

sacrament, is by exciting them to more serious and devout meditation. And here, it must be granted, that if this doctrine could be proved to the satisfaction of christians, a deeper impression would probably be made upon their minds, than can be produced by the most striking representation of our Saviour's sufferings, without the assistance of this doctrine. But this is a supposition that can never be realized. It is impossible to satisfy the minds of christians in general respecting a doctrine so contradictory to all sense and reason. And the more repugnant any doctrine is to the common sense and understandings of mankind, the more readily must doubts and suspicions arise in the minds of those whom we endeavor to persuade of its truth. And the more doubts and suspicions are occasioned by any particular doctrine, the less influence must that doctrine have on the mind.

Any effect that the doctrine of transubstantiation can have in exciting a more lively attention to our Saviour's sufferings, is far more than counterbalanced by the extreme difficulty of proving such a doctrine, and the uncertainty and doubts which it must generally produce.

As this argument for transubstantiation relates entirely to the effect which the doctrine is calculated to produce on the minds of men, and not at all to the evidence of the doctrine, it is fair to contrast with the good effects ascribed to it, the bad effects with which it appears to us to be attended. Among the bad effects which we have reason to attribute to this doctrine, this is one, that a doctrine so full of contradiction, so contrary to all the ordinary methods of judging of the nature of bodies, must naturally be productive of doubt in the minds of the faithful themselves. In consequence of these doubts, the influence of religion on the minds of christians is weakened. It is impossible for persons of any degree of reflection to avoid considering the many and evident contradictions implied in this doctrine. However those who are wholly ignorant and uninformed may profess to assent to it, such as have acquired any habit of reasoning can never view it without being struck with many difficulties. The doubts which are thus excited, and the uncertainty into which the mind is thrown respecting principles that are regarded as of the first importance, are exceedingly unfavorable to the influence of religion. They diminish the authority of moral duty, and are subversive of the practice of virtue.

The effect of the doctrine of transubstantiation is not less hurtful in another view. Those who

set themselves against all religion, and endeavor by every argument which their ingenuity can devise, to depreciate the importance of christianity, are too numerous in every christian country. The prejudices of these persons are greatly strengthened by every doctrine that appears to contradict the good sense and reason of mankind. And the more these tenets abound in the christian churches, the more violent will be the prejudices of unbelievers, the more numerous will they become, and the more lasting will be their opposition. The particular doctrine in question has no doubt been the cause of the infidelity of thousands. Mankind seldom take the trouble to consider what the gospel itself teaches. They take it for granted, that christianity contains all the contradiction which clergymen ascribe to it, when they defend and explain the doctrine of transubstantiation. Hence they infer that a religion which contains so much contradiction could not proceed from God. They reject therefore the whole gospel as a fable.

The defenders of transubstantiation maintain that this doctrine, though superior to reason, is not contrary to it. They assert that it is not more contradictory than the omnipresence of God, the immateriality of the human soul, and many other doctrines of natural or revealed religion, of which we cannot fully explain the nature. The omnipresence of God is indeed inexplicable to the human understanding. We cannot comprehend in what manner the Divine Being exists everywhere. But though this is inexplicable, it contains no contradiction. It is allowed on all hands that we do not understand the nature of divinity, nor the manner in which God exists. The divine essence must possess qualities which we cannot understand nor explain. To say therefore, that his nature is such as to exist every where, is no contradiction. It is only saying that he possesses qualities which we cannot explain. But, to say that any human being can exist in two or more places at the same time, is a contradiction; because we are acquainted with the qualities of human beings, and know that this is inconsistent with their nature. The same reasoning may be applied to the immateriality of the soul. It is no contradiction, to say there may be such an immaterial substance as the soul; or to say that it may influence the body. For we are not acquainted with the particular mode of subsistence of every being in the universe. But, it is a contradiction to say that two or more persons eat the same substance at the same time. We know this to be inconsistent with the nature of any corporeal substance. The doctrine of the