

**A BRIEF DECLARATION AND DEFENCE
OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY**

BY JOHN OWEN

EDITED AND PUT INTO SIMPLER ENGLISH

BY

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“Search the Scriptures” — John 5:39

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PREFATORY NOTE

Few of Owen's treatises have been more extensively circulated and made generally useful than his "*Brief Declaration and Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity...*" It was published in 1669; and the author of the anonymous memoir of Owen, prefixed to an edition of his Sermons in 1720, informs us, "This small piece has met with such a universal acceptance by true Christians of all denominations, that the *seventh edition* of it was lately published." An edition printed in Glasgow was published in 1798, and professes to be the *eighth*. A translation of the work appeared in the Dutch language (Vitringa, *Doct. Christ.*, pars. 6:p. 6, edit. 1776).

At the time when the treatise was published, the momentous doctrines of the Trinity and the Atonement were being violently attacked; but it was not so much for the refutation of opponents as for "the edification and establishment of the ordinary Christian" that our author wrote the following little work. The reader will find in it traces of that deep and familiar acquaintance with opposing views, and with the highest theology involved in the questions which might be expected from John Owen on a subject which he seems to have studied with peculiar industry and research. Reference may be made to his "*Vindiciae Evangelicae*" and his "*Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*", in proof how thoroughly he had mastered the whole controversy with regard to the divinity and satisfactory work of Christ, so far as the discussion had extended to his day. His controversy with John Biddle, in which he wrote his "*Vindiciae Evangelicae*" took place in 1655; and the first volume of the "Exposition" was published only the year before his "Brief Declaration" appeared. The latter may be regarded, accordingly, as the substance of these important works, condensed and adapted to popular use and comprehension, in all that relates to the proper Godhead of the Son, and the nature of the work he accomplished in the redemption of his people.

Notes have been supplied, in the course of the treatise, explanatory of some allusions to various writers whose names are now almost unknown, and, in one or two instances, we have briefly indicated to what extent passages quoted by Owen have been affected by the results and discoveries of modern criticism. For the special object which he had in view, he adopts the course which has since been generally approved and pursued, as obviously the wisest and safest in defending and expounding the doctrine of the Trinity. He appeals to the broad mass of Scriptural evidence in favour of the doctrine, and, after proving the divine unity, together with the divinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit respectively, is careful not to enter into any discussion with regard to the unrevealed mysteries involved in the relations of the Trinity, beyond what was necessary for the refutation of those who argue that, whatever in this high doctrine is incomprehensible by *reason*, must be incompatible with *revelation*. This little work is further remarkable for the almost total absence of the tedious digressions that abound in the other works of Owen. Such logical unity and concentration of thought is all the more remarkable when we find that the treatise was written, as he tells us, "in a few hours." But it was a subject with which his mind was fully stored, and his whole heart was interested. The treatise that follows, therefore, was not the spark struck in some moment of conflict, and serving only a temporary purpose, but is a steady flame nourished from the beaten oil of the sanctuary. EDITOR

TO THE READER

This small treatise has no other design but your good and your establishment in the truth. And therefore, laying aside that consideration alone, I might have been excused from the labour of those hours which were spent in its composure. So, in the work itself, I admitted no one thought but how the things dealt with in it might and ought to be managed for your spiritual benefit and advantage. Other designs most men have in writing what is to be exposed to public view, and lawfully may have done so. In this, I have nothing but merely your good. I have neither been particularly provoked nor opposed by the adversaries of the truth here argued against, nor do I have any need, out of self-respect, to publish such a small, plain discourse as this. Love alone for the truth, and the welfare of your soul, has given power in responding to those who pressed me into this small service.

The matters here dealt with are by all confessed to be of the greatest moment, such as the eternal welfare of the souls of men is immediately and directly concerned in it. All those who believe the sacred truths here proposed and explained also unanimously profess and contend for, nor is it denied by those by whom they are opposed. There is no need, therefore, to give you any special reasons to prove your concern in these things, nor the greatness of that concern, so as to induce you to take up their serious consideration. It were well, indeed, that these great, sacred, and mysterious truths might, without any contention or controversy about them, be left to the faith of believers, as proposed in Scripture, with that explanation of them which, in the ordinary ministry and dispensing of the gospel, is necessary and required.

Certainly, these tremendous mysteries are not by us willingly to be exposed, or prostituted to the silly arguments of every perverse questioner and disputer — those learned researchers of this century, whose pretended wisdom (indeed, ignorance, darkness, and folly) God has designed to confound and destroy in them and by them. For my part, I can assure you, reader, I have no desire to contend and dispute about these things which I humbly adore and believe, as they are revealed. It is the demands of adversaries, in their attempts to draw and seduce the souls of men from the truth and simplicity of the gospel in these great fundamentals, that alone can justify any to debate upon, or eristically [in the form of controversy] to handle these awesome mysteries. This makes it our duty, and that indispensably, inasmuch as we are required to “contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude verse 3) But yet, also, when this necessity is imposed on us, we are by no means discharged from that humble reverence of mind with which we ought always to be conversant about them; nor from that regard for the way and manner of their revelation in Scripture which may preserve us from all unnecessary mixing of litigious or exotic phrases and expressions in their assertion and declaration. I know our critics could, in the matter, decry anything particularly mysterious in these things, although they are frequently and emphatically in the Scriptures affirmed so to be. But, while they deny the mysteries of the things themselves — which have in every way become the glorious being and wisdom of God — they are forced to assign such an enigmatic meaning to the words, expressions, and propositions in which they are revealed and declared in Scripture, as to turn almost the whole gospel into an

allegory, where nothing is properly expressed but as some kind of allusion to something else: which irrational way of proceeding leaves nothing certain in what is, or may be, expressed by word or writing, that is covered over with a pretence of *right reason*; which utterly refuses to be so employed. These things the reader will find afterward uncovered, so far as the nature of this brief discourse will bear. And I only desire these few things from him who intends its perusal —

Firstly, that he would not look at the subject here treated of as a common matter of controversy in religion —

“Neque denim hic levia aut ludicra petuntur Praemia; lectoris de vita animaeque salute Certatur.” (Virgil. Aen. vii. 764)

They are things which immediately and directly in themselves concern the eternal salvation of the souls of men; and their consideration ought always to be attended with a due sense of their weight and importance.

Secondly, let him bring with him a due reverence for the majesty and infinite, incomprehensible nature of God, as something that in no way can be prostituted to the quarrelsome and sophistic scanning of men of corrupt minds, but be humbly adored, according to the revelation that he has made of himself.

Thirdly, that he must be willing to submit his soul and conscience to the plain and obvious sense of Scriptural propositions and testimonies, without seeking out evasions and pretences for unbelief. These requests I can but judge with equity, and do not fear success when they are sincerely complied with.

As an extra procedure, I have to add that, in handling the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, I have proceeded on that principle which, as it is fully confirmed in Scripture, so it has been constantly maintained and adhered to by the most of those who with judgement and success have managed these controversies against the Socinians. And this is, that the essential holiness of God with his justice or righteousness, and as the supreme governor of all, indispensably requires that sin should not also lately go unpunished; and that it should do so, stands with repugnance against those holy properties of his nature. This, I say, has always been constantly maintained by far the greatest number of those who have thoroughly understood the controversy in this matter, and have successfully engaged in it. And as the orthodox arguments for their assertion are plainly unanswerable, so the neglect of abiding in them is causelessly to forego one of the most fundamental and invincible principles in our cause. He who first laboured in the defence of the doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ, after Socinus had formed his theories about the salvation that he brought about, and began to dispute about it, was Jacobus Covetus, a learned man, who laid the foundation for his whole dispute about the justice of God, necessarily requiring, and that indispensably, the punishment of sin. And, indeed, the state of the controversy as it is laid down by Fausto Sozzini (Socinus) in his book *“De Jesu Christo Servadore”*, which is an answer to this Covetus, is genuine, and ought not to be drawn back from, as having become the direct ground of all the controversial writings on that subject which have since been published in Europe. And it is found in these words laid down by Socinus himself —

“Communes et orthodoxy (ut asseris) sentential est, Jesum Christum ideo servatorem nostrum esse, quia divinae justitiae per quam peccatores damnari merebamus, pro peccatis nostris plane satisfecerit; quae satisfactio, per Fidem, imputatur nobis ex dono Dei credentibus.”

This is what he ascribes to Covetus —

“The common and orthodox judgement is, that Jesus Christ is therefore our Saviour because he has satisfied the justice of God, by which we, being sinners, deserved to be condemned for all our sins”

[Which satisfaction, through faith, is imputed to us who believe through the grace of God, which is the orthodox faith in the satisfaction made by Christ — Ed.]

In opposition to this, Socinus thus expresses his own opinion —

“Ego vero censeo, et orthodoxam sententiam esse arbitror, Jesum Christum ideo servatorem nostrum esse, quia salutes aeternae viam nobis annuntiaverit, confirmaverit, et in sua ipsius persona, cum vitae exemplo, tum ex mortuis resurgendo, manifeste ostenderit; vitamque aeternam nobis ei fidem habentibus ipse daturus sit. divinae autem justitiae, per quam peccatores damnari meremur, pro peccatis nostris neque illum satisfecisse, neque et satisfaceret, opus fuisse arbitror.”

(I judge and suppose it to be the orthodox opinion, that Jesus Christ is therefore our Saviour because he has declared to us the way of eternal salvation, and confirmed it in his own person; manifestly showing it, both by the example of his life and by rising from the dead; and in that he will give eternal life to us who believe in him. But I affirm that he neither made satisfaction to the justice of God, by which we deserved to be damned for our sins, nor was there any need that he should do so.)

This is the true heart of the question, and the principal subtlety of Jan Krell (Crellius), the great defender of this part of the doctrine of Socinus in his book of the *“Causes of the Death of Christ”*; and the defence of this book *“De Jesu Christo Salvatore”* consists in speaking almost the same words with those whom he opposed, but still intending the same things as Socinus himself. This opinion, as was said of Socinus, Covetus opposed and proved on the principle mentioned earlier.

The same truth was confirmed also by Georgius Zarnovitus, who first wrote against Socinus' book; as also by Otto Casmann (Casmannus), who engaged in the same work; and by Abraham Salinarius. Upon the same foundation, proceed David Paraeus, Johannes Piscator, Sibrand Lubbert (Lubbertus), Lucius, John Cameron (Camero), Gijsbert Voet (Gisbertus Voetius), Moïse Amyraut (Moses Amyraldus), Josue de Placaeus (Josephus Placaeus), André Rivet (Rivetius), Anton van Wale (Walaesus), Antonius Thysius, Althingius, Samuel Des Marets (Maresius), Andreas Essenius, Arnoldus Montanus (Arnoldus), Franciscus Turretinus, Richard Baxter, with many others. The Lutherans who have managed these controversies, such as Joannes Tarnovius, Balthasar Meisner (Meisnerus), Abraham Calov (Calovius), Stegmannus, Matthias Martini (Martinius), Franzius Wolfgang (Franzius), with all others of their

way, have constantly maintained the same great fundamental principle of this doctrine of the satisfaction of Christ; and it has well and solidly been of late asserted among ourselves on the same foundation. And as many of these authors expressly blame some of the school men, such as Thomas Aquinas, **Durand** de Saint-Pourçain (Durandus), Gabriel Biel, Pierre Tataret (Tataretus), for granting a possibility of pardon without satisfaction, as opening a way for the Socinian error in this matter; so also they are not afraid to affirm that the foregoing of this principle of God's vindictive justice, indispensably requiring the punishment of sin, not only weakens the cause of the truth, but indeed leave it without defence.

However, I suppose men ought to be wary how they censure the authors mentioned, as those who expose the cause they undertook to defend to contempt; for greater, more able, and learned defenders, this truth has not as yet found, nor stands in need of.

John Owen

THE PREFACE

The disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ, having made that great confession of him, in distinction and opposition to those who accounted him only as a prophet — “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mat. 16:14, 16), he does, on that occasion, give out to them that great charter of the church’s stability and continuance — “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Verse 18) He is himself the rock upon which his church is built — as God is called the rock of his people on account of his eternal power and immutability (Deut. 32:4, 18, 31; Is. 26:4); and himself the *spiritual* rock which gave out supplies of mercy and assistance to the people in the wilderness. (1 Cor. 10:4)

The relation of the *professing church* to this rock consists in the faith of this confession, that he is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This, our Lord Jesus Christ has promised to secure against all attempts to overthrow it; yet so as plainly to declare that there would be great and severe opposition made to it. For whereas the *prevalence* of the gates of hell in enmity to this confession is *denied*, a great and vigorous attempt to prevail is no less certainly *foretold*. Neither has it otherwise fallen out. In all ages, from the first solemn foundation of the church of the New Testament, it has, one way or other, been fiercely attempted by the “gates of hell.” For some time after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, the principal endeavours of Satan, and men acting under him, or actioned by him, were pointed against the very foundation of the church, as laid out in the expression before mentioned. Almost all the errors and heresies which, for three or four centuries perplexed her, were principally against the Person of Christ himself; and, consequently, the nature and being of the holy and blessed Trinity. But being disappointed in his design, through the watchful care of the Lord Christ over his promise, in the following ages, Satan turned his craft and violence against different parts of the superstructure, and, by the assistance of the Papacy, cast them into confusion — nothing, as it were, remaining firm, stable, and in order, but only this one confession, which in a particular manner the Lord Christ has taken upon himself to secure.

In these latter ages of the world, the power and care of Jesus Christ in the reviving of his church, in her reformation, even the ruined heaps of its building have been again brought into some tolerable order and beauty. The old enemy of its peace and welfare falling into a disappointment, and finding his travail and labour for many generations in a greater part frustrated, he has returned again to his old work of attacking *the foundation* itself. He is untiring and restless, and can be quiet neither as conqueror nor conquered — nor will be so until he is bound and cast into the lake that burns with fire. For no sooner had the reformation of religion confirmed itself in some of the European provinces, but immediately, in a proportion of distance not unanswerable to what fell out from the first foundation of the church, several people, by the instigation of Satan, have attempted to disturb and ruin it by the very same errors and heresies about the Trinity, the Person of Christ and his offices, the Person of the Holy Spirit and his grace, with which its first trouble and ruin was attempted. And of this, we have of late an instance given among ourselves, and that notoriously

known, through a mixture of imprudence and impudence in those that have managed it, that a very brief reflection upon it will suffice for our present design.

It was always supposed, and known to some, that there are several people in this nation, who, having been themselves seduced into Socinianism, made it their business, under various pretences, to draw others into a compliance with them in the same way and persuasion. Neither has this, for some years, been so secretly carried out, but that the design of it has variously uncovered itself by *overt acts* of conferences, disputations, and publishing of books; which last way of late has been carefully pursued. Unto these three, there is now a *visible accession* made, by that sort of people whom men call Quakers, from their deportment at the first erection of their way (long since deserted by them), until, by some new revolution of opinion, they call themselves a more orthodox denomination. That there is a conjunction issued between both these sorts of men, in opposing the holy Trinity, with the person and grace of Christ, the pamphlets of late published by one and another sufficiently prove. For however they may seem in various things as yet to look different, yet, like Samson's foxes, they are tied together by the tail of consent in these firebrand opinions, and jointly attempt to consume the standing corn of the church of God. And the joint management of their business lately has been as though it were their design to give as great a vogue and report of their opinions by any way they can.

Hence, besides their attempts to be proclaiming their opinions under various pretences, in all assemblies where they may intrude themselves (as they know well) without trouble, they are exceeding careful to scatter and give away, yes, imposing *gratis* (free) and, as to some, *ingratiis* (unwilling), the small books they publish, to all sorts of people promiscuously, as they have find advantage to do so. By this means, their opinions being lately the talk and discourse of *the common sort of Christians*, and the exercise of many — amongst whom are not a few that, on some accounts, which I shall not mention here, may possibly be exposed to disadvantage and prejudice by this — it has been thought fit by some that the sacred truths which these men oppose should be plainly and briefly asserted and confirmed from Scripture; that those of *the meanest sort of professors of the faith*, who are sincere and upright, exercising themselves to keep a good conscience in matters of faith and obedience to God, may have something at hand, both to guide them in their further inquiry into the truth, as also to confirm their faith in what they have already received, when, at any time it is shaken or opposed by the "cunning sleight of men that lie in wait to deceive." (Eph. 4:14) And this is the design of the following discourse. It may possibly be judged needless by some, as it was at its first proposal to him by whom it is written; and that because this matter at present is, by a special providence, cast on other hands, who both have, and doubtless, as occasion shall require, will well acquit themselves in the defence of the truths opposed.

Not to give any other account of the reasons for this small undertaking, it may suffice that *in publico discrimine omnis homo miles est* (every man's concern lying in a common danger) — it is free for everyone to manage it as he thinks best, and is able, so it may be, without prejudice to the whole or the particular concerns of others. If a city catches fire, whose bucket that brings water to quench will be refused? The attempt to set fire to the city of God by the opinions mentioned, is open and plain; and a timely stop being to be put it out, the more hands that are employed in its quenching, the more speedy and secure is the effect likely to be.

Now, because the asserters of these unorthodox opinions mentioned seem to set out themselves to be *some great ones*, above the ordinary measure of men, as having found out, and being able publicly to maintain, such things as never would have entered into the minds of others to have thought about or conceived; and also that they seem with many to be thought worthy of their consideration because they are new, and such as they have not been acquainted with before, I shall, in this preface, briefly show that those who have among us undertaken the management of these opinions have found nothing new in them, but either a little contemptible silly argument and play on words on the one hand, or futile, affected, unintelligible expressions, on the other — the opinions themselves being none other but such as the church of God, having been opposed by and troubled with from the beginning, has prevailed against and triumphed over in all generations. And were it not that confidence is the only relief which enraged impotence adheres unto and expects supplies from, I should greatly admire that those among us who have undertaken an enforcement of these old exploded errors, whose weakness so openly discovers and proclaim itself in all their endeavours, should judge themselves competent to give a new spirit of life to the dead carcass of these rotten heresies, over which the faith of the saints in all ages has triumphed, and which truth and learning have, under the care and watchfulness of Christ, so often chased out of the world.

The Jews, in the time of our Saviour's ministry on earth, being fallen greatly from the faith and worship of their forefathers, and ready to sink into their last and utmost apostasy from God, seem, among many other truths, to have much lost that of the doctrine of the holy Trinity, and of the Person of the Messiah. It was, indeed, suited, in the dispensation of God, to the work that the Lord Jesus had to fulfil in the world that, before his passion and resurrection, the knowledge of his divine nature, as to his individual person, should be concealed from most of men. For this cause, although he was —

“...in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, yet he made himself of no reputation, by taking on him the form of a servant, and being made in the likeness of men, that being found in the fashion of a man, he might be obedient unto death...” (Phil. 2:6-8)

So his divine glory was veiled for a season until he was “declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 1:4); and then “was glorified with that glory which he had with the Father before the world was.” (Jn. 17:6)

And as this dispensation was needful for the accomplishment of the whole work which, as our mediator, he had undertaken, so, in particular, he who was in himself the Lord of hosts, a sanctuary to them that feared him, became “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” (Is. 8:13-14) See also Lk. 2:34; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8; Is. 28:16. But yet, despite, as occasion requires, suitably to his own holy ends and designs, he did not forbid to give plain and open testimony to his own divine nature and eternal pre-existence before his incarnation. And this was what, of all other things, most provoked the worldly-minded Jews with whom he had to do; for having, as was said, mostly lost the doctrine of the Trinity and Person of the Messiah,

whenever he asserted his Deity, they were immediately enraged, and attempted to destroy him. So it is plainly stated in Jn. 8:66-69 —

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.’ Then said the Jews unto him, ‘Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?’ Jesus said unto them, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.’ Then took they up stones to cast at him.”

See also Jn. 10:30-33 —

“I and my Father are one. Then the Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, ‘Many good works have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?’ The Jews answered him, saying, ‘For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, maketh thyself God.’”

They understood well enough the meaning of those words — “I and my Father are one”, namely, that they were a clear assertion of his being God. This caused their rage. And this the Jews all abide by to this day — namely, that he declared himself to be God, and therefore they slew him. Whereas the first discovery of a plurality of persons in the divine essence consists in the revelation of the divine nature and personality of the Son, this being opposed, persecuted, and blasphemed by these Jews, they may be seen and looked upon as the *first assertors of that unbelief* which now some seek again so earnestly to promote. The Jews persecuted the Lord Christ because he, being a man, declared himself also to be God; and others are ready to revile and reproach those who believe and teach what he declared.

After the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, all things being filled with tokens, evidences, and effects of his divine nature and power (Rom. 1:4), the church that began to be gathered in his name and according to his doctrine, being, by his special institution, initiated into the express profession of the doctrine of the holy Trinity, as being *baptised in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit*. This confession comprised the whole of the truth contended for, and by the indispensable placing of it at the first entering into all obedience to him, is made the doctrinal foundation of the church — so it continued for a season in the quiet and undisturbed possession of this sacred treasure.

The first who gave distress to the disciples of Christ by perverting the doctrine of the Trinity was Simon Magus, with his followers — an account of whose monstrous figments and unintelligible imaginations, with their coincidence with what some men dream in these latter days, shall elsewhere be given. Nor need I here to mention the company of Gnostics, Valentians, Marcionites, and Manichees, the foundation of all whose abominations lay in their misunderstanding of the being of God, their disbelief in the Trinity and the Person of Christ, as do some others also today.

Especially, in the early days, there was Cerinthus, who was more active than many others in his opposition to the doctrine of the person of Christ, and then of the holy Trinity. To put a stop to his abominations, all authors agree that John, writing his Gospel, began with a clear declaration of the eternal Deity of Christ with which it is prefaced. (Jn. 1:1-5) And this conflict was well attested by Irenaeus, Eusebius, and others, from Polycarp, who was John’s disciple, that this Cerinthus coming into the

place where the apostle was, he left it, adding, as a reason for his departure, lest the building, through the just judgement of God, should fall on them. And it was of the holy, wise providence of God to suffer some impious persons to oppose this doctrine before the death of that apostle, that he might, by infallible inspiration, further reveal, manifest, and declare it, to the establishment of the church in future ages. For what can more be desired to satisfy the minds of men who, in any sense, own the Lord Jesus Christ and the Scriptures, than that this controversy about the Trinity and person of Christ (for they stand and fall together) should be so eminently and expressly determined, as it were, immediately from heaven?

But he with whom we have to deal in this matter neither ever did, nor ever will, nor can, acquiesce or rest in the divine determination of anything about which he has stirred up strife and controversy: for as Cerinthus and the Ebionites persisted in the heresy of the Jews, that would have slain our Saviour for bearing witness to his own Deity, despite the evidence of that testimony, and the right understanding which the Jews had of his mind in the matter, so he incited others to engage and persist in their opposition to the truth, despite this second particular determination being beaten, in their confutation or confusion. For after the more weak and confused oppositions made to it by Theodotus Coriarius [that is, the tanner], Artemon, and some others. At length a stout champion appears visibly and expressly engaged against these fundamentals of our faith. This man was Paul of Samosata, Bishop of the church of Antioch, about the years (260-268) — a man of most intolerable pride, passion, and folly — the greatest that has left a name in ecclesiastical records. This man openly and avowedly denied the doctrine of the Trinity and the Deity of Christ in a special way. For although he endeavoured for a while to cloud his impious sentiments in ambiguous expressions, as others also have done (see Euseb., lib. vii. cap. 27), yet being pressed by the professors of the truth, and supposing his party was somewhat reputed, he plainly defended his heresy, and was cast out of the church where he presided. Some sixty years later, Photinus, Bishop of Sirmium, with a pretence of more sobriety in life and lifestyle, undertook the management of the same design, with the same success.

What followed afterwards among the churches of God in this matter is of too large and diffuse a nature to be reported. These examples I have fixed on only to intimate to people whose condition or occasions do not afford them ability or leisure of themselves to inquire into the memorials of times past among the professors of the gospel of Christ, that these oppositions which are made at present amongst us to these fundamental truths, and derived immediately from the late renewed enforcement of them made by Faustus Socinus and his followers, are nothing but old-fashioned attempts of Satan against the rock of the church and its up-building, in the confession of the Son of the living God. Now, as all men who have anything of a due reverence for God or his truth remaining in them, cannot but be wary how they give the least admittance to such opinions as have from the beginning been witnessed against and condemned by Christ himself, his apostles, and all that followed them in the faith and ways in all generations; so others whose hearts tremble for the danger that these sacred truths may be in of being corrupted or defamed by the present opposition against them, may know that it is no more but what the church and faith of professors have already been exercised with, and, through the power of him that enables them, have constantly triumphed over.

And, as for my part, I look upon it as a blessed effect of the holy, wise providence of God, that those who have long harboured these abominations of denying the holy Trinity, and the person and satisfaction of Christ in their minds, but yet have sheltered themselves from common observation under the shade of dark, obscure, and uncouth expressions, with many other unfounded pretences, should be given up to join themselves with such people (and to profess a conspiracy of persuasion with them in those opinions, who have rendered themselves infamous from the first foundation of Christianity), and where they will assuredly meet with the same success as those have done who have gone before.

For the other head of opposition made by these people to the truth with reference to the satisfaction of Christ, and the imputing of his righteousness for our justification, I have not much to say here as I have in times past. (Such as, *The Doctrine of Justification, Through The Imputation Of The Righteousness Of Christ; Explained, Confirmed, And Defended*, 1677) In general, the doctrine in which they boast, being first brought out in a rude misshapen manner by the Pelagian heretics, was afterwards improved by Peter Abelard, a sophisticated scholar in France; but it owes its principal form and poison to the efforts of Faustus Socinus, and those who have followed him in his subtle attempt to corrupt the whole doctrine of the gospel. Of these men, are those among us who, at this day, so busily dispute and write about the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, and his satisfaction — their followers and disciples. And it is much more from their masters, who were some of them men learned, diligent, and subtle, than from themselves, that they are judged to be of any great consideration. For I can truly say, that, upon the sedate examination of all that I could ever yet hear or get a sight of, either spoken or written by them — that is, any amongst us — I never yet observed an undertaking of so great importance managed with a greater evidence of incompetency and inability, to give any tolerable countenance unto it. If any of them shall for the future attempt to give any new countenance or props to their tottering errors, it will doubtless be attended unto by some of those many who cannot but know that it is incumbent on them “to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints.”

This present brief endeavour is only to assist and direct those who are less exercised in the ways of managing controversies in religion, that they may have a brief comprehension of the truths opposed, with the firm foundations whereon they are built, and be in a readiness to shield their faith both against the fiery darts of Satan, and secure their minds against the “cunning sleight of men, who lie in wait to deceive.” And wherein this discourse seems in anything to be too brief or concise, the author is not to be blamed who was confined unto these strait bounds by those whose requests enjoined him this service.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY

EXPLAINED AND DEFENDED

The doctrine of the blessed Trinity may be considered two ways: firstly, in respect to the revelation and proposal of it in Scripture, to direct us to the Author, object, and end of our faith, in our worship and obedience. Secondly, as it is further declared and explained in terms, expressions, and propositions, reduced from the original revelation of it, suited to it, and fit to direct and keep the mind from undue apprehensions of the things it believes, and to declare them for further edification. In the first way, it consists merely in the *propositions* with which the revelation of God is expressed in Scripture; and, in this regard, **two** things are required of us. Firstly, to *understand* the terms of the propositions, as they are expressions of truth; and, secondly, to *believe* the things taught, revealed, and declared in them. In the first instance, no more, I say, is required of us but that we assent to the assertions and testimonies of God concerning himself, according to their natural and genuine sense, as he will be known, believed in, feared, and worshipped by us, for he is our Creator, Lord, and Rewarder; and that because he himself has, by his revelation, not only warranted us to do so, but also made it our duty, both necessary and indispensable. Now, the sum of this revelation in this matter is, that *God is one* — that this one God is *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* — that *the Father is the Father of the Son*; and *the Son, the Son of the Father*; and *the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father and the Son*; and that, in respect of this their mutual relationship, they are distinct from each other.

This is the *substance* of the doctrine of the Trinity as to the first direct concern of faith in it. The first intention of Scripture, in the revelation of God towards us, is, as I said, that we might fear him, believe, worship, obey him, and live for him as God. That we may do this in a proper way, and worship *the only true God*, and not adore the false imaginations of our own minds, as I said, this *God is one*, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — that the *Father is this one God*; and therefore is to be believed in, worshipped, obeyed, lived for, and, in all things, considered by us as the first cause, sovereign Lord, and last end of all — that the *Son is the one true God*; and therefore is to be believed in, worshipped, obeyed, lived for, and, in all things, considered by us as the first cause, sovereign Lord, and last end of all — and so, also, of the Holy Spirit. This is the whole of faith's concern in this matter, as it respects the direct revelation of God made by himself in Scripture, and the first proper general end of it. Let this be clearly confirmed by direct and *positive divine testimonies*, containing the declaration and revelation of God concerning himself, when faith is secured as to all its concerns; for it has both its proper *formal object*, and is sufficiently enabled to be *directive* of divine worship and obedience.

The explanation of this doctrine for edification, suitable for the revelation mentioned, is of another consideration; and **two** things are incumbent on us to take care of —

Firstly, that what is affirmed and taught directly tends to the ends of the revelation itself, by informing and enlightening the mind in the knowledge of the mystery of it,

so far as in this life we are, by *divine assistance*, capable of understanding it; that is, that faith may be increased, strengthened, and confirmed against temptations and oppositions of Satan and men of corrupt minds; and that we may be distinctly directed to, and encouraged in, the obedience towards, and worship of, God, which is required of us.

Secondly, that nothing can be affirmed or taught here that may lead to or occasion any *undue apprehensions* concerning God, or our obedience to him, with regard to the best, highest, securest revelations that we have of him and our duty. These things being done and secured, the end of the declaration of this doctrine concerning God is attained.

In the declaration, then, of this doctrine for the edification of the church, there is contained a further explanation of the things before asserted, as proposed directly and in themselves as the object of our faith — namely, *how God is one*, in respect of his *nature, substance, essence*, Godhead, or divine being; how, being Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, he subsists in these three distinct Persons or *hypostases*; and what is their mutual respect to each other, by which, as to their peculiar properties, giving them the manner of their subsistence, they are distinguished from one another; with several other things concerning the necessary consequences of the revelation mentioned. And here, as in the application of all other divine truths and mysteries whatever, yes, of *all moral commanded duties*, use is to be made of such words and expressions as, it may be, are not literally and formally contained in the Scripture; but only are, to our conceptions and understandings, expository of what is so contained. And to deny the liberty, yes, the necessity here, is to deny all interpretation of the Scripture — all efforts to express the sense of the words to the understandings of one another; which is, in a word, to make Scripture itself altogether useless.

For if it is *unlawful* for me to speak or write what I conceive to be the sense of the words of the Scripture, and the nature of the thing signified and expressed by them; it is unlawful for me, also, to think or conceive in my mind what is the sense of the words or nature of the things; which is to say that it is to make brutes of ourselves, and to frustrate the whole design of God in giving us the great privilege of his Word. Wherefore, in the declaration of the doctrine of the Trinity, we may *lawfully*, no, we must *necessarily*, make use of other words, phrases, and expressions, than those literally and syllabically contained in the Scripture, but teach no new things.

Moreover, whatever is so revealed in the Scripture is no less true and divine as to whatever necessarily follows thereon, than it is as unto that which is principally revealed and directly expressed. For how far soever the lines be drawn and extended, from truth nothing can follow and ensue but what is true also; and that in the same kind of truth with that which it is derived and deduced from. For if the principal assertion be a truth of divine revelation, so is also whatever is included therein, and which may be rightly from thence collected. Hence it follows, that when the Scripture reveals the

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to be one God, seeing it necessarily and unavoidably follows thereon that they are one in essence (wherein alone it is possible they can be one), and three in their distinct subsistences (wherein alone it is possible they can be three), — this is no less of divine revelation than the first principle from whence these

things follow. These being the *respects* which the doctrine of the Trinity falls under, the necessary method of faith and reason, in the believing and declaring of it, is plain and evident —

Firstly. The *revelation* of it is to be asserted and vindicated, as it is proposed to be believed, for the ends mentioned. Now, this is, as was declared, that *there is one God*; that *this God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*; and so, that the Father is God, so is the Son, so is the Holy Spirit.

This being received and admitted by faith, the *explanation* of it is —

Secondly. To be insisted on, and not taken under consideration until the others are admitted. And here lies the preposterous course of those who fallaciously and critically go about to oppose this sacred truth. They always begin their opposition, not to the *revelation* of it, but to the *explanation* of it; which is used only for further edification. Their disputes and silly arguments are against the *Trinity, essence, substance, persons, personality, respects, properties* of the divine Persons, and with the *modes* of expressing these things; while the plain *Scriptural revelation* of the things themselves, from where they are drawn as explanatory deductions, is not spoken of, nor admitted by way of confirmation. By this means, they entangle many weak, unstable souls, who, when they meet with things too high, hard, and difficult for them (which divine mysteries quickly do), in the explanation of this doctrine, allow themselves to be taken away from a due consideration of the full and plain revelation of the thing itself in Scripture. Until their temptation becomes strong, and their darkness increased, it is too late for them to return to it, bringing along with them the stupid arguments with which they become prepossessed, rather than that faith and obedience which is required. But yet all this while, these explanations, put forward as exceptions, are indeed not of any *original consideration* in this matter. Let the direct, express revelations of the doctrine be confirmed, they will follow plainly, nor can any exceptions hold water by those who believe and receive it. Let them be rejected, and they will *fall of themselves*, and never be contended for by those who made use of them. But of these things we shall deal with again.

This, then, is the way, the only way, that we, *rationally*, can deal with the critics, and what in *duty* we ought to proceed in and by, to assert and confirm the doctrine of the holy Trinity, which we are considering — namely, that we produce divine revelations or testimonies, where faith may safely rest and acquiesce: that *God is one*; that *this one God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*; so that the Father is God, so also the Son, and the Holy Spirit likewise, and, as such, must be believed in, obeyed, worshipped, acknowledged, as the first cause and last end of all — our Lord and reward. If this is not admitted, if something concerning it is denied, we need not, we have no warrant or ground to proceed any further, or at all, to discourse about the unity of the divine essence, or the distinction of the Persons.

We have not, therefore, any *original contest* in this matter with anyone, but such as deny either *God to be one*, or the *Father to be God*, or the *Son to be God*, or the *Holy Spirit to be God*. If any deny any of these in particular, we are ready to confirm it by sufficient testimonies from Scripture, with clear and undeniable divine revelation. When this is proved and defended, we shall willingly proceed to show that the

explanations used of this doctrine for the edification of the church are according to truth, just as the nature of these things are necessarily required.

This gives us the method of my small discourse, with the reasons for it —

I. The first thing we affirm to be delivered to us by divine revelation as the object of our faith, is, that *God is one*. I know that this may be uncontrollably proved by the light of reason itself, for as good and quiet an assurance as the mind of man is capable of in any of its understanding; but I speak of it now as it is confirmed to us by divine revelation. How this assertion of *one God* respects the nature, essence, or divine being of God, I shall declare later. At present, it is enough to represent the testimonies that he is *One* — the only One. And because we have no difference with our adversaries particularly in this matter, I shall only name a few of them.

“Hear, O Israel; The LORD our God is one LORD.” (Deut. 6:4)

This is a most pregnant testimony; and, as I shall elsewhere show, the Trinity itself, in that one divine essence, is here asserted. See also Is. 44:6, 8 —

“Thus saith the LORD the being of Israel, and his Redeemer the LORD of hosts; ‘I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. Is there a God beside me? Yea, there is no God; I know not any.’”

In which also we may declare that a plurality of Persons is included and expressed. And although there is no more absolute and sacred truth than this, that God is One, yet it may be proved that the Trinity is nowhere mentioned in Scripture, but that, either in the words themselves or the context of the place, a *plurality of Persons* in that one sense is meant.

II. Secondly, it is proposed as the object of our faith that *the Father is God*. And here, as is pretended, there is also an agreement between us and those who oppose the doctrine of the Trinity. But there is a mistake in this matter. Their hypothesis, as they call it, or, indeed, presumptuous error, throws all the conceptions that are given us concerning God in Scripture into disorder and confusion. For the Father, as he whom we worship, is often called so only with reference to his Son, as the Son is so with reference to the Father. He is the “only begotten of the Father”. (Jn. 10:14) But now, if this Son had no pre-existence in his divine nature before he was born of the Virgin, there was no God the Father hundreds of years ago, because there was no Son. And, on this ground, the Marcionites of old plainly denied *the Father* (whom, under the New Testament, we worship) to be the God of the Old Testament, who made the world, and was worshipped from its foundation. For it seems to follow, that he whom we worship being the Father, and on this supposition that the Son had no pre-existence until his incarnation, he was not the Father under the Old Testament; he is some other from him who was so revealed. I know the folly of that inference; yet how, on this opinion of the sole existence of the Son in time, men can prove the Father to be God, I leave it to others to determine.

“He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son”; but “whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, has not God.” (2 Jn. 1:9)

Whoever denies Christ the Son as the Son, that is, the eternal Son of God, he loses the Father also, and the true God; he does not have God. For that God which is not the Father, and which ever was, yet was not the Father, is not the true God. Hence, many of the fathers, even among the first writers of the church, were forced to great pains to confirm this truth, that the Father of Jesus Christ was he who made the world, gave the law, spoke by the prophets, and was the author of the Old Testament; and that against men who professed themselves to be Christians. And this brutish idea of theirs arose from no other principle but this, that the Son had only a temporal existence, and was not the eternal Son of God. But that I may not, in this brief discourse, digress to other controversies than what lies directly before us, and seeing the adversaries of the truth we contend against, in words at least, grant that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the true God, or the only true God, I shall not go on to show the inconsistency of their hypothesis with this confession, but take it for granted that to us "there is one God, the Father." (1 Cor. 8:6) See also Jn. 17:3. So that he who is not the Father, who was not so from eternity, whose paternity is not equally coexistent with his Deity, is not our God.

III. It is asserted and believed by the church *that Jesus Christ is God, the eternal Son of God* — that is, he is proposed, declared, and revealed to us in Scripture to be God, who is to be served, worshipped, believed in, obeyed as God, on account of his *own divine excellence*. And whereas we believe and know that he was man, that he was born, lived, and died as a man, it is also declared that he is God; and that, as God, he pre-existed in the form of God before his incarnation, which was effected by voluntary actions of his own — which could not be true without a pre-existence in another nature. This is proposed to us to be believed by divine testimony and by divine revelation. And the sole inquiry in this matter is whether this is proposed in Scripture as an object of faith, and what is indispensably necessary for us to believe. Let us, then, without prejudice, attend to what Scripture asserts in this matter, and that in the order of the books, and in some particular passages which at present spring to mind —

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." (Psalm 45:6) And is applied to Christ.

"But unto the Son he saith, 'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.'" (Hebrews 10:8)

"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the LORD is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." (Ps 68:17-18) This also applies to the Son.

"Wherefore he saith, 'When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens that he might fill all things.'" (Eph. 4:8-10)

“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand.” (Ps 110:1) This is applied to Christ by himself in Mat. 22:44.

“Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.” (Ps. 102:25-27) Which is declared by the apostle to be meant by the Son, in Heb. 10:10-12.

“The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: when he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” (Prov. 8:22-31)

“I saw also the LORD sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.” (Is. 6:1-3) This is applied to the Son in Jn. 12:41.

“Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” (Is. 8:13-14) This is applied to the Son in Lk. 2:34; Rom. 9:33; 1 Pet. 2:8.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.” (Is. 9:6)

“Behold, the days come’, saith the LORD, ‘that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness.’” (Jer. 23:5-6)

“He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us; even the LORD God of hosts; the LORD is his memorial.” (Hos. 12:3-5)

“‘For thus’ saith the LORD of hosts, ‘After the glory has he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me.’” (Zech. 2:8-9)

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mat. 16:16)

“The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” (Lk. 1:35)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” (Jn. 1:1-3)

“And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” (Verse 14)

“And no man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man, which is in heaven.” (Jn. 3:13)

“Then said the Jews unto him, ‘Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?’ Jesus said unto them, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.’” (Jn. 8:57-58)

“I and my Father are one.” (Jn. 10:30)

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (Jn. 17:5)

“And Thomas answered and said unto him, ‘My Lord and my God.’” (Jn. 20:28)

“Feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28)

“Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.” (Rom. 10:3-4)

“Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” (Rom. 9:5)

“For we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ. For it is written, ‘As I live’, saith the Lord, ‘every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.’” (Rom 14:10-12)

“And one Lord Jesus, by whom are all things, and we by him.” (1 Cor. 8:6)

“Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.” (1 Cor. 10:9) Compare with Num. 21:6.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” (Phil. 2:5-6)

“Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” (Col. 1:15-17)

“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” (1 Tim. 3:16)

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us.” (Tit. 2:13-14)

Hebrews 1 throughout the chapter.

“For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God.” (Heb. 3:4)

“Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify.” (1 Pet. 1:11)

“For Christ also has once suffered for sins, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.” (1 Pet. 3:18-20)

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.” (1 Jn. 3:16)

“And we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (1 Jn. 5:20)

“‘I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending’, saith the Lord, ‘which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.’” (Rev. 1:8)

“‘I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book....’ And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And, being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man.” (Verses 11-13)

“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, ‘Fear not; I am the first and the last.’” (Verse 17)

“I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” (Rev. 2:23)

These are *some* of the passages where the truth under consideration is revealed and declared — some of the divine testimonies where it is confirmed and established, which I have not, at present, inquired into, but these ones came suddenly to mind. Many *more* of similar nature and importance may be added to them, and shall be as occasion requires.

Let, now, anyone who owns Scripture to be the Word of God — as containing an infallible revelation of the things proposed in it to be believed — and whoever has any conscience exercised towards God for the receiving and submitting to what he declares and reveals, takes a view of these testimonies, and considers whether they sufficiently propose this object of their faith. Shall a few poor trifling sophisms, whose terms are scarcely understood by most that among us make use of them, according as they have found them framed by others, be thought fit to be set up in opposition to these multiplied testimonies of the Holy Spirit, and to throw down the truth confirmed by them from its credit and reputation in the consciences of men? For my part, I do not see in anything, but that the testimonies given to the Godhead of Christ, the eternal Son of God, are in every way as clear and unquestionable as those which testify to the being of God, or that there is any God at all. Were men acquainted with the Scriptures as they ought, and as the most, considering the means and advantages they have had, might have been, have they pondered and believed what they read, or do they have any tenderness in their consciences as to that reverence, obedience, and subjection of soul which God requires to his Word, it is utterly impossible that their faith in this matter should ever in the least be shaken by a few *tricky sophisms* or *loud clamours* of men destitute of the truth, and of the spirit of it.

That I may now improve these testimonies for the end I have designed, as the nature of this brief discourse will bear, I shall first remove the general criticisms which the Socinians offer them, and then show further how uncontrollable they are, by giving an instance of the frivolous exceptions of the same critics to *one* of them in particular. And we are ready, God assisting, to maintain that there is not anyone of them which does not give a sufficient ground for faith to rest on in this matter concerning the Deity of Christ, and that against all the Socinians in the world.

They say, therefore, generally, that we do not prove by these testimonies what is by them denied. For they acknowledge *Christ to be God*, and that because he is exalted to that glory and authority that all creatures are put into subjection to him, and all, both men and angels, are commanded to worship and adore him. But that he is God by office, though he is not God by nature. He is God, but he is not the Most High God. And this last expression they have almost continually in their mouths — “He is not the Most High God.” And commonly, with great contempt and scorn, they are ready to reproach those who have solidly confirmed the doctrine of the Deity of Christ, even though ignorant of the state of the controversy, in that they have not proved him to be *the Most High God*, in subordination to whom they acknowledge Christ to be God, and that he ought to be worshipped with divine and religious worship.

But there cannot be anything more empty and vain than these pretences; and, besides, they accumulate in them their former errors, with the addition of new ones.

For —

Firstly. The name of *the Most High God* is first ascribed to God in Gen. 14:18-19, 22, denoting his sovereignty and dominion. Now, as other attributes of God, it is not *distinctive* of the subject, but only *descriptive* of it. So it is with any other excellence of the nature of God. It does not intimate that there are other gods, only that he is the most high, or one over them all. But only the true God is most high — that is, endued with sovereign power, dominion, and authority over all. To say, then, that Christ indeed is God, but not the *Most High* God, is all one as if to say he is God, but not the *most holy* God, or not the true God; and so they have brought their Christ into the number of false gods, while they deny the true Christ, who, in his divine nature, is “over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom. 9:5); a figure of speech perfectly expressing this attribute of the *Most High God*.

Secondly. This answer is suited only to those testimonies which express the *name of God* with a corresponding power and authority invested in that name; for in reference to these alone can it be pleaded, with any pretence of reason, that he is a God by office — though that also is a thought very futile and impertinent. But most of the testimonies produced speak directly to his divine excellence and properties, which belong to his nature necessarily and absolutely. He is eternal, omnipotent, immense, omniscient, infinitely wise; and that he is, and works, and produces effects suitable for all these properties, such as nothing else could enable him for, is abundantly proved by the foregoing testimonies. Now, all these concern a *divine nature*, a natural essence, a Godhead, and not such power or authority as a man may be exalted to; yes, the ascribing of any of them to such a man, implies the highest contradiction expressible.

Thirdly. This God, in authority and office, but not by nature, making him the object of divine worship, is a new abomination. For they are divine, essential excellencies that are *the formal reason* and *object* of worship, religious and divine; and to ascribe them to anyone that is *not God by nature*, is idolatry. By making, then, their Christ such a God as they describe, they diminish him under the severe combination of the true God.

“The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens.” (Jer. 10:11)

The Christ they worship and say is a God, but deny that he is “the God that made the heavens and the earth”, so leaves him exposed to the threats of the true God, who will accomplish it to the uttermost.

There are some other general exceptions they sometimes make use of, which the reader can free himself from getting entangled in, if he just heeds these following rules —

Firstly. Distinction of Persons (of which later), it being in an infinite substance, in no way proves a difference of *essence* between the Father and the Son. Where, therefore, Christ, as the Son, is said to be *another* from the Father, or God, spoken personally of the Father, it does not argue in the least that he is not partaker of the same nature with him. That in one essence there can be but one person, may be

true where the substance is finite and limited, but has no place in that which is infinite.

Secondly. Distinction and inequality in respect of *office* in Christ, does not in the least take away his equality and sameness with the Father in respect of nature and essence. (Phil. 2:7-8) A son, of the same nature as his father, and therefore equal to him, may in office be his inferior — his subject.

Thirdly. The *advancement* and exaltation of Christ as mediator to any dignity whatever, upon, or in reference to, the work of our redemption and salvation, is not at all inconsistent with the essential honour, dignity, and worth, which he has in himself as “God blessed for ever”. Though he humbled himself, and was exalted in *office*, yet, in *nature*, he was one and the same; he did not change.

Fourthly. The Scriptures, asserting the *humanity* of Christ, with its concerns, such as his birth, life, and death, no more deny his Deity than, by asserting his *Deity*, with its essential properties, than they deny his humanity.

Fifthly. God working in and by Christ as he was mediator, denotes the Father’s sovereign appointment of the things mentioned to be done, — not his *immediate power* in the doing of the things themselves.

These rules are proposed a little before their proper place in the method I am following. But I thought it right to put them here, as containing sufficient ground for the resolution and answering of all the sophisms and objections which our adversaries use in this cause.

From the cloud of witnesses I produced earlier, every one of which is alone sufficient to disprove the Socinian infidelity, I shall, in one of them, give an instance, both of the clearness of the evidence, and the weakness of the exceptions which are likely to be raised against them, as I promised; and here it is —

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” (Jn. 10:1-3)

By the Word here, or the LOGOS, whatever he is called, either as being the eternal Word and Wisdom of the Father, or as the great Revealer of the will of God to us, Jesus Christ the Son of God is meant. This is on all hands acknowledged; and the context will admit of no hesitation about it. For of this Word, it is said, that “he came” into the world (verse 10); “was rejected by his own” (verse 11); “was made flesh and dwelt among us, whose glory was the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father” (verse 14); called expressly “Jesus Christ” (verse 17); “the only begotten Son of the Father” (verse 18). The subject, then, I am dealing with is here agreed on all sides; and it is no less evident that it is the design of the apostle to declare both who and what he was of whom he was dealing. Here, then, if anywhere, we may learn what we are to believe concerning the Person of Christ; which also we may certainly do, if our minds have not been perverted through prejudice, “whereby the God of this world does blind the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious

gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (2 Cor. 4:4) Of this Word, then, this Son of God, it is affirmed, that he “was in the beginning.”

Now, this expression, if it does not absolutely and formally express eternity, yet it does refer to his pre-existence before the whole creation; which amounts to the same thing: for nothing can pre-exist his creation but the nature of God, which is eternal; unless we suppose a creature before the creation. But what is meant by this expression the Scripture elsewhere declares. “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.” (Prov. 8:23) “Glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (Jn. 17:5) Both passages explain this phrase, and so undeniably testify to the *eternal pre-existence* of Christ the Son of God. And, in this case, we prevail against our adversaries, if we prove any pre-existence of Christ before his incarnation; which, as they absolutely deny, so we grant it would overthrow their whole heresy in this matter.

And, therefore, they know that the testimony of our Saviour concerning himself, if understood in a proper, intelligible sense, is perfectly destructive of their pretensions. See Jn. 8:58 — “Before Abraham *was*, I *am*.” For although there is no proper sense in the words but a gross equivocation, if the existence of Christ before Abraham was born is not asserted by them (seeing he spoke in answer to that objection by the Jews, for he was not yet fifty years old, and so could not have seen Abraham, nor Abraham him; and the Jews that were present understood well enough that he asserted a divine pre-existence to his being born, so long ago, that, after their manner, they took up stones to stone him, supposing him to have blasphemed in asserting his Deity, as others now do in denying it). Yet they [the Socinians], seeing how fatal this pre-existence, though not absolutely asserted here to be eternal, would be to their cause, contend that the meaning of the words is, that “Christ was to be the light of the world before Abraham was made the father of many nations” — an interpretation so absurd and rubbishy, as never anyone not infatuated by the God of this world could once admit and give countenance to.

But “in the beginning”, as absolutely used, is the same as “from everlasting”, to expound it properly (Prov. 8:23), and denotes an eternal existence; which is here affirmed of the Word, the Son of God. But let the word “beginning” be limited to the subject matter being dealt with (which is the creation of all things), and the pre-existence of Christ in his divine nature before the creation of all things is plainly revealed, and inevitably asserted. And indeed, not only the word, but a discussion of these verses, clearly relates to, and is expository of, the first verse in the Bible — “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” (Gen. 1:1) There, it is asserted that in the beginning God created all things; here in Jn. 1:1-3, that the Word was in the beginning, and made all things. This, then, is the least that we obtain from this first word of our testimony — namely, that the Word or *Son of God had a personal pre-existence before the whole creation*. Of what nature this must be, let these critical men of reason satisfy themselves, who know that Creator and creatures take up the whole nature of beings. One of them he must be; and it may be well supposed that he was not a creature before the creation of any other.

But, secondly, where, or with whom, was this Word in the beginning? “It was”, says the Holy Spirit, “with God”. There being no creature then existing, he could be nowhere but with God; that is, the Father, as it is expressed in one of the

testimonies, in Prov. 8:22 — “The LORD possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old”; and verse 30 — “Then was I by him as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” That is, in the beginning, this Word, or Wisdom of God, was with God.

And this is the same our Lord Jesus asserts concerning himself —

“And no man has ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.” (Jn. 3:13)

In other places, he affirms his being in heaven — that is, with God — at the same time he was on earth; in which he declares the immensity of his nature, and the distinction of his Person; and his coming down from heaven before he was incarnate on the earth, thus declaring his pre-existence, by both showing the meaning of this expression, that “in the beginning he was with God.” But to this, our critics have invented a notable evasion. For although they do not know well what to make of the last clause of the words that says that he was in heaven when he spoke on earth — “The Son of man which is in heaven”, which answers to the description of God’s immensity — “Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord.” (Jer. 23:24) But our critics say that he was there by *heavenly meditation*, as any another man may be; yet they give a very clear answer to what must of necessity be included in his descending from heaven, namely, his pre-existence to his incarnation: for they tell us that, before his public ministry, he was in his human nature (which is all they allow him) taken up into heaven, and there taught the gospel, as the great impostor Mohammed pretended that he was taught his Koran. If you ask them who told them so, they cannot say; but they can tell when it was — namely, when he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for forty days after his baptism. Yet this example is subject to another misadventure, in that one of the evangelists plainly affirms that he was “those forty days in the wilderness with the wild beasts” (Mk. 10:13), and so, surely, not in heaven in the same nature, by his bodily presence, with God and his holy angels.

And let me add this, by the way, that the interpretation of this passage (Jn. 1:1), to be taken up later, and those of the two passages already mentioned (Jn. 8:58, 3:13), Faustus Socinus learned from his uncle Laelius’ papers, as he confesses; and does more than intimate that he believed he had them as it were by revelation. And it may be so; they are indeed so forced, absurd, and irrational, that no one could ever concentrate on them for any reasonable investigation. But the author of these revelations, if we may judge the parent by the child, could be none other but the spirit of error and darkness. I suppose, then, that despite these exceptions, Christians still believe “that in the beginning the Word was with God”; that is, that the Son was with the Father, as is frequently declared elsewhere.

But *who* was this Word? Says the apostle, “He was God”. He was so *with God* (that is, the Father), because he himself was God also — God, in that notion of God which both nature and the Scripture present; not a God by office, one exalted to that dignity (which cannot be satisfactorily pretended before the creation of the world), but as Thomas confessed him, “My Lord and my God!” (Jn. 20:28); or as Paul expressed it, “Over all, God blessed for ever” (Rom. 9:5) or *the Most High God*; which these critics love to deny. Let not the infidelity of men, urged on by the craft and malice of Satan,

look for blind occasions for this matter to be determined; as if the word and testimony of God were able to umpire a difference among the children of men!

Here is the sum of our creed in this matter —

“In the beginning, the Word was God”, and so continues in all of eternity, being Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the Lord God Almighty. (Rev. 1:8, 11, 21:6, 22:13)

And to show that he was God in the beginning, as that he was *One* distinct from God the Father, by whom afterward he was sent into the world, he adds in verse 2 — “The same was in the beginning with God.” Furthermore, to prove what he asserted and revealed for us to believe, the Holy Spirit adds, both as a firm declaration of his eternal Deity, and also his immediate care of the world (which he variously exercised, both by way of providence and grace), as he afterward declares in verse 3 — “All things were made by him.” He was God in the beginning, before all things, in that he made them all. And that it may not be supposed that the “all” that he is said to make or create was to be limited to any certain sort of things, he adds, that “without him nothing was made that was made”, which gives the first assertion an absolute universality as to its subject. And this he further describes in verse 10 — “He was in the world, and the world was made by him.” The world that was made, has a usual meaning in Scripture as the “heavens and the earth, and all things contained in them.” (Acts 4:24) “Lord, thou art God, which best made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is” (that is, the world, the making of which is expressly assigned to the Son.) “Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.” (Heb. 1:10) And the apostle Paul, to secure our understanding in this matter, mentions the most noble parts of the creation, and which, if any, might seem to be excepted from being made by him — “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him.” (Col. 1:16)

The Socinians say, indeed, that he made angels to be thrones and principalities; that is, he gave them their *order*, but not their *being*: which is expressly contrary to the words of the text; so that a man knows not well what to say to these persons, who, at their pleasure, cast off the authority of God in his word: “By him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth.”

What now can be required to secure our faith in this matter? In what words possible could a divine revelation of the eternal power and Godhead of the Son of God be made more plain and clear to the sons of men? Or how could the truth of anything more evidently be presented to their minds? If we do not understand the mind of God and the intention of the Holy Spirit in this matter, we may utterly despair ever to come to an acquaintance with anything that God reveals to us; or, indeed, with anything else that is expressed, or is to be expressed, in words. It is directly said that the Word (that is Christ, as is acknowledged by all) “was with God”, distinct from him; and “was God”, was one with him; that he was so “in the beginning” before the creation, that he “made all things” — the world, all things in heaven and in earth: and if he is not God, who is? The sum is — all the ways in which we may know God are: his name, his properties, and his works; but they are all here ascribed by the Holy

Spirit to the Son, to the Word. He, therefore, is God, or we know neither who nor what God is.

Objection

But, say the Socinians, "These things are quite otherwise, and the words have another sense in them than you imagine."

Answer

What is it, I beg you? We bring none to them, we impose no sense on them, we strain not any word in them, from, beside, or beyond its native, genuine meaning, its constant application in the Scripture, and common use among men. What, then, is this common sense that is intended, and is discoverable only by themselves? Let us hear them coining and stamping this sense of theirs.

Firstly, they say that "In the beginning" is not meant *the beginning of all things*, or the creation of them, but the beginning of the preaching of the gospel. But why so, I beg you? Wherever these words are used elsewhere in the Scripture, they denote the beginning of all things, or eternity absolutely, or an existence preceding their creation. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." (Gen. 1:1) "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." (Prov. 8:23) "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth." (Heb. 1:10) And besides, these words are never used anywhere for the beginning of the gospel. There is mention made, indeed, of the "beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ" (Mk. 1:1), which is referred to the preaching of John Baptist. But "In the beginning" is never so used or applied; and they must meet with men of no small inclination to them, who will, upon their desire, in a matter of so great importance, forego the sense of words which is natural and proper, fixed by its constant use in the Scripture, when applied in the same way, for that which is forced and strained, and not once exemplified in the whole book of God. But the words, they say, are to be limited to the subject-matter dealt with. Well, what is that subject-matter? They say, "*The new creation, by the preaching of the gospel.*" But this is plainly false; nor will the words allow any such sense, nor the contempt, nor is anything offered to give evidence to this corrupt perverting of the words, unless it be a further perverting of other testimonies no less clear than this.

So what is, according to this interpretation, the meaning of these words, "In the beginning was the Word?" to which our critics reply —

"That is, when John the Baptist preached and said, 'This is the Lamb of God', which was particularly the beginning of the gospel — then he was."

That is, he was when he was — no doubt of it! And is not this a notable way of interpreting Scripture when these great pretenders claim a dictatorship in reason, indeed, they are hucksters [pushy salesmen] in sophistry? But to go on with them in this supposition, we must ask them, "How was he then with God, when "The Word was with God?"

“That is”, they say, “he was then known only to God, before John the Baptist preached him in the beginning.”

But what can compel us to admit of this awkward sense and exposition — “He was with God”; that is, he was known to God alone?” What is there singular hereabouts? Concerning how many things may the same be affirmed? Besides, it is absolutely *false*. He was known to the *angel* Gabriel, who came to his mother with the message of his incarnation. (Lk. 1:35) He was known to the *two angels* which appeared to the shepherds at his birth (Lk. 2:9), to all the *heavenly host* assembled to give praise and glory to God on account of his nativity, as those who came to worship him, and to pay him the homage due to him (Lk. 2:10, 13-14). He was known to his *mother*, the blessed Virgin, and to *Joseph*, and to *Zacharias*, and to *Elizabeth*, to *Simeon* and *Anna*, to *John the Baptist*, and probably to many more to whom Simon and Anna spoke of him (Lk. 2:38). So that the sense pretended to be wrung out and extorted from these words, against their proper meaning and intendment, is indeed false and frivolous, and does not belong here in this passage of John.

But let this pass. What shall we say to the next words: “And the Word was God?” Give us permission, without disturbance from anyone, to believe this expression, which comprises a revelation of God, proposed to us on purpose that we should believe it; and that should bring an end to this difference and debate. Yes, but they say, “These words have another sense also.” Strange! They seem to be so plain and positive that it is impossible for any other sense to be fixed on them but only this, that the Word was in the beginning, and was God; and therefore is still true, unless he who is once God ceased to be! “But the meaning is” the critics say, that afterwards God exalted him, and made him God, as to *rule, authority, and power*.” This *making of him God* is an expression very offensive to the ears of all serious Christians; and has been, therefore, long since exploded. And these things here, as all other figments, hang together like a rope of sand. At the beginning of the gospel, he was God, before any knew him but only God. Our critics declare that after he had preached the gospel, and died, and rose again, and was exalted at the right hand of God, he was made God, and that not properly, which is absolutely impossible, but in an improper sense! How can they prove, then, this perverse nonsense to be the meaning of these plain words? They say it must necessarily be so. Let those believe them who are willing to perish with them!

Thus far, then, we believe that we have our critics’ true meaning — “In the beginning” — that is, 20 centuries ago, “the Word” (that is, the human nature of Christ before it was made flesh, which was in its being, “was with God,” that is, known to God alone; and “in the beginning”, that is afterwards, not in the beginning, was made God! — that just about sums up their exposition of this passage.

But what shall we say to what is affirmed concerning his making all things, so as that without him, that is, without his making of it, nothing was made that was made; especially seeing that these “all things” are expressly said to be the world (verse 10), and all things contained there, even in heaven and earth? (Col. 1:16) An ordinary man would think that they should now be taken hold of, and that there is no way of escape left for them; but they have it in readiness. By the “all things” here, according to our critics, are intended all things of the gospel — the preaching of it, the sending of the apostles to preach it, to declare the will of God; and, by the “world”, is intended

the world to come, or the new state of things under the gospel. This is the substance of what is pleaded by the greatest masters among them in this matter, and they are not ashamed to assert it.

And the reader, in this instance, may easily discern what a desperate cause in which they are engaged, and how bold and desperate they are in the management of what they see as the truth.

For —

Firstly, the words are a clear illustration of the *divine nature* of the Word, by his divine power and works, as so many times the Scripture declares. He was God, and he made all things: “He that built all things is God.” (Heb. 3:4)

Secondly, there is not one word spoken concerning the gospel, or the preaching of it, nor any effects of that preaching, which the apostle expressly insists on and declares afterward. (Verse 15 and so on)

Thirdly, the making of all things, here ascribed to the Word, was done *in the beginning*; but that making of all things which they intend, in erecting the church by the preaching of the word, was not done in the beginning, but afterwards — most of it, as themselves confess, after the ascension of Christ into heaven.

Fourthly, in this gloss, what is the meaning of “all things?” The Socinians say, “Only some things.” What is the meaning of “were made?” They say, “That is, were *mended*.” And “by him?” They say, “That is, the apostles, principally in their preaching of the gospel.” And this, “In the beginning?” They say, “*After it was past*” — for so they state expressly that the principal things here intended were done by the apostles afterwards. I think, since the *beginning*, place it when you will — the beginning of the world or the beginning of the gospel — there was never such an exposition of the words of God or man contended for!

Fifthly, it is said, “He made the world,” and he “came” into it — namely, the world which he had made; and “the world”, or the inhabitants of it, “knew him not.” But the world they intend did know him: for the church knew him, and acknowledged him to be the Son of God; for that was the foundation it was built on.

I have instanced directly in this *one testimony* in John, to give the reader a pledge of the full confirmation which may be given to this great fundamental truth, by a due improvement of those other testimonies, or distinct revelations, which speak no less expressly to the same purpose. And of them, there is not any one but we are ready to defend it, if called to do so, against the exceptions of these men; which how bold and sophisticated they are, we may, in these verses now considered, also learn and know.

It appears, then, that there is a full, sufficient revelation made in Scripture of the eternal Deity of the Son of God; and that he is so, as is the Father also. More testimonies I shall not at present insist on, deferring a full discussion and defence of these truths to another time.

Fourthly, therefore, in the next place I will show that the one, or a similar testimony, is given to the Deity of the Holy Spirit; that is, he is revealed and declared in Scripture as the object of our faith, worship, and obedience, on account, and for the reason, of that divine excellence which is the sole reason for our yielding worship to any, or expecting from any the reward that is promised us, or to be brought by them to the end for which we are. And here lies, as I showed, the concern of faith. When one knows what it is to believe by divine revelation, and is enabled by it to regulate the soul in its present obedience and future expectation, seeing it is its nature to work by love and hope, there it rests. Now, this is done to the utmost satisfaction in the revelation that is made of the divine existence, divine excellence, and divine operations of the Spirit, as I will briefly prove. But, before we proceed, we may, in our progress, observe a great consistency of success in those who have denied the Deity of the Son and those who have denied that of the Holy Spirit. For as to the Son, after some men began once to disbelieve the revelation concerning him, and would not acknowledge him to be God and man in one person, they could not settle nor agree, either what or who he was, or who was his Father, or why he was the Son. Some said he was a phantasm or appearance, and that he had no real subsistence in this world; and that all that was done by him was an appearance, he himself being somewhere else, where, they have no idea of.

That proud beast, Paul of Samosata, whose infamous life contended for a pre-eminence in wickedness with his prodigious heresies, was one of the first, after the Jews, who positively contended for his being a man, and no more; who was followed by Photinus and others. The Arians, perceiving the folly of this opinion, which stirred up trouble among all who bore the name of Christians, and that they had as well deny the whole Scripture as not grant to him a pre-existence in a divine nature previous to his incarnation, they framed a new Deity, which God should make before the world, in all things like himself, but not the same as him in essence and substance, but to be so like him that, by the writings of some of them, you would hardly know the one from the other; and that this was the Son of God, also, who was afterwards incarnate. Others, in the meantime, had more monstrous ideas: some that he was an *angel*; some that he was the *sun*; some that he was the *soul of the world*; some the *light within men*. Departing from their proper rest, they still hovered about, and so they have continued till this day.

In the same way, it has come to pass with those who have denied the Deity of the Holy Spirit. They could never find where to stand or abide; but one has cried up one thing, and another cried up another. At first, they observed that such things were everywhere ascribed to him in Scripture as uncontrollable evidence that he is an *intelligent, voluntary agent*. This they found so plain and evident, that they could not deny that he was a *Person*, or an intelligent subsistence. Wherefore, seeing they were resolved not to assent to the revelation of his being God, they made him a created spirit, chief and above all others; but still, whatever else he was, he was only a creature. And this course some lately have steered. The Socinians, on the other hand, observing that such things are assigned and ascribed to him, as that, if they acknowledge him to be a person, or a substance, they must, of necessity, admit him to be God, though they seemed not, at first, to be all agreed what to think or say concerning him positively, yet they all concurred quickly in denying his personality. So some of them said he was the gospel, which others of them have disagreed with; some that he was Christ. Neither could they agree whether there was one Holy Spirit

or more — whether the Spirit of God, and the good Spirit of God, and the Holy Spirit, are the same or not. In general, they now conclude that he is *vis Dei* (the power of God) or *virtue Dei* (the virtue of God) or *efficacia Dei* (the efficacy of God) — no substance, but a quality, that may be considered either as being in God, and then say it is the Spirit of God; or as sanctifying and conforming men to God, and then they say it is the Holy Spirit.

Whether these things answer the revelation made in Scripture concerning the eternal Spirit of God, will be shown immediately. Our Quakers, who have for a long time hovered up and down like a swarm of flies, with a confused noise and humming, begin now to settle in the opinions lately. But what their thoughts will fall in to be concerning the Holy Spirit, when they shall be content to speak intelligibly, and according to the usage of other men, or the pattern of Scripture the greater rule of speaking or treating about spiritual things, I don't know, and am uncertain whether they have an opinion yet. Whether he may be the light within them, or an infallible afflatus, is uncertain. In the meantime, what is revealed to us in Scripture to be believed concerning the Holy Spirit, his Deity and personality, may be seen in the following testimonies.

A summary of this revelation is —

That the Holy Spirit is an eternally existing divine substance, the author of divine operations, and the object of divine and religious worship; that is, “Over all, God blessed for ever” as the following testimonies show —

“The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (Gen. 1:2)

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the Spirit of his mouth.” (Ps. 33:6)

“By his Spirit he has garnished the heavens.” (Job 26:13)

“The Spirit of God has made me.” (Job 33:4)

“Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created.” (Ps. 104:30)

“Baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Mat. 28:19)

“That scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake.” (Acts 1:16)

“Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?’” (Acts 5:3) Verse 4, “Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.”

“Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say...” (Acts 28:20, 26)

“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Cor. 3:16)

“All these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” (1 Cor. 12:11) Verse 6, “And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.”

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.” (2 Cor. 13:14)

“Take heed to the flock over which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.” (Acts 20:28)

“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven unto men.” (Mat. 12:31)

“Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?” (Ps. 139:7)

“But the comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things.” (Jn. 14:26)

“The Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.” (Lk. 12:12)

“As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them.’” (Acts 13:2) Verse 4, “So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed unto Seleucia...”

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Pet. 1:21)

It is evident, on first consideration, that there is nothing we believe concerning the Holy Spirit, but what it is plainly revealed and declared in these testimonies. He is directly affirmed to be, and is called, “God” (Acts 5:3-4); which the Socinians will not say is by virtue of an exaltation to an office or authority, as they say of the Son. He is an *intelligent, voluntary, divine agent*; he knows, he works as he will: which things, if, in their frequent repetition, they are not sufficient to prove he is an intelligent agent, a personal subsistence, that has being, life, and will, we must confess that Scripture was written on purpose to lead us into mistakes and misapprehensions of what we are under penalty of eternal ruin, rightly to grasp and believe. It declares, also, that he is the author and worker of all sorts of divine operations, requiring immensity, omnipotence, omniscience, and all other divine excellence, for their working and effecting. Moreover, it is *revealed* that he is particularly to be *believed in*, and may peculiarly be *sinned against* as the great author of all grace in believers and order in the church.

This is the sum of what we believe, of what is revealed in the Scripture concerning the Holy Spirit.

As, in the consideration of the preceding section, we defended *one testimony* in particular from the exceptions of our critical adversaries of the truth, so on this we may briefly sum up the evidence that is given us in the testimonies just produced,

that the reader may the more easily understand their intention, and what, in particular, they bear witness to.

The sum is that the Holy Spirit is a *divine, distinct Person*, and neither merely the power or virtue of God, nor any created spirit whatever. This clearly appears, from what is revealed concerning him. For he who is placed in the same series or order with other divine persons, without the least shade of difference or distinction from them, as to an interest in personality; who has the names proper to a divine Person only, and is frequently and directly called by them; who also has personal properties, and is the voluntary author of personal, divine operations, and the proper object of divine worship — he is a distinct Divine person.

And if these things are not sufficient evidence and demonstration of a divine, intelligent substance, I shall, as I said before, despair of understanding anything that is expressed and declared by words. But now it is with the Holy Spirit, according to the revelation made concerning him in the Scripture.

For —

Firstly. He is placed in the *same rank and order*, without any hint of difference or distinction as to a distinct interest in the divine nature (that is, as we shall see, personality) with the other divine Persons. “Baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” (Mat. 28:19) “There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.” (1 Jn. 5:7)

“No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit. Now, there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” (1 Cor. 12:3-6)

Neither does a denial of his divine being and distinct existence leave any reasonable sense in these expressions. For read the words of the first place from the mind of the Socinians, and see what is it that can be gathered from them — “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the virtue or power of the Father.” Can anything be more opposite to faith and reason than this absurd explanation? And yet it is the direct sense (if there is any) that these men put on the words. To join a *quality* with acknowledged persons, and that in such things and cases as when they are proposed under a personal consideration, is a strange kind of mystery to me. And the same can be found in the other passages.

Secondly. He also has the *names* proper for a divine Person alone; for he is expressly called “God” in Acts 5. He who is termed the “Holy Spirit” (verse 3), and the “Spirit of the Lord” (verse 9), is called also “God” (verse 4). Now, this is the name of a divine Person, on one account or other. The Socinians would not allow Christ to be called God were he not a divine Person, though not by nature, yet by office and authority. And I suppose they will not find out an office for the Holy Spirit, to which he might be exalted, on the account of the fact (in their eyes) that he might become

God, seeing this would acknowledge him to be a Person, which they deny. So he is called the “Comforter”. (Jn. 16:7) Here is a *personal appellation* also; and because he is the Comforter of all God’s people, it can be the name of none but a divine Person. In the same place, also, it is frequently affirmed, that he will come, and will do such and such things; all of them declaring him to be a Person.

Thirdly. He has *personal properties* assigned to him; such as a *will* — “He divideth to every man severally as he will” (1 Cor. 12:11), and *understanding* — “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10), as also, all the *actions* that are ascribed to him, which all undeniably affirm personal properties to their principal and agent.

For —

Fourthly. He is the *voluntary author* of divine operations. He, of old, cherished the creation — “The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (Gen. 1:2) He formed and garnished the heavens. He inspired, acted, and spoke, in and by the prophets “Well spake the Holy Spirit by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers” (Acts 28:25). “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Pet. 1:21) He regenerates, enlightens, sanctifies, comforts, instructs, leads, and guides, all the disciples of Christ, as the Scriptures everywhere testify. Now, all these are *personal operations*, and cannot, with any pretence of seriousness or consistency with reason, be constantly and uniformly assigned to a “quality” or “virtue”. He is, as the Father and Son, God, with the properties of omniscience and omnipotence, of life, understanding, and will; and by these properties, works, acts, and produces effects according to wisdom, choice, and power.

Fifthly. The *same regard is had of him in faith*, worship, and obedience, as to the other persons of the Father and Son. For our being baptised into his name is our solemn engagement to believe in him, to yield obedience to him, and to worship him, as it puts the same obligation on us to the Father and the Son. So also, with reference to the worship of the church, he commands that her ministers be separated for himself — “The Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2); and verse 4, “So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, departed” — which is comprehensive of all the worship of the church.

And, on the same account, he is sinned against, such as in Acts 5:3-4, 9; for there is the same reason for sin and obedience. Against whom a man may sin formally and ultimately, he is bound to obey, worship, and believe in. And this can be no “quality”, but God himself. For what else can be the sense of this expression, “Thou hast lied to the power of God in his operations”, or how can we be formally obliged to obey a “quality”? There must, then, be a previous obligation to faith, trust, and religious obedience supposed as the ground of making a person capable of being guilty of sin towards anyone; for sin is a failure in faith, obedience, or worship. These, therefore, are due to the Holy Spirit; or a man could not sin against him so signally and fatally as some are said to do in the following testimonies.

I say, then, to this part of our cause, as to the other, that unless we cast off all reverence for God, and, fall into a kind of atheism which, as I suppose, the prevailing wickedness of this age has not yet arrived at, and say that the Scriptures were written on purpose to deceive us, and lead us into mistakes about, and misunderstandings of, what it proposes to us, we must acknowledge the Holy Spirit to be a substance, a Person, God, yet distinct from the Father and the Son. For Scripture tells us that he will come to us, that he will be our Comforter, that he will teach us, lead us, guide us; that he spoke of old in and by the prophets — that they were moved by him, and acted because of him; that he “searcheth the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10), and works as he will; that he appoints for himself ministers in the church — in a word, declares in passages innumerable what he has done, what he does, what he will do, what he says and speaks, how he acts and proceeds, what his will is, and warns us not to grieve him, not to sin against him, with things sins of the similar nature; and all this while, our critics oblige us to believe that he is not a person, a helper, a comforter, a searcher, a willer, but a “quality” in some special operations of God, or God’s “power” and “virtue” in them, which distracts men, not instructs them, this leaves them to no certain conclusion but this, that there is nothing certain in the whole book of God. And of no other tendency are these and similar notions of our adversaries in this matter.

Objection

Let us briefly consider what is being objected to in general to the truth we have confirmed. They say, then —

“The Holy Spirit is said to be *given*, to be *sent*, to be *bestowed* on men, and to be promised to them: and therefore it cannot be that he should be God; for how can any of these things be spoken of God?”

Answer

Firstly, as the expressions do not prove him to be God (nor did ever any produce them for that purpose), yet they undeniably prove him to be a Person, or an intelligent, voluntary agent, concerning whom they are spoken and affirmed. For how can the “power” of God, or a “quality”, as they say, be said to be sent, to be given to be bestowed on men? So that these very expressions are destructive of their arguments.

Secondly. He who is God, equal in nature and being with the Father, may be promised, sent, and given, with respect to the holy dispensing and condescension in which he has undertaken the office of being our comforter and sanctifier.

Thirdly. The communications, distributions, impartings, divisions of the Spirit, which they mention, as they respect the *object* of them, or those on whom they were or are bestowed, denote only works, gifts, operations, and effects of the Spirit; the rule whereof is expressed, <461211>1 Corinthians 12:11. He works them in whom he will, and as he will. And whether these and the like exceptions, taken from acting and operations which are plainly interpreted and explained in sundry places of Scripture, and evidently enough in the particular places where they are used, are sufficient to impeach the truth of the revelation before declared, all who have a due reverence of

God, his word, and truths, will easily understand and discern. These things being declared in the Scripture concerning the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, it is, moreover, revealed, "And these three are one;" that is, one God, jointly to be worshipped, feared, adored, believed in, and obeyed, in order unto eternal life. For although this does absolutely and necessarily follow from what is declared and has been spoken concerning the one God, or oneness of the Deity, yet, for the confirmation

of our faith, and that we may not, by the distinct consideration of the three be taken off from the one, it is particularly declared that "these three are one;" that one, the one and same God. But whereas, as was said before, this can no otherwise be, the testimonies given whereunto are not so frequently multiplied as they are unto those other heads of this truth, which, through the craft of Satan, and the pride of men, might be more liable to exceptions.

But yet they are clear, full, and distinctly sufficient for faith to hold onto immediately, without any other expositions, interpretations or arguments, beyond our understanding of the bare importance of the words. Such as they are of the Father and the Son: "I and my Father are one" (Jn. 10:30); the Father, the Son, and the Spirit: "There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one" (1 Jn. 5:7), and, "Baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." (Mat 28:19)

For if those into whose name we are baptised are not one in nature, we are, by our baptism, engaged into the service and worship of two more gods than one. For, as being baptised, or sacredly initiated into, or in the name of, any one of them, *sacramentally* binds us to a holy and sacred obedience to him, and, in all things, to the avowing of him as the God whose we are and whom we serve, as here we are in the name of the Father, Son, and Spirit; so if they are not one God, the blasphemous consequence before mentioned must unavoidably be admitted: which it also does upon the Socinian principle, who, while all others seem to contend most for one God, they are, indeed, direct polytheists, by owning others with religious respect, which is due only to God alone. But our critics would make us deny the unity of God in three Persons.

Moreover, it is revealed in Scripture also that these Three are *distinct* among themselves by certain particular *relative properties* (if I dare use these terms). So that they are distinct, living, divine, intelligent, voluntary principles of operation or working, and that in and by internal acts one towards another, and in acts that outwardly respect the creation and the several parts of it. Now, this distinction *originally* lies in this — that the Father begets the God, and the Son is begotten of the Father, and the Holy Spirit proceeds from both of them. The manner of these things, so far as they may be expressed for our edification, shall afterwards be taken up.

At present, it is sufficient for the satisfaction and confirmation of our faith, that the distinctions named are clearly revealed in Scripture, and are proposed to be the proper object in this matter —

"Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." (Ps 2:7)

“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Mat, 16:16)

“We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.” (Jn. 1:14)
And verse 18, “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him.”

“For as the Father has life in himself, so has he given to the Son to have life in himself.” (Jn. 5:26)

“The Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding.” (1 Jn. 5:20)

“But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me.” (Jn. 15:26)

Now, as the nature of this distinction lies in their mutual relation to one another, so it is the foundation of those distinct actions and operations in which the distinction itself is clearly shown and confirmed. And these actions, as I said, are either such as where one of them is the object of another’s action, or such as have the creation as their object.

The first sort are testified to in Ps. 110:1; Jn. 10:18, 5:20, 17:5; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; Prov. 8:22; most of which passage have already been quoted. They thus *know* each other, *love* each other, *delight* in each other, are distinct from one another; and so they are presented to our faith.

As for the other sort of actions, Scripture is full of the expressions concerning them. See Gen. 19:24; Zech. 2:8; Jn. 5:17; 1 Cor. 12:7-11; 2 Cor. 8:9.

Our conclusion from the whole is this — there is nothing more fully expressed in Scripture than this sacred truth —

“That there is one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; who are divine, distinct, intelligent, voluntary, omnipotent principles of operation and working: which, whosoever thinks himself obliged to believe the Scriptures must believe; and concerning others, in this discourse, we don’t care for much.

This is what was first proposed — namely, to show what is expressly revealed in Scripture concerning God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; so that we may duly believe in God, yield obedience to him, enjoy communion with him, walk in his love and fear, and so come, at length, to be blessed with him for evermore. Nor does faith, for its security, establishment, and direction, absolutely stand in need of any further exposition or explanation of these things, or the use of any terms not consecrated to the present service by the Holy Spirit. But, whereas it may be variously assaulted by the temptations of Satan, and opposed by the subtle silly arguments of men of corrupt minds; and whereas it is the duty of the disciples of Christ to grow in the knowledge of God, and of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by an explicit understanding of the things they do believe, so far as they are capable of receiving them; this doctrine has in all ages of the church been explained and taught in, and by, such expressions, terms and propositions, as further declare what is

necessarily included in it, or are consequent to it; with an exclusion of such things, ideas, and misunderstandings, as are neither the one nor the other.

This I shall briefly dwell on, and then defend the whole from some exceptions; and so close this dissertation.

Firstly. That God is *one*, I have previously declared and proved. Now this *oneness* can mean nothing but the nature, being, substance, or essence of God. God is One in this respect. Some of these words, indeed, are not used in the Scripture; but whereas they are of the same importance and significance, and none of them include anything of imperfection, they are properly used in the declaration of the *unity* of the Godhead. There is mention in Scripture of the *Godhead* of God — “His eternal power and Godhead” (Rom. 1:20); and of his *nature*, by excluding them from being objects of our worship which are not God by nature, except as his attributes. (Gal. 4:8) Now, this natural godhead of God is his substance or essence, with all the holy, divine excellence which naturally and necessarily appertain to his nature. Of such are eternity, immensity, omnipotence, life, infinite holiness, goodness, and such like. This one nature, substance, or essence, being the nature, substance, or essence of God, as God, is the nature, essence, and substance of the Father, Son, and Spirit; one and the same absolutely in and to each of them: for none can be God, as they are revealed to be; but, by virtue of his divine nature or being. Here consists the *unity of the Godhead*.

Secondly. The *distinction* which Scripture reveals between Father, Son, and Spirit, is that in which they are three hypostases or Persons, distinctly subsisting in the same divine essence or being. Now, a divine Person is nothing but *the divine essence, on account of a special property, subsisting in a special way*. As in the Person of the Father there is the divine essence and being, with its property of *begetting the Son*, subsisting in a special way as the Father, and because this Person has the whole divine nature, all the essential properties of that nature are in that Person. The wisdom of God, the understanding of God, the will of God, the immensity of God, is in that Person, not as that Person, but as the Person is God. The same is to be said of the Persons of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Here, each Person, having the understanding, the will, and the power of God, becomes a distinct principle of operation; and yet all their actions *ad extra* are the actions of God. They are *undivided*, and are all the works of One, of the self-same God. And these things not only necessarily follow, but are directly included in the revelation made concerning God and his subsistence in the Scriptures.

Thirdly. There are, indeed, very many other things that are taught and disputed about in the doctrine of the Trinity; such as, the manner of the eternal generation of the Son, — of the essence of the Father — of the proceeding of the Holy Spirit, and the difference of it from the generation of the Son — of the mutual in-being of the Persons, by reason of their unity in the same substance or essence — the nature of their personal subsistence, with respect to their properties by which they are mutually distinguished — all of which are true and defensible against all the vain arguments of the adversaries of this truth. Yet, because the distinct understanding of them, and their accurate expression, is not necessary for faith, as it is our guide and principle in and for sacred worship and obedience, they need not be insisted on here. Nor are those brief explanations themselves mentioned earlier so proposed as

to be placed immediately in the same rank or order with the original revelations I have insisted on, but are pressed only as proper expressions of what is revealed, to increase our light and further our edification.

And although they cannot rationally be opposed or denied, nor ever were by any except those who deny and oppose the things themselves as revealed, yet those who deny or oppose them are to be required positively, in the first place, to deny or disapprove the oneness of the Deity, or to prove that the Father, or Son, or Holy Spirit, in particular, are not God, before they are allowed to speak one word against the manner of the explanation of the truth concerning them. For either they grant the revelation declared and contended for, or they do not. If they do, let that concession be first laid down, namely — that the Father, Son, and Spirit, are one God, and then let it be debated whether they are one in substance and three in persons, or how else the matter should to be stated. If they deny it, it is plain madness to dispute the manner of anything, and the way of expressing it, while the thing itself is denied to have a being; for of that which is not, there is neither manner, property, adjunct, nor effect.

Let, then, such people as this sort be ready to attempt with their arguments, and to amuse themselves with silly disputes about persons, substances, subsistence, and the like. We would dearly love to know what they are up to! What do they deny? Of what do they disapprove? Is it that God is one? Or that the Father is God, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit are so? If they deny or oppose either of these, do they have testimonies and examples of divine revelation, in readiness to confound the devil and all his emissaries? If they will not do so, if they refuse, then let them know that it is most foolish and unreasonable to contend about expressions and explanations of anything, or doctrine, about the manner, respects, or relations of anything, until the thing itself, or doctrine, is brought out into the open or denied. If they refuse to do this, as generally they do and will (I speak with sufficient experience), and will not be induced to deal openly, properly, and rationally, but keep to their stupidities and silly arguments about terms and expressions, all further debate or conference with them can justly, and ought, both conscientiously and rationally, to be refused and rejected. For these sacred mysteries of God and the gospel are not to be treated lightly as a fit subject for men's contests and disputations.

But as I said earlier, so again let me give some instances of the silly arguments and objections that they use against the whole of this doctrine, and that with respect to some late collections and books from them; from where they have been taken, and have been used by many who do not seem to understand the words, phrases, and expressions found there, and which they make use of.

A list of objections by our critics.

A brief summary of what they say is as follows —

1. They begin —

Objection

“How can these things be? How can three be one, and one be three? Every person has its own substance; and, therefore, if there are three persons, there must be three substances, and so three Gods.”

Answer

Every person has distinctly his *own substance*, and the one substance of the Deity is the substance of each Person, but it is still one; but each Person does not have not its own separate substance, because the substance of them all is the same, as has been shown.

2. They continue —

Objection

“That if each person is God, then each person is infinite, and there being three persons, there must be three infinities.”

Answer

This does not follow in the least; for each person is infinite as he is God. *All divine properties*, such as to be infinite, do not belong to the Persons on account of their personality, but on account of their nature, which is one, for they are all natural properties.

3. But they say —

Objection

“If each person is God, and that God subsists in three persons, then, in each Person, there are three persons or Gods.”

Answer

The nub of this argument consists in that expression “*be God*” and “*that God*”. In the first place, the nature of God is intended; in the latter, a singular person. Place the words intelligibly, and they run like this — If each Person is God, and the nature of God subsists in three persons, then, in each Person, there are three persons; so then the foolishness of their argument becomes clear.

4. But they further infer —

Objection

“That if we deny the persons to be infinite, then an infinite being has a finite mode of subsisting, and so, I do not know what supposition they base their teaching on. Seeing, then, there are not three infinities, then the Father, Son, and Spirit are three unities that make up an infinity.”

Answer

The pitiful weakness of this silly argument is open before all; for finite and infinite are properties and adjuncts of *beings*, and not of the *manner* of the subsistence of anything. The nature of each person is infinite, and so is each Person because of that nature. Of the manner of their subsistence, finite and infinite cannot be predicated or spoken, no further than to say, an infinite being does so subsist.

5.

Objection

“But you grant”, they say, “that the only true God is the Father, and then if Christ is the only true God, he is the Father.”

Answer

I say that the only true God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We never say, Scripture never says, that *the Father only is the true God*; therefore it would follow that he that is the true God is the Father. But we grant the Father to be the only true God; and so we say is the Son also. And it does not at all follow that the Son is the Father, because, in saying the Father is the true God, we are not talking about his paternity, or his paternal relationship with his Son, but his nature, essence, and being. And the same we affirm concerning the other Persons. And to say, that because each Person is God, thus one Person must be another, is to beg leave to disbelieve what God has revealed, without giving any reason at all for doing so.

But this silly argument, being borrowed from another, namely, Crellius, who insisted much upon it, I shall upon his account, and not on theirs, who, as far as I can apprehend, understand little of the intendment of it, remove it more fully out of the way. It is proposed by him in way of syllogism, thus —

“The only true God is the Father; Christ is the only true God, therefore he is the Father.”

Now, this syllogism is ridiculously untrue. For, in a categorical syllogism, the major proposition is not to be particular, or equivalent to a particular; for, from such a proposition, when anything communicable to more is the subject of it, and is restrained to one particular, nothing can be inferred in the conclusion. But such is this proposition here: *The only true God is the Father*. It is a particular proposition, where the subject is limited to a singular or individual predicate, although in itself communicable to more. Now, the proposition being so made particular, the terms of the subject or predicate are supposed to be reciprocal — namely, that one God, and the Father, are the same; which is false, unless it can be first proved that the name “God” is communicable to no more, or no other, than is the other term “Father”: which, to suppose, is to beg the whole question; for *the only true God* has a larger meaning than the term “Father” or “Son”. So that, though the only true God is the Father, yet everyone who is the true God is not the “Father”. Seeing, then, that the name of God here supplies the place of a species, though it is in the singular absolutely, as it respects the divine nature, which is absolutely singular, and One, and cannot be multiplied, yet, in respect of communication of essence, it is

otherwise; it is communicated to more — namely, to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And, therefore, if anything is to be intended and concluded from this, the proposition must be expressed according to what the subject requires, as that capable of communication or attribution to more than one Person, as thus: *Whoever is the only true God is the Father* — which proposition these persons and their masters will never be able to prove.

I have given, in particular, these rebuking answers briefly to these empty arguments, partly because they are well exploded already, and partly because they are mere extracts out of an author not long since translated into English, to whom a complete answer may seem long to be returned. What at present shall suffice is to give a general answer to all these silly arguments, with all of the same kind which the men of these principles usually insist on.

1. *“The things”*, they say, *“we teach concerning the Trinity are contrary to reason”*, and to this they offer several instances, of which the sum of the opposition that they offer to this truth consists. But first, I must ask: What reason is it that they intend? It is their own, the worldly reason of men. By how do they judge these divine mysteries. The Scripture tells us, indeed, that the “spirit of a man which is in him knows the things of a man” — a man’s spirit, by natural reason, may be a judge of natural things — “but the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” (1 Cor. 2:11) So that what we know of these things, we must receive by revelation of the Spirit of God alone, if the apostle is to be believed. And it is given to men to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God — to some, and not to others; and unless it is so given them, they cannot know them. In particular, none can know the Father unless the Son reveals him. Nor will, or does, or can, flesh and blood reveal or understand Jesus Christ to be the Son of the living God unless the Father reveals him, and instructs us in the truth of it. (Mat. 16:17) The way to come to a knowledge of these things, is that described by the apostle in Eph. 3:14-19 —

“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints...”

As also in Col. 2:2-3 —

“That ye might come unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

It is by faith and prayer, and through the revelation of God, that we may come to the knowledge of these things, and not by the worldly reasonings of men of corrupt minds.

2. *What reason*, then do they intend? If reason absolutely, the reason for things, we grant that nothing to the contrary can be admitted. But reason as it is in this or that person, particularly in themselves, we know to be weak, maimed, and imperfect; and that they are, and all others, extremely remote from a just and full understanding of

the whole reason of things. Are they in such a state as that their apprehension will pass for the measure of the nature of all things? We know they are far from that. So that, though we will not admit anything that is contrary to reason, yet, the least intimation of a truth by divine revelation will make me embrace it, although it should be *contrary to the reason of all the Socinians in the world*. Reason in the abstract, or the just measure of the answering of one thing to another, is of great moment: but reason — that is, what it is pretended to be, or appears to be to this or that man, especially in and about things of divine revelation — is of very small importance (or none at all) where it rises up against the express testimonies of Scripture, and these multiplied, to their mutual confirmation and explanation.

3. Many things are *above reason* — that is, as considered in this or that subject by men — which are not at all *against it*. It is an easy thing to compel the most curious inquirers in these days to declare a ready confession by many instances in things finite and temporary; and shall any dare to deny that it may be so in things heavenly, divine, and spiritual? No, there is no concern of the being of God, or his properties, but is absolutely above the grasp of our reason. We cannot by searching find out God, we cannot find out the Almighty to perfection. (Job 11:7)

4. The very foundation of all their objections and silly arguments against this truth is as potentially destructive of fundamental principles of reason as any there is in the world. They are all, at best, reduced to this:

It cannot be so in things finite; the same being cannot in one respect be *one*, in another *three*, and so on. And therefore it is so in things infinite and finite.

All these reasonings are built upon this supposition, that that which is *finite* can perfectly comprehend that which is *infinite* — an assertion absurd, foolish, and contradictory in itself. Again, it is the highest reason in things of pure revelation to captivate our understandings to the authority of the “Revealer”; which I here reject. So that by a loud, unsound, pretence of reason, these men, by a little careful sophistry, try not only to put forward their unbelief, but to overthrow the greatest principles of reason itself.

5. The objections these men mainly insist on are merely against the explanations we offer for this doctrine — not against the original revelation of it, which is the principal object of our faith; which is a preposterous and irrational procedure, as I have shown.

6. It is a rule among philosophers that, if a man, on just grounds, and for good reasons, has embraced any opinion or persuasion, he is not to desert it merely because he cannot answer every objection against it. For if the objections in which we may be entangled are not of the same weight and importance as the reason for which we embraced the opinion, it is madness to set it aside on that account. And much more must this hold among the common sort of Christians in things spiritual and divine. If they will let go and part with their faith in any truth because they are not able to answer distinctly some objections made against it, they may quickly find themselves disputed into atheism.

7. There is such a great intimation made of such an expression and resemblance of the Trinity in unity in the very works of the creation, that learned men have proved by various instances, it is most unreasonable to suppose that to be contrary to reason which many objects of rational consideration, more or less present to our minds.

8. To add no more considerations of this nature, let any of our adversaries produce any single argument or ground of reason (or those pretended to be such) against what I have asserted, arguments that have not already been baffled a thousand times; and it will receive an answer, and a public acknowledgment that the answer is beyond dispute.

A FEW FOOTNOTES BY THE EDITOR

COVETUS, JACOBUS

The only notice of this divine we can discover is found in the *Bibliotheca* of Konigius (1678). All the information he communicates respecting him is in these words —

“Covetus (Jacobus) Parisiensis Theologus. An. 1608 obiit. Reliquit Apologiam de Justificatione.”

Socinus, in a curious preface to his work mentioned above — *De Jesu Christo Servatore* — narrates in what manner Covetus and he first happened to meet. They subsequently exchanged communications on the points in dispute between them. It was in a reply to the arguments of Covetus in this correspondence that Socinus wrote the work to which Dr Owen alludes. It is matter of regret that so little is known of one whom Owen mentions so respectfully, and who had the honour of supplying the first antidote and check to the heresies of Socinus.

MARCION

A native of Pontus, and a celebrated heretic, who lived and propagated his errors in the middle of the second century. He seems to have been engaged in teaching his heretical views at Rome in A.D. 139.

He held two original and seminal principles — the invisible and nameless one, “the Good”, and the visible God, “the Creator”. Epiphanius ascribes to him a third — “the Devil.” The second, according to his system, was the God of the Old Testament, the author of evil; and Christ was the Son of the first, sent by him to overthrow the dominion of God the Creator. He held that there was an irreconcilable opposition between God the Creator revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures, and the Christian God revealed in the New. One ground on which he maintained this preposterous notion is mentioned

and explained above by Dr. Owen. Tertullian devotes five books to the refutation of the errors of Marcion.

SOCINIANISM

The two Sozzini were descended from an honourable family, and were both born at Siena — Laelius, the uncle, in 1525, and his nephew, Faustus, in 1539. The former became addicted to the careful study of the Scriptures, forsaking the legal profession, for which he had undergone some training, and acquiring, in furtherance of his favourite pursuit, the Greek, Hebrew, and Arabic languages. He is said to have been one of forty individuals who held meetings for conference on religious topics, chiefly at Vicenza, and who sought to establish a “purer” creed by the rejection of certain doctrines on which all the divines of the Reformation strenuously insisted. To these Vicentine “colleges”, as the meetings were termed, Socinians have been accustomed to trace the origin of their particular tenets. Dr. Thomas M’Crie, in his *“History of the*

Progress and Suppression of the Reformation in Italy” (1827), assigns strong reasons for discarding this account of the origin of Socinianism as unworthy of credit. Laelius

never committed himself during his life to a direct avowal of his sentiments, and was on terms of intercourse and correspondence with the leading Reformers; intimating, however, his scruples and doubts to such an extent, that his soundness in the faith was questioned, and he received an admonition from Calvin.

He left Italy in 1547, travelled extensively, and at length settled in Zurich, where he died in 1562, leaving behind him some manuscripts to which Dr. Owen alludes, and of which his nephew availed himself, in reducing the errors held in common by uncle and nephew to the form of a theological system.

The nephew, Faustus, led rather a chequered life. Tainted at an early age with the heresy of his uncle, he was under the necessity of quitting Siena; and after having held for twelve years some honourable offices in the court of the Duke of Tuscany, he repaired to Basle, and for three years devoted himself to theological study. The doubts of the uncle rose to the importance of convictions in the mind of the nephew. In consequence of divisions among the reformers of Transylvania, who had become Anti-trinitarians, he was sent for by George Blandrata, one of their leaders, to reason Francis David out of some views he held regarding the adoration due to Christ. The result was, that David was cast into prison, where he died. Socinus, used no influence to restrain the Prince of Transylvania from such cruel intolerance; a fact too often forgotten by some who delight in reproaching Calvin for the death of Servetus. He visited Poland in 1579; but before his visit, the Anti-trinitarians of that country had, by resolutions of their synods in 1563 and 1565, withdrawn from the

communion of other churches, and published a Bible and a Catechism — commonly known after Rakau, the town in which it was published, as the *Racovian Catechism*. Faustus Socinus was not at first well received by his Polish brethren; but he overcame their aversion to him, which at one time was so strong that he was nearly torn to pieces by a mob. He acquired considerable influence amongst them; managed to compose their differences, and became so popular, that his co-religionists adopted the name of Socinians, in preference to their old name of Unitarians. He died in 1604. His tracts were collected into two folio volumes of the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*.

Starting with mistaken views of private judgement, he inferred, from the right to exercise individual belief on the authority of Scripture, the competence of reason to determine the credibility of doctrine; but his views differed from modern Rationalism inasmuch as he adhered more to historical Christianity as the basis of his principles, and was by no means so free in impugning the authenticity of Scripture, when it bore against his system. His heresies assumed a shape more positive and definite than is generally fancied, and affected the doctrines of the Trinity, the divinity of Christ (on which his views were somewhat akin to Arianism), the necessity of an atonement, the nature of repentance, the power of grace, the sacraments, and the eternity of future punishment.

JOHN CRELL

Jan Krell, commonly called Crellius. Not to be confounded with Samuel Crell, also a Socinian writer, who lived about a century later, and who seems to have been converted to the faith of our Lord's divinity. The former was born in Franconia in 1590. He was rector of the University of Rakau in 1616. He had a controversy with Grotius, and was recognised as a leader among the Socinians. He died 1633, leaving behind him works that occupy four volumes in the *Bibliotheca Fratrum Polonorum*.