Son, and holy Spirit, and speaks of them as we do of persons; as appears from the history of the baptism of Christ; which is thus recorded by the evangelist Luke, ⁱ "Jesus being baptized, and praying, the heavens were opened, and the holy Spirit descended in a bodily shape, like a dove, upon him, and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased." This passage, of old, gave occasion to a common saying, Go Arian to Jordan, and there you will see a Trinity: It is a more direct proof of three divine persons; for here the

^g Gen. xi. 6, 7.

^h Gen. xix. 24.

ⁱ Luke iii. 21, 22:

Son is mentioned, the Father is in that relative term implied, and the Spirit is represented as taking a visible shape. The Spirit could not mean any property of God, for the properties of God are never described in Scripture, as taking visible shapes, and descending on any one. The distinction of three persons appears from their various actions: the Father spoke, and was heard, but not seen; the Spirit descended in a bodily shape, but was not heard; and the Son was baptized, and pray'd on the banks of Jordan, in the view of the spectators. The language would be full of Catechreses, if it express'd the Father's telling his intelligent volitive power, cloath'd with our nature, that it was his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased, and his sending his intelligent effective power to rest upon it.

The institution of baptism has been ^k always reckon'd a full declaration of three divine persons, as well as a tacit assertion of their unity in the same Godhead: Christ thus commanded his disciples, ^l "Go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit." From hence it may be gather'd, that the prime design of the Gospel revelation was, to call off the nations from the belief of numerous deities, to believ-

^k Ἐπ' ὀνόματι γὰρ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν ὅλων καὶ Δεσπότου Θεοῦ, καὶ τοῦ Σωτῆρος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ πνεύματος ἁγίου, τὸ ἐν ταῖς ὕδατι τότε λουτρὸν ποιοῦνται. Justin. Apol. p. 89. Ed. Thirlby, cap. 79. Edit. Oxon.

Novissime mandans, ut tingerent in Patrem, Filium, & Spiritum sanctum, non in unum, nam nec semel, sed ter, in singula nomina, in personas singulas tingimur. Tertullian contra Praxeam, cap. 26.

^l Matt. xxviii. 19.

ing in three divine persons, whom yet they could not look upon as three gods, because the unity of God was as strongly insisted on, in the preaching of the apostles, as the Trinity of Persons; and at the same time that they declared it to be necessary for those they preach'd to, to believe in Father, Son, and Spirit, they urg'd upon them the necessity of forsaking idols, and cleaving to the one living and true God. It is generally now agreed ^m among the learned, that it was the custom of the Jews, to initiate proselytes into their religion, by baptism: proselytes were baptized into the profession of the one God, in opposition to idols. This custom of the Jews our Lord was pleased to adapt to the Gospel service; and when he appointed baptism to be administered, with the solemn invocation of the name of Father, Son, and Spirit, can it be thought, he only added a pompous form of words to the Jewish baptism? The Jews baptized their proselytes in the name of the one God; and if he design'd that his followers should be baptized in the name of the one God, and his two essential powers, I can see no need to give out so solemn a form. In my apprehension, it would have made Christianity a very obscure religion, if when converts had been baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, they must have been told, that in order to have clear ideas of that religion they profess'd, they must not conceive of the Father, Son, and Spirit, as three

^m See Dr. Wall's introduction to his history of infant baptism, p. 67---110. Ed. in 8^{vo}, and his answer to Mr. Gale, c. 9. 10. p. 211----233.

See my true [scripture doctrine of the Trinity, Part I. Chap. IV.

real persons, but must conceive of them as one proper divine person, with his two essential powers, the intelligent volitive power, and the intelligent effective power. It is not in the least probable, that Christ's design in instituting baptism was, that we should be baptized into the name of one divine person, and two divine powers; for this confounds, and does not clear our ideas of this solemn piece of religious service. But Mr. Watts makes the Son, as to his human nature, a real person; so that he makes baptism to be in the name of two real persons; and why the third that is named should not be so, no good reason is or can be given by him. It is a very crude supposition, that we are baptized in the name of one proper, real divine person, one real created person, and one divine power, personaliz'd by idioms of speech. Nay, is it not most irrational and ridiculous to assertⁿ, that our faith, worship, and obedience should be directed, and intended to such a Triad, God, a creature, and a divine power?

Another thing that proves the Father, Son, and Spirit to be three real persons, is the way of speaking Christ used, when he promised the mission of the Spirit as a comforter: "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth,

ⁿ In baptism we own Father, Son, and holy Ghost, and are sacredly initiated, consecrated, or dedicated to the service and worship of Father, Son, and holy Ghost: and to conceive that any one that is not God, as the Father is, that is not a person, as he is, and the Son likewise, is join'd with them; and for the end, and in the manner mentioned, without the least note of difference, as to Deity, or personality, is a strange fondness, destructive of all religion, and leading the minds of men towards Polytheism. Dr. Owen of the Spirit, p. 510.

which

which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me; and you also shall testify, because you have been with me from the beginning." I do not think it is possible for words to express a real personality, more strongly than these do. Sending is truly a personal action; it would be great impropriety of speech to say, one property, or power of God, was to send another property, or power, to testify of it: and it would be monstrous to affirm, that a created person could send a divine power in his name. Besides, the work of the Spirit is spoke of, as the work of a person; he was to testify of Christ, which certainly is as much a personal action as that of the apostles, who, when they were instructed by the Comforter, were to testify of Christ. In short, sending and testifying are the works of real persons, and not of properties or powers. According to our author's interpretation, the sense of the words is this; when God's intelligent effective power is come, which I, his intelligent volitive power, will send from the Father, P⁶ "who consider'd as exhibiting the prime physical idea or dignity of Godhead, and sustaining the moral idea or dignity of it, may be conceived as the original of the two divine powers, and consequently to have the original right and power of sending the Spirit," he, the active power, shall testify of me, the cognoscitive power. This is the author's interpretation, express'd in the terms which he thinks convey the clearest and brightest ideas to us; tho' I can't help thinking, it makes but a whimsical figure. If this is not darkening counsel with words without knowledge, I shall never be able to know what is.

Of the same nature with the foregoing passage, is this following : ⁹ “ When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth, for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will shew you things to come: he shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it you.” Here it is imply’d, that Christ was to commit to the Spirit the guidance of his disciples, into all truth: This is a personal action; for how can one power of the same person, commit the care of any persons to another power? The personality of the Spirit is here express’d very strongly: he was to come, he was to guide into all truth, he was not to speak of himself; he was to hear, and what he was to hear he was to speak; he was to shew things to come, he was to glorify Christ, for he was to receive of his, and shew it to his followers. To omit insisting on the impropriety of representing all this, as said of a power of God, it ought to be remarked, that Christ here promised his people something new, above what they, or any of the true believers before them, had been blessed with: now, how God could have been with his people, without his efficient power, is hard to conceive. Our Lord revived his disciples, who were sorrowful at the thoughts of parting with him, with the promise that the person of the Spirit should make a more plentiful effusion of his gifts on them, than ever he had yet done. Mr. Watts says^r, that as the Father did not design now, under the Gospel, to manifest his will by angels, and was about to recal the person of his Son from this lower world; and as the Spirit,

⁹ John xvi. 13, 14.

^r Page 167.

or the divine efficient power, was to reside in the church as the deputy, and prime minister of the Father and Son, it “seem’d proper to our Saviour (who is the divine wisdom incarnate) to describe this divine power by a strong^f prosopopoeia, and a noble allegory, as a messenger sent forth from God, for this glorious design.” Thus by a bold fiction of his own, he makes our Lord

^f Socinus makes the holy Ghost to be described by a prosopopoeia; but he explains it in a different way.

Credo me satis ostendisse, Spiritum sanctum non esse personam, non magis quam aliae vel proprietates, vel effecta Dei sunt personae, cum nihil sit aliud quam peculiaris quaedam virtus & efficacia Dei, quae si ut ipsius Dei proprietates & vis per quam agit consideratur, & accipitur, figurae metonymiae & prosopopoeiae accommodatissimus est locus; & metonymiae quidem, si Spiritus sancti nomine ipse Deus, cujus est Spiritus, quique per eum agit, significatur. Prosopopoeiae vero, ut quando Deus per Spiritum sanctum agit, ipsi Spiritui sancto Dei actio tribuatur, si autem haec virtus & efficacia Dei consideretur & accipitur ut res in quibus agit ab ipsa afficiuntur, utrique isti figurae similiter aptissimus est locus: quandoquidem per metonymiam, is qui a Spiritu sancto aliquo modo affectus quidpiam agit, quatenus id agit, Spiritus sanctus, seu Spiritus Dei, metonymice dici potest, ----- Jam per prosopopoeiam ipsi Spiritui sancto actionem tribui quae ipsius Spiritus ope ab homine fiat, adeo est proclive, ut nihil magis. Socinus contra Wiekum, Cap. 10.

It may not be amiss to put down a remarkable passage or two of that admirable writer Dr. Owen, whom Mr. Watts has the honour to succeed in the same church, relating to the figurative personality of the holy Spirit, which I have met with since these papers were drawn up.

The Socinians and Quakers tell us, that what the holy Scripture speaks concerning the holy Spirit, is indeed true, but that, in and by all the expressions which it useth concerning him, it intendeth no such person, as it seems to do, but an accident, a quality, an effect, or influence of the power of God, which figuratively does all the things mentioned; namely, that has a will figuratively, and understands figuratively, discerns and judges figuratively, is sin’d against figuratively, and so of all that is said of him. Can any man that is not forsaken of all natural reason, as well as spiritual light, choose now but determine, that either the Scripture designs to draw him into er-

to speak darkly, when it was his design to speak clearly. Christ had now done instructing his disciples in a mysterious allegorical way, and thought proper to give them a clearer account of what work lay before him, and what blessings he was to procure for them than he had hitherto done: and can we suppose he would describe the Spirit under an allegory, or a prosopopoeia? Must the divine person, who was to supply the want of his bodily presence, be only described by a bold figure of speech? Certainly these things ought better to be consider'd. Our author will not find this strong way of personalizing, any where used in the new Testament; which as it was design'd for the use of all nations, was not proper to be wrote only according to the taste of those in the East. But I am afraid I use too many words, to confute a mere invention, that is framed to support a precarious hypothesis, which is not gather'd from Scripture, but minted by our author, to give us clear ideas of what Scripture has not explained.

Our author tells us, by way of excuse, "that every interpreter of this Scripture, that preserves the doctrine of the Spirit's Deity, is constrain'd

rors and mistakes, about the principal concernments of his soul, and so ruin him eternally, or that these persons, who would impose such a sense upon him, are corrupt seducers, that seek to overthrow his faith and comfort? Such will they at last appear to be. Dr. Owen of the holy Spirit, p. 49, 50.

It is a confident swelling above all bounds of modesty, to suppose, that because one or other of these things are, or may be, metaphorically, or metalliptically applied to this or that thing, which are not persons, when the figurativeness of that ascription is plain and open, that therefore they are all of them, in like manner, so ascribed to the holy Ghost, in that discourse of our Saviour to his disciples. Dr. Owen, *ibid.* p. 63.

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to near as figurative a sense as his," which I confess I do not understand; for how the making two persons, equal in nature, to act one in subordination to the other, by mutual consent, is introducing any thing figurative or metaphorical, I should be glad he had shewed, as well as ² how none but the Arians can keep precisely to the letter of the text here. In all this I do not take in his meaning, and therefore can say nothing to what he has advanced.

Another Scripture which I shall bring, to prove the real personality of the three divine persons, is the following ^a famous passage: "There are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and holy Spirit, and these three are one." What Mr. Watts ^b thinks to be a special congruity in representing the sacred Three, as three persons, that they succeeded each other, and witness'd in different administrations, I think, proves them to be real persons; otherwise, we must say, the Father, a proper divine person, under the old Testament, bore witness to the Gospel by prophecy, the Father's essential wisdom bore witness, by its own ministrations, in its incarnate state, and the Father's efficient power bore witness, after Christ's ascension. This makes the three distinct witnesses to be one witness: it is indeed said, that they are one; but because the three divine persons, who witness, are one God, it does not follow, that these three witnesses are not three witnesses, but one witness; God witnessing, first in his own person, and then not in his own person, but by his two powers of wisdom and effieience.

^c Page 169.

^a 1 John v. 7.

^b p. 174.

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I am sensible it may be objected, that in the next verse the Spirit, the water, and the blood are represented as three persons; as these are figurative, it may be said, why may not two of the witnesses in heaven be figurative persons? Here I would have it remark'd, that I do not deny that things which are not real persons, may be personaliz'd; but then there are such things elsewhere, in Scripture, said of the Son and Spirit, as prove them to be persons, as much as the Father; therefore, when they are joined with the Father, and represented with him performing personal actions, I think, if he be allow'd to be a proper person, it follows they likewise must be so. The later verse is far from being plain and clear; and such various interpretations have been given of it, that no one would interpret so plain a text as the former verse by it. The three witnesses on earth seem all to be figurative persons; and if the figurative personality ascrib'd to them, proves the personality ascribed to two of the three that bear witness in heaven, to be figurative, it proves the same of the other witness, and so excludes the Father, as well as the Word and Spirit, from being a real person, which I suppose Mr. Watts is not willing to do.

It appears that there is not the same reason to affix a figurative personality to the heavenly witnesses, as to the earthly, from this consideration, that two, at least, of the earthly witnesses (and probably all three) are represented as things to which real personality does not belong; but, in this place, nothing is said of the heavenly witnesses, that contradicts a real personality; and in other places, things are said of all three that evidently prove it. There is no difference of lan-

guage as to the Father, Word, and Spirit in this text, and consequently there is no reason to allow a real personality to the first of the three, and only a figurative personality to the other two. As a figurative personality of all the three earthly witnesses seems to be proved, from the water and the blood being not real persons, and not able to perform personal acts, so a real personality of all the three heavenly witnesses seems evident, from the Father's being a real person, who performs personal acts.

It is allow'd by our author, c " that the Father is properly called a person, an intelligent voluntary agent, with very little or no alteration of the common sense of the word, in human language." I should have been glad, he had given us a little light into his way of proving, from Scripture, the Father's real personality. It is a very strong and convincing evidence of the Father's real personality, that the Scripture represents him as a person, and ascribes personal acts to him; but if any one should take it into his head to deny, that the Father is a real person, and should only allow him a figurative personality, I cannot see how he can be confuted, upon Mr. Watt's hypothesis: for as the Son and Spirit are not real, but figurative persons, according to him, notwithstanding they are represented under personal characters, I know not how the Father's having personal actions ascribed to him, can prove him to be a real person, any more than the other two. A fertile invention may furnish a man with a method of explaining away the Father's personality. It might be pretended that he is the intelligent, directive power of God; and there is the same foundation for say-

ing so, as there is for saying the Son is the intelligent volitive power, or the Spirit the intelligent effective power; for all this way of talking is from fancy and imagination, and nothing else. If any one could be so whimsical as to say the Father is the directive Power of God, and is only personaliz'd by idioms of speech, I confess, I am utterly at a loss to think, how our author could confute him, in a way consistent with his own principles. To say the Father is a proper person, and the Son and Spirit are his two powers, is only taking for granted what should be proved.

As the personal actions ascribed to the Father in Scripture, fully prove him to be a real person; so when the Son and Spirit are joined with him, under personal characters, the natural inference is, that they are persons as much as he is. Neither can this inference be overturned, 'till it can be proved, that the Scripture has given us any caution against taking the personal characters, which it every where ascribes to the Son and Spirit, in the same sense with those which it ascribes to the Father. We have the same Scripture proofs of the personality of the Son and Spirit, that we have of the personality of the Father; we must therefore allow them all to be real persons, or deny them all to be such. All personal properties, adjuncts, acts, and operations are ascribed, and do belong to each of the sacred Three: and why they must be taken figuratively, when applied to the Son and Spirit, any more than when applied to the Father, no reason can be given, but strong prepossession and prejudice. It does not belong to us to say what may be, in things of this high nature: modesty in such matters becomes weak mortals, and curiosity will only leave them that give way to it under great disappointments. If

If a figurative personality be only allow'd to the Word and Spirit, we have only a figurative Trinity: and I can see no reason why the two powers of wisdom and efficiency must be joined with the person of the Father, to make up a Trinity. Is not love a power of the Divine Nature, as well as wisdom and efficiency? nay, more is attributed to that, than to the other; for God is said to be love, but no where in Scripture to be wisdom or efficiency. If then any one would be so perverse as to say, the three persons in the Trinity are figurative persons, love, wisdom, and efficiency, I should be glad to know what Mr. Watts, consistently with his own principles, could advance against him.

Our author distinguishes between God and his two powers; but what conception can we have of God, distinct from, and that does not necessarily include these essential powers. As I have no notion of a human soul, that does not include in it understanding and will, so I have no idea of the Divine Nature, that does not include in it infinite wisdom and power.

SECT. II.

The Scripture proofs of the Son's real Personality.

I Should now give the separate evidence for the personality of Christ, the Son of God; but as Christ is God-man, our author thinks he may, in that sense, be allowed to be a proper person, and therefore if ever so many texts were brought to prove his personality, he would evade them by saying, ^d "Christ assumed the

^d Page 195.

human nature, which will solve the attribution of personal ideas to Christ." But there are some passages in Scripture, where the Son is spoke of under personal characters, before he could be supposed to have taken human nature into a personal union with himself: ^e "His outgoings are of old, from the days of eternity," or everlasting. ^f "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God: all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made." Here the Son is spoke of as a person whose outgoings are of an eternal date, and as being with God, and being himself God, in the beginning, before any creatures were made: He was God, and he was with God; so that he could not be the same person with whom he was, for he is not said to be in God, but with him. Besides, all things are said to be made by him, or he made all things, which is a personal work: he was with God, and so a distinct person, before he made all things; that is, before his human soul, tho' ^g supposed the first of all creatures, could be formed, and consequently personally united to the divine wisdom.

When the Son appeared to Moses in the burning bush, ^h he took personal characters as God, and as Jehovah: "I have seen the affliction of my people; I am come to deliver them, I will send thee to Pharaoh, I will bring you out of affliction." If Mr. Watts here supposes the divine Wisdom's being united to a super-angelic Being, is a foundation for these personal attributions, I would observe, that he who took the character of a person here said,

^e Micah vii. 2.

^f John i. 1, 3.

^g Page 196.

^h Exod. iii. 6, 8, 10, 17.

he was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and that his name was Jehovah ; which no mere created person, tho' ever so super-angelical, can say of himself. Besides, the notion of our author of a super-angelical Being, united to the divine Wisdom, is only an unscriptural fancy and figment, as I shall prove hereafter.

When Christ is described under personal characters, as the Son of God, the only begotten Son, our author ⁱ thinks he is only Son of God, as he is the first of creatures, both for time and rank, with respect to his human soul: and as this glorious Being was united to the divine Wisdom, Christ God-man may be a real person. Now if Christ be the Son of God properly, in his Divine Nature, this way of evading his personality as God, comes to nothing. No one that duly considers the Apostle Paul's words: ^k "to which of the Angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee ;" will venture to say, Christ is called a Son, on account of the glorious angelic Spirit, which was to him instead of an human soul; because the words declare Christ to be a Son on a much higher account, than any angelic, arch-angelic, or super-angelic Spirit can be. Christ's human soul, let it be deriv'd from God in ever so unknown and transcendent a manner, is not derived in a way distinct from other creatures, whatever our ^l author may fancy: for the creation of the highest Arch-angel is as much bringing something into being, out of nothing, as the production of the meanest reptile. It is not therefore likely, that Christ is called the Son of God, on account of this arch-angelick Spirit, if we sup-

ⁱ Page 196, and in many other places.

^k Heb. i. 5.

^l p. 50.

pose him to have such: it remains therefore to be enquired, whether Christ be the Son of God, properly, in his Divine Nature.

It is not to be denied, that Christ is sometimes in Scripture called the Son of God, on account of his office as Mediator, his miraculous birth of the Virgin, and his being declared to be the Son of God with power, at his resurrection from the dead; but his being stiled, in so emphatical a manner, the only begotten Son, seems to refer to a much higher sonship. Scripture does not in exprefs words say, Christ was the Son of God, by eternal generation, yet ground enough may be gather'd from thence to assert this: his goings out are^m said to be of old, from everlasting: the Lordⁿ possessed him from the beginning of his way, before his works of old: he was set up from everlasting, before ever the earth was, when there were no depths, before the mountains were settled, before the hills was he brought^o forth; before creation, he was by the Father, as one brought up with him; he is the only^p begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father; the first-born before^q all creation: he is God's own and^r proper Son, and he, in the days of his flesh, call'd God his own proper Father, ^f which was understood rightly by the jews, to be a claim of equality with God: he^t is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the exprefs image of his person, and the Angels are^v commanded to worship him, as the first begotten;

^m Micah v. 2.

ⁿ Prov. viii. 22, &c.

^o The

word in the original is יָלַדְתִּי, which signifies being in child-birth.

^p John i. 18.

^q Col. i. 15.

^r Ὁς τῆς ἰδίας οὐκ ἐφύσατο, Rom. viii. 32.

^f Πατέρα

ἰδίον ἔλεγε τὸν Θεόν, ἴσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ Θεῷ, John v. 18.

^t Ὁς ὢν --- χαρακτὴρ τῆς ἀπαρρέσεως αὐτοῦ, Heb. i. 3.

^v Heb.

i. 6.

whereas,

whereas, to have worshiped an angelic, or super-angelic Spirit, would have been idolatry. If all this be laid together, ^w eternal generation, or the Sonship of Christ, as to his Divine Nature, is not so remote a consequence from Scripture, as to make us afraid of asserting it: Sure I am there is a great deal more ground from Scripture to assert this notion, than any other scheme, especially Mr. Watts's, which is an express contradiction to Scripture; of which I wonder he is not himself sensible.

If then Christ be the Son of God properly, in his Divine Nature, our author's way of solving the passages that describe Christ as a real person, appears to be wrong; and his true, real personality is proved, from his being described under personal characters, when he is spoke of as the only begotten and eternal Son.

There are some passages in Scripture where the Father and Son are spoke of together, in such a manner, as proves them to be real divine persons. Thus, for instance, the personal actions of knowing and loving ^{*} are attributed to both: "No man knows the Son but the Father, neither knows any the Father save the Son. The Father loves the Son. I love the Father." It cannot reasonably be question'd, that in the first of these Scriptures, the Son is spoke of, as to his Divine Nature, because his incomprehensibility is set on the same foot with that of the Father. To give a figurative sense of these personal acts of love and delight, is mere groundless presumption; it can answer no end, but to serve an heretical hypothesis; and to take this liberty

^w See my true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 177, 180. ^{*} Matt. xi. 17. John iii. 35. xiv. 31.

with Scripture without reason, is unwarrantable; for it is one way to turn all Scripture into allegory and metaphor, and to leave us no method of coming to any determinate sense, whenever any author of fancy thinks fit to obtrude a figurative sense upon us. Besides, it is contrary to a multitude of other ascriptions given to Father and Son in Scripture, which carry in them strong expressions of real personality.

It is not the way to give us clear ideas of the Father and Son to suppose, that when they are both spoke of, in the same way, the expressions used of one must be literal, and those used of the other figurative, it rather conveys uncouth and dark ideas to us. As for instance, God the Father knows and loves his essential wisdom; this is a personal act: the Son, the essential wisdom of God, knows and loves the Father; this is a figurative act: such a distinction can never be supposed, where there is no variation in the sacred language. Can it be thought that the Spirit of God would involve, under the same words, such contrary meanings, which few have invention enough to feign, and still fewer understanding enough to comprehend? Every common reader can do no other, than take the expressions to mean as much real personality, when ascribed to the Son, as when ascribed to the Father.

By the same method that Mr. Watts takes to elude the real personality of the Son of God, many other important doctrines have been by some explain'd away: The death of Christ, and his sufferings have been made to be only figurative: our spiritual impotence to what is good has been affirm'd to be built only on metaphorical expressions; such as being dead in trespasses and sins: Our being merely passive in regeneration

tion has been denied, because the terms in which it is express'd are pretended to be metaphorical; such as being created in Christ Jesus to good works: and the Scripture proofs for any other doctrines of the Gospel may, in this trifling manner, be evaded, according to the prejudices of fanciful authors that oppose them.

There is one thing that makes it necessary to admit, that the Father and Son are real, and distinct persons; and that is, the distinct characters and offices that are ascribed to them in Scripture. Were there not a personal distinction between them, numberless difficulties must be swallowed down: the making the Father, by necessary consequence, suffer and satisfy for sin, has always been, and still will be, a millstone about the neck of the Sabellian scheme, to sink it in the opinion of all sober enquirers into the sense of Scripture. Mr. Watts's scheme, tho' different in expression from the Sabellian, falls as readily into this absurdity as that does. If it be admitted that those divine persons, called Father and Son, are only God the Father, and his property, or power of wisdom, many gross absurdities would follow: As for instance, when the Father begot the Son, he begot himself; the Son, who is the express character of the Father's person, is the express character of himself; when the Father sent his Son into the world, he sent himself; when he declared his approbation of his Son, he gave himself approbation; when he caused his sword to awake against his shepherd, his fellow, he caused it to awake against himself; when the Son satisfied for sin, he satisfied himself; when he prayed to his Father, he prayed to himself; and in all his works of mediation and intercession, he mediates and intercedes with himself:

himself: These are the necessary consequences of Mr. Watts's hypothesis. I would not be thought to charge them upon him, as tenets held by him: I rather hope, if he would but consider what crude consequences flow from the principles he has laid down, he will be convinced, that a scheme attended with such difficulties, is not a scheme attended with clear ideas.

S E C T. III.

The Scripture proofs of the true and real Personality of the holy Spirit.

THERE is the less need to insist largely on the proof of the Son's personality, if we can prove from Scripture the real personality of the Spirit^x, "whose personal characters, our y author tells us, are not express'd in so frequent, nor in so strong and plain terms in Scripture, as those of Christ." He grants, ^z"that in several places of Scripture, the Spirit of God is set forth in a personal character, or under the idea of a person distinct from God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ;" and yet, by a strange self-contradiction, he tells us^a, "that were it not for some personal characters which are sometimes attributed to the blessed Spirit, by a figurative and eastern manner of speech, he is persuaded scarce any reader of the Bible would ever have imagined, that the Spirit of God signified any thing else but a power of the Divine Nature, the influence of that power, or God himself acting by that power." I believe no reader would

^x Page 196.

^z p. 128.

^a p. 132.

have gather'd, that the Spirit is a real person, had not the Scripture attributed personal characters to him; so that in this conclusion our author is right; but that personal characters are attributed to him only by a figurative eastern manner of speech, is what he should have proved, and should not have contented himself with bare affirming it, over and over, without supporting it with arguments. I do not find the Scripture runs into such strong allegories, as he often talks of; what seems to favour his assertion most, is, the manner in which wisdom is described in the Proverbs, which is a poetical book; but as our author, with almost all writers, allows the description of wisdom in the eighth chapter, to belong to the Son of God, I see not why the wise King Solomon may not be supposed to mean the Messiah, in other places, where wisdom is introduced as a person. As Christ has been proved to be a real person, Mr. Watts will gain no support to his hypothesis, from the personal characters attributed to wisdom. The other examples, such as charity's thinking no evil, and the like, which he urges after the Socinians, I believe, every reader will see not to come up to the point. It is universally granted, that the holy Spirit is put frequently, in Scripture, for his gifts and operations; so that Mr. Watts needed not to have given such a long train of proofs, of what everybody allows. The question then is, whether the Spirit is a real person. This appears from several things urged already, and may be farther confirm'd from some other considerations.

We have an express proof of the Spirit's divine personality, in the prophet Isaiah's vision, in relating which, he has given us this account

K

of

of what he heard. ^b“ I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? then said I, here am I, send me ; and he said, go and tell this people, hear you indeed, but understand not, and see you indeed, but perceive not.” Here is a person brought in speaking, in as strong terms as any one can desire ; “ Whom shall I send ? ” If this is not a literal expression of personality, it would be hard to find out words to express such a thing. Now we are told by the apostle Paul, ^c that it was the Spirit who here spoke to ; and by the prophet, “ Well spoke the holy Spirit, by Esaias the prophet, to our Fathers, saying, Go to this people, and say, hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive.” It may be worth taking notice, that the pronouns I, thou, and we are attributed to the Spirit ; as I and we, when he speaks, “ Whom shall I send, who shall go for us ? ” thou, in the prophet’s answer, “ send me,” or, “ do thou send me.” So that were Mr. Watts’s remark ^d true (as it is not) “ that in all the new testament, there is only the pronoun he attributed to the Spirit, but, as he thinks, neither I, thou, nor we ; whereas, I, thou, he, and we are all ascribed to the Father and Son,” it would be of little consideration, since all these pronouns are attributed to the Spirit, in the old Testament ; and one such plain proof is sufficient to determine any point. If this passage in Isaiah was put into Mr. Watts’s language, it would make but an odd appearance. How would it sound if it were thus express’d ? Whom shall I, the intelligent effective power of God, send ? who will

^b Isaiah vi. 8, 9. ^c Acts xxviii. 25, 26. ^d Page 196.

go for the one God, and me his property of effi-
 ciency? The very putting it in this form
 makes it uncouth, and without meaning ; a
 speaking power, and a sending property, is strange
 sort of language. If the application of the personal
 pronouns, I, thou, and he to any thing, be the
 distinctive character of a person, as Mr. Watts
 e says, certainly the Spirit may well be called a
 real person.

The personal characters of the Spirit are repre-
 sented in strong and plain terms in the new Tes-
 tament, whatever our author may fancy to the
 contrary ; as for example, we find it recorded in
 the acts of the apostles, that f “ The Spirit said
 to Peter, Behold, three men seek thee ; arise
 therefore, and get thee down, and go with them,
 nothing doubting, for I have sent them.” Here
 the Spirit is described under a personal character ;
 and certainly a real person may, with propriety
 enough, be said to command any one to go with
 them whom he should send ; but this way of
 speaking is not so well used of a property, fa-
 culty, or power. Whether an allegorical figu-
 rative way of speaking was convenient, in so
 plain and naked a narration as this, is worth con-
 sideration.

Another passage wherein the Spirit is described
 under a personal character, is the following re-
 markable one, in the same book, g “ There were
 in the church that was at Antioch, certain pro-
 phets and teachers ; ---- and as they ministered to
 the Lord, and fasted, the holy Spirit said, Se-
 parate me, Barnabas and Paul, to the work
 whereto I have called them ; they being sent forth
 by the holy Spirit, departed.” This Scripture

e Page 181. f Acts x. 19, 20. g Acts xiii. 1, 2. 4.

is so entirely repugnant to, and subversive of Mr. Watts's scheme, that it is no wonder if we find him endeavouring to evade it; and accordingly he tells us, ^b "it is very naturally interpreted as the voice of God by his Spirit; for it was God that called them to the ministry, and to him they were separated." In answer to this, it may be observed, that it is most natural, wherever it can be done, to stick to the letter of Scripture. The text expressly says, it was the Spirit spoke; and for our author, after the ⁱ Socinians, to say it was God spoke to them by the Spirit, is a mere shuffle, invented to serve an hypothesis. As the Spirit was God, God called them to the ministry; but to pretend it was God, or the Father, called them by the ministry of his intelligent effective power, is only giving an obscure turn to a plain Scripture.

Whoever will duly consider the two last quoted Scriptures, may judge what to make of the following assertion of our author^k: "in all the new Testament, there is only the pronoun he attributed to the Spirit; but I think, neither I, nor thou, nor we, are applied once, in all that sacred book; whereas, I, thou, he, and we, are all applied both to the Father and the Son." I hope it sufficiently appears that Mr. Watts is entirely mistaken,^l and should hereafter be cau-

^b Page 131.

ⁱ Deus est causa principalis, Spiritus sanctus & prophetae sunt causae instrumentales---- Solet Scriptura figurate, parti & epitheto alicui attribuere quod esset ipsius rei----- Spiritus sanctus virtus altissimi, & digitus Dei appellatur, non ut diversum quid a Deo, sed ejus quasi pars, quae loco totius saepe usurpari consuevit. Sicut itaque ex digito Dei nemo personam fabricat; ita nec de Spiritu sancto debet qui digitus Dei vocatur. Enjedinus p. 258.

^k Page 196.

^l Mr. Watts, in his third volume of sermons, p. 426. has

tious how he makes his readers trust his memory. The pronoun I is, in both places, attributed to the Spirit, and is a distinctive character of a real person; but had not that been applied to the Spirit, but only the pronoun he, I cannot see the proof of the Spirit's real personality would have been superseded by it.

There are other actions in Scripture attributed to the holy Spirit, which cannot with propriety of speech be said to be done by a faculty. It is he who renews and sanctifies all the elect people of God; it is he who causes them to rest here, in faith and obedience, and it is he who conducts them to the rest of heaven hereafter: He dwells in the Saints as in a temple^m: He makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be utter'dⁿ; it would sound very strange, to talk of an effective faculty interceding with groanings; but this may very well be said of a real person. It was the Spirit that inspir'd the prophets and apostles; and it was he that formed the human nature of Christ in the womb of the blessed Virgin, and that led and conducted our Lord, in his human capacity, during his state of humiliation here on earth. To give a figurative turn to all this, is to render the sense of Scripture very precarious and uncertain; for how can we be assured, when the Scripture speaks in a figurative, and when in a literal way? but the real

own'd his mistake, as to this matter, "Here, says he, I take occasion to correct a mistake of my memory in my last dissertations on the Trinity, p. 196. where I did not remember, that the pronoun I was apply'd to the holy Spirit in the new testament."

^m Know you not that your body is the temple of the holy Spirit, that is in you, 1 Cor. vi. 19.

ⁿ Romans viii. 26.

case is, the giving a figurative turn to so many texts, that are better accounted for in a literal way, is nothing but an invention to prop up a scheme, that is only the product of a working fancy, and is not drawn in the least from Scripture.

The holy Spirit is not only described, as to his actions, in a personal manner; but personal properties are ascribed to him, as understanding and will: the faculty of understanding is attributed to the Spirit^o by the apostle Paul, "God has reveal'd them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God: what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him; even so the things of God knows no one, but the Spirit of God." Mr. Watts here observes^p, "that the Spirit of God is as much that God, whose Spirit he is, as the spirit of a man is the man himself." I do not think he would be for pursuing the analogy to the utmost; for then the Spirit of God might be called the soul of God, which would sound but crude and harsh. It would likewise follow, that the Spirit is a proper person, even the person of the Father, whose Spirit he is; but this is not agreeable to our author's notion of his being a divine property, and not a person. The Spirit is here represented as personally distinct from God, or that divine person, who reveals all things by him; searching all things, and knowing all things, even the things of God, can be no proper description of God's executive faculty, which wills and effects all things. Since Mr. Watts allows the words to imply, "that the Spirit knows the secrets of the

Godhead, by a primary and immediate consciousness, inherent in himself, and not derived from another," I think it evidently follows, that he is a real person; for certainly consciousness may be express'd of a person, but not of a power. The faculty of willing is also attributed to the Spirit: "These things worketh the same Spirit, dividing to every man severally, as he wills." How a will can be attributed to an effective power, which is distinguished from a volitive power, is hard to conceive. If the Spirit has a will, he is a real person; for this is the most eminently distinguishing character of a person. Indeed a will is ascribed to the wind; but the nature of the thing discovers the metaphor at first sight. As to the Spirit of God having a will, there is no need to use a metaphor, because there are no signs of it: a will, and the acts of the will are often ascrib'd to him; but, as far as I can remember, in no one place is there any thing said with relation to his will, or the acts of his will, that can justly so much as make us suspect that the expression is metaphorical. If understanding and will are the faculties of a real person, then it follows, that when the Spirit is represented as having these faculties, he is proved to be a real person, and not a property or faculty himself.

There are also affections, which are really personal, attributed to the Spirit in Scripture; the prophet Isaiah speaking of the Israelites says, "They rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit." Mr. Watts, after the Socinians, says, "the Spirit may be taken for God himself:" to which it is sufficient to say, it may be otherwise. To

the same purpose the apostle Paul advises us not to grieve the Spirit of God, "Grieve not (says he) the holy Spirit of God, by whom you are sealed to the day of redemption." Now, to attribute grief to a faculty or power, is absurd and repugnant to the common sense of mankind. Besides all this, the holy Spirit is described in "Scripture, as one that can be lied to. It would be odd to talk of lying to a faculty or property. He is also ^w said to be one against whom blasphemy may be committed; and blasphemy against him, and speaking against him, is declared to be irremissible, when all other blasphemy is said to be within the possibility of pardon. Now that blasphemy against God the Father can be pardoned, and blasphemy against God the Father's efficient power must be unpardonable, is very unaccountable; but it is easy to suppose, that blasphemy may be committed against a person.

I hope, by this time, it is sufficiently proved from Scripture, that the holy Spirit is a real person. If we suppose the contrary, many absurdities will follow: when the Son was to pray to the Father, to send the Comforter, the Father was to pray to himself, to send himself; when the Father was to send the Spirit, in the name of the Son, he was to send himself, in the name of a created person; when the Father was to send the Spirit to supply the want of Christ's presence, he was to send himself, to supply the want of himself. These are shocking absurdities, which I doubt not but Mr. Watts despises, as well as I. I would therefore wish him to consider seriously, whether they are not the plain result of the principles he has laid down.

^e Eph. iii. 30. ^u Acts v. 3, 4. ^w Mat. xi. 31, 32.

I have not thought it necessary to take notice of Mr. Watts's denying the eternal proceſſion of the holy Spirit, from the Father and Son; only I would juſt remark, that in one place ^w he makes the proceſſion of the Spirit to refer to his miſſion, rather than to his exiſtence; but in another place he ſays, ^x “the Word and Spirit may be ſaid to proceed from the Father, as powers from the Eſſence.” How theſe things can be made to chime one with another, he beſt knows: I am ſure, I know not how to reconcile them.

I have been the larger in proving the holy Spirit's real perſonality, becauſe if that be done, the perſonality of the Word may eaſily be admitted. As the proof of the Deity of Chriſt, evidences the Deity of the Spirit, in effect, againſt the Arian, and Semi-Arian ſchemes; ſo the proof of the Spirit's perſonality evidences, in effect, the Son's perſonality, in oppoſition to the Sabellian and Socinian ſchemes, and to that of Mr. Watts.

I cannot but obſerve, ſuch is the force of truth, that Mr. Watts is ſometimes obliged, ſeemingly to own, in contradiction to himſelf, the real perſonality of the Son and Spirit: ſome paſſages of this nature I ſhall produce; but I ſhall not bring any out of his Chriſtian Doctrine; it being beneath me to bring againſt a man, from his own books, notions, he has ^y openly recanted; therefore I ſhall take only from the ſecond part of his diſſertations.

After having mentioned the explication of the manner of the Son's generation, and the Spirit's proceſſion, which he calls popiſh and ſcholastic,

^w Page 200.

^x p. 169.

^y Pref. p. xiv, xv.

as the most indefensible part of the common orthodox scheme of the Trinity, he ^z says, “ he heartily agrees with several other parts of it, that God is one infinite Spirit, or conscious Being, that the Divine Essence is but one, and the same, tho’ distinguished into the three sacred persons.” And in another place he says, ^a “ the sense of the word person, in the common language of men, is one single intelligent voluntary agent, or a principle of action, that has understanding and will, so three men, or three Angels, are properly called three persons.” Now since it has pleased God in his word, to represent to us the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, under the characters of three such intelligent agents, they may be called, in human language, three persons, according to the Scripture representation.” He hopes, ^b “ he has reasonable satisfaction in this general truth, that the Father, Son, and Spirit are represented in Scripture, as personal agents.” I might bring other passages to the same purpose, but I shall forbear. I hope Mr. Watts’s design in these passages, was not to amuse his readers: if this was not his intention, it is strange he should thus contradict himself. However, as he has, in a great number of places, contended for the Son and Spirit being figurative persons, I shall not do him so much wrong as to insinuate, that he acknowledges them to be real persons. I cannot but just take notice, that if a real person be a single, intelligent, voluntary agent, as Mr. Watts ^c says, that has understanding and will, then if the Son has understanding and will, which he must have, if he be

^a Page 151.

^a p. 180, 181.

^b p. 209.

^c p. 180.

an ^d intelligent volitive power; and if the Spirit has a primary immediate consciousness inherent in himself, as Mr. Watts ^e grants, it evidently follows, that the Son and Spirit are real persons.

Thus I have amply proved, that the doctrine of the real, tho' not separate, personality of Father, Word, and Spirit, is the true Scripture doctrine. And as it is the Scripture doctrine, so it has been the faith of the Christian Churches, in all ages. All true believers, since Christ, have professed three real divine persons; and why we should leave this good old way, I see no reason. I know this argument is often banter'd, because the Papists pretend the same, tho' very unjustly, for their innovations; but with me it is of great weight, that the faith I attempt the defence of, is the faith of the churches of Christ from the beginning. Tho' God might leave the whole world in darkness, during that great and long apostacy, which he foretold, does it follow, that he would leave his faithful people, who were before that apostacy, who were recover'd from it, and who since, were recover'd from it, to take up with wrong ideas of the three divine persons? It is strange that the Spirit of God, who was to lead his people into all truth, should never clear their notions as to the great doctrine of the Trinity, but should leave them to conceive of himself and the Word, as of two persons, when they were only two powers, of one divine person. I can hardly think that all true Christians have hitherto been mistaken, and that the time is now come for any great light to afford them clearer and brighter ideas of the three divine persons, into whose name they have been

^d Page 219.

^e p. 130.

baptized. The glorious doctrine of three real divine persons, in one divine nature, has always been the faith which Christians have learned from their Bibles; and I doubt not but it will keep its ground, when all the different schemes fram'd by men shall sink into oblivion, and will stand unshaken, till the last trumpet shall sound, that time shall be no more.

C H A P. V.

An Examination of Mr. Watts's Account
of the Person of Christ.

THE doctrine of three divine persons, subsisting in one divine nature, is of all mysteries, known only by revelation, the greatest: Next to that, is the union of the divine and human natures, in the one person of Christ our Redeemer. This has been as much a stone of stumbling, as the former, to men of corrupt minds, and curious fancies. The way how two natures, infinitely distant one from the other, as to kind, can be so united, as to constitute but one person, is above our finite comprehension: and the less we trouble ourselves about the mode of things which are so much above us, the fewer absurdities we shall run into.

In the early ages of Christianity, ^a Simon Magus pretended, that Christ only took flesh, and suffered, in appearance; or that his assump-

^a Simon Samaritanus, ex quo universale haereses subsisterunt, habet hujusmodi sectae materiam: — ipsum venisse, — & descendisse eum transfiguratum, — ut in hominibus homo appareret ipse, cum non esset homo; & passum autem in Judaea putatum cum non esset passus. Irenaeus, Lib. I. c. 23. p. 99. Ed. Ben.

tion of the human nature was nothing more than phantasm or shew. In this he was follow'd by Menander, Saturninus, and Basilides, ^b and afterwards by ^c Marcion, and ^d Manes; the several asserters of this notion were called Docetæ.

Cerinthus ^e and his followers allow'd, that Jesus was really a man; but not knowing how to account for the personal union of the two natures in him, they pretended that Christ was a distinct being, a divine power, or one of the invisible Acons, who came down on Jesus at the time of his baptism, and reveal'd to him the unknown Father, and enabled him to perform works above the power of a man, but left him at his crucifixion, flying back to the pleroma, or divine fulness, from whence he proceeded at first, so that he made two persons in Christ. This error was propagated, as to the main of it, by ^f Carpocrates, whose followers were eminently stil'd Gnostics, and by ^g Valentinus; tho' these heretics differ'd in their explications of it, and some added more monstrous absurdities to it than others.

^b Vide Lib. I. c. 23. p. 100. Epiphan. Haeres. xxii. Sect. 1. Vol. I. p. 60, 61. Ed. Par. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. IV. c. 7. p. 98, 99. Ed. Par. Epiphan. Haer. xxiii. Sect. 1. p. 62. Haer. xxiv. Sect. 1. p. 68.

^c Vid. Tertullian. contra Marcionem.

^d Vide Manetem in disputat. cum Archelao. p. 188, 189. Ed. Fabric. in Spicileg. Patrum Saec. iii. ad calc. Vol. II. Ed. Hippolyt. & eundem in fragment. epistolar. In Fabricii Biblioth. Gr. Vol. V. p. 284, 285.

^e Vid. Irenaeum. Lib. I. cap. 26. p. 105. Lib. III. cap. 11. p. 188, 189.

^f Vid. eund. Lib. I. cap. 25. p. 103.

^g A very large account of Valentinus's sentiments may be seen in Irenaeus.

In the third century, one Bero confounded the two natures in Christ, maintaining ^h that the flesh assumed by the Word was cooperative with the Divinity, and that the Divinity suffer'd with the flesh: we should have known nothing of this heretic, had not Hippolytus, Bishop of A-den, or Porso, in Arabia, wrote against him, of ⁱ whose book some fragments are remaining.

In the fourth century, Apollinaris the younger Bishop of Laodicea, a person of great learning, which he had shew'd in defence of Christianity, giving way, at last, too much to vain philosophy, and fearing lest, if Christ were allow'd to have taken into union with his divine person, the complete human nature, it would follow, that there were two persons in him, formed a scheme, which supposed that Christ had but one ^k rational nature, and that the Deity animated his body, and supplied the place of intellectual faculties, and consequently must suffer with it: to which some of his followers have added these ab-

^h Βήρων γὰρ πῶς ἑναγκος, μεθ' ἑτέρων τινῶν, τὴν Βαλεντίνου φαντασίαν ἀφέντες, χείρονι κακῶ κατεπάρησαν· λέγοντες τὴν μὲ προσληφθεῖσαν τῷ λόγῳ σάρκα γενέσθαι ταυτεργὸν τῇ Θεότητι, ἀλλὰ τὴν πρόσληψιν, τὴν Θεότητα ὅς γενέσθαι ταυτοπαθεῖ τῇ σάρκι ἀλλὰ κένωσιν, Hippolyt. c. Beronem. Fragm. V. Vol. I p. 228. Ed. Fabric.

ⁱ Some have thought these fragments of Hippolytus not to be genuine, but I could never meet with any reason for such a surmise. The title of them is, κατὰ Βήρων καὶ Ἡλικῶς, τῶν αἰρετικῶν, but as this Helix is never mentioned in them, and as two copies of Nicephorus of Constantinople, which are at Paris, and in which these Fragments are quoted, read Ἡλικίων, the last learned Editor, M. Fabricius, thinks the Title ought to be, κατὰ Βήρων καὶ Ἡλικίων τῶν αἰρετικῶν, against Bero and his fellow heretics, which is not improbable.

^k Ὁ δυσσεβὴς Ἀπολλινάριος ἐν τῷ πρὸς σαρκώσεως αὐτοῦ λόγῳ, πρόσεχε οἷά φησιν. Ω καὶ νῦν κτίσις, καὶ μίξις θεσπισία· Θεὸς ἐν σαρκὶ μίαν ἀπετέλεσαν φύσιν. Eulogius apud Photium Biblioth. cod. ccxxx. p. 850. Ed. P. Steph.

furdities,

furdities, that the flesh of Christ was not ^l of the Virgin, but came down from heaven, and was ^m con-substantial with the Deity. The Apollinarian Heresy was one thing, which occasion'd the emperor Theodosius the great, to assemble the council of Constantinople, in which it was condemn'd.

In the fifth century, Nestorius maintained, that the divine and the human natures in Christ were two persons, and was condemned by the council of Ephesus. In opposition to him, Eutyches, running into a contrary extreme, asserted, that there was but one nature in Christ, and that the human nature was absorbed of the divine; he was condemn'd by the council of Chalcedon, which afresh likewise condemn'd Nestorius. Both these opinions are maintained by some Christians, in the east, to this day, tho' it is to be hoped, they do not rightly understand them.

All the errors which have been mentioned, relating to the person of Christ, have taken their rise from this arbitrary maxim, that two natures cannot be so united, as to become one person; so that we may see, that vain and conceited men going upon the same principles, may run into different extremes, rejecting the truth which is the middle way, and the only safe and sure track.

ⁱ Ἐἰ τις ἔσθ' Θεότοκον τὴν Μαρίαν ὑπολαμβάνει χάρις ἐστὶ τῆς Θεότητος· Ἐἰ τις ὡς ἀπὸ σαλῆνος, ἀπὸ τῆς παρθένου δραμεῖν, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἐν αὐτῇ ἀσπιδεπλάστῳ λέγοι, δείκῳς ἄμα καὶ ἀνθρωπικῳς· δείκῳς ὅτι χάρις ἀνδρὸς ἀνθρωπικῳς ἢ ὅτι νόμος κυήσεως, ὁμοίως ἄθεός, Gregorius Nazianzen. Orat. li. Vol. I. p. 738. Ed. Par. [De sectatoribus Apollinaris loquitur.]

^m Ποῦς ἄδης ἠρένετο ὁμοόσιον εἰπεῖν τὸ ἔκ Μαρίας σῶμα τῇ τοῦ Λόγου Θεότητι. Athanasius Epist. ad Epictet. Vol. I. p. 58. Ed. Par.

It is not very easy to say, what is Mr. Watts's real scheme of the union of the two natures, in the person of Christ: from a passage in the first part of his dissertations, it should seem, he inclined to the Nestorian scheme. He thereⁿ says, "he sees nothing so terrible, or heretical, in supposing the human nature and the divine nature of Christ to be, in some sense, two distinct persons." He, in a sneering way, confesses, "the frightful sound of Nestorianism may reasonably forbid a man to indulge this language, because it will not be counted orthodox:" but I do not know why a name should fright a sincere enquirer after truth, from asserting what he thinks agreeable to Scripture: If Nestorianism be the Scripture doctrine, let it be received, if not, let it be rejected as an error. Mr. Watts says, "he knows of no injury done to the Scripture, or to the sacred truths of the Gospel, by such an allowance as this." But the case is really otherwise; for if the Deity were not united to the humanity, how could Christ be stiled God with us, upon his incarnation, any more than before? There are some texts where the actions attributed to one real person must be understood of two natures; they are such as follow. ° "Of whom concerning the flesh Christ came, who is God over all, blessed for ever. P The church of God which he purchas'd by his blood. 9 They crucified the Lord of glory. * We perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." How could the God over all come in the flesh; how could God purchase the church by his blood, and lay down his

ⁿ Page 44.

⁹ 1 Cor. ii. 8.

° Rom. ix. 6.

^r John iii. 16.

^P Acts xx. 28.

life for us? and how could the Lord of glory be crucified, if the Godhead were not personally united to the manhood? Had it not been so, what God is said to have done, must have been done by a person distinct from God. The whole fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Christ personally; this the Apostle Paul has declared, in the following words. ^s “In him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” ^t This word *σωματικῶς* may very well be render’d personally, for *σῶμα* is used for person in “some of the best

^s Ἐν αὐτῷ κατοικεῖ πᾶν τὸ Πλήρωμα τῷ Θεότητος σωματικῶς, Col. ii. 9.

See my true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 171---177.

^t Omnis plenitudo Deitatis] hoc est non portio aliqua divinitatis, quod Gentiles de suis falsis Diis, falso persuasum habebant, neque dona tantum eximia divinæ gratiæ & munificentiae, ut in angelis, & prophetis, & aliis sanctis Viris, sed ipse λόγος, Deus verus & perfectus, cum omnibus suis attributis divinis, infinita, scilicet, sapientia, potentia, bonitate, inhabitat in hac humanâ Christi naturâ. Davenant. in Colos. p. 190. Tota igitur natura divina fuit incarnata: sed non quatenus absolute, & in se consideratur, ut omnibus personis communis; sed quatenus personalibus proprietatibus, seu τρόπῳ ὑπάρξεως, in persona filii determinata, consideratur. p. 191. Per *σωματικῶς* itaque intelligere debemus personaliter, id est non per efficaciam solum, aut assistentiam, sed unionem hypostaticam, ita ut λόγος inhabitans, vel assumens, & natura inhabitata, sive assumpta, fiat una persona, sive unum ὑποστάντων. p. 192. Apud Hebræos animæ ponuntur pro personis, Gen. xiv. 21. Exod. xviii. 20. Sic apud Græcos, *σῶμα* personam significat. Thucydides, Lib. 1. dicit pauperes multo promptiores esse *σώμασιν ἢ χρήμασι πολεμεῖν*, i. e. in propriis, ut aiunt, personis, militare, quam pecuniam ad bellum conferre. Sic Demosthenes *σωμάτων καὶ χρημάτων πλήθος*, h. e. Hominum, sive personarum atque nummorum copiam Atheniensibus adesse dixit cum voluit eos ad bellum animare. Ibid. Anima & corpus illud antequam Verbo unirentur in personam, non erant inter se unita, ut persona; sed trahunt suam personalitatem ex Verbo in illa humana natura *σωματικῶς* inhabitante, idem. p. 193.

^u Ἡ δύναμις-κινετήρα-τοῖς σώμασι τοπλέον ἰχύασσα, ἢ τοῖς χρήμασι. Thucyd. Lib. 1. Sect. 121. p. 66. Ed. Oxon.

σώμασιν ἐπιμυότεροι οἱ αὐτουργοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἢ χρήμασι πολεμεῖν. Idem, Lib. Sect. 141. p. 80.

Greek authors. The personal union of the two natures in Christ, is a certain and necessary truth; without it we have not one Christ, and one mediator, but two Christs, and two mediators; which notion, I am sure, does great injury to the sacred truths of the Gospel; whatever Mr. Watts may imagine. But as he does not insist on this matter, I shall content myself with these short strictures upon it.

In the second part of the dissertations on the Trinity, Mr. Watts has express'd his notion of the person of Christ God-man to be, that he, as to his Divine Nature, is only called a person in figurative speech, and is an essential power of God, which has been consider'd; that this divine, intelligent, volitive power, assumed into union with himself, a glorious angelic, archangelic, or super-angelic spirit; which was the first creature of God, and formed by him in a way vastly different from other creatures; that this glorious spirit, or created Logos, when the Word was made flesh, supplied the place of a human soul. He ^w says, the Logos is the first-born Son of God, as he is a glorious angelic, or super-angelic spirit, who was often called an angel, under the old Testament, when he appear'd to the Patriarchs." And he asks, "may not this illustrious spirit, this great archangel, which is called eminently the Logos, be the prince of

Τὸν ἐλόφυσεν μὴ δεικῶν καὶ γῆς ποιῶν, ἀλλὰ τῶν σωμάτων.
Idem. Lib. 1. Sect. 143. p. 82.

Ὅποτε χρεια γένοιτο ἐπὶ τὰ ὅπλα τοὺς χωρήτας καλεῖν, ἢ χρημάτων εἰσφορὰς, κατ' ἀνδράς ἐκλέγειν, ἕτοι καὶ τε σώματα συνῆγον, καὶ τὰ χρήματα εἰσέπραττον, Dionys. Halicarn. Antiq. Lib. IV. Cap. 15. Ed. Oxon. p. 220. Ed. Francofurt.

Τὸ μὲν-πρὸς τὰ τοιαῦτα ὀκνηρῶς ἀπακείσθαι, ἀ δὲ τοῖς σώμασι, καὶ τοῖς ἔσι λειτουργῆσαι ἕκαστον, ἐπὶ μὲν ἔκ ὀρθῶς ἔχον. Demost. Philip. IV. p. 99. Ed. Francof.

Page 49.

angels, who was born before them all, and is the first begotten of the creation? May not this be the only begotten Son of God in the high heaven, as Adam was here on earth, as having perhaps some peculiar mode, or unknown manner of derivation from the Father, different from the rest of the creatures? may we not suppose the human soul of Christ to be derived from God, in some unknown transcendent manner, distinct from other creatures, even as his human body was; and thus to become the peculiar Son of God, both as to his body and soul?" In these passages we have a pretty full account of Mr. Watts's scheme: and as it is very common for men to be pleased with their own inventions, so our author seems to be ravish'd with pleasure, when he views the product of his fancy. "His scheme, he tells us, * will afford a better solution of many scriptural difficulties, will raise a nobler idea of the person of our blessed Lord, and add a lustre to the whole scheme of the Gospel." I could have wish'd he had let us into these advantages, which he talks of with so much rapture. I do not find, he has much to say for his fancy, but y that there are expressions of Scripture which represent Christ, before his incarnation, under characters inferior to Godhead; by which, I suppose, he means those texts in the old Testament, where Christ is stiled the angel of God's presence, the angel of the covenant, and the like: But till he gives us good reasons to the contrary, I shall affirm, that these are much better accounted for by saying, that Christ acted in an oeconomical subordination to the Father: he, by covenant agreement, submitted to act in sub-

* Page 57.

y p. 50.

jection to the Father's orders; and tho' equal to him in nature, consented to obey him as his servant, that he might bring many sons and daughters to glory. How properly is he therefore called the messenger of the covenant ^z, the angel, the Redeemer of Jacob ^a, the angel in whom the name of God was ^b? All these things may be said of him, with great propriety, according to the vulgar hypothesis, as Mr. Watts arrogantly ^c calls it; so that there is no need of inventing another. Our author ^d insinuates, that on his supposition, the soul of Christ, the chief angel, is properly called the angel who could say, "I am that I am." ^e Now supposing the divine Logos to be in personal union with the created Logos, I grant, that complex person might say, "I am, that I am; I am the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;" but how the angel, a created nature, could, on the account of his personal intimate union with the divine, say, he was Jehovah, or God, I cannot understand.

There are but two texts that I can call to mind which carry the least appearance of favour to Mr. Watts's notion; the one, is in the epistle to the ^f Colossians, where Christ is call'd, "The first begotten of every creature:" the words might very well be render'd, "born before all creation;" for superlatives ^g in Scripture must sometimes be render'd in a comparative sense:

^z Mal. iii. 1.

^a Gen. xlviii. 16.

^b Exod. xxiii. 20.

^c Page 58.

^d p. 50.

^e Exod. iii. 14.

^f Πρωτότοκος ὅλης κτίσεως, Col. i. 15.

^g Πρῶτος μὲν ἦν, he was before me, John i. 15. Ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσηκεν, It hated me, before it hated you, John xv. 18. The very word πρωτότοκος is actually used to express born before, in the Greek translation of the old Testament, Πρωτότοκος ἐξ ἀρχῆς, 2 Sam. xix. 43.

and they whose ^h interest it is most, to have the words render'd, as in our translation, allow, that they may be translated, "begotten before all creatures." If Christ is represented in this Scripture as born before all creation, it cannot be understood of any glorious angelic nature; for that was by creation, tho' we suppose it the first part of creation.

The other text is, in the book of the revelation, ⁱ where Christ is stiled "the beginning of the creation of God:" but no notion can be built on a word of such various significations as Ἀρχὴ. The words may be render'd, "the head of the creation." Christ is the head of the creation, as he is the active, efficient principle that produc'd it, and brought it into being. These texts appear not to countenance our author's fancy of the human soul of Christ being a super-angelic spirit, which is attended with several insuperable difficulties.

There is one thing which prejudices me against this scheme, and that is, it is unscriptural; I mean, the Scripture is wholly silent about it. It is from Scripture, and only from thence, that we can have any account of Christ's person; and therefore all fancies of men, which have no countenance from it, are to be rejected, as things of nought. Were the notion of Christ's human soul being the first of creatures, a thing to be believ'd by us, we cannot but suppose, it would have been revealed; and as it is not reveal'd, I can look upon it to be no better than a mere romance, and an uncertain fiction of a working brain, which every man is as much at liberty to reject,

^h See Dr. Clarke's Scripture Doctrine, p. 162. Ed. 2.

ⁱ Ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τῆς Θις, Rev. iii. 14.

as he is to disbelieve an utter fable. As the notion is not to be found in Scripture, so I cannot see what good purpose can be served by it. Our author indeed tells us, ^k “that this supposition makes it easy to conceive, how the Logos himself might become passible, and condescend to endure the sensations of sorrow, pain, and dying agonies.” But there is no need to attribute passibility to the divine Word; so that this is no real advantage resulting from our author’s scheme. He adds, “if we suppose the angelic Logos to be the human soul of Jesus Christ, then as it was united to Godhead in its pre-existent state, and often appeared in the form and majesty of God, so as it was united to a human body, at the incarnation, it emptied itself of its antient glories, ^l and became subject to the weaknesses, and painful sensations of animal nature.” What an odd and fanciful turn is here given to one of the most glorious texts in the Scripture! how a created spirit could appear in the form and majesty of God, I cannot comprehend. I am sorry to find this noble Scripture given up, in effect, to the Arians, merely to make it agreeable to an hypothesis of another kind, but as unscriptural as theirs is. The sense of the word is, ^m Christ being God by nature, look’d on it as his right to assume equality with God; nevertheless he veiled his awful glories, and took on him the human nature, appearing as a miserable man, that he might die for the sons of men:

^k Page 99.

^l Phil. ii. 6.

^m See Dr. Waterland’s fifth Sermon, which is on this text; and see my true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 190--199. See also a dissertation on this text, in a very learned work entitled, *Fortuita Sacra*, p. 178---278. the author of which has not thought fit to let the world know his name, but his admirable performance has suffer’d greatly by the carelessness of the editor.

This is indeed a glorious and unparallel'd example of humility, and amazing love; and is much better shewed by the vulgar explications of this doctrine, as our self-sufficient author calls them, than by any he has yet furnish'd us with: And as the condescension of the Son of God is better set off by the common explications, than by his; so the great dignity to which the man Christ Jesus is rais'd, is better explain'd by his exaltation to glory and honour, as the reward of his sufferings, than by what Mr. Watts tells us, "that the man Christ Jesus, personally united to the divine Word, is God over all, blessed for ever." I cannot, I confess, make sense of this assertion, but must leave it to the reader's consideration.

Were there nothing to be advanced from Scripture in opposition to Mr. Watts's hypothesis, it's not being found there, is reason sufficient to reject it; but there are a few Scriptures utterly inconsistent with it, and entirely subversive of it, which I shall now consider. In the first chapter of the epistle to the ° Hebrews, the Apostle Paul has told us, that "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour." It would be monstrous to assert, that a human body, united to a super-angelic spirit, is made a little lower than the angels; that which is super-angelic cannot be lower than the angels. It cannot be here pretended, that this super-angelic spirit stooped to a state lower than the angels, because the words are an allusion to what is affirmed by David, p of man in general. If the words, in their native sense, signify the nature of man, then the allusion made to them

° Page 171.

° Heb. i. 9.

° Psalm viii. 5.

proves,

proves, that the human nature of Christ was of the same kind with that of other men.

Another text which may be brought against our author is, ^q in the next chapter. “He that sanctifies, and they that are sanctified, are all of one, therefore he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” How one who was not entirely man, could call men his brethren, I know not; we are, on the contrary told, that he is made in all things like to his brethren: ^r “In all things it behoved him to be made like to his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of his people.” He could not be said, in all things to be made like to his brethren, if he was like them only in his human flesh, and had a soul of a nature far more excellent than they; but that in all things he might be made like them, it was necessary, he should have a soul like other men, in order to his having the tender affections of the human nature to pity the ignorant, at the same time that he had infinite power, to rescue them from the ruin they brought on themselves.

I shall bring but one Scripture more, which is in the same ^t chapter, and is as express and full as can be desired. “He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham.” Mr. Watts ^u, after Castellio, the Socinians, Grotius, and Camero ^v, makes the

^q Heb. ii. 11.

^r Ibid. v. 17.

^t Οὐ γὰρ δήπερ ἀγγέλων ἐπιλαμβάνεται ἀλλὰ σπέρματος Ἀβραάμ ἐπιλαμβάνεται, Heb. ii. 16. these words may be thus render'd, “he partook not in the least of angels, but he partook of the seed of Abraham.”

^u Page 58.

^v Rectissime & doctissime pius ille vir, Sebastianus Castellio, hæc verba fuerat interpretatus, “Non enim angelis opitulatur, meaning

meaning of this place to be, that Christ did not lay hold on angels, to rescue them, but laid hold on the seed of Abraham, for their rescue from bondage. This is not the meaning of the Apostle: Christ was to deliver fallen men, and therefore it was necessary he should take the human nature; but as he was not to deliver angels, therefore he took not on him the nature of angels. Our author seems sensible, there is no weight in the interpretation he and Camero have borrow'd from the Socinians and Grotius; therefore he adds another, ^w "that the human soul of Christ may be called an angel, in its separate state, tho' it be a human spirit, and might have some peculiar distinguishing properties unknown to us." Any reader will see he was here utterly at a nonplus, otherwise he would never have said, as he does in effect, that the soul of Christ is a human spirit, and is not a human spirit.

I do not think it is on any account necessary, to enter into an examination of the fancy of the pre-existence of Christ's human soul, on the supposition of its being of the same kind with other human spirits. As that hypothesis has not the least countenance from Scripture, and does not, so far as I can perceive, answer any one good purpose, it may, I think, be disregarded as an useless fiction.

sed semini Abrahae opitulatur" ----- Nam ἐπιλαμβάνομαι saepe in eadem significatione usurpatur. Enjedinus p. 399.

Nuspiam in Scriptura dici, Christum angelis suscipiendis ac sublevandis (id enim hic est ἐπιλαμβάνειν) destinatum a Deo, aut in eo occupatum esse, sed has ejus esse partes, ut Abrahae posteros & filios, cura sua complectatur, eos sublevet, aeternumque fervet. Crellius, de uno Deo patre, Lib. II. Sect. 3.

See Mr. Hurrion's sermons on the knowledge of Christ crucified, p. 102,---107.

^w Page 59.

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I shall

I shall wave considering Mr. Watts's account of Philo's sentiments; for let them be what they will, they are of no weight, when they are not agreeable to Scripture; especially since our author grants ^x, that he abounds in unreasonable allegories, and that his application of his opinions to particular Scriptures is very ridiculous. From what I have formerly read of this author, I am inclin'd to believe, that Mr. Watts has often mistaken him; but as I have had neither opportunity nor inclination of late, to read him, and as Mr. Watts has ^y "neither health nor leisure enough to throw away much of them in perusing such antient Jewish folios," I think we may both leave such an intricate matter, to be settled and determined by abler hands than ours.

I might attend Mr. Watts in his discussion of the sentiments of the primitive writers; but that would take up more room than the bounds of this treatise will allow; besides, I do not see any great necessity for it.

It is certain that some of the primitive writers held the eternal generation of the Son, as ^z Irenaeus, ^a Clement of Alexandria, ^b Origen,

^x Page 30, 31.

^y p. 30.

^z Qui ait—— Verbum ejus esse hunc Nun, minus adhuc de Patre omnium sentiet, decentiora autem magis quam hi qui generationem prolativi hominum verbi transferunt in Dei aeternum Verbum, & prolationis initium donantes & genesis, quemadmodum & suo verbo. Et in quo distabit Dei verbum, imo magis ipse Deus, cum sit Verbum, a verbo hominum, si eandem habuerit ordinationem, & emissionem generationis, Irenaeus, Lib. ii. c. 13. p. 132. Ed. Ben.

^a Ὁ Θεὸς Λόγος ὁ φανερώτατος ἐν τῷ Θεῷ, ὁ τῷ δεσπότῃ ὅλων ἐξισωθεὶς· ἵτις ἦν υἱὸς αὐτοῦ· καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν ἐν τῷ Θεῷ. Clements Al. Protreptic. c. 10. p. 86. Ed. Oxon.

^b Λέγεται πρὸς αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὡς αἰεὶ ἐστὶ σήμερον, καὶ ὡς ἐσπέραι Θεοῦ· ἐγὼ δὲ ἠγοῦμαι ὅτι ἐστὶ πρῶτα· ἀλλ' ὁ συμπαρακτείνων τῷ ἀγεννήτῳ αὐτοῦ ζῶντι, ἐν, ἕτως ἐπὶ, χρόνῳ ἡμέρα ἐστὶν αὐτῷ σήμερον,

^c Gregory of Neocaesarea, ^d Novatian, ^e Dennis of Rome, ^f Dennis of Alexandria, ^g Methodius, ^h Pamphilus, and ⁱ Alexander of Alexandria. Others say not any thing of the Son's eternal generation, but make his generation temporary, meaning by it, his coming forth from the Father to create the world. These authors are Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch,

ἐν ᾗ γεγέννηται υἱός· ἀρχῆς γενέσεως αὐτοῦ οὐκ εὐρισκομένης, ὡς εἶδεν ἡμέρας, Origen. Com. in Johan. p. 31. Ed. Huet.

^c Εἰς κύριον — υἱὸς ἀληθινὸς ἀληθινοῦ πατρὸς — καὶ αἰδίου αἰδίου. Gregor. Neocesar. Symbol.

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I shall wave considering Mr. Watts's account of Philo's sentiments; for let them be what they will, they are of no weight, when they are not agreeable to Scripture; especially since our author grants *, that he abounds in unreasonable allegories, and that his application of his opinions to particular Scriptures is very ridiculous. From what I have formerly read of this author, I am inclin'd to believe, that Mr. Watts has often mistaken him; but as I have had neither opportunity nor inclination of late, to read him, and as Mr. Watts has † “neither health nor leisure enough to throw away much of them in perusing such antient Jewish folios,” I think we may both leave such an intricate matter, to be settled and determined by abler hands than ours.

I might attend Mr. Watts in his discussion of the sentiments of the primitive writers; but that would take up more room than the bounds of this treatise will allow; besides, I do not see any great necessity for it.

It is certain that some of the primitive writers held the eternal generation of the Son, as ^z Irenaeus, ^a Clement of Alexandria, ^b Origen,

^e * Page 30, 31.

^y p. 30.

^z Qui ait—— Verbum ejus esse hunc Nun, minus adhuc de Patre omnium sentiet, decentiora autem magis quam hi qui generationem prolativi hominum verbi transferunt in Dei aeternum Verbum, & prolationis initium donantes & genesis, quemadmodum & suo verbo. Et in quo distabit Dei verbum, imo magis ipse Deus, cum sit Verbum, a verbo hominum, si eandem habuerit ordinationem, & emissionem generationis, Irenaeus, Lib. ii. c. 13. p. 132. Ed. Ben.

^a Ὁ Θεὸς Λόγος ὁ φανερώτατος ἐν τῷ Θεῷ, ὁ τῷ δεσπότῃ ὅλων ἐξισωθεὶς· ἵτις ἦν υἱὸς αὐτοῦ· καὶ ὁ Λόγος ἦν ἐν τῷ Θεῷ. Clements Al. Protreptic. c. 10. p. 86. Ed. Oxon.

^b Λέγεται πρὸς αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ ὃ ἀεὶ ἐστὶ σήμερον, καὶ ὃ ἐσπέρων Θεῶ· ἐγὼ δὲ ἠγοῦμαι ὅτι ἐστὶ πρῶτον· ἀλλ' ὁ συμπαρακτείνων τῷ ἀγαπήνῳ αὐτοῦ ζῶντι, ἐν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ χρόνῳ ἡμέραν ἐστὶν αὐτῷ σήμερον,

^c Gregory of Neocaesarea, ^d Novatian, ^e Dennis of Rome, ^f Dennis of Alexandria, ^g Methodius, ^h Pamphilus, and ⁱ Alexander of Alexandria. Others say not any thing of the Son's eternal generation, but make his generation temporary, meaning by it, his coming forth from the Father to create the world. These authors are Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch,

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Tatian, Tertullian, and Hippolytus. But all these writers asserted the co-eternity of the Word with the Father, tho' not consider'd under the notion of a Son ; and they did not mean by the Word, any attribute, power, or virtue of the Father. This has been unanswerably proved by two very learned men, ^k Bishop Bull, and ^l Dr. Waterland, whom I look upon to be vastly better fitted to settle this matter, than our author, who seems not to have made himself master of the Christian antiquity.

None of the ancients held the pre-existence of Christ's human soul, except Origen, and perhaps one more. Our author ^m owns, "that the greatest part of the Fathers had no distinct idea of a complex Logos." He says, ⁿ "if a man were to begin and read over the Fathers, with this very view and design, to search for a complex Logos, 'tis probable he might find this opinion in many expressions." I agree with him, that if a man were to read with prejudice in favour of Mr. Watts's fancy, he might perhaps imagine some passages in the ancients, who were far from being, in all cases, the most plain and easy writers, to fall in with his scheme ; but there is not

ἀλλ' ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων γέγονεν. Alexander Alexand. Epist. apud Socratem. Hist. Eccles. Lib. I. c. 6. p. 9, 10. Ed. Par.

Ἀσεβείας οὖν φανείσης τῆς ἐξ οὐκ ὄντων ὑποθέσεως, ἀνάγκη ἔ πατέρας αἰεὶ εἶναι ἔ Πατέρας ——— ἰδεῖν ἐστὶν τὸ ὑιότητος τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν οὐδὲ μίαν ἔχουσιν κοινωνίαν πρὸς τὴν ἑ λοιπῶν ὑιότητος ——— ἡ ὑιότης αὐτοῦ κατὰ φύσιν τυγχάνουσα τῆς πατρικῆς Θεότητος, ἀνέκτα ὑπεροχῇ ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ δι' αὐτοῦ θέσει υἱοθετηθέντων. Idem in epist. apud Theodorit. Hist. Eccles. Lib. I. c. 4. p. 13, 14. Ed. Par.

^k Defens. Fid. Nicenae, Sect. 3. Cap. 5---10.

^l In his first vindication of Christ's divinity, p. 134—163. and in his second vindication, p. 280—294.

^m p. 105.

ⁿ p. 120.

the least footstep in them of a super-angelic Spirit being to Christ instead of a human soul, and therefore our author, in insinuating, that by his scheme many obscure passages of the ancients would be accounted for, gives only his own wishes, instead of proofs. He says, ° “the ancients had derived from Scripture, the Apostles, and the traditions of apostolical men, the doctrine of the Logos, who was the Son of God, the beginning of the creation, the first-born of every creature, the only begotten of the Father, produc’d by his will and power, yet in such an immediate and superior way, as is rather called generation than creation in Scripture.” If all who have dip’d into the writers of the first ages, do not reckon this mere romance, I am extremely mistaken. P The contrary, I am well assured, is true; and were it necessary, it might be evidently proved, that Mr. Watts’s notion of the human soul of Christ being a super-angelic Spirit, has as little to support it from catholic antiquity, as it has from the holy Scriptures.

• Page 105, 106.

P Mr. Watts (p. 104.) boasts of his having the concurrence of Mr. Baxter, as to the ancients holding the Son’s super-angelic nature; but, by what he produces from Mr. Baxter, it appears that he was a very incompetent judge: were this matter so clear, as he seems to represent it, it is strange that no body else ever stumbled upon it.

C H A P. VI.

Short Strictures on some unguarded passages in Mr. Watts's books.

I HAVE now finished my examination of the things that induced me to take some notice of Mr. Watts's writings: which were, his design of giving us a scheme of the Trinity, with clear ideas annexed to it, his denying the true real personality of the Son and Spirit, and his romantic account of the person of Christ God-man. I have shewed how he has entirely failed in his design of furnishing us with clear ideas, I have proved from Scripture, the real personality of the Son and Spirit, and I have laid open the extravagance of his fancy, in supposing a super-angelic Spirit to supply the place of a human soul in Christ. There are many exceptionable passages, in his writings, deserving remark, that have not fell under the former heads, which I do not care wholly to omit considering; but I shall content my self with giving some short strictures on them. Hitherto I have been chiefly concerned with the second part of Mr. Watts's dissertations, but now I shall take in, as occasion serves, his first part, and his Christian doctrine.

I. Our author, in the beginning of his Christian doctrine, ^a says, "God's own counsels and contrivances wrought powerfully for the salvation of the Patriarchs and the Jews, under those darker dispensations, without the particular and

^a Page 1, 2.

explicit knowledge of those divine methods, whereby that very salvation was to be effected." And he affirms, ^b "that the ancient Jews and Patriarchs might be saved, without an explicit knowledge of the special methods of this salvation, and the divine persons concerned in it, because they were not clearly revealed." What he means by explicit knowledge, I know not, and therefore he will pardon me if I mistake him: If by an explicit knowledge he means a clear degree of knowledge, such as we have under the Gospel, he says nothing; if he means a full adequate knowledge, that is what we are without; if he means, that the Patriarchs and the Jews were without a particular and distinct knowledge of the divine persons, that were concerned in their salvation, and of the methods of that salvation, I humbly conceive he is mistaken. As to the Patriarchs, the contrary appears from the promise made to ^c Adam, of the seed of the woman being to bruise the serpent's head, at the same time that the serpent was to bruise his heel; from the prophecy of ^d Enoch, that Christ should come to judgment; from the promise made to Abraham^e, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed; from Jacob's ^f invoking the Angel that had redeemed him from all evil; and, to name no more, from Job's ^g noble confession of his faith, that the living one was his Redeemer, and that in his flesh he should see God, standing, at the last day, on the earth. As to the ancient Jews, if we consult the writings of David, and the prophet Isaiah, nothing is plainer than that they had an

^b Page 4.

^c Gen. xxii. 18.

^e Gen. iii. 15.

^f Gen. xlviii. 6.

^d Jude 14, 15.

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exceeding clear and explicit knowledge of the methods of salvation, and of the divine person, who was to bring it about. To plead against this the ignorance of the Jews in Christ's time, is as ridiculous, as it would be to argue, that the primitive Saints had no explicit knowledge of the doctrines of the Gospel, because they were not known in the dark ages, preceding the reformation. Mr. Watts seems to be for reducing the old Testament church to a magical sort of faith ; for such must it be, if they knew not what, or in whom they believed. As the way of salvation was the same then, that it is now, it was as necessary then, to have some knowledge of the great Redeemer, as it is now. The times before the incarnation were dark, compared with the Gospel dispensation, because what was to come was regarded by the believers before Christ, whereas we consider what has actually been manifested. But of the person, and the offices of the Messiah, who was to come, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Daniel, Zechariah, and others of the Prophets, had a more explicit knowledge than Mr. Watts, under the Gospel dispensation, with all his clear ideas, has shew'd himself to have. But it is not to be wonder'd at, that Mr. Watts has such low thoughts of the faith of the ancient Jewish church, when he has, at other times, shewed such a contempt for the old Testament Worthies, as to suggest, that many of David's Psalms ^h are contrary to the spirit of the Gos-

^h While we are kindling into divine love, by the meditations of the loving kindness of God, and the multitude of his tender mercies, within a few verses some dreadful curse against men is proposed to our lips; " That God would add iniquity to their iniquity, not let them come into his righteousness, but blot them
pel,

pel, and to call Jephthah and Sampson, who, i thro' faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and obtained promises, rash champions^k of heaven, and rude and bloody ministers of providence.

II. As to the faith of believers under the new Testament, Mr. Watts has very low apprehensions of it; only he allows them to know more of the offices the divine persons sustain, than those

out of the book of the living," Psalm lxi. 26, 27, 28. which is so contrary to the new commandment of loving our enemies, and even under the old testament, is best accounted for, by referring it to the spirit of prophetic vengeance. Preface to his hymns, p. 5.

Why must I join with David, in his legal or prophetic language, to curse my enemies, when my Savior, in his sermons, has taught me to love and bless them? Preface to his Psalms, p. 20.

This objection against David's Psalms was not first started by Mr. Watts, but was raised before him by M. le Clerc the Socinian, or rather Sabellian; in his letters concerning inspiration, p. 23. whose exceptions the reader may see answer'd by Mr. Lowth, in his vindication of the writers of the old and new testament, p. 216—228. he may also see le Clerc's vile suggestions refuted, with great spirit, by the late learned M. Witfius, Miscel. Sac. Lib. II. cap. xviii. Sect. 23, 24. p. 218, 219, 220.

ⁱ Heb. xi. 32, 33.

^k Can we suppose that Moses has taken his seat no nearer to God in paradise than Sampson and Jephthah, those rash champions of heaven, those rude and bloody ministers of providence, if ever they arrived there at all? Sermons, Vol. I. p. 367.

Can we think, that Abraham and Moses were not prepared for a greater intimacy with God, and nearer views of his glory in heaven, than Sampson and Jephthah, those rude heroes, who spent their days in bloody work, in hewing down the Philistines and the Amorites? for we read little of their acquaintance with God, or converse with him, beside a petition now and then, or a vow for victory and slaughter; and we should hardly have charity enough to believe they were saved, if St. Paul had not placed them among the examples of faith. Sermon on Sir John Hartopp's death, p. 124, 125.

I am sorry Mr. Watts should be so pleased with this rant, (for he must pardon me, if I give it no better name,) as to repeat it twice. It cannot but raise horror in the minds of serious Christi-

under the old Testament did. To this purpose he says^l, “if we turn over all the books of the new Testament, we shall find that the stress of our salvation is laid upon our humble sense of our sins, our return to God the Father by sincere repentance, and change of heart and life, and our unfeigned faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that when things absolutely necessary to salvation are mentioned, which relate particularly to Christ, they are comprehended in a belief of his characters and offices.” Our author must not think to put us off with such a low account of faith in Christ, under this pretence^m, that we are not required to know and believe how, or in what manner, he is the same with the Father, and in what manner he differs from the Father: Indeed, he was right, in saying, we are not required to know the nature of Christ’s union with the Father; and had he not pretended to know this since, he had shewed more prudence and humility; but it does not follow, that we need not know what Christ is, because we are not required to know how he is, what he is. If unfeigned faith is required of me, and if I must believe his characters and offices, certainly I must

ans, to hear the captains of God’s hosts call’d rash champions of heaven, and rude and bloody ministers of providence; such dissonant ideas, tack’d together, run a passage into the grave burlesque. I wonder he has never expunged his doubt, in the first of the passages I have cited, whether those illustrious champions for the cause of God and religion, ever got to heaven, seeing, in the second, he owns that they are recorded by the apostle Paul, as examples of faith. That their fighting God’s battles, should be call’d spending their days in bloody work, is very odd. And how the assertion of our reading little of Jephthah’s converse with God, can be reconciled with what the Scripture says, that “Jephthah utter’d all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh” (Judges xi. 11.) is what passes my apprehension.

^l Christ. Doct. p. 235.

^m p. 236.

know, whether he is a person or a property, God or a creature, whether he is able to fulfil his character, and execute his offices or no; tho' it is not necessary for me to know, how he can be a different person from the Father, and yet be one supreme God with him. To say, all that is necessary, in order to salvation, is a belief of Christ's offices, is only chiming in with the pretence of the adversaries of his Deity, who say, if we believe Christ to be prophet, priest, and king, we believe all that is necessary, tho' we know not whether he has a capacity to fill up those offices, or not.

III. Our author, in his book of the Trinity, very rightly follow'd greater writers than himself, in denying any subordinate religious worship, to be allowed in Scripture; but, in hisⁿ writings since that, he allows of an odd sort of worship, mediate, or subordinate, in its design, and supreme in its foundation; and he is sorry, as well he may, that he differs from so excellent a defender of the divinity of Christ as Dr. Waterland, on this head. I cannot see what he aims at, in the pages where he treats of this matter, for I would hope his design is not barely to raise a dust about a plain thing, and to invent a way of talking, without any meaning, to bring off the Arians from the charge of idolatry, when they allow inferior religious worship. Divine worship can only be paid to one, who is God; and if all worship, with regard to the foundation^o of it, be supreme, Christ's character, as Mediator, can never make the worship we pay him mediate and subordinate.

ⁿ Dissert. Part. I. p. 109, 110, 113.

^o Page 109.

IV. The next passage I shall take notice of, is one extremely shocking: Mr. Watts says p, “the human soul of Christ is a sublime spirit, superior to all angels, and every created being, the first-born of every creature, and possessor of such capacious powers, as, by virtue of the indwelling Godhead, perhaps, might be some way employed in the great and wondrous transactions of creation and providence in past ages.” I pass by here the fancy of Christ’s human soul, a created spirit, being superior to every created being, as self-contradiction, and so needing not any remark. As to the surmise that Christ’s human soul might be employed in the work of creation, I needed to have said no more to it than what Mr. Watts ⁹ formerly said, “that creation is a peculiar work of God,” were I sure he would stand by that assertion; but he has retracted so much of his former writings, that it is hard to know what he still allows: However, let his sentiments be what they will, it is plain enough, on the foot of reason, that the Creator of all things must be uncreated; and the Scriptures so appropriate the works of creation to God, that all other beings, and inferior instruments are excluded from the glory of it: Thus Hezekiah addressed himself to God, ^r “Thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth.” And thus the Levites^f, in their prayer recorded by Nehemiah, “Thou art Lord alone, thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the sea, and all that is therein, and thou

^p Dissert. Part II. p. 109, 110.
p. 68.

^r 2 Kings xix. 15.

⁹ Christ. doct.
^f Nehem. ix. 6.
preservest

preserve them all." Job speaking of God, said, " he alone spreads out the heavens." God by the prophet ^v Isaiah, has declared thus of himself, " I am the Lord, that makes all things, that stretches forth the heavens alone, and spreads abroad the earth by myself." The Apostle Paul ^w has assured us, " That he who built all things is God." These texts sufficiently exclude any creature, tho' ever so sublime, from being employed in the proper work of creation. A created Creator is a difficulty, that none, since the Gnostics and Valentinians, except the Arians, have been able to swallow, and it has clog'd their scheme so much, that they could never come to any fixed resolution as to this matter. As they never have been able to prove, that a creature could be employed in the proper work of creation, I am sorry our author has made such a concession to them, and, in effect, given up one of the most striking arguments, to prove the Deity of Christ.

V. There is another most unaccountable concession, which is made by Mr. Watts, " that 'tis not for us to say, that in the nature of things it is utterly impossible, for any being beneath a God, to have any one of the powers or characters (supposed proper to God) communicated to him." It is most irrational to suppose this, for as the divine attributes of God are infinite, they must be incommunicable to a creature; because the finite and limited nature of a creature is incapable of receiving the infinite perfections of God. Certainly, in the nature of things, it is impossible, that the essential and

^t Job ix. 6.

^v Isaiah xlv. 24.

^w Heb. iii. 4.

^x Christ. doct. p. 98, 99.

necessary properties of an infinite substance can become the properties of a finite substance.

VI. Our author, in some parts of his books, gives a fanciful account of Godhead being communicated to Christ. He says ^y, “the divine Nature or Deity may be said to be communicated to Jesus Christ the Son, by the Father’s uniting the human nature of Christ to his own Godhead (or to some divine power represented personally) or by God’s assuming the man Christ Jesus, his Son, into a personal union with himself; which act of uniting the Godhead to the man Christ Jesus, may be called a communication of the Divine Nature to the Son.” I can make no more of this, than a heap of confusion. How Godhead can be communicated to a man, because the human nature is assumed into a personal union with the divine, is what I am not able to apprehend; and as I understand it not, I must leave it, without farther remark, to the consideration of those who can discover more clearness and brightness in Mr. Watts’s ideas, than I am able to do in the words cited.

VII. The modern Arians have groundlessly asserted, that there is no warrant in Scripture for worshipping the holy spirit. I am sorry to find “Mr. Watts making the following concession ^z : since we find so great a silence in Scripture, of any express precepts and patterns of prayer or praise directed distinctly to the person of the blessed Spirit, let us not bind it on our own consciences, nor upon others, as a piece of necessary worship, but rather practise it occasionally, as prudence and expedience may require.” I am

^y Dissert. Part I. p. 16. See also Part II. p. 90.

^z Christ’s Doct. p. 232.

perfectly astonished at such an assertion coming from one who had allow'd ^a, that the holy Spirit was worshiped in some texts of the ^b old Testament, that we are dedicated to him in baptism, that the ^c Apostle Paul pray'd for the blessing to descend from the holy Spirit on the Corinthians ^d, in the same way in which the blessing of the Father and Son are prayed ^e for, and that the same is repeated by the Apostle ^f John. That after all these assertions, he should say, ^g "we cannot find any express examples of petition, so directly addressed to the person of the holy Spirit, as there are to the Father and Son," is very surprizing and unaccountable. The reasons he gives, ^h why petitions and praises may not have been addressed to the Spirit in Scripture, are mere fancies, and do not deserve discussion; and the leaving it to prudence and expedience, to use or disuse doxologies to the Spirit, is putting what is either a necessary duty, or a great evil, on a very precarious foot. Either the holy Spirit is God, or he is not; if he is not, he has no right to worship, and to worship him is flat idolatry; but if he is God, he has a right to worship, and consequently to have doxologies addressed to him; so that it is impiety and sacrilege to deny him the ascription of praise, let men say what they will, of prudential, peaceable, or expedient methods.

I readily allow Mr. Watts, ⁱ "that it is the Scripture must be the rule and ground of the

^a Page 96.

^b Psalm xcv. 7--9. Isaiah vi.

^c p. 95.

^d p. 96.

^e 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

^f Rev. i. 4, 5. p. 228.

^g p. 219, 220.

^h p. 220, 221. See also Diss. Part II. p. 151, &c.

ⁱ Dissert. Part II. p. 152.

particular worship we pay to each of the sacred three; " but tho' the Scripture is the rule and directory of our worship, yet it was never designed as the formulary of our devotions; so that notwithstanding we have not a pattern in Scripture of a doxology addressed to the holy Spirit, yet as we find worship evidently paid to him there, we have a sufficient warrant from thence, to address doxologies to him ^k. Since he has a right to worship in general, it is daring insolence to deny him any particular part of worship.

Mr. Watts insinuates doubtfully, " that ^l there may be two or three examples of a doxology addressed to the Spirit, in the writers of the three first centuries." If he knew the matter he talks of, he has done very ill to speak in such diminishing terms of it; but I would rather hope, he thinks the case is as he has represented it, and then he is grossly mistaken, and shews how unsafe it is, to speak of a matter of fact by way of conjecture; for it is certain, that the Spirit is join'd with the Father and the Son in doxologies, more than two or three times in the writers of the three first centuries ^m.

^k See my true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity, p. 68, —78. 513,—517. p. 151, 152.

^m Δι' ἧς, καὶ μεθ' ἧς, τῷ πατρὶ, ἡ δόξα, καὶ τὸ κράτος, σὺν τῷ αἰνίῳ πνεύματι, εἰς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν, Epist. de Martyrio Ignatii, p. 52. Ed. Smith.

Διὰ τῆςτο, Ἐπεὶ πάντων αἰῶν σε, εὐλογῶ σε, δοξάζω σε, σὺν τῷ αἰωνίῳ καὶ ἐπερανίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, ἀγαπείῳ σε παιδί, μεθ' ἧς, σοὶ Ἐπνεύματι αἰνίῳ, ἡ δόξα, καὶ νῦν, καὶ εἰς τὰς μέλλοντας αἰῶνας, Ἀμήν. Polycarpi novissima in Epist. Ecclesiae Smyrn. cap. 14. p. 71. Ed. Oxon. Smith.

Μεθ' ἧς δόξα τῷ Θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ αἰνίῳ πνεύματι. Eccles. Smyrnen. Epist. cap. 22. p. 75.

VIII. In order to shew, that the Apostle John did not borrow his notions of the Logos from Plato, Mr. Watts insinuates, that it is not pro-

Ἐκεῖνόν τε καὶ τὸ παρ' αὐτοῦ υἱὸν ἐλθόντα (καὶ διδάσκοντα ἡμᾶς ταῦτα, καὶ τὸ ἄλλων ἐπομύων, καὶ ἐξομοιουμένων ἀγαθῶν ἀγγέλων στρατὸν) πνεῦμα τε τὸ προφητικόν, σεβόμεθα καὶ προσκυνούμεν, λόγῳ καὶ ἀλεθείᾳ τιμῶντες, Justin. Martyr. Apol. 1. cap. 6. Ed. Ox. p. 11. Ed. Thirlby.

Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ, ὅντως Θεοῦ μαθόντες, καὶ ἐν δευτέρᾳ χάριτι ἔχοντες, πνεῦμα τε προφητικόν ἐν τρίτῃ, τάξτε ὅτι μετὰ λόγου τιμῶμεν ἀποδείξομεν, Idem. Cap. 16. Ed. Oxon. p. 19, 20. Ed. Thirlby.

Παιδαγωγὸς --- πατήρ --- υἱὲ καὶ πατήρ, ἐν ἁμῶν, κύριε --- πα-
ράχει-εν εἰρήνῃ τῇ σῇ πολιτευομένης, εἰς τὴν τελείαν ἡμέραν-αἰνούμενης,
ευχαριστοῦν τῷ μόνῳ πατρὶ καὶ υἱῷ, υἱῷ καὶ πατρὶ, παιδαγωγῷ καὶ
διδασκάλῳ υἱῷ, σὺν καὶ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι. Πάντα τῷ ἐνὶ ἐν ᾧ
τὰ πάντα δι' ὃν τὰ πάντα ἐν δι' ὃν τὸ αἰεὶ ἔσ' μέλη πάντες ἔ-
δόξα, αἰῶνες πάντα τῷ ἀγαθῷ πάντα τῷ καλῷ πάντα τῷ σοφῷ
τῷ δικαίῳ τὰ πάντα, ᾧ ἡ δόξα, καὶ νῦν, καὶ εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας, ἀμήν.
Clemens Alex. Pædag. Lib. III. p. 211. Ed. Oxon.

Τίς ἡμᾶς χωρίζει ἀπὸ τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Χριστοῦ, αὐτῷ πρέπει δόξα
καὶ τιμὴ, σὺν τῷ Πατρὶ καὶ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας τῶ
αἰῶνων, Ἀμήν. Idem. Fragment. p. 1019.

Τῶν μελλόντων ἀπολαύσομεν ἀγαθῶν, χάριτι καὶ φιλευθροπία τῷ
κυρίῳ ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, μεθ' οὗ τῷ πατρὶ, ἅμα τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύμα-
τι, δόξα, τιμὴ, καὶ προσκύνησις, εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας τῶ αἰῶνων, Origen.
in fine Exposit. in Psalmum x. Cod. MS. Barocc. Numb. 335.

Ἡμεῖς οἱ κακείνων τῶ ῥημάτων τὸ μέτρον ἐπιστάμενοι, καὶ τῆ πί-
στεως ἐκ ἀγνοούντες τὴν χάριν, ευχαριστοῦμεν τῷ παραχρημένῳ τοῖς
ἰδίαις ἡμῶν πατράσιν, τῷ παίδι, τῷ ὅλῳ σωτήρῃ, καὶ κύριον ἡμῶν
Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν, ᾧ ἡ δόξα καὶ μεγαλοσύνη, σὺν ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, εἰς
τὰς αἰῶνας. Julius Africanus apud Basil: De Spiritu S. cap.
29. Vol. II. p. 359. Ed. Par.

Οὗτος ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ἀνθρωπίνῳ δι' ἡμᾶς γεγονώς, ᾧ πάντα ὑπέταξεν
πατὴρ, αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα, καὶ τὸ κράτος, ἅμα πατρὶ, καὶ ἁγίῳ πνεύ-
ματι, ἐν τῇ ἁγίᾳ ἐκκλησίᾳ, καὶ νῦν, καὶ αἰεὶ, καὶ εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας τῶ
αἰῶνων, Ἀμήν, Hippolytus contra Noctum, cap. 18. Vol. II.
p. 20. Ed. Fabricii.

Ἀνεῖσιν υἱὸς Θεοῦ καὶ συνκληρονόμῳ Χριστοῦ, αὐτῷ ἡ δόξα καὶ
κράτος σὺν τῷ παναγίῳ, καὶ ἀγαθῷ ζωοποιῷ αὐτῷ πνεύματι, νῦν καὶ
αἰεὶ, καὶ εἰς συμπάντας αἰῶνας τῶ αἰῶνων. Ἀμήν, Idem Homil. in
Theophaneiam, cap. 10. Vol. I. p. 264.

Τῷ ᾧ Θεῷ καὶ πατρὶ, καὶ υἱῷ, τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ, σὺν
τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι, δόξα καὶ κράτος, εἰς τὰς αἰῶνας τῶ αἰῶνων, Ἀ-

bable", "that St. John, who was a poor Jewish fisherman, should be acquainted with the Grecian learning of the Gentiles, and imitate their phrases." I am satisfied that the Apostle John, when he spoke of the Logos, used an expression which had been common among the Jews, and did not take it from Plato; but this is not proved by the irreverent reason Mr. Watts gives, for if John, whilst he was a poor fisherman, was unacquainted with Greek learning, it does not follow, that he must be so, sixty years after he was, by the Spirit, enabled to speak all languages. If our author, who can scarce write a discourse in the Greek tongue, can get acquainted with Plato's notions, much more might the great Apostle, supposing he had no assistance from the Spirit, after the miraculous gift of speaking all languages, because it appears, that he was able to write better in Greek, than Mr. Watts can in his mother tongue; and it is certain, he resided sixty years, in places where he must have occasion to know the Greek learning of the Gentiles, in that one prime part of his work, as a dispenser of the Gospel, was to bring per-

πατρ. Dionys. Alexandrinus apud Basilium de Spiritu sancto. cap. 29.

The two passages from Justin prove the worship of the Spirit with the Father and Son in general; the ten doxologies, which are to be found among the few primitive writers, that the injuries of time have left us, as they confute the impudence of some modern Arians, who have said, the holy Spirit was not worshipped in the primitive Church; so they may make Mr. Watts for the future more cautious of giving his judgment, about a matter he does not seem to have examined.

The Reader who has a mind to see more on this subject of ancient doxologies, may consult my True Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity. p. 78—91.

^a Diff. Part II. p. 17.

sons

sons off from such learning to the faith of Jesus Christ. No doubt this poor Jewish fisherman knew a vast deal more of the Greek learning, than Mr. Watts; for as he liv'd to be near a hundred years old, he may be supposed to have had more health and more leisure than he; but as I do not believe the Apostle John borrow'd any of his notions from Plato, I shall insist no more on this matter; it being only my design, to vindicate an inspired author from a rude, but I hope, an unguarded, and not an ill designed reflection.

IX. We are told by Mr. Watts, ° “ that if a man explains the Trinity, according to the ancient Athanasians, with Bishop Pearson, Bishop Bull, and Mr. How, he is censured, perhaps, as a downright Tritheist.” I know it has been the method of heretics, to charge the defenders of the catholick faith with Tritheism; and when they have been beat from that, to lay the contrary charge of Sabellianism against them, but this has been despised by all men of cool sense. There is one thing in this passage of our author, very strange; that is, the ranging the ancient Athanasians, Bishop Pearson, and Bishop Bull, under the same class with Mr. How, when it is well known, they say nothing like Mr. How's scheme of three minds: as to the Athanasians, I shall refer the reader to the learned Bishop^p Stillingfleet, who has effectually vindicated them from the charge of holding three Gods,

° Dissert. Part II. Pref. p. viii.

^p See Bishop Stillingfleet's vindication of the Trinity, p. 76--113. See also Dr. Wall's history of infant Baptism, Vol. II. p. 135—165. Ed. 3. And Dr. Knight's true Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity continued, p. 239.—252.

the necessary consequence of three minds; his reasonings Mr. Watts should have answer'd, and not till then, have insinuated, after Curcellaeus, Sherlock, le Clerc, Peirce and Jackson, the stale pretence, that the old Athanasians were Tritheists: As to Bishop Pearson, and Bishop Bull, they could hardly be expected to declare against the fancy of three minds, it being started by Dr. Sherlock and Mr. How, after their pieces were published; but they declare, ^a in the most strong terms, for the unity of the divine Essence; so that from their being ranked by Mr. Watts with Mr. How, I should be ready to think, he had never read them, only I find in some parts of his books he quotes from them.

X. Our author, on all occasions, manifests the greatest tenderness towards the Arians; “he freely ^r declares, that he believes the name of Arian has been often of late given, to such as have by no means deserved it, and are no abettors of the old principles of Arius.” For which assertion he only gives this doughty reason, ^f “that it is evident the modern disbelievers of the divinity of Christ, or most of them at least, have re-

^a There can be but one divine essence, and so but one God—There are Gods many, 1 Cor. viii. 5. —but if Christ be none of those many Gods, and yet be God, there can be no other but that one, viz. the eternal God, Pearson on the Creed, p. 126. The divine nature, as it is absolutely immaterial, is also indivisible, p. 135. The Son and Holy Ghost have been believed to be but one God with the Father, because both from the Father, who is one, and so the union of them, p. 40. *Causabatur impia & irrequieta hominum (sc. Arianorum) factio, τὸ ὁμοούσιον nunc Sabellianismo patrocinari, nunc contraria plane ratione, partitionem divinæ essentiae statuere.* Bull. Def. Nic. p. 25. *Filium Dei — ejusdem prorsus cum Patre suo naturae divinae, & incommunicabilis; proinde verum Deum esse, Catholicorum Doctorum fuisse constantem sententiam affirmamus,* p. 35.

^r Dissert. Part I. p. 2.

^f P. 3, 4.

fin'd the ancient doctrines of Arius ; and thereby perhaps render'd their sentiments more defensible, at least in their own opinion." Which I take to be only a jingle of words. I wish this charitable gentleman had shew'd, wherein the modern disbelievers of Christ's divinity differ from the ancient Arians, except in words. He thinks " ² that some of them read their bibles carefully, that they honour and adore that glorious person, whom they believe to be the brightness of the Father's glory, that they trust in him and love him above all things, beside God the Father, tho' perhaps some culpable prejudice may cleave to their minds, whereby they are prevented from receiving that light and evidence of his divine nature, which shines clearly in the word of God, and he cannot but hope, that such humble and sincere enquirers will not miss any of the necessary articles of faith." It is owned by him, that these persons have missed of the true Deity of Christ, so that he cannot reckon that a necessary article of faith. To me also it seems very odd, that any should be called sincere and humble enquirers, who have culpable prejudices cleaving to their minds. Nothing is plainer, than that the modern Arians are afraid of keeping only to Scripture, they have some culpable prejudices cleaving to their minds, arising from a few maxims in reason, which they hold fast, and to which they are for making Scripture itself bow.

XI. Tho' Mr. Watts can shew so much charity to the enemies of Christ's Godhead, yet he has not manifested much esteem for some of his brethren, when he gives a very frightful account

of them, in one place, where he says, "that " if a man has never so sincere a design to vindicate the same great doctrines, which are maintained and professed by his brethren; yet if he happen to step aside from the common track of human phrases, and especially if he give an exposition of some important Scriptures different from their sentiments, and the establish'd interpretation, he runs the risk of having the charge of heresy cast upon him, even while he labours by reasoning and clear ideas to defend those very propositions which they themselves believe." If Mr. Watts has labour'd to defend the Trinity by reasoning and clear ideas, I hope, he will not pretend to say, he has attained his end; for I must own, I never found a writer less aim at reasoning, and very few have furnished us with more obscure ideas. Who these brethren are, that he passes such a bitter and severe censure upon, I know not; but lest the censure be extended to those against whom he might not design it, I wish he had let us know, where we shall find any number of such silly and four mortals, as he describes.

XII. In order to shew the great advantage of his scheme, Mr. Watts tells us, * " here the Sabellians, and all Unitarians may find the unity of the divine nature, not divided into three conscious minds, or three infinite spirits, but diversified into God the Father, with his two distinct essential powers, the Word and Spirit; here the Arians and Semi-Arians may read all the exalted properties of their Logos, i. e. the pre-existent soul of our Saviour;" who would not from hence gather, that Mr. Watts's scheme is an odd and

^u Differ. Part II. Pref. p. viii.

^x Differ. Part II. p. 110, 111.

confused jumble of the inconsistent opinions of the Sabellians and Arians? how fair this y scheme may bid for uniting these contending parties into one scheme of trinitarian doctrine, I know not, nor am I much concerned, because I look upon it to be unscriptural as well as theirs; but I hope serious Christians will not think it worth while, to leave the ancient and catholic faith of the Trinity, for a scheme, that contains in it, as its proposer owns, the peculiarities of opposite and contrary heresies.

The CONCLUSION.

I HAVE now finished the remarks I judge proper, at present, to make on Mr. Watts's writings. He has intimated his design to publish, some time or other, a dissertation on the glory of Christ, God-man, and another on the pre-existence of Christ's human soul: I hope, he will be better advised, than to go any farther in this matter; if he should do so, or if he should condescend to take any notice of what I have wrote, (which I do not expect) I shall, with the help of God, be ready to attend him: for if he goes on to write in the manner he has done, it will be no difficult matter for me to do justice to the cause I have undertaken to defend. A less formidable adversary than Mr. Watts, a man would not desire: it is hard to unravel the sophistry of some men, but there is none of this difficulty in engaging with him, for he has not, in his writings on the Trinity, so far as I am able to see, aim'd much at argument.

I can, with great sincerity, say, that it was not any disrespect to Mr. Watts, that moved me to write: for, tho' I have not the honour to be acquainted with him, yet I have a great value for him; but had he been my most intimate friend, I hope, love for the truth would have sway'd more with me, than personal respect. One reason which had its great weight with me, to incline me to consider Mr. Watts's scheme, was this; it is very clear and plain, that he has advanced the Sabellian, or Socinian hypothesis, with no other addition, than an extravagant fancy of a super-angelic spirit, supplying the place of an human soul in Christ, which is the essence of old Arianism. I take this to be the only real difference between his scheme and that of the Socinians; he does not, indeed, seem to me to know what he has been doing; therefore as I look upon him unwarily to have advanced, what I believe to be a great error, I think I may very well be justified, in appearing for the truth.

It has been the glory of the Dissenters of the congregational denomination, that no one pretending to be of their persuasion, had ever printed any thing erroneous relating to the Trinity, till Mr. Watts published his books. It would have been very strange, if he had done it without animadversion; and I confess, I wonder'd I did not find several engage in the matter^a.

I was induced to this work by a desire I had, that the reproach of suffering errors vented by any among our selves, to pass without controul, might not be fixed on us that dissent from the

^a Nothing was publish'd against Mr. Watts, till after my papers were actually finish'd for the press.

Church of England. I know, we should render ourselves justly odious to our friends of the national establishment, who have, to their great honour, and the world's benefit, shewed a zeal for the catholic doctrine of the Trinity, if a man's being of our number, should be a sufficient screen for his advancing old and exploded errors in a new dress.

How Mr. Watts may resent the freedom I have used with him, I know not; but as he has started many things that need to be supported, I cannot but think it is incumbent on him, either to prove his assertions from Scripture, or to retract what he has laid down: whether he will have the courage to attempt the direct proof of his scheme from Scripture, or the ingenuity to retract it, if he finds it indefensible, I must leave for time to discover: If his scheme is true, he need not be afraid to favour the world with his proofs; and if he, upon due recollection, finds it attended with greater difficulties than at first he might imagine, it is but a necessary piece of justice, for him to declare this to the world, and so to make some satisfaction for the great injury he has done religion, by vending false and precarious hypotheses for clear accounts of the Scripture doctrine. I leave these things to his serious and impartial consideration: I must, however, be so free as to tell him, that if he should think it sufficient, to pass over what is objected to him, with a contemptuous silence, he will not act like a sincere seeker of truth, but will give reason to suspect, that he is too much guided by that spirit of pride, which has always had an influence on those who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity; but I have so much charity, as to hope better things of him, tho' I thus speak.

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In case Mr. Watts should think his scheme is not overturned, by what has been objected to him, if he will fairly go to work, he should not only shew the insufficiency of the arguments, brought against him, but should give the positive proofs of his opinions from Scripture.

I. It will lie upon him to prove, that it is any way possible for us, finite creatures, to gain adequate conceptions of an infinite Being, and consequently to acquire clear and bright ideas of the three divine persons.

II. He ought to shew, how, and wherein, the scheme he advances, differs from the Sabellian scheme, or the Socinian, except in words, and his adding the fancy of Christ's having a super-angelic Spirit, to supply the place of a human soul.

III. He should bring plain and positive proof from Scripture, that the one God is properly but one person.

IV. It may be expected of him, to make it evident, that the Scripture represents the Son, and holy Spirit, as properties, faculties, or powers of the divine nature.

V. It will be necessary for him to manifest, that the Scripture has ever given us any caution, against taking the personal ascriptions, which it applies, without difference, to Father, Son, and Spirit, in the same sense, when applied to the Son and Spirit, as when applied to the Father.

VI. It will be incumbent on him to shew, that there is the least countenance, directly or indirectly, given, in Scripture, to his fancy of a created Logos, or of a glorious super-angelic spirit being to Christ, instead of a human soul.

These are things which Mr. Watts ought, in justice to truth, (if he thinks what he has advanced

vanced to be truth) to make out clearly and fully, if he is able. But as I am satisfied, this is above his power, I cannot but think, he ought to beg pardon of the Church of Christ, for many mistakes he has run into.

1. For pretending to give a scheme of the Trinity, which has clear and bright ideas annexed to it, and yet giving us a scheme full of thick darkness, and mere confusion, and for his numerous self-contradictions :

2. For introducing great numbers of hard and unintelligible terms, which can only perplex and confound his readers :

3. For obtruding upon us the Socinian scheme, in a new dress, and yet not knowing he does so :

4. For making Christ to be, as to his Divinity, only a property of God, and for denying his true humanity, by making him to have a soul vastly above what is human :

5. For representing Nestorianism as an innocent notion, and yet not proving it to be so :

6. For hinting, that the human soul of Christ, a creature, might be employed in the works of creation and providence :

7. For making the holy Spirit to be a power, or property, and yet not a mere attribute of God :

8. For saying ^b the holy Spirit has not the pronoun I attributed to him, in the new Testament :

9. For representing the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit, to be a popish and scholastic hypothesis :

^b Mr. Watts has acknowledg'd, that as to this matter, he had forgot himself. (See his Sermons, Vol. iii. p. 426.) and this is the only mistake he has retracted, tho' he has again been on the subject.

10. For making it a matter of indifference whether doxologies are to be addressed to the Spirit, or no:

11. For giving a false and partial account of antiquity, in making the Spirit to be addressed to, by way of doxology, only two, or three times, in the primitive writings:

12. For abusing the Apostle John, as a poor Jewish fisherman, who could not know the Greek learning, when he had spoke Greek above sixty years.

These are things for which Mr. Watts ought openly to beg pardon; and were he to do so, it would make but small amends, for the grief and trouble he has occasion'd, to those who have at heart the welfare of Christianity.

It is high time now to draw towards a close. I would therefore earnestly desire Mr. Watts, to lay his hand upon his heart, and seriously to consider what he has been doing: he bears the character of a person of great devotion; have his devotions, all the past years of his life, been directed to wrong objects? Has he had communion with Father, Son, and Spirit, without knowing, whether he held communion with persons, or properties? Can he think it becoming one, who has a long time dispensed the Gospel, to shift his notions of the prime doctrine of revelation, two or three times, in the compass of two or three years, without giving any reasons for his so frequently veering about? Can he, in his conscience, believe that the jargon of words he has made use of, can convey clear and bright ideas? Can he reckon it safe to give a scope to a working fancy, in things of such a high nature? Can he think he rightly employs his time, in only puzzling and confounding plain truths,
and

and raising a dust before the eyes of weak readers? Can he think, with comfort, of appearing before Christ, when he makes him to be neither perfect God, nor intirely man? And can he expect the consolations of the holy Spirit, when he, in effect, reduces him to nothing? These things, I hope, he will seriously revolve in his mind, and will not think the product of a fertile invention, too dear a sacrifice to be offer'd up to the honour of the Gospel.

If I find my weak endeavours are made by God successful, for the establishment of Christians in their most holy religion, I shall have the end answer'd, which I propos'd in drawing up this work. I think, I can truly say, my aim in it is right, however I may have failed in the management of it : I design'd it as a mark and token of my high value for the true Scripture and catholic doctrine of the Trinity, in the faith of which I hope to live and to die.

Now to the Father, the Son, and the holy Spirit, three persons, but one infinitely glorious God, be ascribed all honour and glory, might, majesty, power and dominion, henceforth, and for evermore. Amen.

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