

yet faith would have a right to correct this universal repugnancy, as reason does that of the senses and imagination?

Many learned and pious men have laboured hard to find out pertinent similitudes, by which to illustrate a subject which is unsearchably deep and beyond all comparison. Such attempts, however well intended, cannot fail of proving abortive, and are often injurious to the cause they were designed to serve. These comparisons are not adapted to answer the end, as they speak only to our imagination. Now, it is not the *imagination*, but *reason* that must be satisfied. For as those emblems, under which I may represent to myself the Divine Being, have but little evidence to convince me of his existence; so the images, by which the mystery before us may be represented, have but little force to persuade me of its truth. Besides, these comparisons give occasion to our opponents, to examine and expose the disparities which attend them; which must necessarily be both numerous and striking, by reason of the immense disproportion which there is between similitudes taken from finite creatures, and the infinite Creator. On these disparities the enemies of the truth raise imaginary triumphs; and improve them to blind the simple and seduce the ignorant, who do not well understand the design of such comparisons; which was, not the *conviction* of the mind, but the *assistance* of the imagination. Another reason why these comparisons appear to us injurious to the cause of truth, is, their being intended to lessen the difficulties attending the grand mystery, by discovering the *manner* of it, which God has not revealed. This, so far as it is supposed to operate, supersedes the necessity of an unreserved confidence in the Divine testimony, concerning this

profoundly mysterious subject, and, in a measure, the end of revelation itself; which is calculated to humble us, by presenting us with objects which we cannot comprehend, as well as to enlighten us in such things as are necessary to be known.

The only use I would make of such comparisons, is, to discover the difference between intuitive and abstracted knowledge. I call that *intuitive*, which arises from sight and experience; and that *abstracted*, which results from reasoning and testimony. For instance: A man, blind from his birth, has only an abstracted knowledge of many agreeable and wonderful objects around him, of which persons in common have an intuitive knowledge. Now, supposing you speak to such an one about light and colours, about the brightness of the sun in his meridian glory, or concerning the vegetable beauties of spring, his ideas of what you mean are all confused. Nay, if you enter into particulars with him, on subjects of this kind, he will consider many things you say as quite inconsistent one with another. He will not know how, and he will think it impossible for any other person to reconcile so many apparent contradictions. Whereas, if you mention the several particulars to one who enjoys the blessing of sight, and, especially, if he have been studious of nature, he understands what you say, and has not the least doubt in the case. The grand reason of this difference is, those things which are incomprehensible, when they are known merely with an abstracted knowledge, appear in a very different light when they are known intuitively; and, frequently, the difficulties we suppose to be in the *objects*, are in our *own minds*, and arise from our *manner* of knowing them.

Hence it appears, that difficulties and seeming

contradictions may be found in the most common objects, when they are known merely in an abstracted way; and that the supposed inconsistencies vanish, so soon as they come to be viewed intuitively. We have, therefore, little reason to be surprised, if, when contemplating the mystery of the incarnation, difficulties occur, and seeming contradictions appear; since in the present state, our knowledge of it is purely abstracted.

The two following reflections shall conclude this treatise. As there are difficulties in almost every subject of inquiry, it is by a *comparative view* that wise men have always been determined to take one side of a question, rather than the other. This is a certain rule of good sense, and should be followed in the case before us. We ought not to reject the doctrine of the incarnation as erroneous, because difficulties attend it, nor because very plausible objections have been made against it. It is the fault of young persons, and the character of rash and weak understandings, that are not capable of viewing several objects and their relations at once, to determine questions of importance, on the appearance of an insuperable difficulty; or else it is an evidence of a negligent and lazy temper, which will not permit them to examine things maturely. We ought here, as it is a question of infinite importance to the glory of God and the salvation of men, to compare arguments with arguments, and difficulties with difficulties, and that with diligence and prayer. On such an examination it will be found, that the most plausible *arguments* of our adversaries consist either in metaphysical speculations, or in such passages of Scripture as explain themselves, by others, to a very different sense: whereas, ours are formed on such Divine declarations

as are clear and express, frequently repeated and closely connected; so that either the obvious and natural meaning of the terms must be utterly rejected, and then any expressions will serve any purpose, or our interpretation must be received. And as to the *difficulties* it will appear, that the most formidable of those which are started by our opponents are taken either from their being incapable of comprehending the mystery, or from the glosses of some whimsical schoolmen, which we freely give up, and heartily despise, as much as our opposers themselves. But the difficulties which we improve against them, arise from a consideration of such things as are absolutely essential to the Scriptures, which are, *truth, perspicuity, and piety*. For without these, the Bible is unworthy of God: destitute of these, whoever attributes it to Him, reproaches his Maker. Difficulties multiply and load their hypothesis, by considering the analogy of faith; that by which God's love to mankind is most highly recommended; that on which are founded the reality of the atonement by Jesus Christ, and all the merit of his death; and, above all, that which the apostles, who were inspired and commissioned to reveal and publish the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, have most said, repeated, urged, and upon which they have grounded the practice of worshipping Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as **OVER ALL, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER**. So that the difficulties which we object, are such as affect **THE BIBLE**, as a Divine revelation, and **CHRISTIANITY**, as a Divine religion.

Again: Though the Socinian interpretation of controverted texts is, in many instances, the most probable that can be given, in opposition to the arguments we form upon them, in defence of our Lord's

Divinity ; yet they appear unnatural, far-fetched, and invented merely to serve an hypothesis. So that, as we are not required to interpret the oracles of God by a spirit of divination, nor to decipher unsearchable riddles ; we cannot be under any obligation to know, much less to approve, such refined subtilties as are calculated to lower, to obscure, to destroy, those sublime ideas which the Scriptures give us of the essential and mediatorial glories of Jesus Christ.

The former of these reflections proves the *truth* of our principles, the latter shows the *safety* of them. The one satisfies our *minds*, the other our *consciences* ; and both together give a just idea of the design of this treatise, which I now dedicate to the eternal honour of my **DIVINE REDEEMER**, the **ADORABLE IMMANUEL**. Forgive, O **GOD**, the imperfections of the work, and the sins of the author. Establish and spread the infallible truths of thy gospel ; that as thou hast been pleased to manifest thyself in the flesh, all flesh may behold thy glory and bow at thy footstool. Amen.

THE END.