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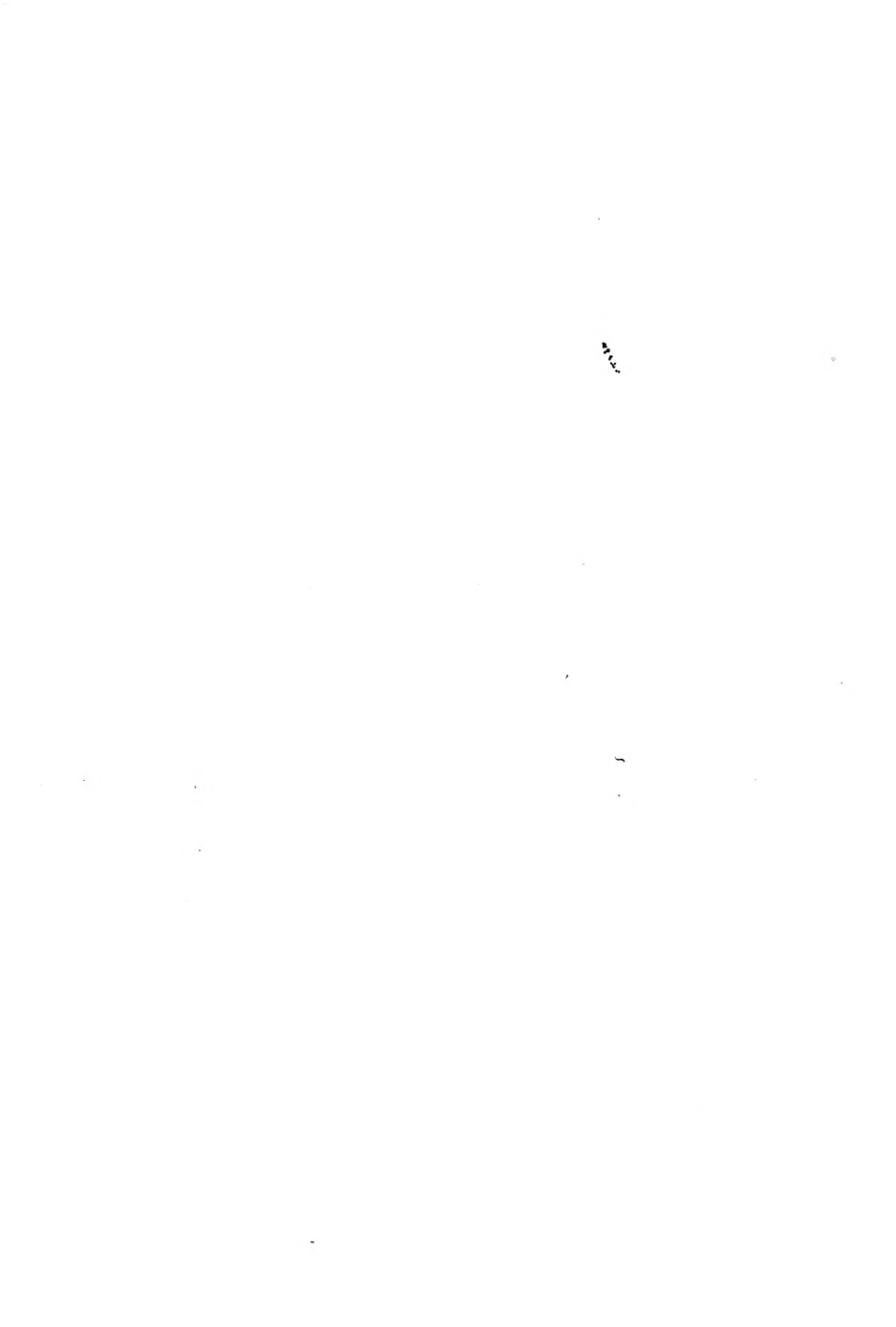
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The DEAN of St. PAUL's

APOLOGY

FOR

Writing against SOCINIANS, &c.

Imprimatur,

Jan. 17.
1693.

Geo. Royle, R. R^{mo}. in
Christo Patri ac Dom.
Dom. Johan. Archiep.
Cant. à Sacris Domest.

A N
A P O L O G Y
F O R
Writing against *SOCINIANS*,
I N
D E F E N C E
O F T H E
D O C T R I N E S
O F T H E
Holy Trinity and Incarnation:

In A N S W E R to a Late *Earnest and Com-
passionate Suit for Forbearance to the Learned
Writers of some Controversies at present.*

By WILLIAM SHERLOCK, D. D. Dean of
St. Paul's, Master of the *Temple*, and Chaplain
in Ordinary to Their M A J E S T I E S.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *Will. Rogers*, at the Sun over-against
St. Dunstan's Church in *Fleetstreet*. 1693.

A N
A P O L O G Y

F O R

Writing against SOCINIANS, &c.



AFTER a long silence, and patient expectation what *the Learned Writers of some Controversies at present* (as a late Author calls them) would bring forth, I intend by the *Assistance of the Holy Trinity, and the Incarnate Jesus*, whose Blessing

I most earnestly Implore, to resume the *Defence of the Catholick Faith*; which I shall Publish in some few short Treatises, as I can find Leisure for it, that I may not discourage my Readers by too Voluminous a Work.

But before I venture to Dispute these matters any farther, it is necessary to make some Apology for Disputing; which is thought very Unchristian and Uncharitable, and of dangerous Consequence, especially when we undertake the Defence of the Fundamentals of our Faith, against the rude and insolent Assaults of Hereticks.

B

Some-

Sometime since, *A Melancholy Stander-by* would be a *Stander-by* no longer, but interposed *An Earnest and Compassionate Suit for Forbearance*, to the Learned Writers of some Controversies at present. These Learned Writers of Controversy, are the Socinians, who ridiculed without any Learning or Common sense, the Athanasian Creed, and the Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation: The Forbearance he desires, is, That nobody should write against them; though Dr. Wallis and my self are more immediately concerned in this Suit.

Who this *Melancholy Stander-by* is, I shall not enquire, for my Controversy is not with Men, but with Doctrines; and I know by experience, that common fame is not always to be trusted, much less suspicions; but if he be a Divine of the Church of England, it seems very strange, that he should profess himself a *Stander-by*, when the Fundamentals of the Christian Faith are in question; and a *Melancholy Stander-by* to see some others undertake the Defence of it. I confess I am always very jealous of men, who are so very Tender on the wrong side; for observe it when you will, their Tenderness is always owing to their Inclination. But to defend our selves, let us briefly consider what he says.

Earnest
Suit, p. 1.

He thinks, *The open Dissentions of its Professors a great blemish to the Reformation*: That is, that it is a great blemish for any men openly to defend the true Faith, which others openly oppose, or secretly undermine; but certainly it would be a greater blemish to the Reformation, to have *Old Heresies* revived, and the true *Ancient Catholick Faith* scorned, and nobody appear in the Defence of it. But we know his mind, That it is for the honour of the Reformation

not

not to Dispute, though it be for the most Important Truths. Surely our *Reformers* were not so much against *Disputing*.

But if these Dissentions be so great a blemish to the *Reformation*, whose Fault is it? Theirs who dissent from the Truth, or theirs who defend it? This is a very plain case; for no body would oppose the Truth, if no body taught it: *The urging too strict an Union* in matters of Faith, begets *dissentions*: That is, to require an open and undisguised Profession of our Baptismal Faith in *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, as the Terms of Christian Communion, is the Criminal Cause of our Dissentions. Well: What shall we do then? Renounce the Faith of the Trinity, for the sake of Peace? This he dares not say, for that would pull off his disguise; but *Christianity must be left in that Latitude and Simplicity wherein it was deli-* P. 2.
vered by our Lord and his Apostles. This had been a good Proposal, would he have told us what this *Latitude* and *Simplicity* is; for I am for no other Faith than what Christ and his Apostles taught: But I would gladly know what he means by the *Latitude* of Faith: For if the Christian Faith be such a broad Faith, must we not believe the whole breadth of it? Or has Christ and his Apostles left it at liberty to believe what we like, and to let the rest alone? To believe that *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are One Supreme Eternal God*; or to believe that the *Father alone is the True God, the Son a mere Man, and the Holy Ghost nothing but a Divine Inspiration*? To believe that the *Eternal Word was made Flesh*; or that Christ was no more than a Man, who had no being before he was born of the Virgin *Mary*? He can mean nothing else by this *Latitude* of Faith, but that Christ

and his Apostles have left these matters so ambiguous and undetermined, that we may believe what we please; and then indeed those do very ill, who dispute these matters: But this is such a breadth as has no depth; for such a Faith as this can have no foundation. Can we certainly learn from Scripture, Whether Christ be a *God Incarnate*, or a *mere Man*? If we cannot, Why should we believe either? If we can, then one is true, and the other false; and then there is no *Latitude* in Faith, unless Christ and his Apostles have left it indifferent, whether we believe what is true, or what is false; what they have taught us, or what we like better our selves.

P. 2. In the same manner he leaves us to guess what he means by the *Simplicity* of the Faith. He is very angry with the *School-Doctors*, as worse enemies to *Christianity*, than either *Heathen Philosophers*, or *persecuting Emperors*. Pray what hurt have they done? I suppose he means the Corruption of *Christianity* with those barbarous Terms of *Person*, *Nature*, *Essence*, *Subsistence*, *Consubstantiality*, &c. which will not suffer *Hereticks* to lye concealed under Scripture-Phrases: But why must the *Schoolmen* bear all the blame of this? Why does he not accuse the *Ancient Fathers and Councils*, from whom the *Schoolmen* learnt these Terms? Why does he let *St. Austin* escape, from whom the *Master of the Sentences* borrowed most of his Distinctions and Subtilties? But suppose these *Unlucky Wits* had used some new Terms, have they taught any new Faith about the *Trinity in Unity*, which the *Catholick Church* did not teach? And if they have only guarded the *Christian Faith* with a hedge of Thorns, which disguised *Hereticks* cannot break through, Is this to wound *Christianity in its very Vitals*?

als? No, no : They will only prick the fingers of Hereticks, and secure Christianity from being wounded ; and this is one great Cause why some men are so angry with the *School-Doctors* ; tho the more general Cause is, because they have not Industry enough to read or understand them.

He says, *The first Reformers complained of this, and desired a purer and more spiritual sort of Divinity. What? With respect to the Doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation? What purer Reformers were these? I'm sure not our English Reformers, whom he censures for retaining Scholastick cramping Terms in their Publick Prayers : He means the beginning of our Litany : O God the Father of Heaven : O God the Son, Redeemer of the World : O God the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son : O Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, Three Persons and One God : These are his Scholastick, Cramping Terms, which he would fling out of our Liturgy, when the season of such blessed Alterations comes. I hope those Excellent Persons among us, who, I doubt not, for better Reasons did not long since think of some Alterations, will consider what a foul Imputation this is upon such a Design, when such a person shall publickly declare, That they ought to Alter and Reform the Doctrine of the Trinity out of our Prayers.*

But the whole Mystery of this *Latitude and Simplicity* of Faith which he pleads for, is that plausible Project (which has been so much talked of of late) to confine our selves to *Scripture Terms and Phrases* ; to use none but *Scripture Words* in our Creeds and Prayers, without any Explication in what sense those words are to be understood : As he tells us, *P. 2. Certainly we may Worship God right well, yea, most acceptably,*

ceptably, in words of his own Stamp and Coinage. Now at the first Propofal few men would fufpect, that there fhould be any hurt in this; though it would make one fufpect fome fecret in it, to confider that Hereticks were the firft Propofers of it, and that Orthodox Chriftians rejected it. The *Arians* objected this againft the *Homooufion*, or *the Son's being of the fame Subftance with the Father*, that it was an Unfcriptural Word; but the *Nicene Fathers* did not think this a good reafon to lay it afide: For what reafon can there be to reject any words, which we can prove to exprefs the true fenfe of Scripture, though they are not found there? For muft we believe the Words or the Senfe of Scripture? And what reafon then can any man have to reject the Words, though they be no Scripture-Words, if he believes the Senfe contained in them to be the fenfe of Scripture? The *Homooufion*, or *that the Son had a Nature like the Father's, tho' not the fame*, was no more a Scripture-Word, than the *Homooufion*; and yet the *Arians* did not diflike that, becaufe it was no Scripture-Word; nor are the *Socinians* angry at any man who fays, That Chrift is but a *meer man, who had no Being before he was born of the Virgin Mary*; tho' thefe words are no where in Scripture: And is it not ftrange, that a man who heartily believes, or at leaft pretends to believe, that *Father, Son, and Holy Ghoft are One Eternal God*, fhould be angry with a *Trinity in Unity, or Three Perfons and one God*, which do as aptly exprefs the Faith which he profefles, as any Words he can think of?

It is very odd to be zealous for Scripture-Words without the Scripture Senfe. If the Scripture have any determined Senfe, then that which is the true Senfe

Sense of Scripture, is the true Faith; and if we must *contend earnestly for the true Faith*, we must contend for the true Sense of Scripture, and not merely for its Words; and when Hereticks have used their utmost art to make the Words of Scripture signifie what they please, is it not necessary to fix their true Sense, and to express that Sense in such other Words as Hereticks cannot pervert?

There are but few words in common speech, but what are sometimes differently used, in a *Proper* or *Metaphorical*, a *Large* or a *Limited* Sense; and all wise and honest men easily understand from the circumstances of the place, in what sense they are used; but if men be perverse, they may expound words *properly* when they are used *metaphorically*, or *metaphorically* when they are used *properly*; and there is no confuting them from the bare signification of the word, because it may be, and oftentimes is used both ways; and therefore in such cases we must consider the Circumstances of the Text, and compare it with Parallel Texts, to find out in what sense the word is there used; and when we have found it, it is reasonable and necessary to express the true Christian Faith, not merely in Scripture words, which are abused and perverted by Hereticks, but in such other words, if we can find any such, as express the true sense in which the Scripture-words are used, and in which all Christians must understand them, who will retain the Purity of the Christian Faith. We do not hereby alter the Christian Faith, nor require them to believe any thing more than what the Scripture teaches, tho we require them to profess their Faith in other words, which are not indeed in Scripture, but express the true and
deter-

determined sense of Scripture words. And this is all the *Latitude of Faith* which this *Stander-by* so tragically complains we have destroyed, *viz.* That we have brought the Scripture words to a fixt and determined sense, that Hereticks can no longer conceal themselves in a *Latitude* of expression, nor spread their Heresies in Scripture words, with a *Traditionary Sense and Comment* of their own.

I would ask any man who talks at this rate about a *Latitude of Faith*, Whether there be any more than One True Christian Faith? And whether Christ and his Apostles intended to teach any more? Or whether they did not intend, That all Christians should be obliged to believe this One Faith? If this be granted, there can be no more *Latitude* in the Faith, than there is in a *Unit*; and if they taught but One Faith, they must intend that their words should signify but that one Faith; and then there can be no *Intentional Latitude* in their words neither; and what Crime then is the Church guilty of, if she teach the true Christian Faith, that she teaches it in such words as have no *Latitude*, no *Ambiguity of Sense*, which Hereticks may deny if they please, but which they can't corrupt in favour of their Heresies, as they do Scripture words?

It is an amazing thing to me, that any man who has any Zeal, any Concernment for the true Christian Faith, who does not think it perfectly indifferent what we believe, or whether we believe any thing or not, should judge it for the advantage of Christianity, and a proper Expedient for the Peace of the Church, for all men to agree in the same Scripture words, and understand them in what sense they please; tho one believes Christ to be the

Eternal

Eternal Son of God, and another to be but a mere man; which it seems has no great hurt in it, if they do but agree in the same words: But if the Faith be so indifferent, I cannot imagine why we should quarrel about Words; the fairer and honester Proposal is, That every man should believe as he pleases, and no man concern himself to confute Heresies, or to divide the Church with Disputes; which is the true Latitude our Author seems to aim at; and then he may believe as he pleases too.

But pray, why should we not write against the *Socinians*? Especially when they are the Aggressors, and without any provocation publish and disperse the most impudent and scandalous Libels against the Christian Faith. He will give us some very wise Reasons for this by and by, when he comes to be plain and succinct; in the mean time we must take such as we can meet with.

He is afraid people should lose all Reverence for the *Litany*, should we go on to vindicate the Do- P. 3.
ctrine of the *Trinity in Unity*: I should not easily have apprehended this, and possibly some of the *common people* might have been as dull as my self, had he not taken care before he parted, for fear nobody else should observe it, to teach people to ridicule the Trinity in their Prayers. Dr. *Wallis* would not undertake to say what a Divine *Person* signifies, as distinguished from *Nature and Essence*, only says, a *Person* is somewhat, but the *True Notion* of a *Person* he does not know: This Author commends this as ever held to by all Learned *Trinitarians*; for indeed all the Doctor meant by his *somewhat* is, That Three *Persons* signify Three *Real Subsistences*, and are *Real Things*, not a *Sabellian*

P. 16. *Trinity of mere Names.* And yet in the very next Page he teaches his Readers to ridicule the Litaney with the Doctors *somewhats*: *O Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, Three Somewhats, and One God, have Mercy on us, &c.* Was there ever any thing more Senseless, or more Prophane! That because the Doctor would not undertake to define a *Person*, but only asserted in general, That a Divine Person was *somewhat*, or some Real Being, in opposition to a mere Nominal Difference and Distinction; therefore in our Prayers we may as well call the Three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, *Three somewhats.* *Nobis non licet esse tam disertis.* I am sure he has reason heartily to pray, That these *Three somewhats*, as he prophanely calls them, *would have Mercy on him.*

P. 3. In the next place he says, *He is well assured, that the late (Socinian) Pamphlets would have died away, or have been now in few mens hands, had not divers persons taken on them the labour to confute them.* But did his Socinian Friends, who were such busie Factors for the Cause, tell him so? Did they print them, that no body might read them? Were they not dispersed in every Corner, and boasted of in every Coffee-house, before any Answer appeared? However, were it so, is there no regard to be had to Hereticks themselves? And is it not better that such Pamphlets should be in an hundred hands with an Answer, than in five hands without one? I should think it at any time a good reward for all the labour of confuting, to rescue or preserve a very few from such fatal Errors; which I doubt not
but

but is a very acceptable service to that *Merciful Shepherd*, who was so careful to seek one lost and straggling Sheep. Heresies and Vices dye by being neglected, just as Weeds do; for we know the Parable, That *the Devil sows his tares, while men sleep*. But this is no new Charge; the good Bishop of *Alexandria* met with the same Censures for his Zeal against *Arius*; for it seems that Heresie would have died too, if it had not been opposed. I doubt this Author judges of other mens Zeal for Heresy, by his own Zeal for the Truth, which wants a little rubbing and chafing to bring it to life; but Heresy is all flame and spirit, will blow and kindle it self, if it be not quenched.

But yet if what he says be true, That by our unskillful way of confuting Heresie, we *run into those very Absurdities which our Adversaries would reduce us to*; This I confess is a very great fault, and when he shews me any of those Absurdities, I will thankfully correct them; for all the Obloquies in the world will never make me blush to recant an Error: But before he pretends to that, I must desire him, that he would first read my Book, which I know some men censure without reading it. Such general Accusations are very spiteful, and commonly have a mixture of spite both against the Cause, and against the Person.

His next Argument is very observable: We must not dispute now against *Socinians*, because *these Controversies about the Trinity have been* P. 4.
above Thirteen hundred years ago determined by two general Councils (the Nicene, and first Constantinopolitan), which are owned by our Church,

and their Creeds received into our Liturgy. *Ergo*, we must not defend this Faith against Hereticks, because it is the Faith of two General Councils which are owned by our Church. Did *Athanasius* think this a good Argument against Writing and Disputing against the *Arians*, after the *Council of Nice* had condemned *Arius* and his Doctrines? Did *St. Basil*, *Gregory Nazianzen*, *Nyssen*, *St. Chrysostom*, *St. Jerom*, *St. Austin*, think this a good Argument, who wrote so largely against these Heresies, which former Councils had condemned? But this Author thinks the best way is to let the Matter stand upon this bottom of Authority; that is, let Hereticks ridicule our Faith as much as they please, we must make them no other answer, but that this is the Faith of the *Nicene* and *Constantinopolitan* Councils, and the Faith of the *Church of England*. And can he intend this for any more than a Jest, when he knows how *Socinians* despise the determinations of Councils, and particularly with what scorn they treat the *Nicene Fathers*? Is this an Age to resolve our Faith into *Church Authority*? Or would he himself believe such absurd Doctrines as they represent the *Trinity in Unity* to be, merely upon *Church Authority*? For my part I declare I would not. I greatly value the Authority of those Ancient Councils, as credible Witnesses of the *Traditionary* Sense of the Church before those Controversies were started; but were not these Doctrines taught in Scripture, were they manifestly repugnant to the plain and evident Principles of Reason, all the Councils in the World should never reconcile me to them, no more than they should

should to the Doctrine of *Transubstantion*. And therefore methinks he might have at least allowed us to have challenged the Scriptures as well as General Councils on our side; and to have vindicated our Faith from all pretended absurdities and contradictions to Reason. But would any man of common sense, who had not intended to expose the Faith of the Holy Trinity, have told the world at this time of day, That we have no other safe and sure bottom for our Faith, but only the Authority of General Councils? Nay, That the Council of *Nice* it self, on whose Authority we must rest, had little else themselves for their Determinations but only Authority, That *it was Authority chiefly carried the Point*. And thus for fear we should have believed too much upon the Authority of Councils, which is the only bottom he will allow our Faith, he gives them a secret stab himself, and makes their Authority ridiculous. That the several Bishops declared, what Faith had been taught and received in their Churches is true; That this Authority *chiefly* carried the Point, is false: *Athanasius* grew famous in the Council for his learned and subtile Disputations, which confounded the *Arians*; and what Arguments he chiefly relied on, we may see in his Works: And whoever does but look into the *Fathers*, who wrote against the *Arians* in those days, will find, that their Faith was resolved into Scripture and Reason, and not meerly or *chiefly* into Authority.

And thus he comes to be *Plain and Succinct*, and tells us, That of all Controversies we can touch upon at present, this of the Trinity is the most unreasonnable, the most dangerous, and so the most unseasonable. I2

It is the most *Unreasonable*: 1: *Because it is on all hands confess'd, the Deity is Infinite, Unsearchable, Incomprehensible; and yet every one who pretends to Write plainer than another on this controversy, professes to make all Comprehensible and easy.*

I perceive he is well versed in Mr. *Hobbs's* Divinity; though I can discover no marks of his skill in Fathers and Councils. For this was Mr. *Hobb's* reason, why we should not pretend to know any thing of God, nor inquire after his Attributes, because he has but one Attribute, which is, that he is *Incomprehensible*; and as this Author argues, *It is a small favour to request of Persons of Learning, that they should be consistent with, and not contradict themselves: that is, That they would not pretend to know any thing of God, whom they acknowledge to be Incomprehensible, which is to pretend to know, what they confess cannot be known.* Now I desire to know, Whether we may Dispute about the Being and Nature of God, and his essential Attributes and Perfections; and vindicate the Notion of a Deity from those *Impossibilities, Inconsistencies, Absurdities*, which some *Atheistical Philosophers* charge on it, notwithstanding that we confess God to be *Incomprehensible*? And if the Incomprehensibility of the Divine Nature does not signify, that we can know nothing of God, and must inquire nothing about him; the Trinity of Divine Persons is as proper an object of our Faith, and modest Inquiries, as the Unity of the Divine Essence, for they are both *Incomprehensible*. And to say, *That every one who pretends to write plainer than another*

on this Controversy, professes to make all comprehensible and easy, may with equal Truth and Authority be charg'd on all those who undertake to vindicate the Notion and Idea of a God, or to explain any of the Divine Attributes and Perfections. A finite mind cannot comprehend what is infinite; but yet one man may have a truer and more perfect Notion of the Nature and Attributes of God than another: God is Incomprehensible in Heaven as well as on Earth, and yet Angels and Glorified Spirits know God after another manner than we do. There must be infinite degrees of knowledge, when the object is infinite; and every new degree is more perfect than that below it; and yet no Creature can attain the highest degree of all, which is a perfect comprehension: So that the knowledge of God may increase every day, and men may Write plainer about these matters every day, without pretending to make all that is in God, even a Trinity in Unity, *comprehensible and easy*.

This is a spiteful and scandalous imputation, and is intended to represent all those who undertake to write about the Trinity, and to vindicate the Primitive Faith of the Church from the scorn and contempt of Hereticks, as a company of vain-conceited, presuming, but ignorant Scriblers; who pretend to make the *Incomprehensible* Nature of God, *comprehensible and easy*. But the comfort is, we have so good Company, that we are able to bear this Charge without blushing; even General Councils, and those great Lights of the Church, *Athanasius*, *St. Hillary*, *St. Basil*, the *Gregories*, *St. Chrysostom*, *St. Austin*, and many others, besides all those who in
all

all succeeding Ages to this day, have with equal Zeal and Learning defended the same Cause; and yet never profess'd to make *all comprehensible and easy*. All that any man pretends to in vindicating the Doctrine of the Trinity, is to prove that this Faith is taught in Scripture, and that it contains no such Absurdities and Contradictions, as should force a Wise man to reject it, and either to reject the Scriptures for its sake, or to put some strained and unnatural senses on Scripture to reconcile it to the Principles of Reason; and this, I hope, may be done by those, who yet acknowledge the Divine Nature, and the Trinity in Unity to be Incomprehensible.

But here he had a very fair opportunity, had he thought fit to take it, to correct the Insolence and Presumption of his *Learned Writers of Controversy*; who will not allow the Divine Nature to be *Incomprehensible*, and will not believe God himself concerning his own Nature, beyond what their Reason can conceive and comprehend: Who deny *Prescience* for the same Reason, that they deny the *Trinity*, because they can't conceive it, nor reconcile it with the liberty of Human Actions; and for the same reason may deny all the Attributes of God, which have something in them beyond what we can conceive; especially an Eternity without beginning, and without Succession, which is chargeable with more Absurdities and Contradictions, than the Trinity it self: For a duration, which can't be measured; and an eternal duration, which can be measured; and a Succession without
a beginning,

a Beginning, a Second or Third without a First, are unconceivable to us, and look like very plain and irreconcilable Contradictions. This is the true use of the *Incomprehensibility* of the Divine Nature; not to stop all Enquiries after God, nor to discourage our Studies of the Divine Nature and Perfections: for we may know a great deal, and may every day increase our knowledge of what is Incomprehensible, tho' we cannot know it all; but to check the presumption of some vain Pretenders to Reason, who will not own a God, nor believe any thing of God, which their Reason cannot comprehend; which must not only make them Hereticks, but, if pursued to its just Consequences, must make them Atheists, or make such a God, as no body will own, or worship, but themselves, a God *adequate and commensurate to their Understandings*, which must be a little, finite, comprehensible God.

In the next place, to prove how unreasonable it is to Dispute in Vindication of the Trinity, he observes again, That *this Matter has been sufficiently determined by due Authority*: but having answered this once, I see no need to answer it again.

To back this he adds, That *the present issue shews, that in this World it never will be better understood*: for it seems, as he says, *The Master of the Sentences*, and some Modern Writers, have made very sad work of it. And yet he does not seem to be very intimately acquainted with *the Master of the Sentences*, nor some of these Modern Writers. But all that he means is, that no body can say any thing to the purpose for so absurd a Doctrine, as *a Trinity in Unity*; and therefore he plainly adds, *The more Men draw the disputacious Saw, the more perplexed and intricate the Question is*; and therefore the only secure way is, to leave off disputing

for the Trinity, and let *Socinians* Dispute against it by themselves. But such Stuff as this, deserves another sort of Answer than I can give it.

Page 7. But he concludes this Argument of *Unreasonableness* very remarkably. *And Lastly, Hereby our Church at present, and the Common Christianity (it may be feared) will be more and more daily exposed to Atheistical Men; for this being but the result of the former particulars, and such kind of Men daily growing upon us, it cannot be believed, they can over-look the advantages which is so often given them.* The sum of which is, That to Vindicate the Doctrine of the Trinity against *Socinians*, will make Men Atheists. This is a very bold stroke for a Christian, and a Divine, and I shall beg leave to expostulate this matter a little freely with him.

1st, I desire to know, whether he thinks the Doctrine of the Trinity to be defensible or not? If it be not defensible, why does he believe it? Why should we not rather openly and plainly reject the Doctrine of the Trinity, which would be a more effectual way to put a stop to Atheism, than to profess to believe it, but not to defend it? If it be defensible, and there be no fault in the Doctrine, but that some Men have defended it ill, would it not much more have become him to have defended it better, than only to quarrel with those who have defended it, as well as they could?

2^{dly}, Why does he not tell the *Socinians*, what injury they do to common Christianity, by ridiculing the Faith of the Holy Trinity, and exposing it to the scorn of *Atheists*? Does he think that they are no Christians, and ought not to be concerned for common Christianity? Or does he think, that Atheists will like the Doctrine of the Trinity ever the better, for its being despised by *Socinians* as an absurd contradictory Faith, with-

without having any Defence made by *Trinitarians*? Or does he think, that the Defences made by *Trinitarians* expose the Faith more than the Objections of *Socinians*? I wish I knew his mind, and then I could tell what to say to him.

3dly, How are *Atheists* concerned in the Disputes of the Trinity? Or how are we concerned to avoid scandalizing *Atheists*, who believe that there is no God at all? Must we be afraid of defending the Faith of the Trinity, lest *Atheists* should mock at it, who already mock at the Being of a God? What shall we have left of Christianity, if we must either cast away, or not defend every thing, which *Atheists* will mock at? Surely he has a very contemptible Opinion of the Doctrine of the Trinity, that he thinks all the Defences that are, or can be made for it, so ridiculous, that they are enough to make Men *Atheists*.

But I can tell him a Secret, which possibly he may be privy to, though in great modesty he conceals his knowledge, *viz.* That *Atheists* and *Deists*, Men who are for no Religion, or at least not for the Christian Religion, are of late very zealous *Socinians*; and they are certainly in the right of it: for run down the Doctrine of *the Trinity* and *Incarnation*, and there is an end of the Christian Religion, and with that an end of all Revealed Religion; and as for Natural Religion, they can make and believe as much, or as little of it as they please. And this is one Reason, and I am sure a better than any he has given against it, why we are, and ought to be so zealous at this time in opposing *Socinianism*, because it is the common Banner under which all the Enemies of Religion and Christianity unite. This makes that little contemptible Party think themselves considerable, that all the *Atheists* and *Infidels*; and li-

centious Wits of the Town, are their Converts ; who promise themselves a glorious Triumph over Christianity, and particularly over the Church of *England*, by decrying and scorning the Catholick Faith of the Trinity and Incarnation.

II. Thus much for the *Unreasonableness* of this Controversie about the Holy Trinity ; in the next place he tells us the *Danger* of it : and he has thought of such an Argument to evince the danger of Disputing for the Holy Trinity, as, I believe, was never dreamt of before ; and that is, That it is *One of the Fundamentals of Christian Religion ; now to litigate touching a Fundamental, is to turn it into a Controversie ; that is, to unsettle, at least endanger the unsettling the whole Superstructure.* Now I am perfectly of his mind, that it is a dangerous thing to unsettle Foundations ; But is it a dangerous thing too, to endeavour to preserve and defend Foundations, when Hereticks unsettle them, and turn them into Dispute and Controversie ? Let us put the *Being of God*, instead of *the Holy Trinity*, and see how he will like his Argument himself. The *Being of a God* is the Foundation of all Religion, and therefore it is dangerous to dispute with Atheists about the Being of God, because this is *to turn a Fundamental into a Controversie, that is, to unsettle, or to endanger the unsettling the whole Superstructure* : And thus we must not dispute against Atheists, no more than against Socinians : And what is it then we must dispute for ? What else is worth disputing ? What else can we dispute for, when Foundations are overturned ? What is the meaning of that Apostolical Precept, *To contend earnestly for the Faith ? Jud. 3.* What Faith must we contend for, if not for Fundamentals ? What Faith is that which can subsist without a Foundation ?

But

But I would desire this Author to tell me, whether we must believe Fundamentals with, or without Reason? Whether we must take Fundamentals for granted, and receive them with an implicate Faith, or know for what Reason we believe them? If our Religion must not be built without a Foundation, like a Castle in the Air, it is certain, that the Fundamentals of our Faith ought to have a very sure Foundation, and therefore we are more concerned to understand and vindicate the Reasons of our Faith, with respect to Fundamentals, than to dispute any less Matters in Religion, for the Roof must tumble, if the Foundation fail.

What shall Christians do then, when *Atheists, Infidels,* and *Hereticks*, strike at the very Foundations of their Faith? Ought not they to satisfy themselves, that there is no force in the Objections, which are made against the Faith? Or must they confirm themselves with an obstinate Resolution, to believe on without troubling themselves about Objections, in defiance of all the power and evidence of Reason? This is not to believe like Men; Christianity had never prevailed against Paganism and Judaism upon these Terms; for they had Possession, Authority, and Prescription on their side, which is the only Reason and Security he gives us for the Faith of the Trinity, That *the Established Church is in possession of it.*

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If private Christians then must endeavour to satisfy themselves in the Reasons of their Faith, when Fundamentals are called in question, is it not the Duty of Christian Bishops and Pastors to defend the Faith, and to defend the Flock of Christ from those *grievous Welves* St. Paul prophesied of? Is not this their proper Work and Business? And when the Faith is publicly opposed and scorned in Printed Libels, ought it not to

Lc.

be as publickly defended? When Hereticks dispute against the Faith, must we be afraid of disputing for it, for fear of making a *Controversie of Fundamentals*? Thanks be to God, our excellent *Primate* is above this fear, and has now in the Press a Defence of that Faith, which this Writer would persuade all Men to betray by silence; and I hope so great an Example may at least prevail with him, to let us dispute on without any more *earnest and compassionate Suits*.

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III. His last Argument is, The *Unseasonableness* of this Controversie. He says, all Controversies are now *unseasonable*; and I say a little more, that they are always so; for there is no *Juncture seasonable* to broach Heresies, and to oppose the Truth: but if Hereticks will dispute against the Truth *unseasonably*; there is no time *unseasonable* to defend Fundamental Truths. But why is it so *unseasonable* in this *Juncture*? Because *under God, nothing but an union of Councils, and joyning Hands and Hearts, can preserve the Reformation, and scarce any thing more credit and justifie it, than an Union in Doctrinals*. To begin with the last first: Is the *Union in Doctrinals* ever the greater, that *Socinians* boldly and publickly affront the Faith of the Church, and no body appears to defend it? Will the World think that we are all of a mind, because there is disputing only on one side? Then they will think us all *Socinians*, as some *Forreigners* begin already to suspect, which will be a very scandalous Union, and divide us from all other *Reformed Churches*. Let *Union* be never so desirable, we cannot, we must not unite in Heresie; those break the Union, who depart from the Faith, not those who defend it. When Heresies are broached, the best way to preserve the Unity of the Church, is to oppose and confute, and shame Heresie and Hereticks, which

which will preserve the Body of Christians from being infected by Heresie, and the fewer there are, who forsake the Faith, the greater Unity there is in the Church.

But *nothing but Union of Counsels. and joyning Hands and Hearts, can preserve the Reformation.* Must we then turn all **Socinians**, to preserve the *Reformation*? Must we renounce Christianity, to keep out Popery? This Stander-by is misinformed, for *Socinianism* is no part of the *Reformation*; and so inconsiderable and abhorred a *Party*, when they stand by themselves, that all *Parties* who own any Religion, will joyn *Counsels, and Hands and Hearts* to renounce them.

But what he would insinuate is, that we shall never joyn against a common Enemy, whose Successes would endanger the *Reformation*, while there are any Religious Disputes among us. I hope he is mistaken, or else we shall certainly be conquered by *France*, for twenty such *compassionate Suits* as this, will never make us all of a mind; and whether we dispute or not, if we differ as much as if we did dispute, and are as zealous for the Interest of a *Party*, the case is the same. But he has unwarily confess'd a great Truth, which all Governments ought to consider, That every Schism in the Church, is a new *Party* and *Faction* in the State, which are always troublesome to Government when it wants their help.

But *these Disputes about the Trinity make sport for Papists.* It must be disputing against the Trinity then, not disputing for it; for they are very Orthodox in this point; and never admitted any Man to their Communion who disowned this Faith, or declared, that he thought it at any time *unreasonable, dangerous, or unseasonable* to dispute for it, when it was violently opposed.

I doubt this Protestant Church-man has made more sport for Papists, than all our other Disputes; for it is a new thing for such Men to plead for *Socinians*, but no new thing to dispute against them; and new Sports are always most entertaining.

But he has himself started an Objection, which if he could well answer, I could forgive him all the rest. *But it will be said, What shall we do? Shall we tamely by a base Silence give up the Point.*

This is the Objection, and he answers, *There is no danger of it, the Established Church is in possession of it, and dispute will only increase the disturbance.* But is there no danger that the Church may be flung out of possession, and lose the Faith, if she don't defend it? No, *The Adversaries to the received Doctrine* (Why not to the true Faith?) *cannot alter our Articles of Religion;* but if they can make Converts, and increase their Party, they may in time change our *Articles*, and then we shall hear no more of *compassionate Suits for forbearance.* *But they can dispute everlastingly;* and let them dispute on, we fear them not. *But they are Men subtil, sober, industrious; many of them very vertuous, and (as all must say) setting aside their Opinions, devout, pious, and charitable.* I perceive he is very intimately acquainted with them, though *St. Paul* commands all Christians, *To mark those which cause divisions and offences contrary to the Doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them,* 16 Rom. 17. But let them be never so good Men, as some of the Heathen Philosophers were, must we therefore tamely suffer them to pervert the Faith? But they are very *zealous*, and *the Presses are open*, and *they will never be silent.* They are *zealous* against the Truth, and therefore we must not be *zealous* for it; they will write and print, and speak against
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the Truth, and will never be silent; and therefore we must be silent, and neither write, nor say any thing for the Truth. Was there ever such a Reason thought of as this? Well! how long must we be silent? *Neglect them till a fit time and place*: But why is not this as fit a time, as ever we shall have, to prevent their sowing Tares, or to pluck them up before they have taken too deep Root? Can there be a fitter time to oppose Heresies, and to defend the true Christian Faith, than when Hereticks are very bold and busie in spreading their Heresies, and opposing the Faith? But when this *fit time* is come (for I know not what he means by a *fit place*) what shall we do then? Will he then give us leave to write and dispute against such Hereticks? This he will not say; but *then let that be done, which shall be judged most Christian and most Wholesome*. But what is that? Will it ever be *most Christian and most Wholesome*, to dispute for the Faith against Heresie? If ever it will be so, why is it not so now? If this never will be *Christian and Wholesome*, what else is to be done to Hereticks *in fit time and place*, unless he intends to Physick 'em?

And it seems he has a Dose ready prepared, *to lay all these Controversies to an Eternal Sleep*; and it is, what he calls a *Negative Belief*, a pretty Contradiction, but never the less proper Cure for Heresie. The Project is this, as far as I can understand him, That the *Socinians* shall not be required to own the Doctrines of the *Trinity and Incarnation*, but shall *so far agree, as not to contradict them, nor teach contrary to them*: Now I should like this very well, that they would not oppose the received Doctrine of the Church, but I believe he knows some little clattering Tongues,

which all the Opiates he has, can never lay asleep; and had he remembered what he had just before said concerning their *Zeal*, and their *Eternal disputing*, and that *they will never be silent*, he would never have proposed so impracticable a thing, as the imposing silence on them; which makes me suspect, that he intends something more than what he says, and therefore to prevent mistakes, I must ask him a Question or two.

1. Whether he will allow us, who, as he grants, are *in possession* of this Faith of the Trinity and Incarnation, to keep possession of it, and teach, explain, and confirm it to our People: we will answer none of their Books, if they won't write them; but if he expects that we should say nothing of, or for the Trinity, as he would have them say nothing against it, we must beg his Pardon; we do not think the Doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation to be of so little concernment, as to be parted with, or buried in silence. We believe Christian Religion to be built on this Faith, and therefore think ourselves as much bound to Preach it, as to Preach the Gospel; and if they will oppose the Faith, as long as we Preach it, we can have no Truce with them.

2dly, I hope he does not propose this *Negative Belief*, as he calls it, as a *Term of Communion*; that tho' we know they deny the Trinity and the Incarnation, yet if they will agree not publickly to oppose and contradict this Faith, we shall receive them to our Communion, and sling the Worship of the *Holy Trinity*, and of a *God Incarnate*, out of our *Liturgies* for their sake.

take. I grant there may be such things, as *Articles of Peace*, when Men joyn in the same Communion, notwithstanding some less material Differences, while the Substantials of Faith and Worship are secure, and oblige themselves not to disturb the Peace of the Church with less Disputes; but to make the Essentials of Faith and Worship *meer Articles of Peace*, to receive those to our Communion, who deny the very Object of our Worship, is as senseless, and as great a contradiction to the Nature and End of Christian Communion, as it would be to receive Heathens, Jews, Mahometans into the Christian Church, by vertue of this *Negative Belief*. This I know he will not allow; for he says, *We are agreed in the other parts of our common Christianity*: whereas it is absolutely impossible, that we should agree in any thing, which is *pure Christianity*, while we differ in the Fundamental Doctrines of *the Trinity and Incarnation*, the owning or denying of which makes an essential Difference in Religion. It alters the Object of our Worship, as much as the Worship of One and of Three Persons in the Godhead, and as much as the Worship of a God Incarnate, and of a deified *meer Man*, differ. It alters the way of our Salvation, as much as Faith in the Blood and Sacrifice of the Son of God, to expiate our Sins, differs from believing a great and excellent Prophet, and obeying his Laws. It alters the Motives and Principles of our Obedience, as much as the Love of God, in giving his Son, differs from his Goodness in sending an excellent Man to be our Prophet and Saviour; as much as the Love, Humility, and Condescension of the Eternal Son of God, in becoming Man, and in dying as a Sacrifice for our Sins, differs from the Love of a

See the Vindication of the Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet's Unreasonableness of Separation, pag. 256, &c.

meer Man, in preaching the Gospel, and bearing Testimony to it by his own Blood.

It changes the hopes and reliances of Sinners, as much as the Security of a Meritorious Sacrifice offered by the Eternal Son of God for the Expiation of our Sins, differs from the Promises of an extraordinary Man sent as a Prophet from God ; and as much as the Intercession of a High Priest, who is the Eternal Son of God, and intercedes in the Merits of his own Blood, differs from the Intercession of a meer, though of an excellent Man, who has made no Atonement for our Sins, and has no other Interest in God, than what an innocent and obedient Man can pretend to. It were easie to enlarge on this Argument ; but I have directed in the Margin, where the Reader may see it discoursed at large.

Now if this Author, for these Reasons, will allow us to instruct our People in the Doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation, and not desire us to receive Socinians into our Communion, he will do good Service, if he can bring them to his *Negative Belief*, and persuade them to be silent ; if he can't, we will try to make them so in time, if they have Wit enough to understand, when it is fit to be quiet.

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In the next place he takes Sanctuary in the Act of Parliament in favour of Dissenters, which he conceives has done very much, if not full enough. But had he considered, how severe this Act is upon his *beloved Socinians*, he might much better have let it alone. For no Dissenters have any benefit by that Act, who do not renounce *Socinianism* : But he pretends to give Account of Acts of Parliament, as he does of other Books, *without seeing them*. But we may see what a hearty good will he has to the Cause : if the Act has excepted *Socinians*,

nians, it is more than he knew, and more than he wished; for he hoped it had not been done, and endeavoured to persuade the World, that all the Bishops of *England* had allowed it; for *he cannot believe, that the Body of the Bishops disallowed, or did not with good liking consent to the Act*, viz. To give Liberty to *Socinians*, as he supposed. This is such a scandalous Representation of the Bishops of *England*, as I'm sure, they don't deserve, and which in due time they may resent.

And here, without any provocation, he sets up the Authority of Bishops, against the Lower House of Convocation, who never differed upon this Point, and I hope never will, nor will ever be tempted by such a forward Undertaker, to dispute the Bounds of their Authority, but content themselves with the Ancient Constitution of the Church of *England*. But if he understands *the Practice of the Primitive and truly Apostolick Church*, which he threatens these unruly Presbyters with, no better than he does *K. Edw. VI.'s* Reformation, which he supposes to be made by the Body of the Bishops, in opposition to the Presbyters (or else I know not how he applies it) he is capable of doing no great good nor hurt. Only I can tell him one thing, That had he fallen into the hands of *K. Edw.'s* Reforming Bishops, they would have reformed him out of the Church, or have taught him another sort of *Compassionate Suit* than this.

He concludes with a heavy Charge upon Myself, and *Dr. Wallis*, (for he mentions none else) as *if we had receded from the Doctrine taught even in our own Church*, about the Holy Trinity. Page 13.

Do we then deny, that there are *Three Persons* and *One God*? No, our business is to prove it, and explain and vindicate it? but he thinks we explain it otherwise,

wife, than it has been formerly explained. And yet that very Account he gives us of it, out of Mr. *Hooker*, is owned by myself, and particularly explained by my Hypothesis. He has given us no just occasion to vindicate ourselves, because he has not vouchsafed to tell us, why he dislikes either of us. He has cited some broken passages out of my *Vindication*, about *Three Eternal Minds*, which are *essentially One Eternal Mind*. And what is the hurt of this? Is not every Divine Person who is God, a *Mind*, and an *Eternal Mind*? Is not the *Alogos*, or the Eternal and Uncreated *Word* and *Wisdom* of God, an *Eternal and Uncreated Mind*? Is not the substantial *Word* and *Wisdom* of God a *Mind*? Is not the *Eternal Spirit*, which searcheth the deep things of God, as the *Spirit* of a *Man* knoweth the things of a *Man*, a *Mind*? And if I can give any possible account, how *Three Eternal Minds* should be *essentially One*, does not this at least prove, that there may be *Three Divine Persons*, in the *Unity* of the *Divine Essence*? And should I have been mistaken in this account, as I believe I am not, must I therefore be charged with receding from the *Doctrine* of the *Church of England*? As for *Dr. Wallis*, he has nothing to say against him, but his calling the *Divine Persons* *Some-whats*, with which he has very profanely ridiculed the *Litany*, which I gave an account before.

And now can any Man tell, what *Opinion* this *Melancholy Stander-by* has of the *Doctrines* of the *Trinity*, and *Incarnation*? He dares not speak out, but gives very broad signs, what he would be at. He discourages all Men from defending these *Doctrines*, declares, That all *new Attempts* cannot satisfy the *old Difficulties*, which he declares to be *unsatisfiable*, and *unsoluble*: That when

Page 7.

we have moved every Stone, Authority must define it.

And

And yet this Authority extends no farther than to a *Negative Belief*, which, he says, is all that can reasonably be required of Men, of such Mysteries as they cannot understand: and thus far he professes himself bound by our Church Articles for Peace sake. And this is his Faith of the Trinity, not to believe it, but only not to oppose it. He complains of the *Scholastick cramping Terms of Three Persons, and One God*, and thinks the *Unity of Three Persons in One Essence*, to be only a more *Orthodox Phrase*; so that he leaves us no words to express this Doctrine by, and therefore it is time to say nothing about it. It is a *Controversie which exposes our Liturgy, and is not only unprofitable, but corruptive of, and prejudicial and injurious to our common Devotion*: so dangerous is it to pray to the *Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, Three Persons and One God*.

But then on the other hand, he carefully practises that *forbearance*, which he persuades others to, towards his *Learned Writers of the Socinian Controversies*, tho' they were the Assailants: never persuades them to forbear exposing and ridiculing the Faith of the Church, which would have provoked his Indignation, had he any reverence for the Holy Trinity, and a God Incarnate; but only thinks by the Charm of a *Negative Faith*, that they may be required quietly to acquiesce in the publick determinations.

He tells us over and over, how unreasonable and dangerous it is to meddle with such high matters, or to offer at any Explication of what is *Incomprehensible*; but it is no fault in them; to talk of Absurdities and Contradictions in what they do not understand: nay, he all along insinuates, that these Absurdities and Contradictions, which they charge upon the Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, are *unsatisfiable, and unsoluble*.

He

He bestows high Encomiums upon these Enemies of the Faith, but speaks with wonderful Contempt of those who defend it, as far as he dares; the Fathers and Councils are out of his reach, but the *Master of the Sentences*, and the *School men*, and all Modern Undertakers, must feel his displeasure: to defend the Trinity *exposes our Liturgy*, and *corrupts our common Devotion*; but to ridicule it, makes them very *pious and devout Men*. GOD preserve his Church from Wolves in Sheeps Clothing.

And now having vindicated our Ancient Rights and Liberties, which the Church always challenged, of defending the *truly Catholick and Apostolick Faith*, from the Assaults of Hereticks, I shall apply myself, as I have leisure, to the Defence of my *Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever-blessed Trinity*, and the *Incarnation of the Son of God*.

T H E E N D.

