

The Doctrine of the Trinity and Transubstantiation Compared,

As To Scripture and Reason, in a Dialogue Between a Protestant and Papist,
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Pr. I hope you are now at leisure to proceed with your parallel between the doctrine of the Trinity and transubstantiation, as to scripture and reason.

P. Yes, and am resolved to make good all that I have said, as to both those.

Pr. And if you do, I will yield the cause.

P. I begin with scripture. And the whole dispute as to both depends on this: Whether the scripture is to be understood literally or figuratively. If literally, then transubstantiation stands upon equal terms with the Trinity; if figuratively, then the Trinity can no more be proved from scripture than transubstantiation.

Pr. As though there might not be reason for a figurative sense in one place, and a literal in another.

P. It seems then you resolve it into reason.

Pr. And I pray, into what would you resolve it? Into no reason?

P. Into the authority of the church.

Pr. Without any reason.

P. No: there may be reason for that authority, but not for the thing which I believe upon it.

Pr. Then you believe the doctrine of the Trinity, merely because the church tells you it is the literal sense of scripture which you are to follow. But suppose a man sees no reason for this authority of your church (as for my part, I do not); have you no reason to convince such a one that he ought to believe the Trinity?

P. Not I. For I think men are bound to believe as the church teaches them, and for that reason.

Pr. What is it, I pray, to believe?

P. To believe is to give our assent to what God reveals.

Pr. And hath God revealed the doctrine of the Trinity to the church in this age?

P. No; it was revealed long ago.

Pr. How doth it appear?

P. By the scripture sensed by the church.

Pr. But whence come you to know that the church is to give the sense of

the scriptures? Is it from the scripture, or not?

P. From the scripture doubtless, or else we could not believe upon the church's testimony.

Pr. But suppose the question be about the sense of these places which relate to the church's authority, how can a man come to the certain sense of them?

P. Hold a little; I see whither you are leading me. You would fain lead me into a snare, and have me say, I believe the sense of scripture from the authority of the church, and the authority of the church from the sense of scripture.

Pr. Do you not say so in plain terms?

P. Give me leave to answer for myself. I say in the case of the church's authority, I believe the sense of scripture without relying on the church's authority.

Pr. And why not as well in any other? Why not as to the Trinity, which to my understanding is much plainer there than the church's authority?

P. That is strange: Is not the church often spoken of in scripture? *Tell the church. Upon this rock will I build my church*, etc.

Pr. But we are not about the word *church*, which is no doubt there, but the infallible authority of the church; and whether that be more clear in the scripture than the doctrine of the Trinity.

P. I see you have a mind to change your discourse, and to run off from the Trinity to the church authority in matters of faith; which is a beaten subject.

Pr. Your church doth not tell you so; and therefore you may upon your own grounds be deceived; and I assure you that you are so; for I intended only to shew you that for points of faith we must examine and compare scripture ourselves, and our faith must rest on divine revelation therein contained.

P. Then you think the Trinity can be proved from scripture?

Pr. Or else I should never believe it.

P. But those places of scripture you go upon may bear a figurative sense, as John 10:30, *I and my Father are one*; and 1 John 5:7, *And those three are one*; and if they do so, you can never prove the Trinity from them.

Pr. I say therefore, that the doctrine of the Trinity doth not depend merely on these places, but on very many others, which help to the true sense of these; but transubstantiation depends upon one single expression, *This is my body*, which relates to a figurative thing, viz. the sacrament, and which hath other expressions joined with it, which are owned to be figurative; *This cup is the new testament in my blood*; and which in the literal sense cannot prove

transubstantiation, as your own writers confess, and which is disproved by those places of scripture, which assert the bread and the fruit of the vine to remain after consecration.

P. Shew the literal sense as to the Trinity to be necessary; for I perceive you would fain go off again.

Pr. Will you promise to hold close to the argument yourself?

P. You need not fear me.

Pr. I pray tell me, were there not false religions in the world when Christ came into it to plant the true religion?

P. Yes; but how far is this from the business?

Pr. Have a little patience; did not Christ design by his doctrine to root out those false religions?

P. That is evident from scripture and church history.

Pr. Then Christ's religion and theirs were inconsistent.

P. And what then?

Pr. Wherein did this inconsistency lie?

P. The Gentiles worshipped false gods instead of the true One.

Pr. Then the Christian religion teaches the worship of the true God instead of the false ones.

P. Who doubts of that?

Pr. Then it cannot teach the worship of a false god instead of the true One.

P. A false god is one that is set up in opposition to the true God, as the gods of the heathens were.

Pr. Is it lawful by the Christian doctrine to give proper divine worship to a creature?

P. I think not; for Christ said, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*: which our church understands of proper divine worship.

Pr. But the scripture requires proper divine worship to be given to Christ; which is to require proper divine worship to be given to a creature, if Christ be not true God by nature.

P. May not God communicate his own worship to him?

Pr. But God hath said, *He will not give his glory to another*, Isa. 42:8. And the reason is considerable, which is there given; *I am the Lord, that is my name*; which shews that none but the true Jehovah is capable of divine worship; for adoration is due to God only on the account of his incommunicable perfections, and therefore the reason of divine worship cannot reach to any creature.

P. Not without God's will and pleasure. But may not God advance a mere creature to that dignity, as to require divine worship to be given to him by his fellow creatures?

Pr. Wherein lies the nature of that which you call proper divine worship?

P. In a due esteem of God in our minds, as the first cause and last end of his creatures, and such acts as are agreeable thereto.

Pr. Then proper divine worship doth suppose an esteem of God as infinitely above his creatures; and how then is it possible for us to give the same worship to God, and to a creature? For if the distance be infinite between God and his creatures, and we must judge of things as they are, then we must in our minds suppose a creature to be infinitely distant from God; and if we do so, how is it possible to give the same divine worship in this sense to God, and to any creature?

P. And what now would you infer from hence?

Pr. Do not you see already? viz. that God cannot be supposed to allow divine worship to be given to Christ, if he were a mere creature; and therefore since such divine worship is required by the Christian doctrine, it follows, that those expressions which speak of his being one with the Father cannot be figuratively understood.

P. But where is it that such divine worship is required to be given to Christ in scripture? For, according to my principles, the church is to set the bounds and measures of divine worship, and to declare what worship is due to God; what to Christ; what to saints and angels; to men upon earth; what to images, sacraments, etc. And if we depart from this rule, I know not where we shall fix.

Pr. I pray tell me, doth the difference between God and his creatures depend on the will of the church?

P. No.

Pr. Is it then in the church's power to give that to a creature which belongs only to God?

P. I think not.

Pr. Who then is to judge what belongs to God, and what not? God or the church?

P. God himself, if he pleases.

Pr. Then our business is to search what his will and pleasure is in this matter, by reading the scriptures, wherein his will is contained: and there we find it expressed, *That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father*, John 5:23. *Let all the angels of God worship him*, Heb. 1:6. *Blessing*,

and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever, Rev. 5:13. That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, etc. Phil. 2:9. If it were God's great design, by the Christian doctrine, to restore in the world a due sense of the infinite distance between God and his creatures; could anything be more repugnant to it, than in the same doctrine to advance a participation of the same divine honour with himself? So that in plain truth, the idolatry of the world lay only in a bad choice of the creatures they were to worship, and not in giving divine worship to a creature; for that Christianity itself not only allows but requires, on supposition that Christ were God merely by office, and was originally a creature as we are. But I pray observe the force of the apostle's argument, speaking of the Gentile idolatry; he saith it lay in this, *That they did service unto them which by nature are no gods, Gal. 4:8.*

P. You know, I must now personate the Anti-Trinitarian; and he answers, That *by nature* no more is implied, than *truly and really*, i.e. God did not advance those creatures among the Gentiles to that worship and honour, which he had done Christ.

Pr. Then you make it lawful by the gospel to believe Christ to be a mere creature, and at the same time to give him divine worship, which supposes him not to be a creature; and so you must believe him to be a creature and not to be a creature at the same time.

P. How do you make that appear

Pr. From your own words; for you say, proper divine worship lies in a due esteem of God in our minds, as the first cause and last end, and in actions agreeable thereto; then to give divine worship to God, we must believe him to be above all creatures as to his nature and being; and therefore to give Christ divine worship, must imply our believing him not to be a creature and to be a creature at the same time.

P. But the meaning of divine worship here must not then relate to acts of the mind, but to outward acts of adoration in the church.

Pr. Were the Gentiles guilty of idolatry in that respect, or not?

P. Yes; but not those whom God requires to worship in such a manner.

Pr. Then the sin of Gentile idolatry lay only in giving divine worship to a creature without God's command; which lessens it to that degree, as to make will-worship and idolatry the same; and to blame the apostles for making such a dreadful sin of it, and dissuading Christians so much from returning to the practice of it: [Rom. 1:21, 23–24. 1 John. 10:7, 14. 1 John 5:21.] for they had the

privilege of giving divine worship to a creature by God's command, which others were damned for doing without a command; which makes the Christian religion not to appear so reasonable, as the Anti-Trinitarians contend it is. But here are four foul mistakes in point of reason, which they are guilty of. (1.) In making the sin of idolatry so arbitrary a thing; which depends not on the nature of the object which is worshipped, but on the will and pleasure of God. (2.) In making the Gentiles guilty of a great sin, merely in wanting a divine command, which was out of their power. (3.) In making the Christian religion to set up the worship of a creature, when its design was to root out idolatry. (4.) In making a factitious god, or a creature to be advanced to the throne of God. Which I think is far more contradictory to reason, than a Trinity of Persons in the unity of the same nature. For nothing can be more absurd than to make that to be God, which wants all the essential attributes and perfections of God; as every creature must do: such as self-existence, eternity, independence, immensity, omnipotence, etc. What a contradiction is it, to suppose a weak, impotent, depending, confined, created God? and such every creature must be in its nature, or else it is no creature. I do not at all wonder to find the Socinians, after this, to lessen the natural knowledge of God, and his infinite perfections, both as to power and knowledge; for it was their concernment to bring the notion of God as low as possible, that a creature might be in the nearer capacity of being made God. But those who consider and know what God is, and what he must be, if he be God, will find far greater difficulty in making man to be God, than in believing God to be made man. For this implies no greater difficulty than merely as to our conception how an infinite Being can be so united to a finite, as to become one person; which implies no repugnancy, but only something above our capacity to comprehend. And we confess ourselves puzzled in the manner of conceiving how a finite spirit, which can pass through a body, can be so united to it as to make a man by that union; yet we all acknowledge the truth of this. But to suppose a creature capable of being made God is to overthrow the essential difference between God and his creatures, and the infinite distance between them. Which is of very pernicious consequence, as to the great ends of the Christian religion, which were to reform the world, and to restore the distinction between God and his creatures; which by the prevalence of idolatry was almost lost in the world: the supreme God being hardly discerned in such a crowd of created and factitious gods. And this very argument is enough to turn my stomach against Socinianism or Arianism.

P. I had thought all men of sense among you had been Socinians; I have often heard them charged with being so.

Pr. You see how grossly you are deceived, notwithstanding your pretense

to infallibility. I do not pretend to any deep reach, but I see reason enough to be no Socinian.

P. Let us return to our matter in hand. What say you to those texts which are said to be inconsistent with the literal sense of those before mentioned, which relate to the unity between Father and Son?

Pr. What texts do you mean?

P. What say you to John 10 from the 30th to the 39th?

Pr. I wonder what it is produced for.

P. 1. It is said, John 10:30, *I and my Father are one*; now it is highly unreasonable to interpret these words literally, because of those which follow.

Pr. How doth that appear? For, verse 30, it is said, *that the Jews took up stones to stone him*: which shews that they looked on him as speaking blasphemy. But what blasphemy was it for Christ to declare an unity of consent between him and his Father; which in truth is nothing but doing his Father's will? Therefore it is plain that the Jews did apprehend more in those words of our Saviour. And they explain themselves, verse 33, what they understood by them, *because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God*. Which shews that they thought not an unity of consent, but of nature, was meant.

P. But Christ's answer shews that he speaks only of a God by office, and not by nature, verse 34, Jesus answered them, *Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods?*

Pr. I pray go on, and see how Christ argues, verses 35, 36, *If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scriptures cannot be broken; say ye of him, whom the Father sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?*

P. This only shews that Christ had greater reason to be called God, but not that he was so by nature.

Pr. I pray go on still, verses 37, 38, *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though you believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him.*

P. Is it not said elsewhere, *that he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him?* 1 John 3:24. Would you hence infer an unity of nature between Christ and believers?

Pr. I do not lay the weight on the phrase, but as it is the conclusion of the dispute between Christ and the Jews. And it ought to be observed, that this was the end of the third conference between Christ and the Jews upon this argument. The first was John 5, and then from Christ's saying, *The Father worketh*

hitherto, and I work, verse 17, the Jews inferred, verse 18, *that he made himself equal with God*. In the second conference, John 8, he said, *Before Abraham was, I am*, verse 58, *And then the Jews took up stones to cast at him*. After this followed this third conference, John 10, and this runs again into the same point, *that he, being a man, made himself God*. And these conferences were all public, in or near the temple, and this last was in *Solomon's Porch*, John 10:23, a place of great resort, and near the place where the sanhedrim sate, who were the judges in the case of blasphemy. Now the force of my argument from hence lies in these things:

(1.) That Christ certainly knew, that the Jews did think by this discourse *that he made himself equal with God*.

(2.) That if it were not true, it were notorious blasphemy, and so esteemed by the Jews.

(3.) That such a mistake ought to have been presently corrected, and in the plainest manner; as we find it was done by St. Paul, when the men of Lystra said, *The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men*; for he ran in presently among them, and said, *We are men of like passions with you*, Acts 14:11, 15. It is impossible for me to think that, if Christ had known himself to be a mere man, he would have suffered the Jews to have run away with such a mistake as this, without giving them the clearest and plainest information; whereas in all his answers he vindicates himself, and endeavours rather to fasten those impressions upon them, as appears by this conclusion of the last conference, *That ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him*. Doth this look like correcting a dangerous mistake in the Jews? And is it not rather a justification of that sense which they took his words in? And in the first conference, John 5, our Saviour is so far from doing as St. Paul did, that he challenges divine honour as due to himself, *that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father*, verse 23. From whence it follows that Christ must be charged as one who, being a mere man, did affect divine honour; or else, that, being God as well as man, he looked on it as justly due to him. I pray tell me what sense do your friends the Socinians make of those words of St. Paul, Phil. 2:6–7. *Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation*, etc.

P. The sense they give is this, that he did not make a show or ostentation of his own greatness, but studiously concealed it, and therefore shewed his great humility.

Pr. But is there any greatness like that of divine honour? and yet this he

challenged to himself.

P. But he knew what the Father designed him for, and so spake those things by way of prediction.

Pr. He knew no creature could deserve divine worship, and he delivered that as part of his own doctrine; and therefore those words, where he is said *to make himself equal with God*, must be understood of nature, and not of office.

P. But St. John 17:22 saith, that Christ prayed to his Father for his disciples, *that they may be one, as we are one*; and that is not by unity of nature.

Pr. I grant it. But our Saviour there speaks of a true, but a lower kind of unity; or else the Socinians must think every believer as capable of divine honour as Christ himself, if they take those words strictly, *that they may be one as we are one*.

P. St. Paul saith, *He that planteth and watereth is one*, 1 Cor. 3:8.

Pr. Who doubts but there are other sorts of unities, besides that of nature? But doth this prove that there is no unity of nature between the Father and the Son? If we have no better arguments against transubstantiation, we will give over disputing.

P. I know you have other arguments for the Trinity, but they prove as little without the authority of the church; as from those places where Christ is called God, as John 1:1–2, Rom. 9:5, etc.

Pr. And I think the argument from those places very good and strong, especially from John 1:1–3, and it seems directly contrary to the whole design of scripture, to call anyone *God over all, blessed for evermore*, as Christ is called, Rom. 9:5, but he that is God by nature.

P. How do you prove that John 1:1 relates to anything beyond the beginning of the gospel, and that Christ, the Word, was before John the Baptist's preaching?

Pr. I desire any one to read the text impartially, and he will find the Socinian sense to be unnatural, forced, obscure, and jejune, proving a thing of no moment at that time; but the sense we give, to be strong, weighty, consistent, and of very great consequence at that time, when the Cerinthians denied the divinity of Christ. The sentences are short, the words lofty and significant, the manner of beginning unusual; so that any one would expect some great and extraordinary matter to be said in these few verses; but what a frustration were this, if after all they intended no more, than that John Baptist preached in public before Christ, yet that Christ was in being before that? Which is a sense so mean, so remote from the occasion of his writing, as it is delivered by the ancients, that nothing

but a miserable necessity could make men of wit and subtlety to put such a sense upon St. John's words.

P. But they deny there was any such occasion of St. John's writing, as the Cerinthians' heresy at that time.

Pr. I know Socinus doth so; but he might as well have denied that there was any such person as Cerinthus. And I think the Cerinthian heresy not only to have been the occasion of St. John's writing, but that the understanding of it gives the greatest and truest light to the words of the evangelist, sheaving the force and importance of them.

P. Wherein, I pray, did that heresy consist?

Pr. I shall not meddle with other parts of it, but only what relates to the present subject; and that lay in these things.

(1.) That there was a supreme and unknown Father, who was before the beginning, and therefore they called him προαρχην, who was the fountain of all emanations. Irenaeus. lib. 1. cap. 1.19.

(2.) That the world was not made by him, but by a power at a distance from him, called Demiurgus, Irenaeus. l. i. c. 25. And in the Egyptian school, where Cerinthus was educated, the Λόγος, Word, was one of the intermediate emanations between the Father and the Demiurgus, Irenaeus. l. i. c. 23.

(3.) That this world was in a state of darkness and confusion, as to the supreme Father of all; only some few had some beams of light from him, by which they knew him.

(4.) That Jesus was a mere man, born as other men are, of Joseph and Mary, but of extraordinary goodness, wisdom, and sanctity.

(5.) That the supreme Father at his baptism did send down a divine power upon him, in the shape of a dove, which enabled him to declare the unknown Father, and to work miracles, which returned to its own πλήρωμα, or *fullness* above, when Jesus suffered.

This is a short scheme of that heresy, as delivered by the ancient Fathers. And now let anyone compare St. John's words with it; and he will find his design was to countermine this heresy by two things.

(1.) That the Λόγος, Word, was eternal. For the Cerinthians said, the Λόγος was not *in the beginning*, but made a great space of time between the eternal being of the Father, and the emanation of the Λόγος, wherein he was in perfect silence, as Irenaeus expresses it, (l. i. c. 1.) And so, *in the beginning*, doth imply the eternity of the Word. But that is not all; for he saith, *it was with God, and was God*, and was the Demiurgus, or the maker of the world, and the

revealer of God to mankind, John 1:1–5, 9–10. And so there was no place for those several emanations between God and the Λόγος; and Demiurgus, as the Cerinthians said.

(2.) That the Λόγος, or Word, was incarnate, which he affirms, verse 14, *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*, etc. and was *the only-begotten Son of the Father*; and so he not only cuts off the other emanations, but declares that Jesus was far from being a mere man. And to this purpose he brings in the testimony of John Baptist, verse 15, and applies what he had said to the person of Jesus Christ, verse 17. Now this being St. John's design, his words afford a demonstration to us of the union of the divine and human nature in Christ, when he saith, *The Word was made flesh*.

P. But doth not the scripture in other places imply that there is a subordination in Christ to the Father, which is not consistent with such an equality of nature; see Heb. 1:8–9. 1 Cor. 8:4–5, 15:27–28. Rev. 3:12.

Pr. The first place is a proof for the divinity of Christ; for the words are, *But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever*, etc. It is true, in the next verse it is said, with respect to his office, *Therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee*, etc. But we do not deny that Christ was anointed as mediator, and in that respect God was his God; but doth this prove that he that is mediator cannot have a divine nature in conjunction with the human?

The second place, I suppose, is mistaken, 1 Cor. 8, not 4 and 5, but 6 verse, *But unto us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him*. And this is one of the strongest holds of the Socinians. But two considerations will take off the seeming force of it.

1. That the apostle, in his disputes with the Gentile idolaters, concerning whom he speaks, verses 4, 5, doth utterly deny any divinity in the beings they worshipped instead of God, when he saith, *An idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one*. He knew very well that they worshipped many, verse 5, *As there be gods many, and lords many among them; but unto us (Christians) there is but one God, and one Lord*: i.e. we have but one supreme God, to whom we give divine worship; and, instead of the multitude of mediators, we have but one Mediator; and so his design is in opposition to their many gods, to assert the unity of the divine nature (not so as to exclude a distinction of persons, but thereby to exclude other gods as the proper object of worship), and the unity of a Mediator, in opposition to their many lords.

(2.) That if this place excludes Christ from the unity of nature with God, it

doth exclude him from being the object of divine worship; for it saith, *that there is no other God but one*; therefore no creature can be made God: *And to us there is but one God, the Father*; therefore the Son cannot be God. If therefore the name *Lord* be taken in opposition to God, then Christ cannot be God in any sense; for we must have but one God: but the plain meaning of the apostle was, that by *one Lord* he meant *one Mediator*, by whom alone we have, in this new frame of things by the gospel, access unto God the Father.

The third place, 1 Cor. 15:27–28 speaks plainly of Christ's kingdom, as Mediator.

The fourth place, Rev. 3:12, where Christ speaks several times of *my God*, proves no more than his words on the cross, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* For surely Christ might own a particular relation to God, and interest in him, as he was in human nature, without overthrowing the divine nature in him.

P. But he owns, *that though he is to be our Judge, he knows not the time*, Mark 13:32, which seems inconsistent with the divine nature, which knoweth all things.

Pr. The Son there spoken of was Christ, as endued with a human soul, when he was upon earth; which could not understand a secret so much out of the reach of man's understanding, without immediate revelation. But it was not necessary, by virtue of the union of both natures, that the divine nature should communicate to the human soul of Christ all divine mysteries; but as the human body was notwithstanding subject to passions and infirmities incident to it, so the human soul might continue ignorant of the day of judgment in this state; both to let us know how great that secret is, and that Christ had the proper capacity of a human soul, which could not extend to such things without divine revelation.

P. There is one argument more, which seems to prove Christ's divinity, and doth not; viz. *The making of all things visible and invisible*, being attributed to him, John 1:3. Heb. 1:10. Col. 1:16–19.

Pr. Now I confess this doth more than seem to me to be a very strong argument; and that for this reason: the apostle saith, *The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are plainly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and Godhead*, Rom. 1:20. Was this argument of the apostle good or not?

P. No doubt it was.

Pr. Then the creation of the world is an invincible proof of the true God.

P. What follows?

Pr. Then if *the making of all things* be attributed to Christ, he must be true God: but this is plain in the New Testament, in which the making of all things is as clearly attributed to the Son, as it is to the Father; *All things*, saith St. John, *were by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made*, John 1:3. *For by him were all things created*, saith St. Paul, *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. *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands*, Heb. 1:10. Now compare these expressions with those wherein the creation is attributed to the Father; *the world is said to be made by him*, Rom. 1:20; *that he hath created all things*, Rev. 4:11; *that of him, and for him, and to him, are all things*, Rom. 11:36. And let any impartial mind discern the difference. Therefore we have as much reason from scripture to believe Christ to be God, as we have from the creation of things to believe a God.

P. But you do not take notice of the different expressions in scripture, concerning the Father and the Son; *All things are said to be of the Father, and by the Son*, 1 Cor. 8:6. *And that the Father created all things by Jesus Christ*, Eph. 3:9, which proves no more than that the Son was God's instrument in the creation.

Pr. What do you mean by God's instrument in the creation? Do you think one creature can create another? How then can the creation prove an infinite power? If you believe the instrument untreated, then you must assert him to be true God by nature; and then we have all we desire.

P. But the Socinians do not like this answer of the Arians, and therefore they interpret these places of the state of things under the gospel, and not of the creation of the world.

Pr. They have not one jot mended the matter; for,

(1.) Where the new creation is spoken of, some circumstances are added which limit the sense to it; as when St. Paul saith, *We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, that we should walk in them*, Eph. 2:10. Who could possibly understand this of the old creation? And so, *If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature*, 2 Cor. 5:17. But in the other places, the same expressions are used, which are attributed to the whole creation, without limitation from circumstances, or from the context and occasion of them.

(2.) There are some things said to be created by Christ Jesus, which cannot relate to the new creation; 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, Col. 1:16. How are these created by preaching the gospel, when they are incapable of the proper means of it; which are, the doctrine of the remission of sins upon repentance, and the renewing and sanctifying grace of God?

P. But St. Paul doth not mention the heaven and earth, but only intellectual beings, angels and men, and therefore he speaks of the new creation.

Pr. A mighty argument indeed! Do not *all things* comprehend the heaven and earth? And the particular enumeration of angels by several denominations, shews that he speaks of another creation distinct from that by the gospel preached to the world; for the apostles were Christ's instruments in this new creation, which they could not be to the invisible powers above.

P. We have now gone through the true and only grounds of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Pr. You are extremely mistaken: for we have other grounds besides these, although these may be sufficient.

P. Name one more.

Pr. I will name several, which you cannot disallow.

P. What are they?

Pr. The several heads of arguments made use of by cardinal Bellarmine to prove the divinity of Christ: who alone is a convincing evidence of the vast disparity between the proofs of this doctrine and of transubstantiation from scripture. For, [Bell. De Christo, lib. i. c. 4. etc.]

1. He proves Christ's divinity from those places of the Old Testament which are expounded in the New; being in the Old Testament spoken of the true God, and in the New applied to Christ. As Num. 21:5–6 compared with 1 Cor. 10:9; Exod. 20:2 with Jude 5; Psa. 68:18 with Eph. 4:8–9; Psa. 97:7 and 102:25–26 with Heb. 1:6, 10, 11; Isa. 6:1, 3 with John 12:41 and Rev. 4:8; Isa. 8:14 with Luke 2:34 and Rom. 9:33; Isa. 40:3 with Matt. 3:3. Mark 1:3. Luke 1:76. John 1:23; Isa. 45:23 with Rom. 14:11; Isa. 44:6 with Rev. 1:8, 17; Mal. 3:1 with Matt. 11:10.

2. From the places of the Old Testament, which attribute to Christ those things which belong to God; as *power and adoration*, Psa. 2:7–8, 12. *Being the first and last*, Isa. 48:1, 12, 16. *Working miracles*, Isa. 35:5. *Being the God of Israel*, Isa. 52:5–6. *The only God*, Isa. 45:5–6. *The Lord of hosts*, Zech. 2:8–11. *Jehovah*, Zech. 3:2. *Pouring out of the Spirit*, Zech. 13:10.

3. From the places of the New Testament which attribute divinity to Christ.

As when he is called, *the Son of the living God*, Matt. 16:16. *The only-begotten Son of God*, John 3:16. *His own Son*, Rom. 8:32. *His true Son*, 1 John 5:20. *His dear Son*, Col. 1:13. *His Son above all others*, Heb. 1:5. *The express image of person*, Heb. 1:3. *Making himself equal with God*, John 5:18. *Being one with the Father*, John 10:30. *Lord and God*, John 20:28. *God blessed forever*, Rom. 9:5. *Who thought it no robbery to be equal with God*, Phil. 2:6. *One with the Father and Spirit*, 1 John 5:7. *The true God*, 1 John 5:20.

4. From the proper names of God, Isa. 9:6. John 20:28. Acts 20:28. Rom. 9:5. Rev. 4:8. 1 John 3:16. The name *Jehovah*, Jer. 23:5, 8. Isa. 40:3. *The Lord*, by which the LXX render *Jehovah*, Matt. 21:3. John 13:3. *The most High*, Psa. 87:5. *A name above every name*, Phil. 2:9. *The invisible One*, 1 Tim. 1:17, and 6:16. *The God of glory*, Acts 7:2. 1 Cor. 2:8. Psa. 24:7–9. *King of kings and Lord of lords*, 1 Tim. 6:15. Rev. 17:14, and 19:16. *The one Lord*, 1 Cor. 8:6. *The true God*, John 5:20. *The only Lord*, Jude 4. *The great God and our Saviour*, Titus 2:13.

5. From the proper attributes of God; as *Eternity*, Prov. 8:22–23. Micah 5:2. John 1:1, 17:5. *Immensity*, John 3:13. Matt. 18:20. *Omnipotence*, Rev. 1:8, 4:8, 11:17. *Wisdom*, Col. 2:3. John 21:17. *Majesty and adoration*, Heb. 1:6. Mal. 3:1. *Invocation*, John 14:13. Acts 7:59, and 9:14. 2 Cor. 12:8. 1 Cor. 1:3. 2 John 3.

6. From the proper works of God; as not only *Creation* (of which already), but *Conservation*, Heb. 1:3. Col. 1:17. *Salvation*, Matt. 1:21. *Foretelling future events*, John 13:19. 1 Peter 1:11. Rev. 2:23. *Working miracles by his own power*, Mark 4:39. And *giving power to others to work them*, Matt. 10:1.

What think you now of the proofs of the Trinity in scripture? Do you think Bellarmine could produce anything like this for transubstantiation? No; so far from it, that where he sets himself in a whole chapter to prove it from scripture, he produces a first without a second. [Bell. de Euch. l. iii. c. 19.] “The “first argument,” saith he, “is taken from Christ’s words, “*This is my body.*” Very well! but where is the second? For no more could be produced but this one single passage, about which he spends his whole chapter, and then betakes himself presently to the fathers.

P. But one plain and clear place is sufficient, if we be certain of the sense of that one; for we are as much bound to believe God when we are sure he speaks it once, as an hundred times.

Pr. We have been all this while comparing these two doctrines as to scripture, and now you see the disproportion so very great, as to number and

variety, you say, One is as good as an hundred; but that one had need to be wonderfully clear, which this is very far from, since many of your own writers do confess transubstantiation cannot be drawn from it; as Bellarmine himself owns, [Cap. 23.] and he affirms it “not to be improbable, that no place of scripture is so clear and express for transubstantiation, but learned and acute men may doubt whether it can be drawn from it, setting aside the church’s declaration.” But neither Bellarmine, nor anyone who attends to the force of the former proofs of the divinity of Christ, can say, that any reasonable man can doubt of it; and that he must at last resolve all into the church’s authority.

P. Have not learned and acute men doubted as well of the divinity of Christ, as of transubstantiation? And therefore in that respect they are both alike.

Pr. We do not insist upon men’s bare doubting, but on the reason of their doubting. And when but one single place is produced, which is yielded not to be sufficient of itself to prove the doctrine; there is much more cause of doubting, than where such multitudes of places are produced; and no doubt is made by those who favour transubstantiation, but that they do fully prove the divinity of Christ.

P. It seems then we must to reason at last. And for my part, I must tell you, I think that parallel much the easiest. For, that three distinct Persons should be in one individual nature, and that the most pure and simple Being, seems to me to be more absurd than transubstantiation.

Pr. Let us set aside the comparing absurdities at present, and only examine, in point of reason, the great absurdity of three Persons being in one individual divine nature.

P. I did hardly believe you would have the courage to defend the doctrine of the Trinity in point of reason; but I see you are a bold man, and will venture farther than wiser men.

Pr. It may be others have not had the leisure or curiosity to examine a mystery believed to be so much out of the reach of our understanding; or have confounded themselves and others so much with school terms, as to leave the matter rather more obscure than it was before. But I shall endeavour to make things as clear as they will bear. And that which I insist upon is, that the absurdities are not to appearance so great as those of transubstantiation. And therefore I desire you to produce those which appear the most dreadful.

P. I shall reduce all to these two, which comprehend the rest.

1. How there can be three Persons and but one God.
2. How these can agree in a third, and not agree among themselves.

For the first, it seems very absurd, that there should be three Persons really distinct, whereof everyone is God, and yet there should not be three Gods; for nothing is more contradictory than to make three not to be three, or three to be but one.

Pr. I hope now you will give me leave to make an answer to your difficulty as distinct as possible. We do not say that three persons are but one person, or that one nature is three natures; but that there are three persons in one nature. If therefore one individual nature be communicable to three persons, there is no appearance of absurdity in this doctrine. And on the other side, it will be impossible there should be three Gods, where there is one and the same individual nature; for three Gods must have three several divine natures, since it is the divine essence which makes a God. But to make this more plain, do you make any difference between *nature* and *person*?

P. Yes.

Pr. Wherein lies it?

P. Excuse me, sir, for you have undertaken to explain these things.

Pr. I will begin with *person*. Which name was originally taken among the Romans from some remarkable distinction of one from another, either by some outward appearance, as a vizard or habit, or some particular quality or disposition. And from hence it came to be applied to those inward properties, whereby one intelligent being is distinguished from another; and from those properties, to the person who had them. Thus *person* is used even by Tully himself at least twenty times in his books of Rhetoric; and the old civil law speaks of *personal rights* and *personal actions*. So that the critics, such as Valla, and others, had no cause to find fault with Boethius for applying the notion of a person to an “intelligent being subsisting in “itself,” (and so the soul is no person in men, but the man consisting of soul and body), “having some incommunicable properties belonging to him”: therefore I cannot but wonder at the niceness of some late men, who would have the names of *person*, and *hypostasis*, and *Trinity*, to be laid aside, since themselves confess Boethius his definition of a person to be true enough; but they say, “it belongs to “the creatures, and not to God, for it would make three Gods.” Which is to suppose, without proving it, that the divine nature can communicate itself after no other manner than a created nature can.

This is now to be more strictly inquired into. And it is very well observed by Boethius, *de Trin.* l. i. *Principium pluralitatis alteritas est*: “That diversity is the reason of “plurality”: and therefore in the Trinity, so far as they are different,

they are three, i.e. in regard of personal properties and relations; but so far as they agree, they are but ONE, that is, as to the divine nature.

It is very true, that, according to arithmetic, three cannot be one, nor one three; but we must distinguish between the bare numeration and the things numbered. The repetition of three units certainly makes three distinct numbers; but it doth not make three persons to be three natures. And therefore, as to the things themselves, we must go from the bare numbers, to consider their nature. Wherever there is a real distinction, we may multiply the number, though the subject be but one. As, suppose we say the soul hath three faculties; understanding, will, and memory; we may, without the least absurdity, say, there are three and one; and those three not confounded with each other, and yet there is but one soul.

P. But the Socinians object, that there is a difference between three properties and three distinct persons; because a person is an individual being; and so three persons must be three individual beings; and therefore as there is but one divine Being, there can be but one Person.

Pr. This is the main strength of the cause; to which I answer, that although a person be an individual being, yet it implies two things in it: (1.) Something common with others of the same nature; as three men have one and the same nature, though they be three persons. (2.) Something peculiar and incommunicate to any other; so that John cannot be Peter, nor Peter James.

P. But what is it which makes one not to be the other, when they have the same common nature?

Pr. You ask a hard question, viz. about the principle of individuation; but if it be so hard to resolve it, as to created beings, there is certainly far less reason for us to be unsatisfied, if it appear difficult to clear the difference of nature and person in an infinite Being. Yet all mankind are agreed in the thing, viz. That there is a community of the same nature, and a real distinction of persons among men, though they cannot tell what that is which discriminates the human nature in John, from the same human nature in Peter and James. And it is observable that, as beings arise in perfection above each other, it is still so much harder to assign that which is called the principle of individuation. In gross and material beings we can discern a number of accidents, or peculiar modes and properties, which distinguish them from each other; but it is much harder to assign it in spiritual and intellectual beings, whose natures and differences lie not so open to our understandings. If so be then it appears more difficult in an infinite and incomprehensible Being, what cause have we to wonder at it?

But we must always make a difference between what we have reason to believe, and what we have a power to conceive. Although we have all the reason in the world to believe that there is a God, i.e. a Being infinite in all perfections; yet we must yield, that his essential attributes are above our comprehension. As for instance:

(1.) We must believe God to be eternal, or we cannot believe him to be God; for if he once were not, it is impossible he should ever be; and therefore we conclude necessary existence to be an essential attribute of the divine nature: but then, how to conceive that a being should be from itself, is at least as hard, as how one and the same individual nature should be communicated to three distinct persons; nay, it is somewhat harder, since we see something like this in other beings, but we can see no manner of resemblance of a thing that hath its being wholly from itself.

(2.) We must allow God to be omnipresent, or else we must suppose him so confined and limited to a certain place, as to be excluded from any other; and if he can act in all places, he must either be present in them, or his power must be larger than his being, which is infinite; but after this, we have not a power to conceive how a Being should be present in the whole world, and not to be extended; and if it be extended, how it should be incapable of being divided into parts, which is certainly repugnant to the divine nature. I therefore produce these two instances, to let the Anti-Trinitarians see, that what they object in point of reason, as to the incomprehensibility of the mystery of the Trinity, will in consequence overthrow the divine nature. But as there is the highest reason to believe there is a God, though we cannot comprehend his perfections, so there may be great reason to believe the doctrine of the Trinity, though we cannot comprehend the manner of it.

P. I had thought you intended to explain the mystery of it, and now you tell us it is incomprehensible.

Pr. It is a good step to our believing it, to make it plain, that the difficulty of our conception ought not to hinder our faith. And I have made some advance towards the explication of it, by shewing, that since mankind are agreed about the difference between *nature* and *person*, the whole difficulty comes to this, that the same common nature in mankind makes three persons; but that it is the same individual nature in all the Persons of the Trinity.

And now let us consider the infinite perfection and simplicity of the divine nature; and we shall think it unreasonable that it should be bounded as to the manner of its communication, as the nature of man is. Every individual man hath

not only individual properties, but an individual nature, i.e. the common nature of man, limited by some unaccountable principle, that loth make him different front all other men having the same nature with himself. The difficulty then doth not lie in a community of nature, and a distinction of persons, for that is granted among men; but in the unity of nature with the difference of persons. And supposing the divine nature to be infinite in its perfection, I do not see bow it is capable of being bounded, as the common nature of man in individuals is; and if it be not capable of being bounded and limited, it must diffuse itself into all the persons in the same individual manner; and so this doctrine of the Trinity is not repugnant to reason.

P. But what say you to the Athanasian Creed; is not that repugnant to human reason?

Pr. I think not; but that it is a just explication of the doctrine of the Trinity rightly understood.

P. I see, now you are upon hard points, you will stick at nothing, and transubstantiation itself will down with you anon.

Pr. I doubt not; but at present we are upon the Athanasian Creed. And I desire but one principle to clear it, which follows from what is said already, viz. That what is affirmed of the divine nature, as such, must be common to all three Persons; but whatever is affirmed of the several Persons, as such, must be peculiar to themselves. Now this is a clear principle of reason, and hath no appearance of absurdity in it. And from hence the Athanasian Creed will easily be cleared. For *eternity, incomprehensibility, omnipotency*, belonging to the divine nature, as such, we ought to say, *That they are not three Eternals, three Incomprehensibles, three Almightyes; but one Eternal, one Incomprehensible, one Almighty*. Because the attributes belonging to the Persons, by reason of the divine nature, and the attributes being really the same with it, the nature is the proper subject of them, which being but one, we are not to distinguish them as to essential attributes, but only as to personal relations and properties.

P. But if the three Persons be coeternal, how is it possible to conceive there should not be three eternal?

Pr. This seems the hardest expression in the whole Creed; but it is to be interpreted by the scope and design of it, which is, that the essential attributes are not to be distinguished, though the Persons be. And so eternity is not taken as a personal attribute, but as essential; and so *they are not three Eternals, but one Eternal*. And the great design of the Creed was, to shew, that the Christian church did not believe such a Trinity as consisted of three Persons, unequal and

different in nature, and substance, and duration.

P. But what say you to the damning all those who do not believe it, in the beginning and end of it?

Pr. This is off from our business. But to let you see I will not avoid the difficulties you offer, I will give you an answer even to this. The meaning is not, that everyone is damned who doth not conceive aright of the difference of nature and person in the Trinity, or of the essential and personal attributes; but that those who set up in opposition to it the worship of a mere creature as God, or the worship of more gods than one, or who willfully reject this article of the Christian faith, when it is duly proposed to them, are guilty of a damning sin. For even the disbelief of Christianity itself is not supposed to be the cause of men's damnation, but where the doctrine of the gospel hath been proposed in a way of credibility. If, when this doctrine of the Trinity is proposed to men's minds, they will not consider it, nor weigh the arguments on both sides impartially, but with scorn and contempt reject it, and endeavour to bring reproach upon Christianity for the sake of it, and disturb the peace of the church about it; such cannot be said to receive or believe it faithfully, and by such sins they do run the hazard of perishing everlastingly.

P. I see you have a mind to smooth everything relating to the Trinity; I wish you would do the same about transubstantiation. But yet you have not answered the other great difficulty in point of reason, viz. That those things which agree or disagree in a third, must agree or disagree with the other. And therefore if the Father be God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God, then the Father must be Son and Holy Ghost, and the Son and Holy Ghost must be the Father. If not, then they are really the same, and really distinct; the same as to essence, distinct as to persons; and so they are the same, and not the same, which is a contradiction.

Pr. And now I think you have drawn out the most refined spirits of Socinianism, to make the doctrine of the Trinity and transubstantiation parallel, because you say, it implies a contradiction, which is the nearest parallel you have yet offered at. But this terrible argument is grounded on the same supposition, viz. That the divine essence is no more capable of communicating itself to three distinct persons, than any created being is. The reason of that axiom being, that created things, by reason of their finite nature, cannot diffuse or communicate themselves to more than one; and therefore those which agree in a third, must agree together; but supposing it possible that the same finite nature could extend itself to several individuals, it would be presently answered, the

axiom did hold only where they did adequately and reciprocally agree, and not where they did agree only in essence, but differed in the manner of subsistence. For where a different manner of subsistence is supposed possible in the same individual nature, the agreement in that cannot take away that difference which is consistent with it, which we attribute to the unlimitedness and perfection of the divine nature.

P. But you can bring no other instance but the thing in question; and therefore this is a *petitio principii*, or taking that for granted which is in dispute.

Pr. I do not think it to be so, where the reason is assigned from the peculiar properties of the divine nature, to which there can be no parallel. And I think it very unreasonable in the Socinians, to send us to created beings for the rules and measures of our judgment concerning a Being acknowledged to be infinite.

P. Are not the divine Persons infinite, as well as the divine nature? and therefore as created persons do take in the whole nature, so infinite persons will do the infinite nature.

Pr. No question, but the persons are infinite in regard of the nature which is so; but if an infinite nature be communicable to more persons than one, every such person cannot appropriate the whole nature to itself.

P. If the difference be on the account of infinity, then there must be an infinite number of persons in the divine essence.

Pr. I answer, That infiniteness of number is no perfection; and as to the number of persons, we follow not our own conjectures, nor the authority of the church; but divine revelation, which hath assured us, that there is but *one God*, and yet *there are three that are one*; which depends not merely on the place of St. John, but the form of baptism is remarkable to this purpose, which joins together *the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, without any other distinction besides that of order and relation. And it is against the fundamental design of Christianity to join any created beings together with God in so solemn an act of religion. And St. Paul joins them together in his benediction; *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.* 2 Cor. 13:14. From whence the Christian church hath always believed a Trinity of Persons in the unity of the divine nature.

P. You have taken a great deal of pains to clear the doctrine of the Trinity from any absurdity in point of reason, why should you not do as much now as to transubstantiation?

Pr. In plain truth, because I cannot; for here lies a vast difference between them. In the Trinity we considered an infinite Being, to which no bounds can be

set without destroying its nature; but in transubstantiation we suppose a true finite body, which hath its natural bounds and limits to one certain place, and yet you will and must suppose this body to be equally present in many thousand distant places at the same time; which implies so great a repugnancy to the very nature of a body, that I can by no means give my assent to it.

P. Alas! Is this it which chokes your reason, so that you cannot swallow the doctrine of the church in this matter?

You do not consider, that though we allow nothing infinite in the body itself; yet we suppose an infinite power to be employed about it; and an infinite power may produce things above our comprehensions, about bodies in themselves finite.

Pr. This is the utmost your cause will bear; but I pray tell me, is there any such thing as a repugnancy in the nature of things, or not? i.e. Are there not some things which are endued with such properties, that if you alter them, you destroy their very nature; as, to suppose an indivisible line, a triangle without lines, a body without dimensions?

P. Hold a little; a body must have dimensions belonging to it, but it is not necessary it should have those dimensions wherever it is present. For it may be present in one place as a body, and in another after the manner of a spirit.

Pr. You might as well have said, a body may be considered two ways; as it is a body, and as it is not a body; for there can be no body where there are no dimensions proper to it.

P. See how you are mistaken; for “it is not the dimensions which seem to hinder a body being in more places at once, but its unity;” as Bellarmine well observes.

Pr. I say both of them hinder. For a true body can no more be without its dimensions, than a line without divisibility.

P. I grant, that naturally it cannot, but by divine power it may.

Pr. Will you make the power of God to change the essential properties of things, while the things themselves remain in their true nature? You may as well say that naturally man is a reasonable creature; but by divine power he may be a true man, and yet want the faculty of reasoning: that naturally two and two make four, but God can make two and two to be joined together in a supernatural manner, so that four shall not result from them; that though, naturally speaking, whitewashing a wall makes it look white, yet by an extraordinary power, there may be the presence of all things which make a wall white, yet it shall not do so; just so it is to make a body present, and yet to have no dimensions of a body. Is

there any real difference between the nature of a body and spirit? Wherein lies it? Is it not as repugnant for a body to be after the manner of a spirit, as for a body and spirit to be the same?

P. All this proceeds upon not considering the difference between the *essential extension* of a body, and that which is *quantitative*, and hath *relation to place*.

Pr. The *essential extension* of a body without *quantity* is nonsense, and a contradiction. For it is to make a body extended and not extended at the same time. I pray tell me what you mean by *a body*, as it is opposed to *a spirit*?

P. I mean as all mankind do, such a substance which consists of parts extended and divisible.

Pr. Then being extended and divisible are the natural and essential properties of a body. And therefore, to suppose a body not to be extended and divisible, is to suppose it not to be a body, which is a plain contradiction.

P. You are to distinguish between *the intrinsic quantity*, which is an inseparable property of a body, and the *extrinsic relation* it hath to a place.

Pr. *Intrinsic quantity* without relation to place is *intrinsic nonsense*. For, how is it possible for extended parts to have no relation to place?

P. By *relation to place*, I mean, when the parts of a body answer to the parts of a place; but by *intrinsic quantity*, I mean, that there is the real order and proportion of parts in the body itself, but it doth not fill up the place.

Pr. Then you do suppose the body of Christ in the eucharist to have all the distinct parts of a body, with their due order and proportion, but to be in the sacrament after an invisible manner.

P. Why not?

Pr. Do you think it possible for the real and entire body of a man to be crowded into the compass of a wafer, with all the difference of its parts, so that no true part of the body be missing?

P. Yes, by divine power.

Pr. Do you think a far less thing possible than that, viz. that a man's head and shoulders, and arms, should be contained entire and distinct under the nail of his little finger?

P. Why not?

Pr. Then why may not the greatest body be within the least? Why may not an elephant be caught in a mousetrap, and a rhinoceros be put into a snuff box? For either there is a repugnancy in the nature of the thing, for a greater body to be within a less, or there is not: if not, then these mentioned instances are

possible; if there be, then the supposition of divine power can give no relief, unless you suppose, that God can do things repugnant in themselves, i.e. that he can do things which cannot be done. But I pray tell me, if the very body of Christ be by transubstantiation in the wafer, with all its parts in their due order, then the head must be distant from the feet, and all the other organs in their proper places; but this cannot possibly be supposed, where there is no measure of distance as place is, and the whole body is in a point.

P. I say again, there is a just order of parts considered *in themselves*, but not *with respect to place*.

Pr. Then it is impossible there should be any distance; without which it is impossible there should be the order of parts in a human body. Thus, there is a repugnancy in the very supposition of Christ's body being in the wafer, though there were but one single wafer; but when to this we add, that it is equally thus present in thousands of wafers at what distance of place soever, the absurdities do increase and multiply so fast upon us, that it is hardly possible to imagine anything concerning a body, which doth imply more than this doth. As that one and the same body should be indivisibly present in many places, where it must be divided from itself, by so many bodies interposing; so that it is impossible to apprehend how two bodies can be divided from one another more effectually, than such a body must be from itself, if it be present in many places at once.

P. I pray stop here; for reckon up as many absurdities as you will, they are all but the effects of *carnal reason*, and we must *captive our understanding to the obedience of faith*.

Pr. Then it is to no purpose to argue any farther on the point of reason; and I thought you designed this for one part of your parallel.

P. So I did; and I still say, there are things as hard to make out about the Trinity, which you have not yet taken notice of.

Pr. I pray let us hear them, that we may put an end to this discourse.

P. What say you then to one and the same nature being in three distinct persons, which, Bellarmine saith, "is more wonderful than that one body should be in many places; because the nature is identified with the persons, but the body is not so with the places in which it is present." If therefore the same nature be not divided from itself in the Persons of the Trinity, how much more easily may one body be present in several places, and not be divided from itself?

Pr. It is strange neither Bellarmine nor you should discern the difference. For the reason why a body must be divided from itself, being in several places, is, because it is finite; and there being no penetration of dimensions in bodies,

the interposing of other bodies must needs divide the same body in distant places; but the reason why the same divine nature may be in several persons is, because it is infinite; and therefore nothing can bound or discontinue it.

P. You have talked much of contradictions; is there any greater about transubstantiation, than that of *eternal generation* of the Son in the mystery of the Trinity? for, if it be not *proper generation*, then you cannot infer from it, that *the Son is of the same substance with the Father*; if it be, then it must be a proceeding from not being to being, and so *an eternal generation* is a contradiction.

Pr. It is a rule in common reason, that all attributes must be understood according to the nature of the subjects. And therefore, if the subject here spoken of be of such a nature as to be incapable of proceeding from not being to being, then whatever is affirmed of it must be so understood as not to destroy its nature. The term of *generation* alone is not, it may be, sufficient to prove the Son co-essential with the Father, because it might have been used improperly and metaphorically. But when, from the scripture, it otherwise appears that the Son of God, being *the Word, was in the beginning with God, and was God*, John 1:1, and we soon after find him called *the only-begotten of the Father*, verse 14, and *the only-begotten Son*, verse 18, we have reason to infer from hence his eternal generation: which must not be understood in such a mean sense as is agreeable to creatures, but as it is consistent with the essential attributes of God, of which necessary existence is one. So that by *eternal generation* no more can be meant, than such an emanation of the Son from the Father, as doth suppose them to have the same nature and coexistence; which is best represented by the rays of the sun coming from the fountain of light, if they were permanent, and not- successive.

P. What say you then to the mystery of the incarnation? “Is it not more wonderful,” as Bellarmine observes, “that there should be one hypostasis in two natures than one body in two places? since the union is greater between the hypostasis and the natures, than between the body and the places it is in; the one being intrinsic and substantial, the other extrinsic and accidental. And “that hypostasis is the same with the divine nature, and yet is most closely united with the human nature, which is so different from the divine; so that it is incomprehensible by us, how in that union the natures are not confounded, or the hypostasis divided.”

Pr. Suppose now we grant all this, that there is an incomprehensible mystery in the incarnation, what follows from thence? Have I not hitherto owned, that there must be something incomprehensible by us, in what relates to

the divine nature? And it is the less wonder it is so in the incarnation, wherein an union is implied between an infinite and finite nature; when the union of the soul and body, though both finite, is above our comprehension, though we ourselves consist of souls and bodies so united? But what consequence is it, if we are not able to explain this, that then we must admit that the same body may be not merely in two, but in ten thousand places at the same time? i.e. If we cannot explain the hypostatical union, then all manner of absurdities must go down with us, that relate to things of a very different nature from it.

P. I am glad to find you are set at last, and that now you have a difficulty before you which you can never get through.

Pr. Be not too confident; I have only hitherto denied the consequence as to the difficulties of transubstantiation. But it is possible, that, setting aside the confusion of school terms, I may be able to give a far more intelligible and reasonable account of the incarnation itself, than you can ever do of transubstantiation.

P. First show that it is possible, and then explain the manner of it.

Pr. But let us in the first place agree what we mean by it.

P. By the incarnation, I mean, the union of the divine and human nature, so as to make one person in Christ.

Pr. If this be not possible, it must either be, 1. Because two natures different from each other cannot be united to make one person; the contrary whereof appears in the union of soul and body to the person of a man. Or, 2. Because it is impossible that an infinite nature should be united to a finite.

P. How can there be an union possible between two beings infinitely distant from each other?

Pr. Not in that respect wherein the distance is infinite; but if there be nothing destructive to either nature in such an union, and the infinite nature do condescend to it, why may it not be so united to an intelligent finite being, as to make one person together with it? For in respect of union, the distance is not so great between finite and infinite, as between body and spirit.

P. The distance is infinite in one case, but not in the other.

Pr. I do not speak of them with respect to perfections, but to union; and an infinite distance in that must imply an absolute repugnancy, which you can never prove: for, since body and spirit may be united to make one person, an infinite Spirit may be united to a finite nature.

P. But the manner of the hypostatical union is impossible to be conceived.

Pr. Let the thing be granted possible, and the difficulty of conceiving the

manner may be as great in the union of soul and body. Will you undertake to explain that to me? and yet I hope you believe it. But let us hear your difficulties again, which you object from Bellarmine.

P. "That there should be but one *hypostasis* in two natures; and that in the union the natures should not be confounded, nor the hypostasis divided."

Pr. All these difficulties arise from the sense of the word *hypostasis*: which originally signifies a real being, and not such which depends only on fancy and imagination; from thence its signification was enlarged, not only to things real (in opposition to mere appearances, and creatures of the mind), but to such a thing which did subsist of itself, and had not its subsistence in another, as accidents had. So that an *hypostasis* was a real substance which had subsistence in itself. But such are of two kinds, as the Greek fathers observe. (1.) Such as are real substances in themselves, but yet are capable of being joined with another to make up a person; thus the soul and body have two different *hypostases*, and make up but one person of a man. (2.) It is taken for a complete individual subsistence, which is not joined with any other as a part; and so *hypostasis* is the same with *a person*, which is nothing else but a complete, intelligent, individual hypostasis. And in this sense there can be but one *hypostasis* in Christ, i.e. one person, though there be two natures.

P. But our divines say, that the human nature after the union hath no *hypostasis*, it being swallowed up by the divine.

Pr. I know they do; but if they mean that the human nature, after the union, loses that subsistence which is proper to the human nature, it is impossible for them to avoid the Eutychian heresy, condemned by the council of Chalcedon; but if they mean no more than that there is a true nature, but no person, save only that which results from both natures; they then agree with the sense of the church, which condemned the Eutychians. For as much as the heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches differed in themselves, they were both built on the same ground, viz. that there could be no true nature, but there must be a person; and that two natures could not make one person. From whence Nestorius asserted there were two persons in Christ; and Eutyches denied that there were two natures.

P. What doth all this signify, but that the authority of the church must determine whether there be two natures or two persons in Christ?

Pr. It seems then, the whole business wherein the general councils were so warmly concerned, was only to make an ecclesiastical dictionary, and to appoint what words are to be used, and what not. Do you think then there were no such

real heresies as Nestorianism and Eutychianism, but only they happened to take the words *nature* and *person* in another sense than the church would have men use them?

P. I trust the church for all these things.

Pr. Then if the church would have you affirm two persons and one nature, or two natures and one person, it were all one to you.

P. Why not? since the church must determine.

Pr. What if you had been to dispute with Nestorius and Eutyches?

P. I would have told them, they must submit to the church about the use of words.

Pr. And they would have laughed at you for your pains: for the controversy was really about the truth of Christ's incarnation (as the fathers proved, and the councils determined), which in consequence was rejected by both of them; as I will evidently prove, if you have any longer patience.

P. I beg your pardon, sir; I have heard enough of all conscience already.

Pr. I think so too, to make you ashamed of your parallel between the doctrine of the Trinity and transubstantiation.

And methinks, for the sake of our common Christianity, you should no more venture upon such bold and unreasonable comparisons. Do you in earnest think, it is all one whether men do believe a God, or providence, or heaven, or hell, or the Trinity and incarnation of Christ, if they do not believe transubstantiation? We have heard much of late about old and new popery; but if this be the way of representing new popery, by exposing the common articles of faith, it will set the minds of all good Christians farther from it than ever. For upon the very same grounds we may expect another parallel between the belief of a God and transubstantiation; the effect of which will be, the exposing of all religion. This is a very destructive and mischievous method of proceeding; but our comfort is, that it is very unreasonable; as I hope hath fully appeared by this discourse.