

A

DESIGNED END

TO THE

SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY:

OR,

A RATIONAL AND PLAIN

DISCOURSE

TO PROVE,

THAT NO OTHER PERSON BUT THE FATHER
OF CHRIST IS GOD MOST HIGH.

BY JOHN SMITH.

*Father, — This is life eternal to know thee the only true
God. John xvii. 3.*

L O N D O N :

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P R E F A C E.

IT would doubtless have afforded no inconsiderable satisfaction to several readers of the following very valuable tract to have been introduced to the personal history of the writer; but the most probable sources of biographical information have been examined without success. What has been discovered respecting the tract itself is at the reader's service.

“ The designed end to the Socinian controversy,
“ or a rational and plain discourse to prove, that no
“ other person but the father of Christ, is God most
“ high;” was published by Mr. John Smith in
1695. The author discovers a very considerable acquaintance with the christian scriptures, and a mind influenced by a love of truth. These circumstances lead us to wish to know more of a man to whom the christian world is much indebted, and proportionably

proportionably to lament, that we are not supported by authentic documents in a more ample narrative.

It appears, however, that the publication of this tract provoked the notice of the civil power, which had so recently effected the revolution of 1688, and afterwards, in other instances, conducted itself with so little respect to the rights of conscience.* We are told that, “besides several libels against the state, “many heretical and socinian books have been seized “and stopt, particularly one entitled, *A brief and “clear confutation of the trinity*, which was publicly “burnt, by order of both houses of parliament, and “the author prosecuted; and one other lately taken “with its author, called *A designed end to the socinian “controversy, or a rational and plain discourse to prove, “that no other person but the father of Christ is God “most high. †*” This ineffectual mode of suppressing the volume before us is ascribed by Dr. Hickes to
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* See Statute 9 & 10 Wm. III. c. 32.

† See “Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and “Dr. Tillotson; occasioned by the late funeral ser- “mon of the former upon the latter.” 4to, pp. 88, 1695, with a preface and appendix.—Ap. No. viii.

the active vigilance of archbishop Tillotson.* But whether he was justified in imputing to the amiable and candid Tillotson the unchristian persecution of the reputed heretics of those days may reasonably be questioned. Dr. Birch says, that bishop Burnet gave “a strong and clear answer” to Dr. Hickes in “reflections” upon these discourses in 1696; † but with what effect, with respect to the imputation cast upon him and his excellent friend the archbishop, I am not competent to say, not having them before me. Dr. Hickes certainly exhibited so very acrimonious a spirit against the character and reputation of the deceased archbishop, as greatly to weaken any insinuation or unproved charge made by him against his grace’s catholicism: and in order effectually to exculpate him from having had any concern in the seizure of Mr. Smith’s *Designed end to the Socinian controversy*, which was not published till 1695, and

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consequently

* See the preface to “Some Discourses, &c.” which are said by Dr. Birch to have been written by Dr. Hickes.—See his “Life of Tillotson.” 8vo. 1752, p. 7.

† See Birch’s “Life of Tillotson.” p. 345.

consequently from having any share in causing the author to be apprehended, it is sufficient to observe that the archbishop died November 22, 1694. But from the circumstance of this prosecution, let who may have been *the promoter* of it, the discourser (Dr. Hickes) very justly remarks, that “certainly there
 “ must be something formidable in their books, and
 “ some reasonings in them, which these men of
 “ latitude” (as he is pleased to call them) “ cannot
 “ well answer, that they use so much diligence to
 “ suppress them.”*

The unitarian controversy engaged very general attention towards the close of the last century, inso-
 much that, when the authority and reasons in vindica-
 tion of the proper unity of God were found too
 strong for the host of orthodox theologians who op-
 posed them, they procured the assistance of their allies,
 the tories of that day, to pass an act of parliament to
 remove all doubts, and to establish the doctrine of
 the trinity under no less a sanction than the omni-
 potence of the legislature. Various learned, ju-
 dicious, and masterly tracts were published upon the
 subject

* See “Some Discourses, &c.” pref. p. 6 & 7.

subject about this time.* Mr. Locke was a writer in this controversy in vindication of “ the God and
 “ father of our lord Jesus Christ being the only God
 “ and father of Christians.”† Many others also, though of less celebrity, maintained the cause of the divine unity, with learning, ability, and candor, which their opponents could answer with nothing so forcible and resistless as a penal statute adapted to the purpose.

It is a strong presumptive argument in favor of archbishop Tillotson to know, (as Dr. Jortin hath expressed himself,) “ that he made some concessions
 “ concerning Socinians which never were, and never
 “ will be forgiven him, and that he broke an ancient
 “ and fundamental rule of theological controversy,
 “ allow

* See “ A collection of tracts, proving the God
 “ and father of our lord Jesus Christ, the only true
 “ God ;” in three small volumes in quarto, 1691, 1693, and 1695.

† See “ The exceptions of Mr. Edwards, in his
 “ causes of atheism against the *reasonableness of christi-*
 “ *anity* &c.” examined :— in a third collection of
 tracts, &c. 1695, and bishop Law’s preface (p. vii.) to his edition of Locke’s “ Works.” 1777.

“ *allow not an adversary to have either common sense or*
 “ *common honesty.*”

“ Now, by way of contrast, proceeds Dr. Jortin,
 “ behold the character of the same persons, from the
 “ *masterly and impartial* hand of South: ‘ The so-
 ‘ cinians are impious blasphemers, whose infamous
 ‘ pedigree runs back [from wretch to wretch] in a
 ‘ direct line to the devil himself; and who are fitter
 ‘ to be crushed by the civil magistrate, as destructive
 ‘ to government and society, than to be confuted as
 ‘ merely heretics in religion.’ “ Such, says Jortin,
 “ is the true agonistic style, or intolerant spirit: such
 “ the courage of a champion, who challenges his
 “ adversary, and then calls upon the constable to
 “ come and help him !”*

But South is not the last champion of this sort; who, besides consigning his adversary to the civil power, “ writes like a man, but bites like a dog.” South does indeed call upon the constable, which implies a deliverance “ by due course of law,” but

Horsley

* See Birch’s “ Life of Tillotson.” App. No. iii. or Jortin’s “ Tracts, &c.” Octavo. 1790. vol. i. p. 366 . . 369.

Horsley first endeavours to excite an exterminating spirit among the multitude, and then to direct it against a large body of useful, or, at least, unoffending men. There now lies before me a circular letter from this bishop to the clergy of his Welch diocese, soliciting their pastoral services in behalf of the emigrant clergy of France, and inviting them to undertake a croisade against the protestant dissenters. An extract from this very extraordinary letter will shew what some men's untamed spirit of insolence and intolerance will lead them to say, and how great and unprovoked injuries other men are made to bear. An insolence and intolerance which border on insanity; and which nothing but a deprivation of the reasoning powers of man can excuse.—“ You will “ remind them” (i. e. your parishioners), writes this christian, protestant, and newly translated bishop to the clergy of his late diocese, “ that the persons for “ whom we, in the name of God, implore their aid, “ however they may differ from us in certain points “ of doctrine, discipline, and external rites, are “ nevertheless our brethren, members of Christ, “ children of God, heirs of the promises; adhering “ indeed

“ indeed to the church of Rome, in which they have
 “ been educated, but more endeared to us by the
 “ example they exhibit to us of patient suffering for
 “ conscience-sake, than estranged by what we deem
 “ their errors and corruptions. More dear and near
 “ to us, in truth, than some, who, affecting to be
 “ called our protestant brethren, have no other title
 “ to the name of protestant than a jew or a pagan,
 “ who not being a christian, is for that reason only
 “ not a papist; persons who, professing to receive
 “ our lord as a teacher such as the mahometans re-
 “ ceive him, call in question, however, what is not
 “ called in question by the mahometans, the in-
 “ fallibility of his doctrine; and under the mask of
 “ affected zeal for civil and religious liberty are
 “ endeavouring to propagate in this country those
 “ very notions of the sovereignty of the people, the
 “ rights of man, and an unlimited right of private
 “ judgment in opposition to ecclesiastical discipline;
 “ those treasonable and atheistical notions which in
 “ France have wrought the total subversion of the
 “ civil and ecclesiastical constitution, the confusion
 “ of all rights, the abolition of all property, the
 “ extinction.

“ extinction of all religion, the loss of all liberty to
“ the individual, except that of blaspheming God
“ and reviling kings!!!”

Such are the calumnies of intemperate passion,
of fiery zeal, and of interested and revengeful in-
tolerance!

NOV. 6, 1793.

J. D.

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THE reader is desired to take notice, that these papers were written at different times, as matter did offer itself to the author's mind ; and for that reason some particulars are therein touched upon more than once ; for which it is hoped, however, that there will need little excuse, since in relation to the whole design it may be pertinent enough. The method also, for that reason, is somewhat unusual ; but I have ventured however to let it pass as it is, since not method but matter in such cases is chiefly to be minded : and I doubt not but that in one part or other thereof, every part of the controversy will be found to be both fully and fairly discussed : and I wish none that read it may be of that evil temper as to forbear the acknowledgment of that truth, which yet in conscience they dare not deny ; like those Jews of old, who though they believed in Christ, yet did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue ; John xii. 42.

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TO THE
SECOND EDITION IN MDCCXCIII.

IT is presumed, that the good sense which abounds in this little tract will recommend it to the attention of the friends of truth and free inquiry, although it is certain, that, since the author's time, great improvements have been made in translating and explaining many passages of scripture cited in it. The doctrine of the trinity which he opposeth hath been proved by many learned men in the present century to derive it's chief support from false readings and false translations of the Bible.

M. D.

A

DESIGNED END

TO THE

SOCINIAN CONTROVERSY.

THAT THERE IS A GOD.

THAT there is such a being as God, (by which is meant one eternal mind, essence or spiritual power, who is the original and first cause of all other beings besides,) is manifest; for it is not possible that any other being whatsoever, could give a being to itself: certainly nothing can be more absurd than to imagine that a thing can act any-ways towards its own production before it is

Hence it follows, that every one of these beings is but the real effect of this first cause that had a being before it; and this first cause of necessity must have been eternal, and without beginning: since had there

been once no kind of being at all, there then could never have been such a being as God, no nor any other being besides; for doubtless, of nothing, nothing can be produced.

THAT THIS GOD IS BUT ONE IN NATURE OR ESSENCE.

AND as it is thus plain that there is a God, so it is utterly impossible that there can be any more than one God: for whoever is truly God must be absolutely infinite or immense; that is, *his divine essence must be boundless, and fill all that endless and inconceivable space that is without or beyond the limits of this world, as well as this world.*

For it is impossible, that any being whatever can *in any respect be greater than God is, or contain him*; for then he himself could not be truly infinite, nor excel in all perfections. The nature or essence therefore of God is infinite, and in extent is without bounds; and *it is self-evidently impossible for two or more infinitely extended beings to subsist together*: which demonstrates by consequence, that God can be but one as to his divine essence or nature.

And as right reason does plainly teach this truth, so do the scriptures as evidently declare the same: to instance in a few,—*The Lord he is God, there is none else besides him, Deut iv. 35. See now that I, even I am he, and there is no God with me, Deut. xxxii. 39. There is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee,*

thee, 1 Chron. xvii. 20. I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God, Is. xliv. 6. We know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one, 1 Cor. viii. 4. —To us there is but one God, 1 Cor. viii. 6. I might add a great number of other texts that speak to the very same purpose, but I think it is needless in a case so plain.

THAT THIS ONE TRUE GOD IS BUT ONE IN
PERSON.

Now as it is thus plain, that God is but one, as to his nature or essence; so it is evident likewise, that he can in no sense be any more than *one in person*: for if, as some affirm, the divine nature did contain in it several persons, as does the human nature, then each of those must be *truly immense, truly almighty, and truly most wise*, else they could not each of them be truly God, (*as some have unwarily asserted, and the trinitarian notion supposes*); for whoever is truly God must be every way thus qualified in all respects.

For if that person that is supposed to be God *be not truly immense*, then some other being of necessity must be greater than he; for whoever is not infinite must be bounded by some other being, which in that respect does truly surpass that bounded being in greatness: but (as I said before) *nothing can in any kind or respect whatsoever be greater than God is, or contain*

him; and by consequence he alone is truly immense.

The person that is truly God must be also *almighty*; that is, he must be able to do more than any, or than all other beings together can do: for doubtless none is the most high, but he that in might and strength does transcend all others. *Touching the Almighty, says Job, he excels in power, ch. xxxvii. 28.*

The person also that is truly God must be most wise and knowing: it is doubtless a property essential to the true God, to know more than any other being besides can know: *Of that day and hour, saith our saviour, knoweth no man, no not the angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father only; Matt. xxiv. 36. Mark xiii. 32.*

Now if that person who is truly God must be thus immense in his person, almighty in his power, and most wise in his knowledge; then it follows by direct consequence, that it is impossible for more than one person to be truly God: for nothing can be more absurd, than to believe or affirm, that two or three distinct beings, such as all personal beings are, can be each of them unlimited, as to the extent of their personal beings; can be each of them able to do more than the rest can do, or that each of them can know more than the others know.

Suppose, for instance, two such beings as *A* and *B*: Now if the person of *A* can do more than the person of *B*, then the person of *B* cannot do more than
the

the person of *A*; for if he could, then would not *A* be able to do more than *B*, and by consequence he could not be almighty.

Again, if the person of *A* be most wise, and knows more than the person of *B*, then *B* cannot know more than *A*; for if he did, then would not *A* know more than *B*, and so by consequence would not be most wise: which evidently demonstrates, that no more than one person can be truly God, since no more than one can be truly infinite in all these afore-mentioned divine perfections.

THAT THIS ONE PERSON WHO IS TRULY GOD,
IS HE ONLY WHO IS THE FATHER OF JESUS
CHRIST.

IT is undeniably evident from the Old Testament, that *the God of Israel, or the lord of hosts*, is the only true God: for thus it is written, *Thou art God, and thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth*, 2 Kings xix. 15. *There is none like thee, neither is there any God besides thee*, 2 Chron. xvii. 20. *Thou art God alone*, Psalm lxxxvi. 10. *Besides me there is no God*, Isaiah xliv. 6. *I am God, and there is none else*, Isaiah xlv. 9. *Thou shalt know no other God but me*, Hosea xiii. 4. Now as this is plain beyond contradiction, so do all christians generally acknowledge, that the God here mentioned was he only who afterwards was called the Father of Jesus Christ.

And

And in the New Testament no truth is more fully and plainly expressed than this is : thus says our Lord himself, *Father,---This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God,* John xvii. 1, 3. The same do his Apostles affirm ; *Blessed be God, even the Father of our lord Jesus Christ,* 1 Cor. i. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ,* Eph. i. 3. *With one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our lord Jesus Christ,* Rom. xv. 6. *We give thanks to God, and the Father of our lord Jesus Christ,* Coloss. i. 3. *He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father,* 1 Cor. xv. 24. *Therewith bless we God, even the Father,* James iii. 9. *To us there is but one God, the Father.* 1 Cor. viii. 6.

Now it is impossible, that any one article of the christian faith can be more fully and plainly expressed in scripture than this is : the words can be understood in no other sense than what at the first sight they do plainly signify, and they give the most satisfying answer that can be given to any one that shall ask who God is ; namely, that he is only that most divine person who is the Father of Jesus Christ : And if in this case plain scripture is not to be relied on, I see not of what great use our bibles can be to us.

YET THIS SO PLAIN AND EVIDENT TRUTH IS
COMMONLY DENIED.

FOR a very great number of professed christians do notwithstanding believe, that in the godhead there are indeed more persons than only one ; and that Jesus Christ, the son of God, is God also as well as his Father. But of this error the former arguments are sufficient to convince them : for if *none be God but the Father of Christ*, then cannot the son be truly God also, *since he in no sense whatever can be said to be the Father of Christ*, that is, of himself.

And certainly if men would resolve faithfully to make use but of common sense and common honesty, they could not but be convinced of the absurdity of this opinion, by only reading so often as they do in the New Testament of Jesus Christ his being *the son of God* : for how can he be God himself, who truly is no other than the son of God ? If he be the son only, then it is plain that he is not the Father also, who alone is God : for it is impossible, according to the notion we have of sons, for any being whatever to be the son of himself. No understanding man, when at any time he hears mention made of the son of a King, is so idle in his imagination as to believe, that thereby is meant the King who is his Father ; he certainly then must be very senseless, who can think that by the son of God is any-ways meant God, that is, God most high.

CHRIST

CHRIST NOT THE TRUE GOD, BECAUSE HE
HIMSELF HAS A GOD ABOVE HIM.

It is also evident beyond contradiction, that our blessed Lord cannot be truly God, since both he himself and his apostles do very plainly acknowledge, that he has a God above him: for instance, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Mat. xxvii. 46. *I ascend to my God, and to your God,* John xx. 17. *Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God,* Rev. iii. 12. *The head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God,* 1 Cor. xi. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,* Eph. i. 3. *The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ knows I lie not,* 2 Cor. xi. 31. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ may give you the spirit,* Eph. i. 17. *Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows,* Heb. i. 8, 9.

These texts are very plain, and need no interpretation to make them be understood. Now if our Lord Christ have thus a God above him, then it is evident, if any thing in the world be so, that he himself is not God most high.

CHRIST NOT GOD, BECAUSE WHAT HE DOES
IS BY A POWER RECEIVED FROM GOD.

THIS truth Christ himself does plainly declare; *I can, saith he, of my own self do nothing, John v. 30. All power is given unto me both in heaven and in earth, Mat. xxviii. 18. When the multitude saw his miracles, they marvelled, and glorified God, who had given such power unto men, Mat. ix. 8.* Now these things can in no tolerable sense be said of him that is truly God: for he that is God most high hath essentially in himself all kind of divine dignity and excellency, and cannot, without the highest of blasphemies, be in any sense said to receive them of another.

But of our lord it is recorded, that he neither said nor did any thing, especially in the work of our redemption, but what he was commanded to say and do by his Father; *I have not spoken of myself, (saith he,) but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak. John xii. 49.*

Is he able to save the world? To this power he was raised by God: *him hath God exalted to be a prince and a saviour, Acts v. 31.* Can he give power to believers to become the sons of God? This power he also has received: *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him, John xvii. 2.* Has he power to raise from the dead? Even this power
also

also he did receive: *As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the son to have life in himself,* John v. 26. Has he power to judge the world? It is God that does enable him to do this: *This is he that was ordained of God to be judge of quick and dead,* Acts x. 42. *I can do nothing of myself; as I hear, I judge,* John v. 30.

Moreover, it is thus said, *The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them,* John xvii. 22. *I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me,* Luke xxii. 29. *The God of our lord Jesus Christ hath put all things under his feet,* Eph. i. 17. Now they must impose strangely upon their own understandings, that can (unrequired by the gospel) believe him to be truly God, even infinite in all perfection, of whom it is said so plainly, that whatever power and dignity he has is given him by another.

CHRIST NOT GOD, BECAUSE GOD AND HE ARE PLAINLY DISTINGUISHED.

THIS consideration alone of itself is a very strong argument, to prove our lord Christ not to be really and truly God, since he is every where spoken of as a person that differs as much from God, as a noble subject differs from his prince or king. Thus it is said of him, that *God anointed him,* Acts x. 38. *That he offered himself up to God,* Heb. ix. 14. *That God raised him from the dead,* Acts ii. 24. That

'That he was *exalted by God*, Acts ii. 33. That he *ascended to God*, John xx. 17. That he *sits at God's right-hand*, Acts vii. 56. That *God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us*, Eph. iv. 32. That *he hath redeemed us unto God by his blood*, Rev. v. 9. That *the God of our lord Jesus Christ hath put all things under his feet*, Eph. i. 22.

I might collect a very great number of other places that speak to the very same purpose, all which do evidently demonstrate, that the true God is not Jesus Christ: for if Jesus were *sent of God*, and *raised up from the dead by God*, and *sits now at God's right-hand*, &c. then it is plain, that there is as great a difference between the true God and him, as there is between a prince and him whom he is said to honour or employ.

It would be strangely absurd for a man to affirm, that *God can be sent of God*; that *God can pray to God*; that *God can ascend to God*; that *God can sit at God's right-hand*; and that *God shall deliver up the kingdom to God, that God may be all in all*. He that can believe this possible is fitted for the reception of the most ridiculous and absurd errors that were ever found in the world.

OF THAT ACCOUNT WHICH THE SCRIPTURES
GIVE OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

As from what has been said before it appears very plainly what kind of person Christ our Lord is not ; so it will be likewise necessary to shew what the scriptures do declare concerning him as to what he is. Now if we consider well the general scope and tendency of those sacred writings, we shall perceive very plainly, that Christ, or the messiah, according to the promises, was really to be of the same nature with them, which he came to redeem ; that *as by man came death, so by man might come also the resurrection of the dead*, 1 Cor. xv. 21. It was by *the seed of the woman* that the *serpent's head was bruised*, Gen. iii. 15.

To *Abraham* the promise was made, that *in him and in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed*, Gen. xxviii. 14. *Moses* tells the children of *Israel*, that *the Lord their God should raise up unto them a prophet like unto him*, Deut. viii. 15. Of *this man's seed*, (namely *David's*,) saith *St. Paul*, *both God raised up unto Israel a saviour, Jesus* ; Acts xiii. 23. *In the fulness of time God sent forth his son, made of a woman*, Gal. iv. 4. From all which places it is manifest, that, as to the personal nature of Christ, he is the same as were those human ancestors from whom he did lineally descend ; *In all things he was like unto his brethren, except in being a sinner* ; Heb. ii. 17. iv. 15.

And

And accordingly we find him almost every where mentioned by that plain denomination and term of *A MAN*; *Ye seek* (saith he himself) *to kill me, A MAN who hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God*, John viii. 40. *After me cometh A MAN that is preferred before me*, John i. 30. *Jesus of Nazareth, A MAN approved of God by wonders and signs which God did by him*, Acts xiii. 38. *He hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by THAT MAN whom he hath ordained*, Acts xvii. 31. *There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, THE MAN Christ Jesus*, 1 Tim. ii. 5. *But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood*. Heb. ii. 7. *But THIS MAN, after he had once offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down at the right-hand of God*, Heb. x. 12. I could name a multitude of others, but I think it is needless.

Now to me it is strange, that any should so much as imagine that the believing and asserting of Christ to be truly an human person should derogate from his true honour and dignity, when the gospel does so frequently assert him to be such; whereas on the contrary, it is not said so much as once, that he is God most high, or that he is one of that sacred three which do constitute or make up the true Godhead: these unscriptural titles are derived only from the mere opinions and traditions of either deceived or deceiving men, whose eyes the god of this world hath blinded, so that they cannot see or discern the truth.

THE PRIMITIVE CONFESSIONS CONCERNING
CHRIST WERE ;

NOT that Jesus our lord was God equal to the Father in all kind of divine perfections, nor that he was God of the substance of his Father, as he was man of the substance of his mother, as some have taught in after-times. All that those first confessions do contain was this, that *he was the Christ, the son of God, and the saviour of the world.*

This was the faith of *Martha* ; *She said unto him, Yea lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the son of God, that should come into the world,* John xi. 27. This was *St. Peter's* faith, *Thou art Christ the son of the living God,* Mat. xvi. 16. This was the *Eunuch's* faith, *I believe that Christ is the son of God,* Acts viii. 37. This was the faith of the *Mariners* ; *Of a truth thou art the son of God,* Mat. xiv. 33. And the faith of *Nicodemus* was, *We know thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou dost, except God be with him,* John iii. 2.

St. Paul is also said to preach Christ in the synagogues, that he was *the son of God,* Acts ix. 20. He is said also to testify to the Jews, *not that Jesus was God, but that Jesus was the Christ,* Acts xviii. 5. *We have seen and do testify (saith St. John) that the Father sent the son to be the saviour of the world,* 1 John iv. 14. Here is no trinity in unity, nor god-man, nor Hypostatical union, so much as mentioned, nor any other of those hard and cramping names with which the church of God has been since perplexed.

THE UNDOUBTED FAITH ON WHICH THE
SALVATION OF ALL CHRISTIANS DOES
DEPEND,

Is no other than this : *These things*, saith St. John, *are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name, John xx. 31. If we confess with our mouth the lord Jesus, and believe in our heart, that God raised him from the dead, we shall be saved, Rom. x. 9. Whosoever shall confess, that Jesus is the son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God, 1 John iv. 15. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth, that Jesus is the son of God? 1 John v. 5.* These are a plain account of that faith which now is indispensably required of every christian in relation to Christ.

The scripture *no where* enjoins us to believe, on pain of damnation, either that Jesus is God most high, or that he is indeed both God and man, or that he was eternally begotten of the Father. It only teaches us thus much concerning him, that *the man Christ Jesus is the mediator between God and men, 2 Tim. ii. 5. That he is the propitiation of the sins of the whole world, 1 John ii. 2. That it pleased the Father by him to reconcile all things to himself, Col. i. 20. That there is no salvation in any other, Acts iv. 12. That he appears now in the presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24. And that he shall judge both quick and*

C 3 dead,

diad, at the latter day, Acts x. 42. These are fundamentals so plain, and so undoubted, that all christians do universally agree in the profession of them, as they likewise would do in all other truths, were nothing but what is really such imposed on the faith of believers.

OF THE TRANSCENDENT DIGNITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

AND now although from what has been said hitherto, it be plainly evident, *that the Godhead does consist but of one divine person only, even the Father of Christ*; and that Jesus, called otherways in scripture the son of God, is no other than an *human person*: yet it is plain also that he is *not a common man*, but the chief and most transcendently excellent of all human beings, yea in dignity above even the angels.

For as his conception in the womb of a virgin was miraculous, so were his life and actions a wonder: he made a perfect conquest both of death and the devil; and in that great instance of magnanimity has outdone all the renowned heroes both of *Greece* and *Rome*. And unto which of the angels said God at any any time, *sit thou on my right-hand?* but to this dignity is Jesus exalted, *Heb. i. 13.* God has crowned him with glory and honour, *Heb. ii. 9.* And anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows, *Heb. i. 9.* Angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him, *1 Pct. iii. 22.*

He is ascended into heaven in a triumphant manner: and as *he now sits there at God's right-hand in glory*, so at the last day shall he come down from thence, *to judge mankind*, with such a surprising majesty as shall amaze and confound the world. It is doubtless impossible for any human understanding to conceive, or tongue to express this most excellent man's transcendent dignity; his greatness must needs be very extraordinary, who is thus set even *above the angels, is the head of every man, and the prince of the kings of the earth.* 1 Peter iii. 22. 1 Cor. xi. 3. Rev. i. 5.

And now if to those foregoing considerations we add, that of his most admired love to us sinful mortals, *in making peace for us by the blood of his cross*, Coloff. i. 20: and in undergoing, with invincible patience, all those indignities and miseries which did befall him in this the course of that glorious work of his, *the opening for men a new and living way to the regions of bliss*: the consideration of this, I say, added to that other of his most transcendent glory and power, ought evermore to raise up in us that veneration which is suitable to such most wonderful instances of unconceivable majesty and heroic affection.

YET IT IS NOT ANY WAY JUSTIFIABLE TO
HONOUR CHRIST FALSLY.

As the glory of God is not to be advanced by falshood, so neither can we truly honour Christ by lies; he desires no such thing at our hands, neither at the last day will he reward us for affirming him to be that which indeed he is not: they only give true honour to Christ, who own him for the undoubted Messiah, or the son of God, and do stedfastly both believe and obey his gospel.

As for the other vain and ungrounded opinions of men concerning him, they no ways conduce to the glory of our blessed redeemer. It is said indeed, that we should *honour the son, as we honour the Father*, John v. 23. But that word *AS* does not import an equal honour, no more than it does import an equal holiness and purity, when we are commanded to purify ourselves *AS* he is pure, 1 John iii. 3. And *AS* he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation, 1 Peter i. 15.

Besides, the word *honour* is of a doubtful import, and doth oftentimes signify only obedience, as is evident from Ephesians vi. 1, 2, where by *honour thy father and mother* is clearly signified, *obey your parents*. And accordingly Dr. Clagget, in his paraphrase on the place, makes it *to be an honouring the son with the same faith and obedience*; implying, that we are as much bound to believe and obey the gospel of Christ in the New Testament, as we are the law of God recorded in the Old; that since he

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is made judge of the world, to be certain he will not suffer the breach of his own laws to go unpunished.

Doubtless we ought to be as careful of ascribing to Christ those glories which are his, as we are to give to God Almighty that honour which essentially belongs to himself: and no man can think or speak too honourably of his redeemer, so long as he no ways does thereby rob God the Father of that truly divine honour which is his indispensable due. Our lord, who fought not his own glory, (John viii. 50.) will give us no thanks for such honours as do naturally derogate from his Father's dignity: but such is their honour who make the son to be God; for then, since but one person can be truly God, they do assert by consequence, that the Father is not so.

God has indeed highly exalted Jesus, his beloved son, and has given him a name above every name, and has put all things under his feet. But when all things are said to be thus put under him, *it is manifest that he himself is excepted that did put all things under him*, 1 Cor. xv. 27. So that notwithstanding the great and mighty dignities to which God hath exalted Christ, yet he has still reserved to himself this most supreme royalty of being *the God and head of Christ*. God hath given him indeed a kingdom; but when the intent of this government of his is accomplished, he shall again resign it back, that so God in that after-state of eternity may be all in all, 1 Cor, xv. 24, 25, 28.

ANSWERS TO THE PRINCIPAL OBJECTIONS.
MADE AGAINST THE UNITARIAN DOCTRINE.

AND now though, from what has been already said, no man whose understanding is not enslaved by the tyranny either of self-conceit, interest, or education, can doubt of so great a truth as this is; namely, that no personal being whatever, besides the Father of Christ, is God most high; as also that other branch thereof, that Jesus our lord, as to his nature, is the same with them whom he came to redeem. Yet since there have been many objections raised against it, I will endeavour, as briefly as I can, to give them such reasonable answers as shall make these truths beyond exception.

OF THE NAMES OF GOD GIVEN TO CHRIST.

SOME object, that Christ of necessity must be God, since in several places of scripture he is expressly called by the name of *God*. I answer, *a God he undoubtedly is, and a mighty God too, according to the way of expression used in those antient times; in which those were called Gods who either represented God's person, or acted in his name and by his authority: but he is not God Almighty.*

When the jews did accuse him for making himself God, he thus vindicates his innocence; *If, saith he, they are called Gods to whom the word of God*
came.

came—Say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the son of God? John x. 35, 36. Christ had as good a right to this title as any of the rest, if not a better, and therefore it could be no blasphemy to appropriate the same to himself, had he done so; but they lied, for he did not do it, he only said, that he was *the son of God*, calling God his Father.

OF THE MEDIATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

OTHERS object, that if Christ were not God as well as man, he could not have been a fit mediator between God and man, since in such a case, say they, he ought no way to be exactly the person concerned. A fit mediator between God and man must neither be only God, nor only man, but one who, by nature, is between these two, even God as well as man.

I answer: It is not necessary, that a mediator should be of such a middle nature, nor does the scripture any where assert it: there is always supposed in the work of reconciliation, one offended, another offending, and a third not concerned in the quarrel, interposing to make peace between them. Now in this sense Christ, though but a man, was a very fit and proper mediator: Had he been God, he had been the party offended; had he been a sinful man, he had been one of that party that gave the offence;

offence ; but being a man perfectly righteous, he therefore was fit to intercede between God and sinners.

That Christ is our mediator is plain and evident ; and it is as plain, that he is only a man, and not both God and man, as some assert: *There is, saith the scripture, one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. ii. 5.* And it is most wonderful, that, in a matter so manifestly evident, men should dare impose upon the world another faith, or be induced to believe contrary to so plain and evident a part of God's word.

OF THE ONENESS OF GOD AND CHRIST.

Others object, that Christ Jesus must needs be God, because it is said, *I and my Father are one, John x. 30.* And again ; *There are three that bear record—and these three are one, 1 John v. 7.* To these I answer, that though it is said they are one, yet it is not said what one they are ; it is not said they are one God. This is only the ungrounded assertion either of some easy-minded, or else of some heedlessly bold and daring men.

Doubtless by that passage, 1 John v. 7, is meant, that these three are one as to the record, which they are there said to bear ; they perfectly agree in that witness which they give concerning Jesus his being truly the Christ, as the foregoing verses do plainly intimate.

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As for that other passage, John x. 30, it is plain, that the oneness there meant is a mystical or moral, and not a natural oneness: and it is doubtless explained by John xvii. 11, where our saviour prays, that his disciples *might be one as he and his Father were one; that they, saith he, may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they may be one in us*, ver. 21, which denotes an oneness only in the same mutual affection, for believers can be one in no other sense but this: and look what oneness there ought to be between one true believer and another, the same oneness there is between Christ and God, an inward intimacy, like that between real friends, of whom it is usual to say, they are all one, one in heart, and one in mind; as those in Acts iv. 32, are said to be.

OF THE EQUALITY OF GOD AND CHRIST.

SOME object, that Christ must be God as well as his Father, because it is said, that *he thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, Philip. ii. 6. To this I answer, that Christ himself hath told us, that *his Father is greater than he*, John xiv. 28. Hence it is plain, that if the son be any ways equal to the Father, yet it is really but in some particulars; for were the son equal to the Father in every respect,

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then it were impossible for the Father to be greater than he.

Whence it is clear, that the son cannot be equal to the Father in all things, though in some things he may. For instance, as God can save believers, so this also Christ can do ; but this power of Christ is not an essential, but a derived power ; *Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him, John xvii. 2.* These are our saviour's own words ; and it is plain, that he from whom he receives the power must in power be superior unto him : he is not therefore almighty, and so by consequence not God most high, as the objection would suppose.

OF CHRIST'S BEING THE MAKER OF THE WORLD.

SOME object, that Christ is said to be the maker of the worlds, Heb. i. 2, and that all things were made by him, John i. 3, and therefore, say they, he of necessity must be God eternal. I answer, many things are spoken of Christ figuratively, as he is called a way, a door, a vine ; and the bread in the sacrament is said to be his body. Now these, as those likewise which affirm him to be the maker of the world, are figurative or mystical expressions, in which one thing is said to signify another, as the old creation to set forth the new.

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There are in the scripture many dark and difficult passages, hard to be understood, as St. Peter expresses it, 2 Epist. iii. 16, which are doubtless true in some sense or other, could we be so happy as to hit upon the right: but in the mean time, till this can be done, it is certain that that can never be the right sense which contradicts the clearest and the plainest parts of the bible, as well as the greatest and most certain evidences of human understanding.

The general current of the scripture declares plainly, that *Christ, or the Messiah, was derived from the seed of Abraham; that he was the son of David; that he was made of a woman.* Wherefore it is self-evident, that in a literal sense he could never be the maker of the world, whose true ancestors were human persons, and who was born, or whose being did first begin to be, some thousands of years after the world was made. All scriptures therefore that affirm Christ to be *the maker of the world,* and to be *the maker of all things,* must be supposed to *speak figuratively,* and are no-ways to be understood in their literal sense and meaning.

In all such cases as this is, it is safer to say, that we cannot understand truly in what sense these scriptures are to be taken, than it is to conclude, that they mean that which other more numerous and plain places of scripture, as well as reason, do make to be impossible.

OF THE TWO NATURES OF JESUS CHRIST.

When we urge those scriptures which say that *Christ has a God above him; that he could do nothing of himself; that he knew not of the day of judgment; that he died to redeem mankind.* The opposers reply, that this is meant only as to his manhood or humane nature, but not as to his divine nature: for as he was God, none was his superior; he had all power essentially in himself, knew all things, and was truly immortal.

I answer; if Christ had really two natures in him, so that thereby he had been truly God as well as man, the person thus constituted or made up of two such natures could never have died according to his humane nature, if by his divine nature he had been truly God too: for how could he in person have been mortal in one capacity, if he had been on the contrary immortal in another? He also could not possibly have been ignorant in one capacity of what he knew in another; nor could he have wanted any kind of power, if in any of his capacities he had had all power essentially in himself; *one capacity must needs have supplied the defects of the other, especially the stronger of the weaker.*

OF CHRIST, HIS BEING THE SON OF GOD.

IT is objected, that as Christ Jesus our lord was begotten by God on the body of the virgin; so he must necessarily be God of the substance of his Father, as he was man of the substance of his mother. In answer to this I say, that when the angel saluted the virgin with the glad-tidings of her being designed to be the mother *not of God*, but of the promised messiah, he told her, *that the Holy Ghost should come upon her, and the power of the highest should overshadow her*; and that *therefore that holy thing which should be born of her should be called the son of God*, Luke i. 31, 35.

Now in the relation of this message these following particulars are remarkable:

First; That Jesus our lord is the son of God's power only, and not of his person; *the power of the highest shall overshadow thee*. It was of the woman only that he was made, Gal. iv. 4. (He was not generated, as some think, out of his Father's substance) and so by consequence was the son only of his miraculous and almighty power.

Secondly; It is not said, that therefore he shall be the natural son of God in that sense, as one man is the natural son of another; but therefore he shall be called the son of God, or he shall so be, and be so reputed, because in this one particular instance God

was to him instead of a father, not a father in the way that men are fathers to their children, but a father in respect of the virgin's receiving a power from God; thus in an uncommon manner to conceive in herself a son of *Joseph* and *David*, ver. 31, 32.

From what has been said I think it appears plainly, that Christ his being God of the substance of his father is an ungrounded conceit. The generation of our lord Jesus may be better accounted for another way: for God the almighty architect, and most-wise contriver of the creation, has reserved to himself a power to alter the course of nature whensoever he pleases; and as of a rib taken out from the side of *Adam* he made a woman, so by the same omnipotent power he did enable a virgin woman to conceive a son. If God had power out of mere stones to raise up children unto *Abraham*, Mat. iii. 9. we ought not to think it incredible, that in this miraculous manner he should out of the posterity of *Abraham* raise up this seed so wonderfully to be the world's redeemer.

OF THE POWER BY WHICH CHRIST DID MIRACLES.

SOME I find are strongly persuaded, that none but a person truly God could do those wonderful works that Christ did. To such I answer, that a man who

is no God can do things that are miraculous, when God gives him a power to perform them. This is evident in those which *Moses* did, and in those also which were wrought by the apostles. The works of Christ indeed were extraordinary, yet not done by a power inherent in himself, but by a power derived from God: for himself tells us, that *all power was given unto him both in heaven and in earth*, Mat. xxviii. 18. He was a man approved of God (saith the apostle) *by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did by him*, Acts ii. 22.

This power God did bestow on Christ, to be only an evidence of his being the true messiah: *Rabbi*, saith *Nicodemus*, *we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these things that thou dost except God be with him*, John iii. 2. *The works*, saith Christ, *which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me*, John v. 36. His works were an evident proof, that he was no impostor, but a true and most wonderful prophet; yet still he is said *to be but a man, a man whom God was with, a man by whom God did wonders*.

OF THE INCOMPREHENSIBLENESS OF GOD'S
NATURE.

SOME object, that we must not think to comprehend the infinite nature of God, nor understand fully every particular that does relate to his divine perfections; for God is incomprehensible, and may, for aught we know, be that which yet we cannot plainly understand him to be, namely three in person, though but one in essence.

I answer; some of God's divine perfections are self-evident, and it is impossible that we can be mistaken therein: we are infallibly certain that he must be immense in person, almighty in power, and most wise in knowledge. And although we cannot know what God is in every respect, yet at the same time we may know certainly what indeed he is not; we know certainly, that *he is not a man*, or that he was made of a woman, as Christ was: we know certainly that *he is not mortal*, or that he cannot die, as Christ did; and we know certainly that *he has not a God above him*, as Christ had; and we know certainly, that *he has not received any kind of power from another*, as Christ Jesus is said to do.

And as one truth naturally infers another, so we do from hence assuredly conclude, that the person of Jesus our lord is not truly God, for *he was made of a woman*, Gal. iv. 4. *He died to redeem us*, 2 Cor. v.

14. *He had a God above him, 1 Cor. xi. 3 And he did receive all the power he had of another, John v. 30. Mat. xxviii. 18.*

We also know certainly, that if the divine godhead did consist of three persons, that then neither of the three persons singly can be God. If all three be but that one God together (as the trinitarians assert), then no one of them can be the true God by himself: for the same denomination cannot properly fit each person singly, as does fit them when conjoined in one mutual relation; for then they might be said to be indeed three supreme godheads, which is utterly impossible.

We also know certainly, that if any of the three persons, said to be in the godhead, be God by himself, as we have proved God the father undoubtedly is, then all the rest are but superfluous and unnecessary, as to the constitution of a godhead: for one infinite, almighty, and most wise person is as sufficient to all the purposes of a godhead, as ten thousand deities: but if three be but the one true God together, then no one of them can be that one true God by himself alone.

Lastly, we may be infallibly certain, that if doctrines grounded on so many numerous and great evidences both of scripture and self-evident reason, as these are, *That God is but one in person; that the person who is truly God, is no other than the Father of Jesus Christ; and that the most excellent of men, even*

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Jesus Christ, was only a man, be false; then we cannot be certain of the truth of any other principle in religion: if the evidences here collected do deceive us, it is in vain to hope by any other methods to find the truth.

OF THE COMING DOWN OF CHRIST FROM HEAVEN.

SOME, as a proof of our saviour's godhead, urge those texts of scripture, where it is said, *He came down from heaven; came forth from the father, and ascended up where he was before.* To which I answer, that these prove not that for which they are intended, since it is plainly inferred from other scriptures, that Christ, some time before he was sent to declare the glad-tidings of the gospel, was assumed or taken up from the earth into his father's more immediate presence, (as *St. Paul* was some time after into the third heaven) there to be instructed in the mind and will of God, and to be invested with that great dignity and power of being a prince and a saviour.

To this the prophet *Daniel's* vision plainly alludes; *I saw, saith he, in the night-visions, and behold one like the son of man came to the antient of days, and they brought him before him; and there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, and nations, and languages should serve him, Dan. vii. 13.* And from the words of our saviour himself it is plain, that

that he ascended up into heaven before he came down to declare his father's will to men; *No man, saith he, hath ascended into heaven, but he that came down from heaven, John iii. 13.* But no man but Christ ever came down from thence, which he never could have done had he not first ascended up thither. And that he was taken up to be instructed in the doctrine he was to publish to the world, is plain also; *The Father, saith he, that sent me, he gave me a commandment what I should say, and what I should speak, John xii. 49.*

The redemption or restoration of mankind was a work of prodigious difficulty; and God, who had fore-ordained our saviour for the performance thereof, did for his greater encouragement present to his view *the glories, which before the world was* (John xvii. 5.) he had designed as a reward for his son the messiah: and it was doubtless this fore-taste of the divine and heavenly happiness that animated him with courage and fortitude to encounter all the difficulties that stood in his way. Hence it is said, *that he for the joy that was set before him did endure the cross, and despise the shame, Heb. xii. 2.*

OF THE ETERNITY OF CHRIST.

SOME object, that Christ is said to be *before Abraham, before all things*, and that he *had glory with God before the world was.* This, say they, proves him to be eternal, and by consequence God. I answer,

swer, it is impossible that Christ can be the true and living God, since it is plain from what has been said in the former part of this work, that no person is truly God but the father of Christ, and that *Christ has a God above him.*

It is impossible for Christ to be eternal: for if God be his Father, as all acknowledge, then there was a time when the son had not a being: for to be a son, and to be equal in duration with his eternal Father that begot him, is undoubtedly impossible. Besides, we are told plainly, that the son was first *fore-ordained* before he came to have a being in these latter times, *1 Pet. i. 20.* Now no fore-ordained being can possibly be eternal, since he that did ordain his being must be before him of necessity; and none but the very first of all beings can be truly eternal.

How could he have a being before *Abraham*, since it is declared he was of the seed of *Abraham*? How could he be before *David*, when it was out of *David's* posterity that God raised up Jesus according to his promise? And since Jesus the son of God *was made of a woman*, *Gal. iv. 4.* he could not be more antient in time than his mother that bare him.

It follows then that these scriptures on which the objection depends are purely figurative, and are not to be understood in their literal sense and meaning: they declare indeed, that Christ *in some sense or other* was before all things, before *Abraham*, and had glory before

before the world was, but not in that sense which the objectors suppose.

For it is not reasonable they should be understood in such a sense as contradicts both common understanding, and the greatest and plainest part of all the bible; they are places of the same nature with those which St. *Peter* affirms are *hard to be understood*, 2 Pet. iii. 16, and for that reason must by interpretation be brought to such a sense as is agreeable to the analogy of faith, and the most general scope and design of the holy scriptures: that is to say, that Christ was before *Abraham*, and before the world, &c. in the fore-ordination, decree and counsel of God, as in very deed St. *Peter* interprets them, when he saith thus of Christ, that *he verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times*, 1 Pet. i. 20.

OF THE SATISFACTION THAT CHRIST MADE TO GOD.

SOME argue thus; that if Christ had not been God, the sacrifice he offered, or the satisfaction he made for sinners, would not have been of that infinite worth which was necessary to satisfy the infinite justice of an offended God. I answer; The holy scriptures do not any where declare this doctrine, but on the contrary they tell us, that *as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation;*

so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men to justification of life, Rom. v. 18.

In which words are contained the whole doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ; and they imply thus much only, that God was so infinitely well pleased with the unspotted righteousness of his son, that for his sake he entered into a new covenant of grace and mercy with mankind, wherein he did engage himself to be still their God, and to afford them new means of becoming his people.

Thus did God, in infinite mercy, take all men again into favour for the sake of one perfectly righteous person, as in infinite justice he had before included all men under suffering for their first father's sin and transgression: So that *as by man came death, the punishment due to the breach of the first covenant, so by man came also the resurrection from the dead, 1 Cor. xv. 21.* All which was not the effect of any equivalent price which by Christ was given to God, but of the righteousness or obedience, which he performed to his father's command: for *as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, Rom. v. 19.*

Had Christ given to God, or made in our stead such a satisfaction as had been equivalent to the transgressions of all men, in order to redeem them, how then could eternal life be the free gift of God? How then could we be saved by free grace? and how could our sins be said to be forgiven? for gift, and
grace,

grace, and forgiveness, are not proper terms where an equivalent hath been received.

In the scripture it is said indeed, that Christ hath *obtained eternal redemption for us*, Heb. ix. 12. That *our peace is made through the blood of his cross*, Col. i. 20. That we were *reconciled unto God by the death of his son*, Rom. v. 10. But it speaks not so much as one word of an equivalent.

But is it not said, say some, that *we are bought with a price*; 1 Cor. vi. 20; and that *the son of man has given his life a ransom for many*? Mat. xx. 28. I answer; these are but improper expressions, and are of the same nature with those which attribute hands, and eyes, and ears to God, which only imply that such acts are done by God which men usually perform by these bodily parts: Even so Christ is said to ransom us, and to buy us with a price, because by his means we do receive benefits equivalent to what they do who are set free from any kind of misery and bondage, by the payment of a price to them in whose bondage they are.

I shall, as a close to what I have to say on this head, add, that the justice of God spoken of is satisfied in a manner different from that which the adversary supposes: that is to say, the justice of God is satisfied in the certain punishment of *Adam's* transgression. *Adam* was commanded not to eat of the forbidden fruit on pain of death. This command he transgressed: and it is evident, that the punishment

was accordingly inflicted, for *Adam* died, and all his posterity do die likewise. Now when the penalty is thus inflicted, it is plain that justice is satisfied, and God in equity can require no more : but had not Christ obtained the favour to restore us to life after the punishment was thus inflicted, there had then been an end of mankind for ever.

From hence it is apparent how idle their fancy is who imagine Christ suffered what all mankind should have suffered, in order to free them for ever from suffering the same. For it is plain beyond contradiction, that we are not freed from death, the punishment due to that first transgression, for we all die ; God does exact the forfeiture of every one of us, and by consequence his justice, as to that offence, is satisfied in all its demands. But this, say some, is false, for hell was our due as well as death ; and from that Christ has freed every one that will believe. I answer ; it is strange that Christ should free believers from one part of the punishment and not from the other : The scriptures no where reveal this secret, and for that reason we need not believe it.

Hell is the punishment which is due to the breach of the second covenant, and not of the first ; now neither has Christ freed us from this by any thing that he has done and suffered for us. He by his righteousness did indeed procure for us a new covenant, and this new covenant of grace proposes life and pardon, on condition that we will believe its promises,
sincerely

sincerely endeavour to obey its precepts, and repent of sin; and they are truly the breakers of this covenant who live in a continued course of disobedience thereunto, and die at last in final impenitence. Now for such sinners as these there does remain no sacrifice; Christ never died for the redemption of such, and by consequence can no-ways be said to suffer in their stead.

OF THE OBJECT OF DIVINE WORSHIP.

Some object, that Jesus must be God, because it is recorded that his name, in the most primitive times of the gospel, was called upon; see *Acts* ix. 14. and xxii. 16. I answer; it is difficult to understand rightly what is there meant by calling on his name: This is certain, that the scripture no where enjoins us to make Christ the object of divine worship; it does rather expressly intimate the contrary. Our Lord forewarns his disciples not to ask any thing of him after his ascension, but bids them ask the Father in his name, *John* xvi. 23, 24, 26.

And when our Lord taught his own disciples to pray, he bids them say, *Our Father which art in heaven*, *Mat.* vi. 9. He does not direct them to say, *O Christ hear us*: He tells the Samaritan woman, that in the following times the *true worshippers should worship the Father*, *John* iv. 23. It was the doctrine of St. Paul, that in every thing by prayer and supplication

oration we should let our requests be made known unto God, *Phil.* iv. 6. And his own practice was according to his doctrine, *I bow my knee* (saith he) *to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*, *Eph.* iii. 14. and in many other places, God or the Father, not Christ, is mentioned as the alone-object of divine adoration and petition: And it is worth noting, that Christ himself, whose example and footsteps we should follow, prayed always to his Father, and never did so much as once petition any other person of the supposed trinity.

And as to thanksgiving, it is plainly said to be the will of God, that we should do all in the name of the lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him, *Col.* iii. 17. And in another place we are commanded to give *thanks always unto God and the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ*, *Eph.* v. 20. And accordingly we read in a great number of places in the New Testament, how the apostles gave God thanks through Jesus Christ.

Jesus our lord is said in scripture *to appear in the presence of God for us*, *Heb.* ix. 24. *To be an advocate for sinners*, *1 John* ii. 1. *To make intercession for the saints*, *Rom.* iii. 34. *To be the Mediator between God and men*, *1 Tim.* ii. 5. *The minister of the new covenant*, *Heb.* viii. 6. All which proves him to be the person that pleads our cause, that solicits our acceptance, the great transactor and manager of all
affairs

affairs between God and us ; but it no-ways intimates any divine worship due to himself.

And indeed should we put Christ instead of the true God, and make him the alone object of divine prayer and thanksgiving, in whose name then shall we approach the throne of grace? and by whom shall we render thanks to God? who shall be our intercessor, our advocate, our mediator? For my part I know but of one mediator, and that is the man Christ Jesus, *1 Tim.* ii. 5. and he only is the mediator between us men and the one true God, whom I before have proved to be only the father of Jesus Christ.

To make our lord Christ therefore the object of our divine addresses is as much as in us lies to deprive him of his mediatory office, which also by consequence is to deny him to be the son of God, even the beloved in whom alone we are accepted, *Eph.* i. 6. Yea, and by this we deny also the godhead of the Father, in whose stead we do by this means place Christ, than which there can be nothing in this world that is more truly antichristian ; see *1 John* ii. 22.

Now from the foregoing arguments it is evident, that whatever the sense of the objected places be, yet they cannot mean that which the objector intends, since in vastly more numerous and plain places the scriptures make God and not Christ to be the alone object of our divine addresses.

OF THE NOVELTY OF THE UNITARIAN
DOCTRINE.

SOME object against the doctrine of God's being but one in person the novelty thereof, that it is but of yesterday in comparison to that which asserts a trinity, which is, they say, of at least 1600 and odd years standing. I answer, that the objector is greatly mistaken: for can that be a new doctrine which has the greatest and the most plain part of the scripture for its foundation? The doctrine of God's being but one in person is in the former part of this work proved to be expressly and plainly contained both in the old and new Testament, and by consequence must needs be as ancient as the scriptures are.

The long continuance of the contrary doctrine, if it were as ancient as the objectors affirm, is yet no argument of its real truth. We read, that soon after the good wheat was sown, the enemy began to sprinkle tares in the field; *Mat. xiii. 25.* And the mystery of iniquity began to work even in *St. Paul's* time, *2 Thess. ii. 7.* So that it is no wonder, that some errors, as suppose this of the trinity, be almost of equal standing to the greatest truths: for where God has a church, the devil always has a chappel. It is not the long or short continuance of any doctrine, as to its profession, that makes it authentic, but that foundation of reason and scripture on which it is built: A tenet is not therefore true because of its
long

long or general belief, if at the same time it contradicts self-evidence, and the general current of the sacred scriptures.

OF SCRIPTURE MYSTERIES.

SOME object, that much of the scripture is mere mystery; and therefore since all scripture is the object of our faith, we must sometimes believe things which we cannot comprehend. I answer, if we are to believe mysteries when clearly revealed, yet it does not from thence follow, that therefore we must believe impossibilities and contradictions. A just God can never lay on us a necessity of submitting to those terms and conditions of salvation which we cannot possibly understand. Hence it follows, that such obscure mysteries as evidently do contradict other plain truths, do no-ways concern us, so long as we are in the dark as to their true sense and meaning.

When a mystery is plainly expressed in scripture, as when it is said, a virgin did conceive a son, or that all men shall rise again, or that Christ shall judge the world, and no other plain scripture contradicts it, neither is it contrary to human reason; we are then to believe it, though it may be above our understanding to conceive which way the power of God should enable a virgin to conceive, or in what manner our scattered dust shall be recollected and revived, or how our blessed saviour can be made fit for so great a work as an universal judge.

But

But if some places in scripture had said these things, but others more numerous and plain had affirmed the contrary, or had it contradicted any self-evident principle of reason; we might then have rejected the belief thereof as safely and with as good authority as we now do that of the popish transubstantiation, which by the way is as expressly contained in scripture as is that of the trinity.

But for mysteries of a more doubtful nature, such as want the qualifications before expressed, they can no-ways oblige our faith, so long as their true meaning lies hid in obscurity of expression. There will be a time when all secret things shall be revealed, and all hidden things shall be brought to light, for which we must wait with patience, and not pretend, as some do, to explain even what is most hard and difficult, by such notions as are purely unintelligible; for this is but the more to confound their minds which were at a loss before.

It is true, if any man can rationally explain a mystery, he then does good service both to God and man; but this we are infallibly certain is never done, when the sense that is given of a doubtful place of scripture is contrary not only to the general current of the rest of the word of God, but is also a contradiction to the most self-evident sentiments of human understanding.

But some may say, if such passages as these are so generally to be overlooked in the business of religion,
why

why then did God cause them to be recorded in the sacred scripture? I answer, that it may as well be asked, why God made so many sorts of small, and, as we think, useless insects to live upon the earth, since we know not what benefit they are of to the world? Doubtless God, who does nothing in vain, made them for some great ends, though our short-sighted understanding cannot perceive what those excellent ends of his are: Even so likewise will his wisdom be manifested some way or other, by what to us is yet hard to be understood in scripture. And though we are ignorant of the true meaning of many of the most obscure and doubtful parts thereof, yet the ends and purposes of God in causing them to be written either are or shall in due time be accomplished.

In the mean time we ought to magnify that manifest goodness of God, who hath communicated to mankind such a number of plain and evident precepts as will be fully sufficient for salvation, if we carefully observe them. All are concerned in the business of life eternal, therefore hath God given us laws suitable to our common capacities: The gospel of Christ was preached to the poor, which intimates that the glad tidings of salvation did not consist of unintelligible mysteries, but of such plain and evident notions as did fit the understandings of the lowest people.

OF FAITH AND REASON.

There are a sort of people in the world of several false persuasions, who, when they can no longer maintain their errors against the power of true reason, fly to faith as their last refuge, and tell us, that it is by faith only that we are made able to *overcome the world*, 1 John v. 4. And that therefore it is necessary for men to believe what yet they cannot comprehend.

To this I answer, that faith indeed is the chief duty of the christian religion, because it is the belief of God's promises and threatenings that does engage mankind to the obedience of his precepts: Few, I doubt, would be religious, were there no fear of hell, nor hopes of heaven. It is said, that *all things are possible to him that believes*, Mark ix. 23. which in other words imports, that no difficulty nor hazard, how great soever, shall be able to stop them in their christian race: And in this sense it only is, that faith is said to be the victory that overcometh the world.

But though it is only a firm persuasion of the truth of God's promises and threatenings that inspires the faithful with courage to overcome and conquer the temptations not only of the devil, but of the lusts of this world too; *yet this is no argument, that therefore we must assent to that which we see no reason to believe*; for then we might be every whit as liable to believe things false as things that are true.

Wherefore

Wherefore it behoves us to be very watchful and circumspect in avoiding false principles ; for error of any kind will rather make us slaves to the devil, than enable us to overcome and conquer him. As therefore thou oughtest to embrace truth wheresoever thou dost find it, so be as ready to relinquish errors, when by carefully examining into religion thou hast discovered them to be such ; for *it is in every respect as heroic an act of faith to believe ourselves in the wrong when we really are so, as it is to adhere steadfastly to a truth undoubted.*

Know then that no kind of faith can be true that is certainly unreasonable, for the light of nature is as much God's law as divine revelation ; and none must ever think, that God's law can contradict itself. Right self-evident reason is the only touchstone that men have to distinguish truth from error : and it is the agreement even of scripture with this reason that makes us know it to be the word of God ; *it is not our forefathers saying so, but the exact concurrence of the witness of our spirit and that testimony.*

And though some would persuade us not at all to trust to reason in matters of religion ; yet it is observable, that those very men that exclaim most against it are yet necessitated to give reasons of their own to prove, if it were possible, that your reason is not to be relied on : and certainly that guide must needs be most safe, whom the whole world, in some kind or other, do find it so necessary to follow.

OF THE TRUE NATURE OF RELIGION.

It is certain, that the laws of religion are designed by God for the only good of mankind; he forbids some things and commands others, only because the one is prejudicial to man's well-being, and the other is absolutely necessary to his peace and happiness. In order then to the true happiness of this life, there is required a suitable way of living, even such as respects the universal good of the whole kind; which, in short, is that which men call a life of holiness, or a life perfectly free from every kind of injustice or mischief both to one's self and others.

And as for the heavenly state, that is a state of perfect goodness and purity; and it is impossible, that any one can take delight in that divine kind of life hereafter, which he hated here: And for that reason could the wicked be admitted into heaven, yet then would they be unhappy, by reason that *there* none of those base and ignoble pleasures would be found which their corrupted minds on earth did love and admire. It is then only a good life on earth that can fit us for the heavenly inheritance.

Now this goodness of life, so necessary to man's both present and future bliss, does not consist in speculation, but in practice. Belief is of no other use than as it enacts obedience; and that is the reason, that the day of judgment is represented as taking no notice of the opinions, but of the practices of men.

Have

Have you fed the hungry? Have you clothed the naked? Have you visited the sick? *Mat. xxv. 36.* At that great solemnity the enquiry will not be, what had you in the world? or what did you profess? but what good deeds have you done therein? how has your care been to promote the universal good of rational beings? Have you renounced the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life? *1 John ii. 26.* and lived *soberly, and righteously, and godlily in this present world?* *Tit. ii. 12.* and done *justly, and loved mercy, and walked humbly with God?* *Mich. vi. 8.*

Now if it is the goodness of our practice that is the one thing necessary to salvation, then the disbelieving either a few doubtful, or else a few unreasonable opinions, can never be dangerous. Let us then (as to the point now under examination) ask ourselves but this one question, Will the belief of the doctrine of a trinity make me a more merciful and righteous man than I shall be if I did profess the contrary? Will it make me love and honour God better? Will it make the service which I render to his Divine Majesty a more reasonable service? And if on serious consideration you find it will not, then it is plain that the Unitarian faith, which denies a trinity of persons in the Godhead, is much to be preferred, since it is not perplexed with such contradictions to human understanding, but depends on more plain and noble evidences, and does also in all respects whatsoever effectually secure a good life; which, when all is done, is the very soul and

life of religion, and will stand by a man when *hypostatical unions*, and *mutual consciousness*, and *Somewhats*, will prove but poor things to depend upon for salvation.

There can be no danger of damnation for not assenting to such mysterious notions as men can at no tolerable rate understand, such as is that of the doctrine of a trinity, (*which makes the divine power of the Godhead to reside in three distinct persons, whose constitution is like that of a free state, rather than the more divine government of a single monarchy*) if in the mean time they believe heartily the plain doctrine revealed in God's word, and live up truly to the undoubted precepts which the christian religion commands, which I am certain does no where say, that unless ye believe that three persons are truly God, ye shall certainly be damned.

SALVATION AND THE BELIEF OF THE TRINITY NOT INCONSISTENT.

It is objected as dangerous to believe the doctrine of God's being but one in person, because we should hereby, as much as in us lies, exclude from salvation all those pious and just men who in former ages have lived and died in the belief of a trinity. I answer; the wisdom of the unitarian doctrine never was so uncharitable as to suppose this; yet doubtless the belief of a trinity must needs much lessen their future happiness, though

though not wholly debar them of salvation: And therefore to persist therein, after due admonition especially, is very imprudent and dangerous.

It is plain, that though those who believe a trinity do believe more than either God or Christ do require as necessary to salvation, yet together or therewith many persons do also believe all the chief fundamentals in religion that are requisite to save them; and therefore their hope and trust in God's mercy on one hand may out-ballance their error on the other. If God winked at the ignorance of the virtuous gentiles, how can we imagine that he should not be gracious to the heedless and unwitting errors of the humble and contrite-hearted christian?

If any man (saith the apostle) build on the foundation bay, and straw, and stubble, that is, doctrine that will not stand the test of truth, he shall suffer loss; yet he himself shall be saved, but so as by fire, 1 Cor. iii. 15. that is, with great difficulty he shall escape damnation. If God should be extreme to mark what is done amiss, no man could stand in judgment before him; as it is in Psalm clxiii. 2. and cxxx. 3. All salvation is of the free grace and mercy of God, who pardons iniquity, transgression and sin, Exod. xxxiv. 7. A good life will make great abatements upon the account of a bad faith; Mercy rejoiceth against judgment, Jam. ii. 13. and charity shall cover a multitude of sins, 1 Pet. iv. 8.

But though it is possible for a man to be saved in this faith, who otherwise has lived well, yet it will

doubtless much lessen his future happiness, for error of any kind is the fruitful parent of many mischiefs ; it betrays us into absurdities, and involves us in many unwarrantable words and actions. As our faith is, so will our practice be apt to be, and consequently error in one respect or other will be apt to make mens lives less innocent ; and the less innocent our actions are, the less doubtless will our reward hereafter be : For the eternal glories, *compared to that of the sun, and moon, and stars,* 1 Cor. xv. will be in proportion to the degrees of our christian perfection. They therefore whose religion is such only as will but just preserve them from damnation must not expect so large a share of the divine recompences, as by God's grace is due to the enlarged capacity of the more exactly knowing and undefiled soul.

But notwithstanding what has been said on the behalf of those otherwise good livers who have not been ignorant of the truth merely out of malice and design, I add, that in case men of *false principles* are told plainly that they are in the wrong, and yet they still do obstinately persist therein, and refuse to consider seriously the arguments both of scripture and reason that are offered to convince them ; I see not how in any case it is possible for such to be saved : for this is truly and plainly to reject the counsel of God, and to do despite to the spirit of grace.

BY WHAT NATURE THE WORLD WAS
REDEEMED.

WHEN men have argued whatever they can about the necessity of Christ his being truly God, that so the sacrifice he offered might be of merit sufficient to answer the demands of God's most infinite justice; yet after all it must be acknowledged, that our peace was made with God, only by the holy life and death of an human person: for nothing that is truly God can die or shed blood, but *it is by blood, even the blood of a dying Jesus, that we are cleansed from all sin, 1 John i. 7.* And this his death for our redemption is an undeniable instance to prove, that his person was truly human.

Christ Jesus our lord was undoubtedly filled with the divine spirit, for in him dwelt the fulness of the godhead; but this did not make him God, any more than a believer shall be made God by *receiving of his fulness, John i. 16.* or by being *partaker of the divine nature* promised to such, *2 Pet. i. 4.* It only fitted him for the work of redemption: he by that eminent inhabitation of the divine spirit became able to surmount all temptations to sin; and it was only the undefiled obedience of his life, even unto death, that made the sacrifice which he offered unto God acceptable.

The blood that was shed to manifest the intire obedience of Jesus unto God was no other than the blood of a most holy and excellent man; it was not the blood
of

of God, as some men rashly do affirm: On the cross he that thus died cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Now for him to be God that thus prayed to God, is, I think, impossible. Wherefore it is evident, that he who thus died was not a true deity; and yet it was by him that died that the world was redeemed; for which *blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who hath thus visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up a mighty salvation for us out of the house of his servant David, Luke i. 68, 69.*

A GENERAL RULE FOR ANSWERING ALL OBJECTIONS.

HAVING considered and answered the principal objections urged in favour of the doctrine which asserts Jesus-Christ to be truly God, in opposition to that of his being only *the man who is the mediator between God and men, 1 Tim. ii. 5.* or that which asserts, that none is God but the father of Christ, it will be needless to confute those other little objections which still remain; since when the chiefest strength that does uphold an error is overthrown, it is not in the power of some little props to maintain and support it: nevertheless, lest the minds of some should thereby be perplexed, I here lay down one general rule, by which all other objections may be easily refuted, and that is this:

If any principle in religion be true by the greater and by the plainer number of evidences, it can never
be

be false by a few in number, or by them that are dark and doubtful.

If then the arguments to prove the true God to be only the father of Jesus Christ are more in number, and plainer to be understood, than those are which are objected in favour of the contrary, you need then only to reply thus, that the proofs that make for it are more both in number and weight, than those that are against it; and that therefore it would be unpardonable to suffer such trifles to unsettle and shake your faith.

Suppose a man objects against the doctrine of God's being but one in person this text, *Let us make man*, Gen. i. 26. and endeavour to prove from thence, that God is more than one in person, is it reasonable to suffer this to alter your judgment, when for that one passage, *us*, urged in favour of the belief of more persons than one, you have ten thousand that mention God to be but only one, in such terms as these, *I, thou, me, he, his?* And as for the terms of *we, they, them, &c.* they are not mentioned in scripture so much as once, as applied to God alone.

If every single objection that is started should be admitted to be of authority sufficient to invalidate the best and clearest proofs; or if every hard and doubtful passage in scripture were enough to overthrow all them that are clear and plain, then all true religion would soon be at end: for some plausible exceptions may be made against the chiefest and plainest truths in religion
otherwise

otherwise so many false and erroneous opinions would not have obtained that authority that they have in the world.

Indeed when we are told plainly, that we are in an error, and arguments truly considerable are at the same time offered to undeceive us, we ought then to suffer ourselves to be convinced: for if what is thus urged carries with it so much clear evidence as makes it undoubted, the changing then of our opinions will not only be reasonable but very honourable too, since nothing is more ignoble and base than to be a slave to error, from which not any thing in this world but truth can free us.

OF THE TRUE NOTION OF THE HOLY GHOST.

It is plain from the general analogy of true faith grounded on scripture-evidence, that the holy ghost is no distinct person subsisting of himself; for then it is clear, that our Lord could not be the son of him who is now called God the father, or the first person in the supposed trinity, since it is plain that the Virgin *Mary's* conception was occasioned by the *overshadowing of the Holy Ghost*, Luke i. 35. which all trinitarians acknowledge to be the third person, and not the first: It is expressly said, that *that which was conceived in her was of the holy ghost*, Mat. i. 20. *And that she was with child by him*, Mat. i. 18. Wherefore it is evident from these additional words, *and the power of the highest shall*

shall overshadow thee, Luke i. 35. that the holy ghost is only that divine and invisible power of God, by which he works his will and pleasure in the world; and by consequence, that God, and the spirit of God, are no more two distinct persons than man and the spirit of man are; for to the one the other is compared in the sacred scripture, 1 Cor. ii. 11. And as the members of man's body do secretly and wonderfully obey the dictates of his will or mind, so, and much more so, do all creatures act, and are commanded by the Almighty power of God's divine and most wise will and pleasure.

When therefore all the elect people of God are said to be sanctified by the holy ghost, it must be understood of that new temper and inclination of mind which God by his divine and invisible power does work or cause in men. When he powerfully raises up in them holy thoughts, and excites in their minds new desires, he is then truly said to sanctify them by his spirit; and when men wilfully reject those motions to goodness, which God by his power does raise up in them, they are then truly said to resist, and grieve, and quench his spirit.

And whereas the spirit is said to receive, and to be sent, from whence some would infer its distinct personality: it is replied, that these are but improper expressions, such as are before noted to be spoken of God and Christ; they are words fitted to our dull apprehensions rather than to the true nature of the
spirit

spirit itself, even as God is represented as having the actions and passions of a man, and to come down from Heaven, when yet we know that he is already every where, though our mortal eyes have not powers fitted to perceive him: He that filleth all things can no-ways be capable of moving out of his place. Such expressions as these therefore are plainly improper, and must not be understood literally, or as at first sight they seem to express.

The CONCLUSION.

TO what has been said on this subject, I will only add this one solemn protestation, that as what I here offer is grounded on the dictates only of plain and positive scripture, and the most evident and perfect reason, as I humbly judge: So the design of this its publication is the alone glory of God Almighty, and the Church's peace, which no-ways can be established firmly but on the foundations of truth.

And though I am sensible the work is not performed with that exactness as to be in every part without reproof, yet I am satisfied that in the main I have therein managed the true cause of God and Religion.

Nevertheless, I have a secret distrust within me, that what I here offer will not be kindly received: for my best endeavours must not expect to find better success than did those of my blessed lord and master; who, though *he spake as never man spake*, and confirmed

firmed his doctrine with such miracles as did demonstrate him to be a teacher *sent of God*, yet was believed on but by a few: The praise of men was then generally much more beloved than the praise of God; *John xii. 43.*

And I doubt the case is still the same; men now seek their own and not the things of Jesus Christ, *Phil. ii. 21.* They that love riches will hardly run the hazard of losing any temporal preferment for the sake of truth. Others will be averse from acknowledging themselves in a mistake, who before have been honoured with the repute both of orthodox and learned men; and those who have been long prepossessed with the contrary persuasion will hardly relinquish it, though the best of reasons be offered to convince them of their error.

In short, the religion of mankind generally is but a self-righteousness, a law rather of their own making than of God's appointing. There are but very few that in all things do either live or believe as the gospel directs them: the whole world does for the most part prefer some senseless humour before sacred truth, and that immortal bliss to which it would conduct them.

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