

WRITINGS OF WILLIAM LAW

by William Law

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by William Law, compiled for study and devotional reading.

80 Chapters

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01.00 A Collection of Letter

A COLLECTION OF LETTERS

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01.01 Letter 1

To Mr. J. L. My dear and most worthy friend, For so I must salute you, as having long dwelt in my heart under that idea, though personally unknown to me. I shall not trouble you with apologizing for this long silence, but speak directly to the matters of yours, concerning your difficulty to join in any church communion.

Religion, or church communion is in its true nature, both external and internal, which are thus united, and thus distinguished; the one is the outward sign, the other the inward truth signified by it: the one never was, nor ever can be, in its true state without the other. The inward truth, or church, is regeneration, or the life, spirit, and power of Christ, quickened and brought to life, in the soul. The outward sign, or church, is that outward form, or manner of life, that bears full witness to the truth of this regenerated life of Christ, formed or revealed in the soul. The inward truth gives forth its outward proper manifestations of itself, and these manifestations bring forth the true outward church, and make it to be visible, and outwardly known. As thus, everything in the inward life, spirit, and will of Christ, when it becomes living, dwelling and working in the spirit of our minds, or inward man, is the inward church, or kingdom of God set up within us: and everything in the outward behavior, and visible conversation of Christ, whilst dwelling amongst men, when practiced and followed by us, in the form and manner of our life, makes us the members of that outward church, which he set up in this world.

Inwardly nothing lived in Christ, but the sole will of God, a perpetual regard to his glory, and one continual desire of the salvation of all mankind. When this spirit is in us, then are we inwardly one with Christ, and united to God through him.

Outwardly Christ exercised every kind of love, kindness and compassion to the souls and bodies of men; nothing was visible in the outward form of his life, but humility and lowliness of state in every shape; a contented want, or rather total disregard of all worldly riches, power, ease or pleasure; a continual meekness, gentleness, patience and resignation, not only to the will of God, but to the haughty powers of the world, to the perverseness, and contradiction of all the evil and malice of men, and all the hardships and troubles of human life: now this, and such like outward behavior of Christ, thus separate from, and contrary to the spirit, wisdom and way, of this world, was that very outward church, of which he willed all mankind to become visible, and living members. And whoever in the spirit of Christ, lives in the outward exercise of these virtues, lives as to himself in the highest perfection of church unity, and is the true inward and outward Christian. He is all that he can be, he hath all that he can have, he doth all that he can do, and enjoyeth all that he can enjoy, as a member of Christ's body, or church in this world. For as Christ was God and man, come down from heaven, for no other end, but fully to restore the union that was lost betwixt God and man, so church unity is, and can be nothing else, but the unity of this, or that man, or number of men with God, through the power and nature of Christ. And therefore it must be the truth, and the whole truth, that nothing more is required, nor will anything less be able, to make anyone a true member of the one church of Christ, out of which there is no salvation and

in which there is no condemnation, but only and solely his conformity to, and union with the inward spirit, and outward form of Christ's life and behavior in this world. This is the one fold under one shepherd; though the sheep are scattered, or feeding in valleys, or on mountains ever so distant, or separate from one another. On the other hand, not only every unreasonable unjust action, be it done to whom it will, not only every unkind, proud, wrathful, scornful, disdainful inward thought, or outward behavior to any person, but every unreadiness to do good of all kinds, to all that we can; every unwillingness to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep, and love our neighbor as ourselves; every aversion to be inwardly all love, and outwardly all meekness, gentleness, courtesy, and condescension in words and actions towards every creature, for whom Christ died, makes us schismatics, though we be ever so daily gathered together, into one and the same place, joining in one and the same form of creeds, prayers and praises offered to God, and is truly a leaving, or breaking that church unity, which makes us one with Christ, as our head, and unites us with men, as the members of his body. That the matter is thus; that the true church unity consists in our walking as Christ walked, fully appears, as from many others, so from these plain words of our Lord himself: "Ye are not of this world, as I am not of this world, but I have chosen you out of the world." Therefore to have that contrariety to the world, which Christ had, is the one necessary and full proof of our being his, of our belonging to him, and being one with him.

Again, "Abide in me, and I in you, if ye abide in me, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch withered, etc. For without me ye can do nothing."

Therefore the one true proof of our being living members of Christ's church on earth, or only dead branches, fit for the fire, is nothing else but our being, or not being inwardly of that spirit, and outwardly of that behavior, which Christ manifested to the world.

Again, "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you, and by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples."

Therefore the true and sufficient mark of our outward church membership, is there only, and fully, outwardly known, and found in every man, where the outward form of Christ's loving behavior to all men, is outwardly seen and known to be in him. These and like passages of Christ and his apostles (though quite overlooked by most modern defenders of the one church) are the only places that speak home to the truth, and reality of church unity.

It may now be reasonably asked, What is the divine service, or worship in this church? For every church must have its divine service and worship which is the life, strength, and support of it.

It is answered: "That no man can call Christ Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Therefore nothing is, or can be a divine service in that church, which has Christ for its Lord, but what has the Holy Spirit for its beginner, doer, and finisher. For if it be certain that no one can own Christ as his Lord, but by the Holy Spirit, then it must be equally certain, that no one can serve or worship God through Christ his Lord, in any other way, help, power, or means, but so far as it is done, in, and by the power of that same Holy Spirit. Whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh; that is, whatsoever proceeds from, or is done by the natural powers of man, from his birth of flesh and blood, is merely human, earthly, and corrupt, and can no more do anything that is heavenly, or perform a service or worship that is divine, than our present flesh and blood can enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Thus saith the apostle, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be, the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Now if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And consequently if not his, he can perform no divine service to him. Nor can any worship cease to be carnal, or become divine, but by its being all that it is, and doing all that it doth, by the power, and presence of Christ dwelling in our souls, and helping us by his Holy Spirit to cry in truth and reality, Abba Father. The New Testament never calls us to do, or offer, or allows anything to be done or offered to God, as a divine service, or worship, but what is done in the truth, and reality of faith, of hope, of love, and obedience to God. But through all the New Testament, no faith, no hope, no love is allowed to be true, and godly, but only that faith, that hope, which solely proceeds from, and is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, living, dwelling, and working in our whole heart, and soul, and spirit. This spirituality of the Christian religion, is the reason why it was first preached to the world under the name of the kingdom of God, because under this new dispensation, freed from veils, shadows, and figures of good things absent or to come, God himself is manifested, ruling in us and over us, as an essential light of our lives, as an indwelling Word of power, as a life-giving Spirit within us, forming us by a new birth, to become a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices to God, through a new and living way which Christ hath consecrated for us. The truth and perfection of which state, is plainly set forth by the following prayer of Christ, viz., "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us--I in them and thou in me, that they be made perfect in one, and that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." Now for the truth and certainty of this spiritual kingdom, in which are only spiritual worshippers baptized from above, into an union, and communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, through the mysterious union of God and man in the one mediator Jesus Christ; for the truth, I say, of this spiritual state of Christianity, we have the plainest words of Christ, expressly declaring that the Jerusalem service, and consequently every thing, or service that has the nature of it, was to have its end in the establishment of his church.

"Believe me," saith he, "the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father: but the hour cometh and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

Therefore it must be certain in the highest degree, that Christ cannot, nor could set up any other kind of worship, or worshippers, but such as the Father seeketh; because he and his Father were one, both in will and work. And the reason and necessity of this kind of worship, is added by Christ in the following words, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth."

Therefore if Christ had not only and solely set up this truth of spiritual worship, he had been but another Moses, and though a better teacher, yet still but as a schoolmaster, to some higher state of religion, that was yet wanted, and must be revealed, if so be that man was to be restored to his true state of life, union, and happiness in and with the divine nature. For as God is a spirit, and our life is spiritual, so no religious worship can be in its true perfection, or bring us into the possession of our highest good, till it raises all that is spirit and life in us, into union and communion with spirit and life in God.

If it should here be asked, how we are to become and continue worshippers of the Father in spirit and truth? It is answered; all consists in turning inwards, in attention to that, which is daily and

hourly stirring, living, and working in our hearts.

Now though the scripture nowhere gives this direction in these very words, yet, since it is said in scripture, that God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, but in the temple of our hearts, since the kingdom of God is said to be within us, and not to come with outward observation, but to be in us, as a secret, living seed of the incorruptible Word; since our hearts is our whole life, and we are said to live, and move, and have our being in God, it is directly telling us that we are to turn inwards, if we would turn to, and find God.

It is directly telling us, that in what manner we are within, as the worship is done there, so is God in such manner within us; and that he is no otherwise our God, our life, our rest and happiness, than so far as the working of our hearts, is a willing and choosing, a hungering and thirsting to find, feel and enjoy the life- giving power of his holy presence in our souls. To be inwardly therefore attentive to God, showing the good and the evil, distinguishing the light from the darkness in our own souls; to listen to the voice of his ever speaking Word, and to watch the movings of his ever sanctifying Spirit within us, waiting and longing in the spirit of prayer, of faith and hope, of love and resignation, to be inwardly quickened and revived in the image, and according to the likeness of that Son, in whom he is well pleased, is the worshipping of God with our whole heart and soul, in spirit and in truth.

It is living to God, in and through the power of Christ, as he lived; it is praying with him, and by his Spirit, that continual prayer which he always had, whether speaking to the multitude, or healing their diseases, or alone by himself in the stillness of nights, and loneliness of mountains. For this inward prayer, in which the whole heart, and soul, and spirit, loves, worships, and applies to a God, not absent or distant, but to a Trinity of goodness and mercy, of light and love, of glory and majesty, dwelling, and working within us, willing and desiring to do all that in the temple of our hearts, which is done and always doing in his own temple in heaven, is a prayer, that only needs outward words for the sake of others; and of which it may be said, as Christ said: "Father, I knew that thou always hearest me, but because of the people, which stand by, I said it."

I begin to apprehend, worthy sir, that you will think I am gone too far about, and not come close enough to the matter in hand. But I hope it is not so: I have gone through all that I have said, only to show, that church unity or communion, is not a matter that depends on any particular society, or outward thing, but is complete, or defective, in such degree, as we live in unity with, or contrariety to the inward spirit and outward example of Christ. For no union signifies anything to us, or our salvation, but union with God, through Christ, and nothing unites us to Christ, or makes us to be his, but his Holy Spirit dwelling, and working inwardly and outwardly in us, as it did in him. This is the only church unity, that concerns the conscience, and when we are in this unity, we are in union with Christ, and with everyone who is united to him, however distant, or separated from us, by human inclosures.

I come now to consider the church under another, and more common idea of it, namely as external, and about which, all the Christian world is at enmity, strife, and debate.

After Christianity had been a few ages in the world, it became national, and obtained the protection, and patronage of the princes of this world.

Hence it was enriched with many gifts and privileges, and strengthened by powers, that were foreign to the nature of it; and churchmen, beginning to quarrel about Christian doctrines, were supported in their strife and division from one another, by the temporal powers, under which they lived. This state of the church hath continued to this day, where almost every age hath multiplied the number of divided churches, brought forth, by the union of the civil and ecclesiastical power. This state therefore of external churches, hath the nature of things merely human, and is subject to such alterations, changes, and corruptions, as the forms and revolutions of temporal government all over the world. And therefore the private Christian, who, as such, is a member of a kingdom, that is not of this world, has little or no concern in it.

Without entering into the merits of divided churches, which I shall not do here, or anywhere else; thus much I think, may with truth be affirmed, that where the church and state are incorporated, and under one and the same power, all the evil passions, corrupt views, and worldly interests, which form and transform, turn and overturn all outward things, must be expected often to come to pass, as well in the church, as in the state, with which it is united. But as private Christians have no power, or call to govern the world, or set up thrones according to the principles of truth and righteousness, but are by the spirit of the gospel obliged to submit to, and be contented with that state of government, good or bad, under which the providence of God has placed them, so are they in like manner, to exercise a patient submission, and resignation under such an imperfect state of the outward church, which providence has not prevented, and only to take care, to be inwardly found such worshippers in spirit and in truth, as the Father seeketh.

I mean not by this, as some have done, that any evil however great in the beginning, or continuing of usurped power, either in the church or state, loses its evil nature, and may be called right and good, as soon as providence has suffered it to become successful.

No, by no means. Success, though always to be owned to have God's permission, leaves all things in their own nature, neither good because successful, nor bad, because defeated and suppressed. The wickedness of the Jews conspiring and effecting the death of Christ, was not only permitted, but suitable to the designs of providence, in the redemption of mankind. But that the evil nature of their wickedness did not lose its guilt, because suffered by God to be successful, but still continues, is plain from the curse of God still abiding upon it to this day. The duty of private Christians, with regard to providence in such cases, is not to call that good which before was evil, or that evil which before was good, but patiently to suffer, and humbly acquiesce under all that bad outward course of things, either in church or state, which the providence of God has not thought fit to prevent, and that for these reasons: first, as fully knowing that all things must work together for good, to those who love God; secondly, as piously believing that in all successful wickedness, whether of princes against their people, or of people against their princes, there is always something hid under it, which in its way and degree, will like the successful wickedness of the Jews towards Christ, help forward that salvation, for which Christ hath laid down his life. Who can say, what a good, and blessing, the Christian world had been deprived of, had the righteous providence of God not permitted the princes of the heathen world, to make such bloody havoc of the first Christians. But suppose errors of the following kind got into the church, viz., 1. The scripture baptism of the whole body under water, only as it were mimicked, by scattering a few drops of water on a new-born child's face. 2. The Supper of the Lord in one church, held to be bread and wine changed into the real flesh and blood of Christ: in another, as bread and wine, not

changed into, but substantially united with the real flesh and blood of Christ: in another, mere bread and wine, only made memorials of the body and blood of Christ. In one church this, in another that form and manner of consecration held to be essential; in another, all priestly consecration rejected, as rank superstition. 3. Suppose the original apostolical constitution of church assemblies, where all meet together, that all in their turns, might prophesy one by one, that all might learn, and all be comforted, should in some churches be so changed, that all praying, speaking or prophesying, as from the power, and presence of Christ amongst them, was quite prohibited; where one and the same long, tedious, humanly- contrived form of worship, is daily, from year's end to year's end, to be read by one, who is become their only speaker and instructor, not because he alone is daily full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, but because he is either hired to that office, or because, by some means or other, the church and churchyard are become his freehold. Is not such a state of church assemblies, in full contrariety to the first assemblies, and to the apostle's injunction; "quench not the Spirit, despise not prophesyings"? 4. Suppose again, that in the settled service of the church, certain prayers and petitions, not according to truth and righteousness, or suitable to the goodness of the evangelical spirit, are read, as prayers for success in unChristian wars, prayers for the destruction of our Christian brethren, called our enemies, thanksgivings for the violent slaughter and successful killing of mankind: when these are made parts of the church service, are we in obedience to the providence of God, suffering things in church assemblies to come to this pass, to unite and bear a part in such church service? My answer to all this, shall be only personal; that is, what I would do myself, in these supposed cases.

First, as to any defects, mutilation, or variations in the outward form, and performance of baptism and the Supper of the Lord in the church, I am under little, or no concern about them; and that for this very good reason, because all that is inwardly meant, taught, or intended by them, as the life, spirit, and full benefit of them, is subject to no human power, is wholly transacted between God and myself, and cannot be taken from me, by any alteration made by man, in the outward celebration of them.

If the church, in my baptism, should sprinkle a little milk, or wine, instead of water, upon my face it would be no defective baptism to me, if I had all that inward disposition of repentance, of faith in Christ, to be born again of him, which was meant, figured, and implied by such immersion into water, as was the first baptism. The same may be said of the Supper of the Lord, however altered, or varied in its outward manner from what it was at first, if the inward truth, pointed at by it, is in me, is loved and adhered to by me, I have all the benefit that was meant, or could be had by it, when it was kept to a tittle in the same outward form, in which the first church used it. And therefore the outward celebration of these sacraments is revered by me, wherever they are observed, as standing in the same place and significant of the same inward blessing, as in their first institution. As to the fore-mentioned supposed prayers, though I am present when they are read in the church, I neither make, nor need I make them, any more my own prayers, than I make, or need to make all the curses in the psalms, to be my own curses, when I hear both priest and people reading them in church, as a part of divine service. Nor is there any more hypocrisy, or insincerity, in one case, than in the other.

I join therefore in the public assemblies, not because of the purity, or perfection of that which is done, or to be found there, but because of that which is meant and intended by them: they mean the holy, public worship of God; they mean the edification of Christians; they are of great use to

many people; they keep the world from a total forgetfulness of God; they help the ignorant and letterless to such a knowledge of God, and the scriptures, as they would not have without them. And therefore, fallen as these church assemblies are, from their first spiritual state, I reverence them, as the venerable remains of all that, which once was, and will, I hope, be again, the glory of church assemblies, viz., the ministration of the spirit, and not of the dead letter. And there are two very great signs of the near approach of this day, in two very numerous, yet very different kinds of people in these kingdoms. In the one sort, an extraordinary increase of new separations, particularity of opinions, methods, and religious distinctions, is worked up to its utmost height. And we see them almost every day running with eagerness from one method to another, in quest of something, by the help of a new form, which they have not been able to find in the old one.

Now, as the vanity and emptiness of any thing, or way, is then only fully discovered and felt, when it has run all its lengths, and worked itself up to its highest pitch, so that nothing remains untried, to keep up the deceit; so when religious division, strife of opinions, invented forms, and all outward distinctions, have done their utmost, have no further that they can go, nor anything more to try, then is their inevitable fall at hand; and if the zeal was simple and upright, all must end in this full conviction, viz., that vanity and emptiness, burden and deceit, must follow us in every course we take, till we have done with all our own running, to expect all, and receive all, from the invisible God dwelling in, and blessing our hearts with all heavenly gifts, by a birth of his eternal, all-creating Word, and life-giving Spirit brought forth in our souls. The other sign I mentioned, is to be found in another kind of a much awakened people, in most parts of these kingdoms, who in the midst of the noise and multiplicity of all church-strife, having heard the still, and secret voice of the true shepherd, are turned inwards, and wholly attentive to the inward truth, spirit and life of religion, searching after the mystical, spiritual instruction, which leads them from the outward cry, of a "Lo here," or "there, is Christ," to seek to him and his redeeming spirit within them, as the only safe guide from inward darkness to inward light; and from outward shadows into the substantial, ever-enduring truth; which truth is nothing else, but the everlasting union of the soul with God, as its only good, through the spirit and nature of Christ truly formed and fully revealed in it. But to go no further; I shall only add, that as yet, I know of no better way of thinking or acting, than as above, with regard to the universal fallen state of all churches; for fallen they all are, as certainly as they are divided.

Every church distinction is more or less in the corrupt state of every selfish, carnal, self-willed, worldly minded, partial man, and is what it is, and acts as it acts, for its own glory, its own interest and advancement, by that same spirit, which keeps the selfish, partial man solely attached to his own will, his own wisdom, self-regard, and self-seeking. And all that is wanting to be removed from every church, or Christian society, in order to its being a part of the heavenly Jerusalem, is that which may be called its own, human will, carnal wisdom, and self-seeking spirit; which is all to be given up, by turning the eyes and hearts of all its members, to an inward adoration, and total dependence upon the supernatural, invisible, omnipresent God of all spirits; to the inward teachings of Christ, as the power, the wisdom, and the light of God, working within them every good, and blessing, and purity, which they can ever receive, either on earth, or in heaven.

Under this light, I am neither Protestant, nor papist, according to the common acceptation of the words. I cannot consider myself as belonging only to one society of Christians, in separation and distinction from all others. It would be as hurtful to me, if not more so, than any worldly partiality

And therefore as the defects, corruptions, and imperfections, which, some way or other, are to be found in all churches, hinder not my communion with that, under which my lot is fallen, so neither do they hinder my being in full union, and hearty fellowship with all that is Christian, holy, and good, in every other church division. And as I know, that God and Christ, and holy angels, stand thus disposed towards all that is good in all men, and in all churches, notwithstanding the mixture in them, is like that of tares growing up with the wheat, so I am not afraid, but humbly desirous, of living and dying in this disposition towards them.

I am, worthy Sir, With much Truth of Love and Respect, Your faithful Friend, And hearty Servant.

King's Cliffe,

Feb. 28, 1756.

01.02 Letter 2

To the Reverend Mr. S. My dear friend and brother,

I hope my long silence has not occasioned your being offended at me, or any suspicion, that I have disregarded you, or the matter you wrote upon. If I were to offer at a reason in excuse of it, it would be an invented one, for it has never been known to myself. But I was contented to know, that my heart was right towards you, full of all good will and desire to serve you, in the way that God should lead me to it. And so it is come to pass, that you have not heard from me sooner.

It is a great pleasure to me to think (as you say) that my letter to you, will also be to two of your brethren, who stand in the same state of earnestness, to know how to be faithful and useful in their ministry, as you do: I hope God will increase your number. The first business of a clergyman awakened by God into a sensibility, and love of the truths of the gospel, and of making them equally felt, and loved by others, is thankfully, joyfully and calmly, to adhere to, and give way to the increase of this new-risen light, and by true introversion of his heart to God, as the sole author of it, humbly beg of him, that all that, which he feels a desire of doing to those under his cure, may be first truly and fully done in himself.

Now the way to become more and more awakened, to feel more and more of this first conviction, or work of God within you, is not to reflect and reason yourself into a further and deeper sensibility of it, by finding out arguments to strengthen it in your mind. But the one true way is, in faith and love to keep close to the presence and power of God, which has manifested itself within you, willingly resigned to, and solely depending upon the one work of his all-creating Word, and all-quickenng Spirit, which is always more or less powerful in us, according as we are more or less trusting to, and depending upon it. And thus it is, that by faith we are saved, because God is always ours, in such proportion as we are his; as our faith is in him, such is his power and presence in us. What an error therefore, to turn one thought from him, or cast a look after any help but his; for if we ask all of him, if we seek for all in him, if we knock only at his own door of mercy in Christ Jesus, and patiently wait and abide there, God's kingdom must come, and his will must be done in us. For God is always present, and always working towards the life of the soul, and its deliverance from captivity under flesh and blood. But this inward work of God, though never ceasing, or altering, is yet always, and only hindered by the activity of our own nature, and faculties, by bad men through their obedience to earthly passions, and by good men through their striving to be good in their own way, by their natural strength, and a multiplicity of seemingly holy labors and contrivances.

Both these sorts of people obstruct the work of God upon their souls. For we can cooperate with God no other way, than by submitting to the work of God, and seeking, and leaving ourselves to it. For the whole nature of the fallen soul, consists in its being fallen from God, into itself, into a self-government and activity, under its own powers broken off from God, and therefore dying to self, as well to our reason, as our passions and desires, is the first and indispensable step in Christian redemption, and brings forth that conversion to God, by which Christ becomes formed

and revealed in us. And nothing hinders this conversion from being fruitful in all good, and gaining all that we want from God, but the retaining something to dwell in as our own, whether it be earthly satisfactions, or a righteousness of human endeavors. And therefore all the progress of your first conviction, which by the grace of God you have had from above, and from within, consists in the simplicity of your faith, in adhering to it, as solely the work of God in your soul, which can only go on in God's way, and can never cease to go on in you, any more than God can cease to be that which he is, but so far as it is stopped by your want of faith in it, or trusting to something else along with it. God is found, as soon as he alone is sought; but to seek God alone, is nothing else but the giving up ourselves wholly unto him. For God is not absent from us in any other respect, than as the spirit of our mind is turned from him, and not left wholly to him. This spirit of faith, which not here, or there, or now and then, but everywhere, and in all things, looks up to God alone, trusts solely in him, depends absolutely upon him, expects all from him, and does all it does for him, is the utmost perfection of piety in this life. The worship of God in spirit and truth, can go no higher, it does that which is its duty to do; it hath all that it wants, it doth all that it will, it is one power, one spirit, one will, and one working with God. And this is that union or oneness with God, in which man was at first created, and to which he is again called, and will be fully restored by God and man being made one Christ.

"Stephen was a man full of faith and the Holy Ghost." These are always together, the one can never be without the other. This was Stephen's qualification for the deaconship, not because of anything high or peculiar in that office, but because the gospel dispensation was the opening a kingdom of God amongst men, a spiritual theocracy, in which as God, and man fallen from God, were united in Christ, so an union of immediate operation between God and man was restored. Hence this dispensation was called, in distinction from all that went before it in outward types, figures, and shadows, a ministration of the Spirit, that is, an immediate operation of the Spirit of God itself in man, in which nothing human, creaturely, or depending upon the power of man's wit, ability or natural powers, had any place, but all things begun in, and under obedience to the Spirit, and all were done in the power and strength of faith united with God.

Therefore to be a faithful minister of this new covenant between God and man, is to live by faith alone, to act only, and constantly under its power, to desire no will, understanding, or ability as a laborer in Christ's vineyard, but what comes from faith, and full dependence upon God's immediate operation in and upon us. This is that very thing, which is expressly commanded by St. Peter, saying, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God, if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth." For all which he giveth this reason, which will be a reason as long as the world standeth, viz., "that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ." A plain and sufficient declaration, that where this is not done, there God is not glorified by Christians through Christ Jesus.

God created men and angels solely for the glory of his love; and therefore angels and men, can give no other glory to God, but that of yielding themselves up to the work of his creating love, manifesting itself in the several powers of their natural life, so that the first creating love, which brought them into being, may go on creating, and working in them, according to its own never-ceasing will, to communicate good for ever and ever. This is their living to the praise and glory of God, namely by owning themselves, in all that they are, and have, and do, to be mere instruments of his power, presence, and goodness in them, and to them; which is all the glory they

can return to their creator, and all the glory for which he created them. We can no otherwise give religious glory to God, than by worshipping him in spirit and in truth, seeing Christ has said, that "the Father seeketh such to worship him." But we can no otherwise worship God in spirit and in truth, than as our spirit in truth and reality, seeks only to, depends only upon, and in all things adores, the life-giving power of his universal Spirit; as the creator, upholder, and doer of all that is or can be good, either in time or eternity. For nothing can be good, but that which is according to the will of God, and nothing can be according to the will of God, but that which is done by his own Spirit. This is unchangeable, whether in heaven, or on earth. And this is the one end of all the dispensations of God, however various, towards fallen man, viz., to bring man into an union with God. Comply with all the outward modes and institutions of religion, believe the letter, own the meaning of scripture facts, symbols, figures, representations, and doctrines, but if you stand in any other use of them, or seek to gain some other good from them, than that of being led out of your own self, from your own will, and own spirit, that the will of God, and the Spirit of God, may do all that is willed, and done by you; however fixed, and steadily you may adhere to such a religion, you stand as fixed and steadily in your own fallen state. For the restoration of fallen man, is nothing else but the restoration of him to his first state, under the will and Spirit of God, in and for which he was created.

You may here perhaps, my dear friend, think that I am speaking too much at large, and not closely enough to the particular matter of your enquiry. But my intention hath been, so to speak to you on this occasion, as to lay a ground for a proper behavior, under every circumstance of the outward work of your ministry. All things must be set right in yourself first, before you can rightly assist others, towards the attaining to the same state.

I do not mean, that you must be first in a state of perfection, before you can be fitted to teach others. But I mean that you must first see, in what you place your own perfection, and have the witness in yourself of the truth of it, before you can rightly direct others in the way to it; otherwise your instruction would be of such practical things, of which you had no practical knowledge. For this reason, I have said all that is said above, to help you to set out under a right sense of all that, which religion is to do for yourself, and why, and how, and by what means alone, it can be done in you. When these two things are not notionally but practically known, and adhered to, then are you enabled, according to your measure, to speak of things, and truths of religion, to those that are ignorant, or insensible of them.

Hence you may learn, what you are chiefly to drive at, in all your discourses from the pulpit, and conversation; namely, to turn the attention of men to a power of good, and a power of evil, both of them born and living within them. For in these two things, or states of the soul of every man, lies the full proof of the whole nature, both of the fall, and redemption from it. Were we not naturally evil, by a birth of evil essentially born and living in us, we should want no redemption; and had we not a birth of something divine in us, we could not be redeemed. Inward evil can only be cured, or overcome by an inward good. And therefore, as all our salvation is an inward work, or struggle of two births within us, so all the work of your outward instruction, must be to call everyone home to himself, and help every heart to know its own state, to seek, and find, and feel his inward life and death, which have their birth, and growth, and strife against one another, in every son of Adam. And as this is the one good way of preaching, so it is, of all others, the most powerful, and penetrating into the hearts of all men, let their condition be what it will. For as these two states are

certainly in every soul of man, however blended, smothered, and undistinguished, in their operations for a time, yet they have each of them, in some degree, their hearing ears, which though ever so sunk into dullness, will be forced, more or less, to feel the power of that voice, which speaks nothing but what is, and must be in some sort spoken within themselves. And this is the true end of outward preaching, namely, to give loud notice of the call of God in their souls, which though unheard, or neglected by them, is yet always subsisting within them. It is to make such outward sounds, as may reach and stir up the inward hearing of the heart. It is so to strike all the outward senses of the soul, that from sleeping in an inward insensibility of its own life and death, it may be brought into an awakened and feeling perception of itself, and be forced to know, that the evil of death which is in it, will be its eternal master, unless the good of life that is in it, seeks for victory in the name and power and mediation of Christ, the only prince of life, and Lord of glory, and who only hath the keys of heaven, of death and hell in his hands.

Thus far, and no further, goes the labor and ministry of man, in the preaching of the Word, whether it be of Paul, or Cephas.

Hence also you will be well qualified, to open in your hearers, a right sense and knowledge of the truth and reality of every virtue, and every vice, that you are discoursing upon. For since all that is good and evil, is only so to them, because it lives in the life of their heart; they may easily be taught, that no virtue, whether it be humility, or charity, has any goodness in it, but as it springs in, and from the heart, nor any vice, whether it be pride, or wrath, is any further renounced, than as its power, and place in the heart is destroyed. And thus the insignificancy and vanity of an outward formality, of a virtuous behavior, and everything short of a new heart, and new spirit in, and through the power of Christ, dwelling vitally in them, may be fully shown to be self-delusion, and self-destruction. Your next great point, as a preacher, should be to bring men to an entire faith in, and absolute dependence upon, the continual power and operation of the Spirit of God in them.

All churches, even down to the Socinians, are forced, in obedience to the letter of scripture, to hold something of this doctrine. But as the practice of all churches, for many ages, has had as much recourse to learning, art, and science, to qualify ministers for the preaching of the gospel, as if it was merely a work of man's wisdom, so ecclesiastics, for the most part, come forth in the power of human qualifications, and are more or less full of themselves, and trusting to their own ability, according as they are more or less proficient in science, and literature, languages and rhetoric. To this, more than to any one other cause, is the great apostasy of all Christendom to be attributed. This was the door, at which the whole spirit of the world, entered into possession of the Christian church.

Worldly lusts, and interests, vanity, pride, envy, contention, bitterness, and ambition, the death of all that is good in the soul, have now, and always had their nourishment, power, and support, from a sense of the merit, and sufficiency of literal accomplishment.

Humility, meekness, patience, faith, hope, contempt of the world, and heavenly affections (the very life of Jesus in the soul) are by few people less earnestly desired, or more hard to be practiced, than by great wits, classical critics, linguists, historians, and orators in holy orders.

Now to bring man to a right practical knowledge, of that full dependence upon, and faith in the continual operation of the Holy Spirit, as the only raiser and preserver of the life of God in their

hearts, and souls, and spirits, it is not enough, you sometimes, or often preach upon the subject, but everything that you inculcate, should be directed constantly to it, and all that you exhort men to, should be required, only as a means of obtaining, and concurring with, that Holy Spirit, which is, and only can be, the life and truth of goodness. And all that you turn them from, should be as from something that resists, and grieves that blessed Spirit of God, which always wills and desires to remove, all evil out of our souls, and make us again to be sanctified partakers of the divine nature. For as they only are Christians, who are born again of the Spirit, so nothing should be taught to Christians, but as a work of the Spirit; nor anything sought, but by the power of the Spirit, as well in hearing, as in teaching. It is owing to the want of this, that there is so much preaching and hearing, and so little benefit either of the preacher or hearer. The labor of the preacher is, for the most part, to display logic, argument, and eloquence, upon religious subjects; and so he is just as much carried out of himself, and united to God by his own religious discourses, as the pleader at the bar is, by his law, and oratory upon right and wrong. And the hearers, by their regarding such accomplishments, go away just as much helped, to be new men in Christ Jesus, as by hearing a cause of great equity well pleaded at the bar.

Now in both these cases, with regard to preacher and people, the error is of the same kind, namely, a trusting to a power in themselves; the one in an ability, to persuade powerfully; the other in an ability, to act according to that which they hear. And so the natural man goes on preaching, and the natural man goes on hearing of the things of God, in a fruitless course of life. And thus it must be, so long as either preacher or hearers, seek anything else but to edify, and be edified in, and through the immediate power and essential presence of the Holy Spirit, working in them. The way therefore to be a faithful, and fruitful laborer in the vineyard of Christ, is to stand yourself in a full dependence on the Spirit of God, as having no good power, but as his instrument, and by his influence, in all that you do; and to call others, not to their own strength or rational powers, but to a full hope, and faith of having all that they want, from God alone; not as teaching them to be good by men, but by men and outward instruction, calling them to himself, to a birth of essential, inherent living goodness, wisdom and holiness from his own eternal WORD and Holy Spirit, living and dwelling in them. For as God is all that the fallen soul wants, so nothing but God alone, can communicate himself to it; all therefore is lost labor, but the total conversion of the soul, to the immediate essential operation of God in it. As to the other parts of your office, whether they relate to things prescribed, or to such as are to be done, according to your best discretion, there will not be much difficulty, if you stand in the state as above described. As to several outward forms, and orders in the church, they must be supposed to partake, in their degree, of that spirit, which has so long borne rule in all church divisions. But the private man, who has sufficient call to the ministry, is not to consider, how outward things should be, according to the primitive plan, but how the inward truth, which is meant by them, may be fully adhered to.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as differently practiced in almost every particular church, may afford ground of scruple about them, since almost every church in these matters, is condemned by all other churches. But the way to be above, and free from these scruples, is to keep yourself, and your people wholly intent to that spiritual good, of which these institutions are the appointed outward figures, namely to that spiritual regeneration, which is meant by baptism, and to the spiritual living in Christ, and Christ in us, which is meant by the Supper of the Lord. And then, though the sacraments practiced by you should have any outward imperfection in them, they

would be of the same benefit to you, as they were to those, who used them in their first, outwardly perfect form. And thus you will be led neither to overrate, nor disregard such use of them, as is according to the present state of the church. It is only the inward regenerate Christian, that knows how to make a right use of all outward things. His soul being in such a state of union with God, and man, as it ought to be, it takes everything by the right handles, and turns everything into a means of carrying on this love towards God and man. To the pure, all things are pure. When you visit the sick, or well awakened, or dully senseless, use no pre-contrived knowledge, or rules, how you are to proceed with them, but go as in obedience to God, as on his errand, and say only what the love of God and man suggests to your heart, without any anxiety about the success of it; that is God's work. Only see that the love the tenderness, and patience of God towards sinners, be uppermost in all that you do to man. Think not, that here severity, and there tenderness, is to be shown; for nothing is to be shown to man, but his want of God; nothing can show him this so powerfully, so convincingly, as love. And as love is the fulfilling of the whole Law, so love is the fulfilling of all the work of the ministry.

I am, with my best Wishes To you and your Brethren, Your most affectionate Friend, And willing Servant.

April 19th, 1756.

01.03 Letter 3

To a Clergyman of Bucks.

I am much surprised, my friend, that you should still want more to be said, about the doctrine of imputation, whether of Adam's sin, or the righteousness of Christ to his followers. Our polluted sinful birth of Adam, is all the sin we can have from him; and our supernatural birth of Christ, is all the righteousness that we possibly can have from him. Imputation neither hath, nor can have anything to do in either case; sin and righteousness are both inward and innate things, and the sole work of the spirit, that lives in us. That which is born of God, is godly, and cannot sin; and that which is born of sinful man, cannot be without a sinful nature and tempers. Cain could not possibly have any other natural life, than that which was in Adam; and therefore so sure as Adam in soul, spirit, and body, was all sin and corruption, so sure is it, that all his offspring must come from him in the same depravity of soul, spirit and body. And to talk of their having this disordered fallen nature, not from their natural birth, but by an outward imputation of it to them, is quite absurd, as to say, that they have their hands and feet, or the whole form of their body, not from their natural birth, but by an outward imputation of such a form, and members to them. Suppose it was said, that Adam's evil and polluted condition of body and soul, was not the natural effect of his transgression, but independently of that, came upon him from God's imputing it to him, as his, though it was not his. What a blasphemy would this be? And yet not less than that, of saying, that his children have their evil nature, the sinful state of their wills and affections, not by their natural birth from him, but independently of that, solely from God's imputing Adam's sinful nature to Cain, though he was by birth free from sin, and born in the purity and perfection, in which Adam was created; for so he must have been, if his birth had nothing of sinful Adam in it. But if Cain was not so born, then he had his sin, not by an imputation of another's sin to him, but plainly in the same way of natural birth, as every man has his natural life and form of his body, from parents of the same nature and form. And indeed, to speak of sin imputed to a person that has it not, and so made his, is the same absurdity, as speaking of will and affections, imputed to a person that has them not, and so made his. For sin is nowhere but in, and from the will and affections, and therefore to make sin to be there by imputation, where it is not, has no more sense in it, than to make will and affections, to be by imputation in a creature that has them not.

"As in Adam all die," says the text: is not this the same, as saying, that all men have their fallen nature, because born of Adam? Say, this dos not follow, and then the matter will stand thus: "In Adam all die" : but why, or how? Why because no man hath the evil of a mortal fallen nature from his birth from Adam, but merely by God's free imputation of it to him. But such a free imputation of Adam's sinful state to his children, when they had it not by natural birth, is quite blasphemous, and leaves no room for magnifying the free grace of God in Christ Jesus; since free grace comes only to help man out of a sinful state which he had not by natural birth, but came upon him, by God's free imputation of it to him, when he had it not. Thus, the adorable love of God in his free grace in Christ Jesus, is quite destroyed, upon supposition, that mankind have not their sinful state from their natural birth from Adam, but by a free imputation of it by God to them.

Take now the other part of the text, so "in Christ shall all be made alive." Is it not a flat denial of all this, to say, they are not made alive by a birth of that to which Adam died, brought to life again in them, but are accounted as if they were alive, by the imputation of Christ's life to them, but not born in them? Could dead Lazarus have been said to have been made alive again, if still lying in the grave, he had only been accounted as alive, by having the nature of a living man, only imputed to him? Our Lord said to a leper, whom he had cleansed, "Go, show thyself to the priest." But if instead of cleansing him, he had bid him go to the priest, to be accounted as a clean man, by the imputation of another's cleanness to him, had he not still been under all the evil of his own leprosy? Now this is strictly the case of the righteousness of Christ, only outwardly imputed to us, and not inwardly born within us. A fiction, that runs counter to all that Christ and his apostles, have said of the nature of our salvation. We want Christ's righteousness, because by our natural birth, we are inwardly full of evil; therefore saith Christ, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Does not this place all in a birth? But a birth, and outward imputation, are inconsistent; that which is born in us, cannot be said, to be outwardly imputed to us. "I am the vine," saith Christ, "ye are the branches." Now if this be a true representation of the matter, then these two plain doctrines of Christ, affirming, (1) the absolute necessity of a new birth from above, and (2) declaring this birth to be as really brought forth in us, as the life of the vine is really in the branches, do, as far as words can do it, entirely reject the notion of a righteousness imputed to us from without; a righteousness, that has no more to do with our own life, after it is imputed to us, than it had a thousand years before we were born. For that which is not in us, or ours, by a birth of itself in us, can never be any nearer to us, or have a more real union with us, after it is called ours, than before it was so called. I say called, for imputation, whether of sin, or righteousness, if its power is not living in us, is no more than mere calling that ours, which is not ours.

It is needless to cite places of scripture, affirming that all consists in a Christ revealed, begotten, formed and living in us. Let this one word of Paul suffice, "Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." He does not say, a Christ who is only called his, or outwardly imputed to him, but quite the contrary, a Christ who liveth in him.

Again, if Christ's holy nature, be not a birth in us, but only outwardly imputed to us, then no virtue, or power of an holy life, can have any more real existence, or vital growth in us, than in the devils, but are only outwardly imputed to us, and not to them, only called ours, and not theirs, though we have no more of them within us, than they have. Thus, be ye "holy, for I am holy; be ye perfect, as your Father, which is in heaven, is perfect; thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." All these are but vain exhortations to do, and be, that which is not within our sphere, but entirely inconsistent with it. For these virtues are, in their whole nature, nothing else but the very righteousness of Christ, therefore if that can be only outwardly imputed to us, the same must be said of all those virtues, that they can have no real life or growth in us, but only outwardly imputed to us. And indeed, unless Christ be truly and essentially born in us, we can have no more of any Christian virtue, but the empty, outward name of it: for neither man, nor angel ever did, or can thus love God with all his heart, be holy because God is holy, be perfect as he is perfect, but because there is a spirit born and living in them, which is of God, from God, and partakes of the divine nature.

Further, say that the Holy Spirit is not born and living in us, that his operation is not inwardly in us, as the spirit of our spirit, the life of our life, but only outwardly imputed to us, as if he was in us,

though he be not there: what a blasphemy would this be! And yet full as well, as to say the same of Christ, and his righteousness. For if Christ was only outwardly imputed to us, the same must, of all necessity be said of the Holy Spirit; for where and what Christ is, there and that is the Holy Spirit. How constantly are we told in scripture, that they only are sons of God, "who are led by the Spirit of God"; that unless "a man hath the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; that if Christ be not in us, we are reprobates." Now I would ask, can any man be truly said to be led by the spirit of the world, the flesh and the devil, who has nothing of this spirit living in him, but only outwardly imputed to him? Can any creature be said to be led by the spirit of man, who has not the nature of man within him, but only outwardly imputed to him? Yes, just as a beast may be said to be a Newtonian philosopher, by having Sir Isaac's system outwardly imputed to him.

Take notice, sir, that if Christ's righteous and holy nature is only outwardly imputed to Christians, then all of them, whether they are called good, or bad, are without any difference as to their inward man, and all under the same unaltered evil of their fallen nature, as much after, as they were before Christ's righteousness was imputed to them. When a good man has anything falsely laid to his charge, is not this outwardly imputing something to him, that is not his, does not belong to him? But is not his own inward goodness just in the same fullness of truth in him, after such an imputation of evil to him, as it was before it was so imputed. Now this is the whole nature of imputation; and therefore if the righteous nature of Christ is only outwardly imputed to the sinner, it leaves him in all the evil of his fallen nature, and can no more make him inwardly good, than a good man can be made inwardly evil, by having an evil outwardly imputed to him, that is not his. The relation between Christ and the fallen soul, is thus: Christ is the one mediator between God and man, and that which his mediation consists in, is the restoring that life in man, which was his first created union with God. Nothing separated man from God, or made him want a mediator, but the loss of his first divine life; and therefore nothing can mediate, or be a means of union again between God and man, but that which can, and doth raise again in man, that divine life which was his first union with God. Everything therefore, that is said of this one mediator, as redeeming, ransoming, justifying, sanctifying, making peace, or reconciliation, however variously expressed, has no other nature, or meaning, but that of making fallen man, inwardly alive again in God. He in whom Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, has just that same change made in him, just that same done to him, as he that has his sins washed and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. For these different expressions mean only one and the same thing, and that one thing, is Christ in us, our hope of glory. This is justification, sanctification, redemption, peace, reconciliation, and everlasting union with God. Trifling therefore, to the last degree, is their orthodoxy, who raise disputes, and set up different doctrines, on the different meaning of these words, and the danger of not knowing, or not stiffly contending for the blessed difference between justification and sanctification, full as trifling, as to raise disputes, and set up different doctrines on the different names given to Jesus Christ, as Word of God, son of man, Lamb of God, alpha and omega, mediator, Immanuel, atonement, reconciliation, resurrection, and the great danger of ascribing that to Christ, as our reconciliation, which only belongs to him, as called the resurrection and the life. Figure to yourself such an orthodox dispute as this, and then you will see the importance of that pious zeal, which will not suffer justification and sanctification to encroach upon one another.

What an egregious folly, to be learnedly laborious in dividing and distinguishing those different names of Christ, or the different effects of his purchasing, justifying, or sanctifying our souls, when

all that these things are told us for, and all the benefit that we can receive from them, lies solely in this one word of Christ, "if anyone will be my disciple" (that is, if anyone will have the benefit of all that I am, and of all that is said of me) "let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Then, and then only, all the different names of Christ, and all the different powers ascribed to him, will be, not critically, but blessedly known and understood to be one, as God is one, whether he be called I AM, or the creator of heaven and earth, or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. But to proceed: all that is said of the nature, office, and qualities of Christ, in order to be our redeemer, is so much said of the necessity of their being essentially found, and realized in every soul, that is to partake of his redemption. If "Christ be not in us, we are none of his." But how can Christ be in us, but because all that which Christ was, in the Spirit and nature of his whole process, is in us, as it was in him? If the same mind be not in us, which was in Christ Jesus; if that which loved, that which willed, that which suffered in him, be not the same spirit in us, we shall never reign with him. He may be truly called a redeemer, but we are not his redeemed, for such as the redeemer is, such are they that are redeemed.

"To him that overcometh," saith Christ, "will I grant to sit with me on my throne, (N.B.) even as I overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne." What becomes now of the vain fiction of an outward imputation? Is Christ's victory here imputed to us? Is not the contrary as strongly taught us, as words can do it? "To him that overcometh, even as I also overcame." Can we have fuller proof, that Christ's righteous nature must be inwardly born, living and manifesting itself in us, as it did in him; how else can we overcome, even as he overcame? That Spirit which overcame in Christ, was manifest in the flesh, for no other end, but that the same conquering Spirit might be born in us. And when that is done, then all is done, by that grace of God, which bringeth salvation, justification, sanctification, or the new creature. For whether you call it by one, or by all these names, it is the white stone with the new name written in it, which no man knoweth, but he that hath received it. And that for this reason, because it is no outwardly imputed thing, but is the new name, the new nature and Spirit of Christ, become all in all in us, and so only to be known by those, who have it brought to life in them.

Again, "This is my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins"; what follows? Why, "Drink ye all of this. If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all iniquity; who hath washed us from our sins in his blood." Now to show you, that all these different sayings have but one and the same doctrine, you need only read the following decisive words: "These are they that came out of the great tribulation," (that, is have trodden the wine press with Christ) "and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb." Here you see is no outward imputation of the sufferings of Christ, but "their coming out of great tribulation," or passing through the whole process of Christ, was that alone, which made their "robes to be washed in the blood of the Lamb." And no other doctrine is in this text, than if it had been said, "these are they, who having denied themselves, taken up their daily cross, and followed Christ, have thereby washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb." Through all the New Testament, this is the one doctrine of salvation through the blood of Christ, it is "drinking the cup, that he drank of," and not the bitterness of his cup outwardly imputed to us.

You tell me, my friend, that the seraphic Aspatio is quite transported with the thought of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the sinner, and that it should in the account of God, be esteemed as his. It may be so, transport seems to be as natural to Aspatio, as flying is to a bird.

But surely, a more transporting, a more glorious thing it is, both to the glory of God, and the good of man, that the sinner is, through the righteous nature of Christ, born and brought to life in him, set up again in his first likeness and image of God. For if man's righteousness is not essentially restored in him, as it was essentially in him at the first, has he not less of God in him, by his redemption, than he had at his creation? Is it to the happiness of man, and the glory of God, that God has not obtained that dwelling in man, for which he alone created him? Is it matter of transport to think, that fallen man will to all eternity live destitute of his first heavenly nature, his first divine life, which he had in, and from God? But this must be the case, if Christ's righteousness is only outwardly imputed to him, and not essentially born in him.

Transports, my friend, are but poor proofs of truth, or of the goodness of the heart, from whence they proceed. Martyrdom has had its fools, as well as its saints, and zealots may live and die in a joy, that has all its strength from delusion.

You may see a man drowned in tears, at beholding, and kissing a wooden crucifix, and the same man condemning another, as a wicked heretic, who only honors the cross, by being daily baptized into the death of Christ. Nay, so blind is opinion-zeal, that some good Christian pastors will not scruple to tell you, they could find no joy in their own state, no strength, or comfort in their labors of love towards their flocks, but because they know, and are assured from St. Paul, that God never had, nor ever will have, mercy on all men, but that an unknown multitude of them, are through all ages of the world, inevitably decreed by God to an eternal fire, and damnation of hell, and an unknown number of others, to an irresistible salvation.

Wonder not then, if the inquisition has its pious defenders, for inquisition-cruelty, nay, every barbarity that must have an end, is mere mercy, if compared with this doctrine. And to be in love with it, to draw sweet comfort from it, and wish it God speed, is a love that absolutely forbids the loving our neighbor, as ourselves, and makes the wish, that all men might be saved, no less than a rebellion against God. It is a love, with which, the cursed hater of all men, would willingly unite and take comfort; for could he know from St. Paul, that millions, and millions of mankind, are created and doomed to be his eternal slaves, he might be as content with this doctrine, as some good preachers are, and cease "going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"; as knowing, that his kingdom, was so sufficiently provided for, without any labors of his own.

Oh, the sweetness of God's election, cries out the ravished preacher! Oh, the sweetness of God's reprobation! might the hellish satan well say, could he believe that God had made him a free gift of such myriads, and myriads of men, of all nations, tongues and languages, from the beginning to the end of the world, and reserved so small a number for himself. This is the blessed fruit of the imputation doctrine.

What a complaint, and condemnation is there made in scripture, of those who sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils? And yet, this reprobation doctrine, represents God, as sacrificing myriads of his own creatures, made in his own image, to an everlasting hell.

There is not an absurdity of heathenish faith and religion, but what is less shocking than this doctrine, and yet so blindly are some zealous doctors of the gospel bigoted to it, as to set it forth, as the glorious manifestation of the supreme sovereignty of God. My friend, let any old woman preach to you, rather than these doctors. But to end in one word, Christ's righteousness is ours, in

our redemption, just in the same manner, as it was Adam's in his first holy birth. For Adam had then no righteousness in him, but that which was created in Christ Jesus. And that is the one only reason, why there could be no other redeemer but Christ, because the loss of Christ, was that death which Adam died by his fall; and therefore no possibility of coming out of his fallen state, but in, and by a birth of Christ's righteous nature, essentially born and living in him, as it was living in him before he fell.

"Little children," saith St. John, "let no man deceive you; (N.B.) he that doth righteousness, is righteous, (N.B.) even as he is righteous." Therefore to expect, or trust to be made righteous, by the righteousness of another, only outwardly imputed to us, is, according to the apostle deceiving ourselves.

Either man, by the mediation of Christ, is united again with God, or he is not; if he is not, then he has no more of the divine life in him, after his redemption, than he had before he was redeemed. But if he is again united with God, as he was at his creation, then his redemption must wholly consist in the birth of a divine nature and Spirit, essentially brought to life in him. That which is spirit in man, must be godlike, before it can united with that Spirit, which is God. And was there not a divine Spirit in man, truly born of God, proceeding from the Spirit of God, as his real offspring, no union of will, love, or desire, could be between God and man. For this is a truth, that extends itself through all that is natural, or supernatural, that like can only unite with like. There is not separation between things, but that which is effected by contrariety. If therefore nothing in man was a partaker of the divine nature, man must in his whole nature, be forever separated from God, and stand in the same impossibility of being united with him, that two the most contrary things, do to one another. So sure, therefore, as the mediation of Christ, is by himself declared to be for this end, viz., "that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one"; so sure is it, that an outwardly imputed Christ, is as absurd in itself, and as contrary to scripture, as an outwardly imputed God.

Farewell.

01.04 Letter 4

In Answer to a Scruple. That you may have a full answer to your scruple, concerning these words, "the folly of debtor and creditor," in the second part of the Spirit of Love, I will set forth the doctrine from whence it is taken. Great part of that book, is to clear up, and assert the true scripture doctrine of the nature, necessity, and merit of our Lord's sufferings and death, as an atonement, and satisfaction before God, in the work of our redemption. No point of Christianity has been more mistaken, in our common systems of gospel doctrine, or given greater offense than this, and yet nothing clearer, or more reasonably to be believed, when it stands in its own scriptural manifestation.

Now the right ground of understanding the true meaning of every different expression, relating to Christ as our savior, or salvation, lies in these two things: 1. What Christ is in himself. 2. What he does, or intends to do for us. The scripture saith, "God was manifested in the flesh"; this describes his whole nature, what he was in himself, viz., the deity become man. What he is, and does in us, and for us, is expressed in the following words, "He was manifested to destroy the works of the devil"; and again, "as in Adam all die, so in Christ, shall all be made alive."

Now according to this ground, every expression concerning our savior, is to have its true infallible meaning fixed. Everything that is said of his birth, his life, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection and ascension, are all of them, both with respect to God, and ourselves, of one and the same efficacy, full of one and the same merit, and all for one and the same end, viz., to destroy in man the works of the devil, and to make all that died in Adam, to be alive again in Christ.

Suppose now, any one of these to be wanting, and the same will follow from it, as if they were all wanting. Had his birth been otherwise than it was, not God as well as man, he could have made no beginning of a divine life in us. Had not his life been without sin, his death upon the cross could have done us no good, nor could have been the one mediator between God and sinful man. Had his sufferings been less than they were, had there been any evil, trial, or temptation, which had not attacked him, through the whole course of his life, with all its force, he could not have been said, to have overcome them. So sure therefore as Christ, as a son of man was to overcome all that the world, the flesh, and the devil, could do to fallen man; so sure is it, that all the evils, which they could possibly bring upon fallen man, were to be felt, and suffered by him, as absolutely necessary in the nature of the thing, to prove his victorious superiority over them. Had he not given up his body to an ignominious death, in all the horrors of a soul, that had lost its God: he could not have suffered that in, and for man, which every man must have suffered, who had died in his fallen state. But Christ dying, and sacrificing himself, as he did, in and through that horrible death, which was fallen man's gate to eternal misery, and conquering this state of man, as he had every evil power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, then it was, that he could say to those, who were all their life in fear of this death, be of good comfort, I have overcome this death, and that upon the same ground, as he said to his followers, under a sense of worldly tribulations, "be of good comfort, I have overcome the world." And thus his death, had no other nature, with respect to us,

than every other part of his process, that was antecedent to it, only as it was the last, and greatest, and finishing part of that redeeming work, which was begun by his divine birth, and carried on in, and through his sinless, perfect life. And as I said, that the death of man unredeemed, was his gate into an eternal separation from God, so Christ's entrance into this gate of damnation, and pouring out his blood, thus forsaken of God, had a suffering in it, that thoughts can no more conceive, than words express.

Hence it is, by way of eminence, justly said, to be the highest price, that he paid for us; and that by his blood it is that we are washed, and redeemed, not only because of its greatness in itself, but because it finished, and for ever completed the whole redeeming work, which he had to do for us in the flesh. Hence it was, that through the Old Testament, this sacrifice of his death, is the great thing mostly pointed at in all its sacrifices, types, and figures; hence also is all the boast of it in the gospel. Well therefore may the church, through all ages, have ascribed so much to the merit of his blood shed for us; well may it have been celebrated, as the one great price, by which we are ransomed from the power of death and hell; because though all that he was, and did, antecedently to it, was equally necessary to our salvation, yet all had been without any effect, unless by his so dying, this damnable death had been swallowed up in victory. In short, had not Christ been real God, as well as real man, he could have made no beginning in the work of our salvation, and had he not ended his life in such a sacrifice, as he did, he could never have said, "It is finished." He therefore, who denieth the truth, the certainty, and absolute necessity of these two essential points, is in the abomination of Socinianism, and is that very liar and anti-Christ described by St. John in his first epistle.

Again, though Christ's death was thus absolutely necessary in the very nature of the thing, thus great in its merits and effects, yet unless his resurrection had followed, we had been yet in our sins, nor could he, till risen from the grave, have purchased a resurrection for us. Lastly, had he not ascended into heaven, he could not have had the power of drawing, as he said, all men to himself. Every part therefore of our savior's character, or process, has its full and equal share in all that, which is said of him, as our peace with God, our righteousness, our justification, our ransom, our atonement, our satisfaction, our life and new birth; for all these different expressions, have no difference in doctrine, but whether separately, or jointly taken, signify nothing else, but this one thing, that he was the true and full destroyer of all the works of the devil in man, and the true raiser of a divine life, in all that died in Adam. And here, sir, you are well to observe, that all that Christ was, did, suffered, and obtained, was purely and solely on the account, and for the sake of altering, or removing that which was wrong, evil, and miserable in man, or in scripture words, "God was in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world to himself," that is, taking away from man every property, or power of evil, that kept him in a state of separation from God. Thus it was, and to this end, that "God was in Christ Jesus" in his whole process.

Unreasonably therefore have our scholastic systems of the gospel, separated the sacrifice of Christ's death, from the other parts of his process, and considered it as something chiefly done with regard to God, to alter, or atone an infinite wrath, that was raised in God against fallen man, which infinity of just vengeance, or vindictive justice, must have devoured the sinner, unless an infinite satisfaction had been made to it, by the death of Christ.

All this, is in the grossest ignorance of God, of the reason and ground, and effects of Christ's death, and in full contradiction to the express letter of scripture. For there we are told, that God is love, and that the infinity of his love was that alone, which showed itself towards fallen man, and wanted to have satisfaction done to it; which love-desire could not be fulfilled, could not be satisfied with anything less than man's full deliverance from all the evil of his fallen state. That love, which has the infinity of God, nay, which is God himself, was so immutably great towards man, though fallen from him, "that he spared not his only begotten Son"; and why did he not spare him? It was because nothing but the incarnate life of his eternal Son, passing through all the miserable states of lost man, could regenerate his first divine life in him. Can you possibly be told this, in stronger words than these, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son"; how did he give him? Why, in his whole process. And to what end did he give him? Why, "that all who believe in him, might not perish, but have everlasting life." Away then with the superstitious dream, of an infinite wrath in God towards poor fallen man, which could never cease, till an infinite satisfaction was made to it. All scripture denies it, and the light of nature abhors it. The birth, the life, the death of Christ, though so different things, have but one and the same operation, and that operation is solely in man, to drive all evil out of his fallen nature, and delight the heart of God, that desires his salvation. God is love, and has no other will towards man, but the will of love. That love, which from itself began the creation of an holy Adam, from itself began the redemption of a fallen Adam. The death of Christ was a sacrifice from the love of God the Son towards man, to overcome thereby that damnable death, which, otherwise, every son of Adam must have died; it was a sacrifice offered to the same love, in God the Father; a sacrifice, equally loved and desired by both of them, because, in the nature of the thing, as absolutely necessary to alter and overcome that evil, which belonged to man's state of death, as the incarnation of the WORD, was absolutely necessary in the nature of the thing, to make man to be alive again in God. This is the one only true, and full confutation of Socinianism. But to have recourse to a supposed wrath, or vindictive justice, in a God incensed towards fallen man, in order to confute the Socinian, who denies the necessity, and effects of Christ's death, is only opposing one great falsity with another. For wrath has no more place in God, than love has in the devil. Wrath began with devils, hell, and fallen nature, and can have no possible existence anywhere, or in anything, but where devils, hell, and fallen nature, have their power of working. Do not, my friend, be here so furious, as to say, that if it was strictly true, that there was no wrath in God, you would burn your Bible: for if it was strictly true, you would never have had a Bible to burn; nor any more messages from heaven about man's salvation, than from hell. For if you will have wrath in the most high God, you can have no other, or better a God, than that which the atheistical Spinoza invented. For if wrath is in the supreme God, then nature is in God, and if so, then God is nature, and nothing else; for nature cannot be above itself. Therefore if nature is in the most high God, then the lowest working of nature, is the true supreme God. And so instead of a supernatural God, who created heaven and earth, heaven and earth, and all things else, are the only God. This is the atheistical absurdity, that necessarily follows from the supposing a wrath in God; for wrath can no more be anywhere, but in nature, than storms and tempests can be, where there is nothing that moves.

Let me here, sir, observe to you the barefaced calumny, that Dr. Warburton has ventured to cast upon me, in charging my writings with Spinozism, though all that I have wrote for these last twenty years, has been such a full contradiction of it, as is not to be found in any book, that has been purposely wrote against it. Had I only proved, as I have done, by a variety of proofs, that wrath

cannot possibly be in the true God, I had sufficiently confuted Spinozism; for if not wrath, then nothing of nature is in God. But I have gone much further, and have, in my Appeal, the book of Regeneration, the Spirit of Prayer, the Spirit of Love, and the Way to Divine Knowledge, opened the true ground of the unchangeable distinction between God and nature, making all nature, whether temporal or eternal, its own proof, that it is not, cannot be God, but purely and solely the WANT of God, and can be nothing else in itself but a restless, painful want, till a supernatural God manifests himself in it. This is a doctrine, which the learned of all ages have known nothing of; not a book ancient or modern in all our libraries, has so much as attempted to open the ground of nature, to show its birth and state, and its essential unalterable distinction from the one abyssal, supernatural God; and how all the glories, powers, and perfections of the hidden, unapproachable God, have their wonderful manifestation in nature and creature. This is a blessing reserved by God for these last times, to be opened in his chosen instrument, the poor, illiterate Behmen. And this I will venture to say, that he who will declare war against him, has no choice of any other weapons, but raillery and reproach. To call the blessed man, a possessed cobbler, will be doing something; to call his writings, senseless jargon, may stand his learned adversary in great stead; but if he tries to overcome him any other way, his success will be like his, who knocks his head against a post. But no more of this here. And now, sir, what shall I say of my learned, accusing doctor? Why only this, that if he knows how to forgive himself, then there will be one thing at least, in which we are both of us like-minded. A word or two now to yourself and friends, who are so loath to own a God who is all love: let me tell you, if you will have wrath in the supreme God, you must have a God, in whom is selfishness, envy, and pride, with all the properties of fallen nature. For as it is impossible for one of these to be without the other in the creature, so if any one of them was in God, all the other must be there. They are the four essential elements of hell, or fallen nature, which mutually beget, and are begotten of one another; where one is, there are all of them, and where all are not, there cannot be one of them. Every pride consists of three things, selfishness, envy, and wrath. And so of every one of them, take which you will, it consists of the other three, so that to separate them, is to separate a thing from itself.

Divine love is just as contrary to them, as God is to the devil; and where love is not, there God is not, and where the work is not wholly the working of love, it is no work of God, but the selfish, wrathful, proud, envious working of the diabolical nature, fallen from its first blessed subjection to, and union with the supernatural God of love. To talk (as some do) of a good wrath in God, which is only so called, because it has a likeness to, and produces like effects to those that come from wrath in the creature, is but calling that a good wrath, which is like a bad wrath, and is no better, no wiser, than to talk of a good envy, a good pride in God, which are only so called, because they have a likeness to that, which is a bad pride, and a bad envy in the creature. Can anything be more profanely absurd than this? Which yet is the best that can be said by those, who will have it the glory of God, to be wrathful, who think all is lost, that the gospel salvation is blasphemed, if the same love that created man in glory, should be his only redeemer, when he had fallen from it. Not considering, that salvation could never have come into the world, but because, all that good and blessing, which love can be, and do to the creature, must be done, and doing for ever and ever, by that first creating God, whose name and nature, whose will and working, is love, the same yesterday, today, and forever. And now, sir, need I say much more, to remove your scruple about the following passage in the Spirit of Love, "No wrath in God, no fictitious atonement, no folly of debtor and creditor, no suffering for suffering's sake, but a Christ suffering and dying, as his same

victory over death and hell, as when he rose from the dead and ascended into heaven." {Spirit of Love, Second Part.}

I said folly of debtor and creditor, because Christ's overcoming man's damnable death, by his victorious passage through it, has nothing in it that has any likeness to the transaction of a debtor paying his creditor; nothing was done in it by way of payment of a debt, any more than Christ paid a debt for Lazarus, when he raised him from the dead, or paid a debt for the man born blind, whom he helped to seeing eyes. For the good that is done us by the death of Christ, is a good that relates solely to ourselves. Nothing in it, is given to, or received but by ourselves; it overcomes, and saves us from our own evil of death, just as that, which Christ did to Lazarus, and the blind man, overcame the death that was in the one, and the darkness that was in the other.

You appeal to a parable of our Lord's, which has no more relation to the nature and efficacy of Christ's death, than the parable of the tares of the field. St. Peter saith, "How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him, till seven times?" Christ answereth, "Not until seven times, but until seventy times seven." And then he sets forth this doctrine of continual forgiveness in the following parable.

"The kingdom of God is likened to a certain king, who would take account of his servants." Read the whole parable, and you will be forced to see, that nothing else is intended to be taught by it, but that one conclusion, which Christ draws from it: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye from your hearts, forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses." All that the parable saith, is neither more nor less, than is said in these other words, "Be ye merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful": again, the doctrine of this parable, quite overthrows that, which systematic doctors intend by debtor and creditor; for their doctrine is, that the injured authority of God must have full satisfaction made to it, and thence it is, that they ground the necessity of so great a payment, as Christ made to it. Whereas this parable of the kingdom of God, sets forth a king, (N.B.) frankly forgiving, and not requiring any payment at all, either from the debtor himself, or from anyone else for him. Can there therefore be a greater folly, than to appeal to this, and the like scriptures, to make God a creditor, whose vindictive wrath against his debtor, will not be appeased, till full payment is made to it? And what a blind persisting is it in the same folly, to urge the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," as another proof, that God is that creditor, who will be fully paid the debts, that are due to him? For surely, if God requires us to expect, and pray for the forgiveness of our debts, it is badly concluded from thence, that therefore full payment of them, must be made. The truth is, this petition teaches the same frank forgiveness, as the foregoing parable, and is utterly inconsistent with the doctrine of an infinite satisfaction, necessary to be made; for if so, then the petition ought to have been thus, "forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," (N.B.) "when full payment is made, either by themselves, or by someone else for them." In a word, vindictive wrath in God, that will not forgive, till a satisfaction equal to the offense, is made to it, sets the goodness of God in a lower state, than that which has been found in thousands of mankind. The truth of the matter, is this, the divinity of Christ, and his whole process through life and death, was absolutely necessary in the nature of the thing, to raise man out of the death of sin, into a heavenly birth of life. And the necessity of all this, is grounded upon the certainty of man's fall, from a divine, into a bestial life of this world. The Socinian blasphemy consists in the denial of these points, the deity of Christ, and the fall of man, and the necessity of Christ's death. Our scholastic doctors, own the fall of man, but know, or own

nothing of the true nature and depth of it. They own the truth of Christ's divinity, and the necessity of his sufferings; they plead for the certainty of these things from scripture words, but see not into the ground of them, or in what, the absolute necessity of them consists. Hence it is, that when opposed by Socinian reasoning, they are at a loss how to support these great truths, and are forced to humanize the matter, and to suppose such a vindictive wrath in God, as usually breaks forth in great princes, when a revolt is made, against their sovereign authority.

What a paltry logic, to say, God is righteousness and justice, as well as love, and therefore his love cannot help, or forgive the sinner, till his justice, or righteous wrath has satisfaction? Every word here, is in full ignorance of the things spoken of. For what is love in God, but his unchangeable love of his own goodness, his impossibility of loving anything else but it, his impossibility of suffering anything that is unrighteous, to have any communion with him? What is God's forgiving sinful man? It is nothing else in its whole nature, but God's making him righteous again. There is no other forgiveness of sin, but being made free from it. Therefore the compassionate love of God, that forgives sin, is no other, than God's love of his own righteousness, for the sake of which, and through the love of which, he makes man righteous again. This is the one righteousness of God, that is rigorous, that makes no abatements, that must be satisfied, must be fulfilled in every creature that is to have communion with him. And this righteousness that is thus rigorous, is nothing else but the unalterable purity and perfection of the divine love, which from eternity to eternity can love nothing but its own righteousness, can will nothing but its own goodness, and therefore can will nothing towards fallen man, but the return of his lost goodness, by a new birth of the divine life in him, which is the true forgiveness of sins. For what is the sinful state of man? It is nothing else, but the loss of that divine nature, which cannot commit sin; therefore the forgiving man's sin, is in the truth and reality of it, nothing else, but the revival of that nature in man, which being born of God sinneth not. Lastly, let me ask these dividers of the divine nature, what different shares, or different work, had the righteousness, and the love of God in the creation of man? Was there then something done by the love of God, which ought not to be ascribed to the righteousness of God? Who can be so weak, as to say this? But if the love and the righteousness of God, is one, as God is one, and had but one work in the creation of man, it must be the highest absurdity, to say, that in the redemption of man, the love, and the righteousness of God, must have, not only different, but contrary works, that the love of God cannot act, till the righteousness of God, as something different from it, is first satisfied.

All that which we call the attributes of God, are only so many human ways of our conceiving that Abyssal All, which can neither be spoken, nor conceived by us. And this way of thinking, and speaking of God, is suitable to our capacities, has its good use, and helps to express our adoration of him, and his perfections. But to conclude, and contend, that there must therefore be, different qualities in God, answerable, or according to our different ways of thinking, and speaking of his perfections, is rather blaspheming, than truly glorifying his name, and nature. For omnipotent love, inconceivable goodness, is that unity of God, which we can neither conceive, as it is in itself, nor divide into this, or that. The importance of the subject I have been upon, has led me further than I intended. But for the full illustration of it, I refer you to the Second Part of the Spirit of Love. And so committing you to a God, who has no will towards you, but in, and through the life, and death, the Spirit and power of the holy Jesus, to deliver you from all your natural evil, and make you his beloved son, in whom, he can be well pleased to all eternity, I bid you farewell.

July 18, 1757.

01.05 Letter 5

To a Clergyman in the North of England. My dear Brother,

Live as you now do, in such activity of spirit, and multiplied ways of being good, and though you were to live half an hundred years longer, you would stick in the same mire, and end your life in the same complaints, as filled your last letter to me. You tell me, that after all the great change you have made in your life, you find nothing of that inward good and satisfaction, which you have so much expected, and more especially since you have been a reader of the books, recommended by me.

But, sir, you quite mistake the matter, you have not changed your life; for that which is, and only can truly be called your life, is in the same state as when I first knew you. Nothing is in your life, whether it be good or bad, but that which WILLS and HUNGERS in you; and your own life neither is, nor can be anything else but this. Therefore nothing reaches your life, or can make a real change in it, from bad to good, from falseness to truth, but the right will and the right hunger. Practice as many rules as you will, take up this or that new opinion, be daily reading better and better books, follow this or that able man, the bread of life is not there. Nothing will be fed in you, but the vanity and self-conceited righteousness of your own old man. And thus it must be with you, till all that is within you is become one will, and one hunger after that which angels eat in heaven. But now, if will and hunger are the whole of every natural life, then you may know this great truth with the utmost certainty, namely, that eating is the one preservation of every life, from the highest angel in heaven, to the lowest living creature on earth. That which the life eats not, that the life has not. Now everything that lives on earth, is a birth or production of the astral, elementary fire, light, and spirit, to which water is always essential, and it continues in life, tastes and enjoys the good of its life, no longer than these powers and virtues of the stars and elements are essentially and continually eaten by it.

It is just so with the immortal, heavenly life of the soul, it is a birth of those same powers, in their highest glory, in the invisible world; a world, where the triune deity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, brings forth a triune glorious habitation for itself, of fire, light, and spirit, opening an infinity of wonders, births, and beauties in a crystal transparent sea, called the kingdom of heaven.

Out of these powers, or out of this kingdom of heaven, are the births of all holy, angelic creatures; nothing lives or moves in them, but that fire, light, and spirit, which comes as a birth from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and nothing feeds, keeps up, and exalts this heavenly fire, light, and spirit, but the hidden, inconceivable, supernatural Trinity, which is before, and deeper than all nature, and can only manifest itself, and communicate its goodness, by such an outward birth of its own unapproachable glory. And here you may find a glorious meaning of those words of our Lord, saying, "my kingdom is not of this world," because it is a kingdom of those heavenly powers of the triune God, which give food and nourishment, purity and perfection to the fire, light, and spirit of those divine creatures, which are to be holy as he is holy, perfect as he is perfect, in his own heavenly kingdom.

Here therefore, in this spiritual eating of that same invisible good, which gives life, and perfection of life to all the angels of God, and not in any human contrivances, or activity of your own, are you to place your all, as to the change of your life; it all consists in the right hunger, and the right food, and in nothing else. The fall of Adam, and the origin of all sin and misery, began in his lust and hunger after the knowledge of good and evil in the kingdom of this world. By this, he left, and lost the food which heaven gives. He died to all the influences and enjoyments of his first fire, light, and spirit, which was his vital union with God, in the kingdom of heaven. All the evil that was hid in this earthly creation, and its numerous creatures, opened, and diffused itself with all the power of a poisonous food, through his whole soul and body. But in all this, nothing more came upon him, or was done to him, than that which his own hunger had eaten. Here you have the fullest demonstration, how every change in the life of man is, and only can be made, namely, by hungering, and eating. Adam had not fallen, had known no death, or extinction of that heavenly fire, light, and spirit, which was his first birth in God, but because he hungered after the state of the animal life in this world, which has no other fire, light, and spirit in it, but that which gives a transitory life, or diverse, contrary lusts and appetites, to all the beasts, birds, and insects. This is the doctrine of the Old Testament, concerning the power of hunger and eating in the first Adam. On the other hand, in conformity to this, and in full proof of the truth of it, that it must have been so; the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, in the New Testament, has declared, that hunger and eating is that alone, which can help fallen man to that first heavenly fire, light, and spirit, with the spiritual flesh and blood that belonged to it; saying again and again, in a variety of the strongest expressions, this great truth, that except a man eat his flesh, and drink his blood, he hath no life in him, that is, no life of that celestial body and blood, which Adam lost, and which alone can live in the fire, light, and spirit of heaven.

Every spirit that is creaturely, and every desire of the spirit, has always something bodily, as its own birth. No spiritual creature can begin to be, but by beginning to be bodily. For creaturely existence, and bodily existence, is the same thing; the spirit is not, cannot be in the form of a creature, till it has its body; and its body is the manifestation of spirit, both to itself, and other beings.

Live in the love, the patience, the meekness, and humility of Christ, and then the celestial, transparent, spiritual body of Christ's flesh and blood, is continually forming itself, and growing in and from, and about your soul, till it comes to the fullness of the stature in Christ Jesus; and this is your true, substantial, vital eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of Christ, which will afterwards become your body of glory to all eternity. And though your astral reason, and outward senses, whilst you are in Adam's bodily flesh, know nothing of this inward body of Christ, yet there it is, as surely as you have the love, the patience, the meekness, and humility of Christ; for where the true Spirit of Christ is, there is his true spiritual body. On the other hand, live to selfishness, to diabolical pride, wrath, envy, and covetousness, and then nothing can hinder these tempers, from forming within you such a spiritual body to your soul, as that which devils have, and dwell, and work in. Be as unwilling as you will, through learned wisdom, or fear of enthusiasm, to believe this, your unbelief can last no longer, than till Adam's flesh and blood leave you, and then, as sure as your soul lives, you will, and must have it living, either in the spiritual body of fallen angels, or in the spiritual body of the redeeming Jesus. Oh, sir, trifle away no more time in many matters, your first spiritual body must come again. Without it, you are the very man that came to the marriage

feast, not "having on a wedding garment." He was bound hands and feet, and cast into utter darkness, that is, he was the chained prisoner of his own dark, hellish, spiritual body, which had been all his life growing up in him, from that which his soul had daily eaten, and hungered after; and so was become those very chains of darkness, under which the fallen angels are reserved unto the judgment of the great day.

Now there is no being saved or preserved from this body of chains and darkness, but by the one hunger and thirst after righteousness that is in Christ Jesus, and by eating that, which begets heavenly spiritual flesh and blood to the soul. The two trees of paradise, with their two fruits, viz., of death to the eater of the one, and life to the eater of the other, were infallible signs, and full proofs, that from the beginning to the end of the world, death and life, happiness and misery, can proceed from nothing else, but that which the lust and hunger of the soul chooseth for its food. Now spiritual eating is by the mouth of desire, and desire is nothing else but will, and hunger, therefore, that which you will, and hunger after, that you are continually eating, whether it be good, or bad, and that, be it which it will, forms the strength of your life, or which is the same thing, forms the body of your soul. If you have many wills, and many hungers, all that you eat is only the food of so many spiritual diseases, and burdens your soul with a complication of inward distempers. And under this working of so many wills, it is, that religious people have no more good, or health and strength from the true religion, than a man who has a complication of bodily distempers, has from the most healthful food. For no will or hunger, be it turned which way it will, or seem ever so small or trifling, is without its effect. For as we can have nothing but as our will works, so we must have always some effect from it. It cannot be insignificant because nothing is significant, but that which it does. Do not now say, that you have this one will, and one hunger, and yet find not the food of life by it. For as sure as you are forced to complain, so sure is it, that you have it not. "Not my will, but thine be done"; when this is the one will of the soul, all complaints are over, then it is, that patience drinks water of life out of every cup; and to every craving of the old man, this one hunger continually says, "I have meat to eat, that ye know nothing of."

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," is the one will, and one hunger, that feeds the soul with the life-giving bread of heaven. This will is always fulfilled, it cannot possibly be sent empty away, for God's kingdom must manifest itself with all its riches in that soul, which wills nothing else; it never was, nor can be lost, but by the will, that seeks something else. Hence you may know with the utmost certainty, that if you have no inward peace, if religious comfort is still wanting, it is because you have more wills than one. For the multiplicity of wills, is the very essence of fallen nature, and all its evil, misery, and separation from God lies in it; and as soon as you return to, and allow only this one will, you are returned to God, and must find the blessedness of his kingdom within you.

Give yourself up to ever so many good works, read, preach, pray, visit the sick, build hospitals, clothe the naked, yet if anything goes along with these, or in the doing of them you have anything else, that you will and hunger after, but that God's kingdom may come, and his will be done, they are not the works of the new- born from above, and so cannot be his life-giving food. For the new creature in Christ is that one will, and one hunger that was in Christ; and therefore where that is wanting, there is wanting that new creature, which alone can have his conversation, which alone can daily eat and drink at God's table, receiving in all that it does, continual life from "every word, that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." From what word, and from what mouth of God? Why only from that hidden, supernatural power of the triune deity, which speaks, and breathes

continual nourishment to that heavenly fire, light, and spirit, in and from which, all that are about the throne of God, have their inward joy above all thought, and their outward glory, that can only be figured, or hinted to us, by pearls, sapphires, and rainbow beauties.

It is from this power of the triune God, working in the fire, light, spirit, and spiritual water, or body of your new-born creature, that all the good, and comfort, and joy of religion, which you want, is to be found, and found by nothing, but the resurrection of that divine, and heavenly nature, which came forth in the first man. Do not take these to be too high flown words, for they are no higher, than the truth; for if that which is in you, is not as high as heaven, you will never come there. That heavenly fire, light, and spirit, which makes the angelic life to be all divine, must as certainly be your inward likeness to God; and that which God is, and works in angels, that he must be, and work in you, or you can never be like to, or equal with them, as Christ has said. To be outwardly glorious, as they are, you must stay till this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, but to have the same inward glory of the same celestial fire, light, and spirit, burning, shining, and breathing in your inward man, as angels have, belongs to you, as born at first of the triune breath of the living God, and born again of Christ, out of Adam's death, to have, and be, all that by a wonder of redemption, which was your divine birthright at first by a wonder of creation. And now, my dear friend, choose your side: would you be honorable in church, or state, put on the whole armor of this world, praise that which man praises, clothe yourself with all the graces and perfections of the belles lettres, and be an orator, and critic, as fast as ever you can, and above all, be strong in the power of flattering words. But if the other side is your choice; would you be found in Christ, and know the power of his resurrection; would you taste the powers of the world to come, and find the continual influences of the triune God, feeding and keeping up his divine life in your triune soul, you must give up all for that one will, and one hunger, which keeps the angels of God in the full feasts, of ever new, and never-ceasing delights in the nameless, boundless riches of eternity.

Think it not too hard, or too severe a restraint, to have but one will, and one hunger; it is no harder a restraint, than to be kept from all that can bring forth pain, and sorrow to your soul; no greater severity, than to be excluded from every place, but the kingdom of God. For to have but this one will, and one hunger, is to have every evil of life, and all enemies put under your feet. It is to have done with everything, that can defile, betray, disappoint, or hurt that eternal nature, which must have its life within you. On the other hand, everything that is not the effect and fruit of this one will, and one hunger, must sooner or later, be torn from you with the utmost smart, or become food for that gnawing worm, which dieth not. Do you ask, how you are to come at this one will, and one hunger, I refer you to no power of your own, and yet refer you to that which is within yourself.

Angels in heaven, are not good and happy by anything they can do to themselves, but solely by that which is done to them. Now that Holy Spirit, which does God's will in heaven, and is the goodness and happiness of all its inhabitants, that same Spirit is every man's portion upon earth, and the gift of God within him. It is but lost labor, to strive by any power of your reason, or self-activity, to work up this one will and one hunger within you, or to kindle the true ardency of a divine desire, by anything that your natural man can do. This is as impossible, as for fallen Adam to have been his own redeemer, or a dead man to give life to himself. The one will, and one hunger which alone can eat the true nourishment of the divine life, is nothing else but the divine nature within you, which died in Adam no other death, but that of being suppressed and buried for a while, under a load and multiplicity of earthly wills.

Hence it is, that nothing can put an end to this multiplicity of wills in fallen man, which is his death to God, nothing can be the resurrection of the divine nature within him, which is his only salvation, but the CROSS of Christ, not that wooden cross, on which he was crucified, but that cross on which he was crucified through the whole course of his life in the flesh. It is our fellowship with him on this cross, through the whole course of our lives, that is our union with him, it alone gives power to the divine nature within us, to arise out of its death, and breathe again in us, in one will, and one hunger after nothing but God. To be like-minded with Christ, is to live in every contrariety to self, the world, the flesh, and the devil, as he did; this is our belonging to him, our being one with him, having life from him, and washing our robes in the blood of the Lamb. For then, and then only are we washed, and cleansed by his blood, when we drink his blood, and we drink his blood, when we willingly drink of the cup that he drank of.

Again, not to be like-minded with Christ, is to be separated from him. To have another mind than he had, is to be in the state of those, who crucified him. Such as the redeemer was, such are they that are redeemed. As Adam was, such are they that are born of him. Life from Adam, and life from Christ, is the one single thing, that makes the one our destroyer, the other our redeemer. But to have done, cast not about in your mind, how you are to have the one will, and one hunger, which is always eating at God's table, and continually fed with the bread of life; the thing is already done to your hands. "I am the way, the truth, and the life," saith Christ, the same as if he had said, the way is nowhere, the truth is nowhere, the life is nowhere, but in me. What room therefore for any learned contrivances, or further enquiry about the matter? Follow Christ in the denial of all the wills of self, and then all is put away that separates you from God: the heaven-born new creature will come to life in you, which alone knows, and enjoys the things of God, and has his daily food of gladness in that manifold BLESSED, and BLESSED, which Christ preached on the mount.

Tell me then no more of your new skill in Hebrew words, of your Paris editions of all the ancient fathers, your complete collection of the councils, commentators, and church historians,. Did Christ mean anything like this, when he said, "I am the way, the truth and the life"? Did the apostle mean anything like this, when he said, "No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost"? Great, good, and divine teachers, you say, were many of the fathers: I say nothing to it, but that much more great, good, and divine is he, who is always teaching within you, ever standing and knocking at the door of your heart, with the words of eternal life.

You perhaps may ask, why I go on writing books myself, if there is but one true, and divine teacher? I answer, though there is but one bridegroom, that can furnish the blessing of the marriage feast, yet his servants are sent out to invite the guests. This is the unalterable difference between Christ's teaching, and the teaching of those, who only publish the glad tidings of him. They are not the bridegroom, and therefore have not the bridegroom's voice. They are not the light, but only sent to bear witness of it. And as the Baptist said, "He must increase, but I must decrease"; so every faithful teacher saith of his doctrine, it must decrease, and end, as soon as it has led to the true teacher.

All that I have written for near thirty years, has been only to show, that we have no master but Christ, nor can have any living divine knowledge, but from his holy nature born and revealed in us. Not a word in favor of Jacob Behmen, but because, above every writer in the world, he has made all that is found in the kingdom of grace, and the kingdom of nature, to be one continual

demonstration, that dying to self, to be born again of Christ, is the one only possible salvation of the sons of fallen Adam. But I will have done, as soon as I have given you a little piece of history, which your friend Academicus, has given of himself: "When I had," says he, "taken my degrees in the university, I consulted several great divines to put me in a method of studying divinity. It would take up near half a day to tell you the work, which my learned friends cut out for me. One told me, that Hebrew words are all; that they must be read without points, and then the Old Testament is an opened book. He recommended to me a cart load of lexicons, critics, and commentators upon the Hebrew Bible. Another tells me, the Greek Bible is the best, that it corrects the Hebrew in many places, and refers me to a large number of books learnedly writ in defense of it. Another tells me that church history is the main matter, that I must begin with the first fathers, and follow them through every age, not forgetting to take the lives of the Roman emperors along with me, as striking great light into the state of the church in their times. Then I must have recourse to all the councils held, and the canons made in every age: which would enable me to see with my own eyes, the very great corruptions of the Council of Trent. Another, who is not very fond of ancient matters, but wholly bent upon rational Christianity, tells me, I need go no higher than the reformation; that Calvin and Cranmer were very great men; that Chillingworth and Locke ought always to lie upon my table; that I must get an entire set of those learned volumes wrote against popery in King James's reign; and also be well versed in all the discourses, which Mr. Boyle's, and Lady Moyer's lectures have produced; and then, says he, you will be a match for our greatest enemies, which are popish priests, and modern deists. My tutor is very liturgical; he desired me, of all things, to get all the collections, that I can, of the ancient liturgies, and all the authors that treat of such matters, who, says he, are very learned and very numerous. He has been many years making observations upon them, and is now clear, as to the time, when certain little particles got entrance into the liturgies, and others were by degrees dropped. He has a friend abroad in search of ancient mss. liturgies; for by the by, said he, at parting, I have some suspicion, that our sacrament of the Lord's Supper is essentially defective, for want of having a little water mixed with the wine. Another learned friend told me, that the Clementine Constitution is the book of books; and that all that lies loose, and scattered in the New Testament, stands there in its true order and form. And though he will not say, that Dr. Clarke, and Mr. Whiston, are in the right, yet it might be useful to me to read all the Arian and Socinian writers, provided I stood upon my guard, and did it with caution. The last person I consulted, advised me to get all the histories of the rise and progress of heresies, and of the lives and characters of heretics. These histories, he said, contract the matter, bring truth and error close in view; and I should find all that collected in a few pages, which would have cost me some years to get together. He also desired me to be well versed in all the casuistical writers, and chief schoolmen, for they debate matters to the bottom, dissect every virtue, and every vice, and show how near they may come together without touching. And this knowledge, he said, might be very useful, when I came to be a parish priest.

"Following the advice of all these counselors, as well as I could, I lighted my candle early in the morning, and put it out late at night. In this labor I had been sweating for some years, till Rusticus, at my first acquaintance with him, seeing my way of life, said to me, had you lived about seventeen hundred years ago, you had stood just in the same place, as I stand now. I cannot read, and therefore, says he, all these hundreds of thousands of doctrine and disputing books, which these seventeen hundred years have produced, stand not in my way; they are the same thing to me, as if they had never been. And had you lived at the time mentioned, you had just escaped them all, as

I do now, because, though you are a very good reader, there were then none of them to be read. Could you therefore be content to be one of the primitive Christians, who were as good as any that have been since, you may spare all this labor. It is not easy for me, says Academicus, to tell you how much good I received from this simple instruction of honest Master Rusticus. What project was it, to be grasping after the knowledge of all the opinions, doctrines, disputes, heresies, schisms, which seventeen hundred years had brought forth, through all the extent of the Christian world! What project this, in order to be a divine, that is, in order to bear true witness to the power of Christ, as a deliverer from the evil of earthly flesh and blood, and death and hell, and a raiser of a new birth and life from above! For as this is the divine work of Christ, so he only is a true and able divine that can bear a faithful testimony to this divine work of Christ. How easy was it for me to have seen, that all this labyrinth of learned enquiry, into such a dark, thorny wilderness of notions, facts, and opinions, could signify no more to me now, to my own salvation, to my interest in Christ, and obtaining the Holy Spirit of God, than if I had lived before it had any beginning. But the blind appetite of learning, gave me no leisure to apprehend so plain a truth. Books of divinity indeed, I have not done with, but will esteem none to be such, but those that make known to my heart, the inward power and redemption of Jesus Christ. Nor will I seek for anything even from such books, but that which I ask of God in prayer, viz., how better to know, more to abhor, and resist the evil that is in my own nature, and how to obtain a supernatural birth of the divine life brought forth within me. All besides this is pushpin." {Way to Divine Knowledge.} God be with you.

March 5, 1753.

01.06 Letter 6

In Answer to a Question.

You tell me, sir, that after a twenty years' zeal, and labor in matters of religion, it has turned to so little account, that you are forced, most earnestly to desire a speedy answer to this question, Where you shall go, or what you shall do, to be in the truth?

Let me first premise thus much. Every man in his fallen state, has all that in him, though in a state of death, and hiddenness, which was the living glory, perfection of the first created man. Just as the root of the lily, in the winter's cold, hath all that in it, though as in a state of death, which was the glory and beauty of the summer's flower. What is hidden in the root of the lily, lies no longer in its seeming death, than till the spring-sun calls forth its life. Now, one divine dispensation after another, is to do that same to the fallen soul, which the spring, and daily advancing sun does to the lily root; namely, to call it out of its state of death, and make something of its first glory come to life, and spring forth out of it. Hence it is that the kingdom of God (which was that to which Adam died) is like to treasure hid in a field; and again, the kingdom of God is within you. But this could not be true, unless all that glory, which Adam lost, was still preserved, as a seed, or shut-up root of life within him: and all this, through the mercy, and free grace of God, who foreseeing the fall of Adam, willed, that a seed of his first glory, should be preserved in him; declared, and made known to him, by a seed of the woman, which through the Word made flesh, should, in spite of death and hell, grow up to the fullness of the stature in Christ Jesus. And as the kingdom of heaven, is every man's treasure, as surely within him, as his own soul, so that which hides, and covers it from us, is that awakened, bestial life, which is called Adam in us, and in which, the immortal soul, that was born for heaven, is wedded to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, and subject to the workings of that satanical nature, which our Lord calls the prince of this world. And thus it is, that every man comes into this world in a twofold state; Adam and Christ are both born in him. And if this was not the state of man, nothing within you, would, or could ask, as you have done, or have any anxiety after the truth. And your being either led from this true knowledge of your state, or having never been sensible of it, is the reason of your having made so many religious inquiries in vain, both from yourself, and other people. For nothing can tell you the truth, or establish you in a just and solid discernment of right from wrong, in doctrines, opinions, and practices of religion, but this home knowledge of yourself, namely, that Christ and Adam, are not only both of them essentially within you, but the whole of you; that nothing is life or salvation, but that, which is the life and growth of Christ in you, and that all that is done from the life, the power and natural capacity of the Adamical nature, is heathenish, is mere vanity and death, however gloriously set forth by the natural gifts of wit and learning.

Religion has no good in it, but as it is the revival, and quickening of that divine nature, which your first father had from God, and nothing can revive it, but that which first created it. God is no otherwise your God, but as he is the God of your life, manifested in it; and he can be no otherwise the God of your life, but as his Spirit is living within you. Satan is no other way knowable by you, or

can have any other fellowship with you, but as his evil spirit works, and manifests itself along with the workings of your own spirit. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"; but he is nowhere to be resisted, but as a working spirit within you, therefore to resist the devil, is to turn from the evil thoughts, and motions that arise within you. "Turn to God, and he will turn to you": but God is an universal Spirit, which you cannot locally turn to, or from; therefore to turn to God, is to cleave to those good thoughts and motions which proceed from his Holy Spirit, dwelling and working in you. This is the God of your life, to whom you are to adhere, listen, and attend, and this is your worshipping him in spirit and truth. And that is the devil that goeth about as a roaring lion, who has no voice but that which he speaks within you. Therefore, my friend, be at home, and keep close to that which passes within you, for be it what it will, whether it be a good, in which you delight, or an evil, at which you grieve, you could have neither the one, nor the other, but because a holy God of light and love is essentially dwelling in you. Seek therefore for no other road, nor call anything the way to God, but solely that, which is {sic, his?} eternal, all-creating WORD, and SPIRIT worketh within you. For could anything else have been man's way to God, the WORD had not been made flesh. The last words in your question, viz., to be in the truth, are well expressed, for to be in the truth, is the finished state of man returning to God, thus declared by Christ himself, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"; free from the blindness and delusion of your own natural reason, and free from forms, doctrines and opinions, which others would impose upon you. To be in truth, is to be, where the first holy man was, when he came forth in the image and likeness of God. When he lost paradise, he lost the truth; and all that he felt, knew, saw, loved, and liked of the earthly, bestial world, into which he was fallen, was but mere separation from God, a veil upon his heart, and scales upon his eyes. Nothing of his first truth could be spoken of to him, even by God himself, but under the veil of earthly things, types, and shadows. The Law was given by Moses; but Moses had a veil upon his face, the Law was a veil, prophecy was a veil, Christ crucified was a veil, and all was a veil, till grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, in the POWER of his HOLY SPIRIT. Therefore to be in the truth, as it is in Jesus, is to be come from under the veil, to have passed through all those dispensations, which would never have begun, but that they might end in a Christ spiritually revealed, and essentially formed in the soul. So that now, in this last dispensation of God, which is the first truth itself restored, nothing is to be thought of, trusted to, or sought after, but God's immediate, continual working in the soul, by his Holy Spirit. This, sir, is he where you are to go, and the what you are to do, to be in the truth. For the truth as it is in Jesus, is nothing else but Christ come in the Spirit, and his coming in the Spirit, is nothing else but the first lost life of God, quickened, and revealed again in the soul. Everything short of this, has only the nature of outward type and figure, which in its best state, is only for a time. If therefore you look to anything but the Spirit, seek to any power, but that of the Spirit, expect Christ to be your savior, any other way, than as he is spiritually born in you, you go back from the grace and truth, which came by Jesus, and can at best be only a legal Jew, or a self- righteous Pharisee; there is not getting further than these states, but by being born of the Spirit, living by the Spirit, as his child, his instrument, and holy temple, in which he dwells, and works all his good pleasure. Drop this full adherence to, and dependence upon the Spirit, act as in your own sphere, be something of yourself, and through your own wisdom, and then, though all that you say, or do, is with the outward words of the spiritual gospel, and in the outward practices of the spiritual apostles, yet for all this, you are but there, where those were, who worshipped God with the blood of bulls and goats; for (N.B.) nothing but the Spirit of God can worship God in spirit and in truth. But you will

perhaps say, that you are still but where you were, because you know not how to find the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit. If you know how to find your own thoughts, you need not be at a loss to find the Spirit of God. For you have not a thought within you, but is either from the good of the Spirit, or from the evil of the flesh. Now the good and the evil that are within you, and always more or less sensible by turns, do each of them teach you the same work and presence of the Spirit of God. For the good, could not appear as good, nor the evil be felt as evil, but because the immediate working of the Spirit of God creates, or manifests this difference between them, and therefore be in what state you will, the power of God's Spirit within you, equally manifests itself to you; and to find the immediate, continual, essential working of the Spirit of God within you, you need only know what good, and evil are felt within you. For all the good that is in any thought or desire, is so much of God within you, and whilst you adhere to, and follow a good thought, you follow, or are led by the Spirit of God. And on the other hand all that is selfish and wicked in thought, or affection, is so much of the spirit of satan within you, which would not be known, or felt, as evil, but because it is contrary to the immediate, continual working of the Spirit of God within you. Turn therefore inwards, and all that is within you, will demonstrate to you, the presence, and power of God in your soul, and make you find, and feel it, with the same certainty, as you find and feel your own thoughts. And what is best of all, by thus doing, you will never be without a living sense of the immediate guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, always equal to your dependence upon it, always leading you from strength to strength in your inward man, till all your knowledge of good and evil, is become nothing else, but a mere love of the one, and mere aversion to the other. For the one work of the Spirit of God, is to distinguish the good, and evil, that is within you, not as in notion, but by affection; and when you are wholly given up to this new-creating work of God, so as to stay your mind upon it, abide with it, and expect all from it. This, my friend, will be your returning to the rock, from whence you were hewn, your drinking at the fountain of living water, your walking with God, your living by faith, your putting on Christ, your continual hearing the WORD of God, your eating the bread that came down from heaven, your supping with Christ, and following the Lamb wherever he goeth. For all these seeming different things, will be found in every man, according to his measure, who is wholly given up to, and depending upon the blessed work of God's Spirit in his soul. But your mistake, and that of most Christians, lies in this; you would be good by some outward means, you would have methods, opinions, forms, and ordinances of religion, alter and raise your fallen nature, and create in you a new heart, and a new spirit, that is to say, you would be good in a way that is altogether impossible, for goodness cannot be brought into you from without, much less by anything that is creaturely, or the action of man; this is as impossible, as for the flesh to sanctify the spirit, or for things temporal, to give life to things that are eternal. The image and likeness of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are in every man, antecedent to every outward work, or action that can proceed from him: it is God thus within him, that is the sole cause that anything can be called godly, that is done, observed, or practiced by him. If it were not so, man would only have his being from God, but his goodness from himself.

All man's outward good works, are only like his outward good words; he is not good, because he is frequent in the use of them, they bring no goodness into him, nor are of any worth in themselves, but as a good, and godly spirit speaks forth itself in the sound of them. This is the case of every outward, creaturely thing, or work of man, be it of what kind it will, either hearing, praying, singing or preaching, or practicing any outward rules, and observances; they have only the goodness of

the outward Jew, nay, are as vain, as sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals, unless they be solely the work, and fruits of the Spirit of God: for the divine nature, is that alone, which can be the power to any good work, either in man, or angel. When a man, first finds himself stirred up with religious zeal, what does he generally do? He turns all his thoughts outwards, he runs after this, or that man, he is at the beck of every new opinion, and thinks only of finding the truth, by resting in this, or that method, or society of Christians. Could he find a man, that did not want to have him of his party, and opinion, that turned him from himself, and the teaching of man, to a God, not as historically read in books, or preached of in this, or that society, but to a God essentially living and working in every soul, him he might call a man of God; as leading him from himself to God, as saving him from many vain wanderings, from fruitless searchings into a Council of Trent, a Synod of Dort, and Augsburg Confession, an Assembly's catechism, or a Thirty- nine Articles. For had he an hundred articles, if they were anything else but a hundred calls to Christ come in the Spirit, to a God within him, as the only possible light, and teacher of his mind, it would be a hundred times better for him, to be without them. For all man's blindness and misery lies in this, that he has lost the knowledge of God, as essentially living within him, and by falling under the power of an earthly, bestial life, thinks only of God, as living in some other world, and so seeks only by notions, to set up an image of an absent God, instead of worshipping the God of life and power, in whom he lives, moves, and has his being. Whoever therefore teaches you to expect great things from this, or that sort of opinions, or calls you to anything as saving, and redeeming, but the manifestation of God in your own soul, through a birth of the holy nature of Christ within you is totally ignorant of the whole nature, both of the fall, and the redemption of man. For the first is nothing else, or less, than a death to the divine life, or Christlike nature, which lived in the first man; and the other, is nothing else, but Christ new-born, formed, and revealed again in man, as he was at the first. These two great truths are the most strongly asserted by Christ, saying, "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." Let him "deny himself," is the fullest declaration, and highest proof, that he has lost his first divine and heavenly nature, that he is not that self, which came first from God, or he could not be called to deny it. Say, if you will, that he has not lost that first heavenly life in God, and then you must say, that our Lord calls him to deny, crucify, and renounce that holy, and Godlike self, which was the first gift of God to him. To read whole libraries on these matters, is only to be bewildered in the strife of fictions, and contradictions about them. But to read this one single line of Christ, is to be led into the open, full truth of the whole nature, both of the fall, and redemption. And indeed, if we were but freed from the Babel of opinions, which have so long confounded the first truths of the gospels, it would be plain from every part of it, that nothing could be called the fall of man but his loss of the divine life, or nature, nor anything be called his redemption, or the real means of it, but solely that, which God is, and does in him. For what can be a good, or work good in man, but God, or the divine nature in him? All the divine truths, that ever came from God, speak only to the pearl of the divine nature, that is hidden in our earthly field of flesh and blood, because nothing else wants them, or has any capacity to receive them; that which is divine, can only receive the divine things from God. And thence it is, that unless a "man be born again from above, it is not possible for him to see, or enter into the kingdom of God," that is, the divine life must arise again, in the power of a new birth, or there is nothing in fallen man, that can partake of the kingdom of God. And the reason is, because "the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," and therefore not possible to be anywhere, but where it proceeds from the Holy Ghost. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy

God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." Now what is this God, that you are thus to love? Is it some abstract idea, that learned men have helped you to form of him? No such thing. This would be but a poor fiction of God, and a poor fiction of love. God is all good, the only good, and there is nothing good besides him, therefore to love God with all your heart, is to love all goodness, and to love nothing else but goodness, and then, and only then, do you love God with all your heart, and soul, and strength. But now, to what purpose could this precept of such a love be given to man, unless he essentially partook of the divine nature? For to be in heart, and soul, and spirit, all love of God, and yet have nothing of the nature of God within you, is surely too absurd for anyone to believe. So sure therefore as this precept came from truth itself, so sure is it, that every man (however loath to hear of anything but pleasures, and enjoyments in this vain shadow of a life) has yet a divine nature concealed within him, which, when suffered to hear the calls of God, will know the voice of its heavenly Father, and long to do his will on earth, as it is done in heaven. The conclusion then, is this, if to love God with your whole heart, and soul, is to love all goodness, and nothing else but goodness; and if all that is done without this love, whether in religious duties, of common life, is but mere separation from God, then it must be the grossest blindness, to believe you can have any love of God, or goodness in any duties you perform, any further, or in any other degree, than as the eternal, Holy Spirit of God, lives and loves in you.

Again, to see the divinity of man's original, you need only read these words: "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." For what could man have to do with the perfection of God, as the rule of his life, unless the truth and reality of the divine nature was in him? Could there be any reasonableness in this precept, or any fitness to call us to be good, as God is good, unless there was that in us, which is in God? Or to call us to the perfection of an heavenly Father, if we were not the real children of his heavenly nature? Might it not be as well, to bid the heavy stone to fly, as its flying father the eagle doth? But this precept from the lip of truth, is another full proof, that by the fall, a death, or suppression is brought upon our first divine life, and also that it is yet in a state, capable of being revived again, in us. For if it was not in a state of death, or suppressed in us, there could be no need of calling us to live according to it; for every being naturally acts according to the life, that is manifested in it. Nor could we be called to be heavenly, but because the heavenly nature has its seed in our soul in a readiness to come to life in us.

Lastly, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thy self," is another full proof, that God is in us of a truth, and that the Holy Spirit hath as certainly, an essential birth within us, as the spirit of this world hath. For this precept might as well be given to a fox, as to a man, if man had not something quite supernatural in him. For mere nature, and natural creature, is nothing else, but mere self, and can work nothing but to, and for itself. And this, not through any corruption, or depravity of nature, but because it is nature's best state, and it can be nothing else, either in man, or beast.

"I say unto you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you." Every word here is demonstration, that nothing but the new birth from above, can be a Christian. There is no other nature, or spirit that can breathe forth this universal love and benevolence, but that same, which laying aside its own glory, came down from heaven, to forgive, to love, to save, and die for a whole world of enemies and sinners. This is the Spirit of Christ, that must as essentially live and breathe in you, as it did in him, or all exhortations, to do as he did, to walk as he walked, are but in vain. The natural man is in full separation from this

holiness of life, and though he had more wisdom of words, more depth of literature, than was in Cicero, or Aristotle, yet would he have as much to die to, as the grossest publican, or vainest Pharisee, before he could be in Christ, a new creature. For the highest improved natural abilities, can as well ascend into heaven, or clothe flesh and blood with immortality, as make a man like-minded with Christ in any one divine virtue. And that for this one reason, because God, and divine goodness, are inseparable. No precept of the gospel, supposes man to have any power to effect it, or calls you to any natural ability, or wisdom of your own to comply with it. Christ and his apostles called no man, to overcome the corruption and blindness of fallen nature, by learned cultivation of the mind. The wisdom of the learned world, was the same pitiable foolishness with them, as the grossest ignorance. By them, they only stand thus distinguished, the one brings forth a publican which is often converted to Christ, the other a Pharisee, that for the most part, condemns him to be crucified. They (Christ and his apostles) taught nothing but death, and denial to all self, and the impossibility of having any one divine temper, but through faith, and hope of a new nature, not "born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." To speak of the operation of the Holy Spirit, as only an assistance, or an occasional assistance, is as short of the truth, as to say, that Christ shall only assist the resurrection, of our bodies. For not a spark of any divine virtue can arise up in us, but what must wholly and solely be called forth, by that same power, which alone can call our dead bodies, out of the dust and darkness of the grave.

If you turn to your own strength, to have Christian piety, and goodness; or are so deceived, as to think, that learning, or logical abilities, critical acuteness, skill in languages, church- systems, rules and orders, articles and opinions, are to do that for you, which the Spirit of Christ did, and only could do for the first Christians; your diligent reading the history of the gospel, will leave you as poor, and empty and dead to the divine life, as if you had been only a diligent reader of the history of all the religions in the world. But if all that you trust to, long after, and depend upon, is that Holy Spirit, which alone made the scripture-saints able to call Jesus Lord; if this be your one faith, and one hope, the divine life, which died in Adam, will find itself alive again in Christ Jesus. And be assured, that nothing but this new birth, can be the gospel Christian, because nothing else can possibly love, like, do, and be that, which Christ preached in his divine sermon on the mount. And be assured also, that when the Spirit of Christ, is the spirit that ruleth in you, there will be no hard sayings in the gospel; but all that the heavenly Christ taught in the flesh, will be as meat and drink to you, and you will have no joy, but in walking, as he walked, in saying, loving, and doing, that which he said, loved, and did. And indeed, how can it be otherwise? How can notions, doctrines, and opinions about Christ, what he was, and did, make you in him a new creature? Can anyone be made a Samson, or a Solomon, by being well versed in the history of what they were, said or did?

Ask then, my friend, no more, where you shall go, or what you shall do, to be in the truth; for you can have the truth, nowhere, but in Jesus, nor in him, any further, than as his whole nature, and Spirit is born within you.

Farewell.

01.07 Letter 7

To a Person of Quality.

Madam,

I had the honor of your Ladyship's letter, and no want of true regard for your Ladyship, or the subject, has been the occasion of my delaying this answer so long. I am in some hopes, that the person that wanted it, may, by this time, have found something better than it, by being left to God and himself, and that I have done more for him by my silence, than I should have done by my writing. To be always tampering with physicians, upon every occasion, is the way to lose all natural soundness of health; and to be continually talking, and enquiring about the nature of distempers, and the powers of medicines, for the head, the heart, the spirits, and nerves, is the way to lose all true judgment, either of our own sickness or health.

It is much the same, with regard to our spiritual health and constitution, we do much hurt to it, by running after spiritual advice on every occasion, and wanting the help of some human prescription, for every fear, scruple, or notion, that starts up in our minds, and to weaken the true strength of our spiritual constitution, which if left to itself, would do all that we want to have done.

If it be asked, What this soundness of our spiritual constitution is? It may be answered that it is a state or habit of such humble, total resignation of ourselves to God, as by faith, and hope expects all from him alone. This is the health, and strength of our spiritual constitution, and nothing is health in the soul, but this state. And if we left all our incidental, accidental, sickly notions, and imaginations that so frequently attack our minds, if we left them to be overcome, and done away by the strength of our spiritual constitution, (N.B.) we should never fail of success.

How this pious and worthy person came to think of leaving his parish, or what scruples occasioned his doubting, whether he should stay in it, I cannot guess, and therefore can say nothing to them. I should have thought, that such a change as he found in himself, his parish, and neighborhood, should have everything in it, that could render his situation comfortable to him. The greatest danger that new converts are liable to, especially if they are young, arises from their conceiving something great of their conversion, and that great things are to follow from it. Hence they are taken up too much with themselves, and the supposed designs of God upon them. They enter into reasonings, and conjectures how they shall be, and do something extraordinary, and so lose that simplicity of heart, which should think of nothing but of dying to self, that the Spirit of God might have time and place to create, and form all that is wanting in their inward man.

There is nothing more plain and simple than the way of religion, if self is but kept out of it; and all the perplexities, and scruples which pious persons meet with, chiefly arise from some idea they have formed, of a progress they ought to make in order to be that, which self would be. But piety makes little progress till it has no schemes of its own, no thoughts or contrivances to be anything, but a naked penitent, left wholly, and solely in faith and hope to the divine goodness. Every contrivance for human help, from this, or that, be it what it will, is at best but dropping some

degree, of that fullness of faith and hope, and dependence upon God, which only is, and only can be our way of finding him, to be the strength and God of our life.

Nothing but the life of God, opened by his Holy Spirit within us, can be the renewal of our souls, and we shall want this renewal no longer, than whilst we are seeking it in something, that is not God. The faith that ascribes all to God, and expects all from him, cannot be disappointed.

Nothing could hinder the centurion from having, that which he asked of Christ, because his heart could thus speak, "Lord I am not worthy, that thou shouldest come under my roof, speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed."

He that has this sense of himself, and this faith in God, is in the truth and perfection of religion: if we knew the goodness of this state, we should be always content with the simplicity of it, and let everything else come, and go, as it would; all is well and safe, so long as the heart rests all upon God alone. Your Ladyship says, this worthy person fears his zeal, and yet dreads the abatement of it. It would be better, not to indulge a thought about his own zeal, or to speak a word of it to any person. For if it is godly zeal, it is no more his than it is mine, nor comes any more from him, than it does from me; and therefore when he thinks, or speaks of it as his, or as something he would be glad to keep in its right state, it is giving way to delusion, both with regard to himself, and the nature of true zeal: for as the "wind bloweth where it listeth," so it is with him, who is driven by true zeal.

I do not wonder, that his audience is so much affected, and increased, since he has preached up the doctrine of regeneration amongst them. All other preaching passes away as a tale that is told, and indeed is nothing better, till it enters into the things within man, brings him to a sensibility of the state of his heart, and its want of God's Holy Spirit therein.

How far it may be right for him to comply with their request of visiting, reading, and expounding the scripture to them, I pretend not to say; but only thus much, that it seems to be right to be in no anxiety about it, or to put himself under any stated rules about it, but leave it to be done, as he finds himself inwardly stirred up to it, and able out of the abundance of his heart to perform it.

Expounding the scriptures, has a fine sound, but I should rather advise such persons, to read only in love, and simplicity of heart, such scriptures as need no expounder, but their own heart turned to God. Persons who are come to this inward conviction, that they must live, and die, under the power of satan, and of fallen nature, unless by a fullness of faith in Christ, they be born again from above, have nothing more to enquire about, where, or how Christ is to be found.

They have no other use to make of the scripture, but that of being refreshed, and delighted with such passages, as turn, and stir up the heart, to a fullness of faith, love, and resignation to the blessed guidance, and operation of the Holy Spirit of God.

January 10, 1754.

01.08 Letter 8

To the Same.

Madam,

Mr. Wesley's letter did not at all disappoint me. I had no expectation of seeing a better, either with regard to the substance, or to the style, and manner of it. If I knew of any kind of answer, that would do him any real good, I should advise it. But to answer it for the good of anyone else, seems to be quite needless. It does not admit of a serious answer, because there is nothing substantial or properly argumentative in it. And to answer it in the way of ridicule, is what I cannot come into, being full as averse to make a mock of him in a religious garb, as to the doing the greatest bodily injury to his person. How far he has answered, or does answer any good ends of providence, or is an instrument in the hands of God, is a matter I meddle not with; only wishing, that every appearance of good, every stirring of zeal, under whatever form it appears, whether in knowledge, or ignorance, in wisdom, or weakness, may be directed, and blessed by God, to the best ends it is capable of. As to myself, I seem to myself to have no other part to act, nor any call to anything else, in this hurry, and struggle of zeal against zeal, in such a variety of forms, but only, and fully to assert the true ground, and largely open all the reasons, of that one inward regeneration, which is equally the one thing needful to every sect, and the one thing alone that can make every sect, or method, or outward form, not hurtful to those that adhere to it. For every outward form, however specious or promising, will only help us to be carnally minded, till it is in some degree known, to have no other, or better nature, than that of the shell, which helps us to the kernel. The doctrines I have published, are in their best state with regard to the reader, as they stand in my books, and will be less useful to him, when they are drawn into controversy. For this reason, I can lend no help to that. This may perhaps seem to your Ladyship, as if I had too great an opinion of what I had done. And I believe, such a free way of speaking sometimes in conversation of my own books, may have been suspected of smelling too much of self-esteem. But I can with truth assure you, madam, that when I speak of the fullness and clearness of my own writings, I feel no other sentiments of self-sufficiency, than when I speak of the goodness of my own eyes. Nor do I know how to consider the one, more than the other, to be any merit of my own; and therefore when any man, great or little, contemns, reproaches, or asperses me, or my books, as void of sense, truth, and light; I feel no more inward uneasiness, or think myself any more hurt, than if he had only told the world, that my eyes were miserably bad, and I could scarce see to read, even with the best spectacles. And so have no desire controversially to defend the one, more than the other, but contentedly leave them both, to be their own proof of what they are.

I was once a kind of oracle with Mr. Wesley. I never suspected anything bad of him, or ever discovered any kind, or degree of falseness, or hypocrisy in him. But during all the time of his intimacy with me, I judged him to be much under the power of his own spirit, which seemed to have the predominancy in every good thing, or way, that his zeal carried him to.

It was owing to his unwillingness, or inability to give up his own spirit, that he was forced into that false, and rash censure which he published in print against the mystics: As enemies to good works, and even tending to atheism. A censure so false, and regardless of right and wrong, as hardly anything can exceed it; which is to be found in a preface of his book of hymns. But no more of this.

February 16, 1756.

01.09 Letter 9

To the Same.

Madam, The passage in the letter from a pious and very excellent clergyman, as you style him, calls for no regard, either from your Ladyship, or me. More insignificant words cannot well be put together: "I think," says he, "Mr. Law has gone half a bow shot too far." If I have shot so far beyond, or beside the truth, he should have shown where, and why, and how. Without this, his words are but a random shot at nothing. His reason for this censure, is still worse, viz., "because I have touched the heart-string of all systematical divinity." As grievous a charge, as if he had said, that I had shook the very foundation of every Babel of every country. For not a system of divinity, since systems were in being, whether popish, or Protestant, deserves a better name. His next reason is, "because it should not be touched without skill from above."

If this gentleman ever preaches from the pulpit, concerning the ways of God, and the doctrines of redemption, without skill from above, all he says, will be a whole bow-shot beside the matter.

If, therefore, in touching this point, I have touched that, which ought not to be touched without skill from above, I have taken no bolder a step, than he does, every time he mounts the pulpit, to give forth the doctrines of Christ. His third reason is this, "I choose in my present ignorance, as touching the necessity and virtue of an outward atonement, to bow down before the awful subject." But in truth, he should have said, I choose to bow down before the awful heart string of all systematical divinity, which resolves all the atonement into an infinite wrath, and vengeance, raised in the holy deity itself, and which would not be appeased, or satisfied by anything else, but the sacrifice of an infinite Son of God. It is by reason of his attachment to this heart string, or rather his having so constantly preached according to it, that he cannot bear a demonstration of the most glorious truth, that either heaven or earth can proclaim, viz., that God from eternity to eternity, is mere, unchangeable, and ever-overflowing love; and that nothing but this infinity of never-ceasing, never-changing love, gave the birth, the life, the sufferings, the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, for the salvation of all mankind; because in the whole possible nature of things, nothing else but this whole process of a God made man, could have any ability to extinguish the hell, and wrath of a fallen nature, and give man a second birth of such a life from above, as could for ever and ever, have union and communion with the unbeginning, never-ending, never-changing Trinity of love.

01.10 Letter 10

To Mr. J. T. My dear worthy Friend, Whom I much love and esteem, your letter, though full of complaints about the state of your heart, was very much according to my mind, and gives me great hopes, that God will carry on the good work he has begun in you, and lead you by his Holy Spirit, through all those difficulties, under which you at present labor. The desire that you have, to be better than you find yourself at present, is God's call begun to be heard within you, and will make itself to be more heard within you, if you give but way to it, and reverence it as such; humbly believing that he that calls, will, and only can, help you to pay right and full obedience to it. As to the advertisement in the public paper, it deserved no regard from you, or anyone else. It must have come, either from a very ignorant and weak friend, or from a very insignificant enemy to the writings of J. B. But be it as it will, it was not an object of your attention, nor could be of any use to you. But to come to your own state, you seem to yourself to be all infatuation and stupidity, because your head, and your heart are so contrary, the one delighting in heavenly notions, the other governed by earthly passions, and pursuits. It is happy for you, that you know and acknowledge this: for only through this truth, through the full and deep perception of it, can you have any entrance, or so much as the beginning of an entrance into the liberty of the children of God. God is in this respect dealing with you, as he does with those, whose darkness is to be changed into light. Which can never be done, till you fully know (1) the real badness of your own heart, and (2) your utter inability to deliver yourself from it, by any sense, power, or activity of your own mind. And were you in a better state, as to your own thinking, the matter would be worse with you. For the badness in your heart, though you had no sensibility of it, would still be there, and would only be concealed, to your much greater hurt. For there it certainly is, whether it be seen and found, or not, and sooner or later, must show itself in its full deformity, or the old man will never die the death which is due to him, and must be undergone, before the new man in Christ can be formed in us.

All that you complain of in your heart is common to man, as man. There is no heart that is without it. And this is the one ground, why every man, as such, however different in temper, complexion, or natural endowments from others, has one and the same full reason, and absolute necessity, of being born again from above.

Flesh and blood, and the spirit of this world, govern every spring in the heart of the natural man. And therefore you can never enough adore that ray of divine light, which breaking in upon your darkness, has discovered this to be the state of your heart, and raised only those faint wishes that you feel to be delivered from it. For faint as they are, they have their degree of goodness in them, and as certainly proceed solely from the goodness of God working in your soul, as the first dawning of the morning, is solely from, and wrought by the same sun, which helps us to the noonday light. Firmly, therefore, believe this, as a certain truth, that the present sensibility of your incapacity for goodness, is to be cherished as a heavenly seed of life, as the blessed work of God in your soul. Could you like anything in your own heart, or so much as fancy any good to be in it, or believe that you had any power of your own to embrace and follow the truth, this comfortable

opinion, so far as it goes, would be your turning away from God and all goodness, and building iron walls of separation betwixt God and your soul. For conversion to God, only then begins to be in truth, and reality, when we see nothing that can give us the least degree of faith, of hope, of trust, or comfort in anything, that we are of ourselves. To see vanity of vanities in all outward things, to loath and abhor certain sins, is indeed something, but yet as nothing, in comparison of seeing and believing the vanity of vanities within us, and ourselves as utterly unable to take one single step in true goodness, as to add one cubit to our stature.

Under this conviction, the gate of life is opened to us. And therefore it is, that all the preparatory parts of religion, all the various proceedings of God either over our inward, or outward state, setting up, and pulling down, giving, and taking away, light, and darkness, comfort, and distress, as independently of us, as he makes the rain to descend, and the winds to blow, are all of them for this only end, to bring us to this conviction, that all that can be called life, good, and happiness, is to come solely from God, and not the smallest spark of it from ourselves. When man was first created, all the good that he had in him was from God alone. N.B. This must be the state of man for ever. From the beginning of time through all eternity, the creature can have no goodness, but that which God creates in it. Our first created goodness is lost, because our first father departed from a full, absolute dependence upon God. For a full, continual, unwavering dependence upon God, is that alone which keeps God in the creature, and the creature in God. Our lost goodness can never come again, or be found in us, till by a power from Christ living in us, we are brought out of ourselves, and all selfish truths, into that full and blessed dependence upon God, in which our first father should have lived.

What room now, my dear friend, for complaint at the sight, sense, and feeling of your inability to make yourself better than you are? Did you want this sense, every part of your religion would only have the nature and vanity of idolatry. For you cannot come unto God, you cannot believe in him, you cannot worship him in spirit and truth, till he is regarded as the only giver, and you yourself as nothing else but the receiver of every heavenly good, that can possibly come to life in you. Can it trouble you, that it was God that made you, and not you yourself? Yet this would be as unreasonable, as to be troubled that you cannot make heavenly affection, or divine powers to spring up, and abide in your soul.

God must for ever be God alone; heaven, and the heavenly nature are his, and must for ever and ever be received only from him, and for ever and ever be only preserved, by an entire dependence upon, and trust in him. Now as all the religion of fallen man, fallen from God into himself, and the spirit of this world, has no other end, but to bring us back to an entire dependence upon God, so we may justly say, blessed is that light, happy is that conviction, which brings us into a full and settled despair, of ever having the least good from ourselves.

Then we are truly brought, and laid at the gate of mercy: at which gate, no soul ever did, or can lay in vain. A broken and contrite heart God will not despise. That is, God will not, God cannot pass by, overlook, or disregard it. But the heart is then only broken and contrite, when all its strong holds are broken down, all false coverings taken off, and it sees, with inwardly opened eyes, everything to be bad, false, and rotten, that does, or can proceed from it as its own. But you will perhaps say, that your conviction is only an uneasy sensibility of your own state, and has not the goodness of a broken and contrite heart in it.

Let it be so, yet it is rightly in order to it, and it can only begin, as it begins at present in you. Your conviction is certainly not full and perfect; for if it was, you would not complain, or grieve at inability to help or mend yourself, but would patiently expect, and only look for help from God alone.

Know therefore your want of this, as of all other goodness. But know also at the same time, that it cannot be had through your own willing and running, but through God that showeth mercy; that is to say, through God who giveth us Jesus Christ. For Jesus Christ is the one only mercy of God to all the fallen world.

Now if all the mercy of God is only to be found in Christ Jesus, if he alone can save us from our sins; if he alone has power to heal all our infirmities, and restore original righteousness, what room for any other pains, labor, or enquiry, but where, and how Christ is to be found.

It matters not what our evils are, deadness, blindness, infatuation, hardness of heart, covetousness, wrath, pride, and ambition, our remedy is always one and the same, always at hand, always certain and infallible. Seven devils are as easily cast out by Christ as one. He came into the world, not to save from this, or that disorder, but to destroy all the power and works of the devil in man.

If you ask where, and how Christ is to be found? I answer, in your heart, and by your heart, and nowhere else, nor by anything else. But you will perhaps say, it is your very heart that keeps you a stranger to Christ, and him to you, because your heart is all bad, as unholy as a den of thieves.

I answer, that the finding this to be the state of your heart, is the real finding of Christ in it. For nothing else but Christ can reveal, and make manifest the sin and evil in you. And he that discovers, is the same Christ that takes away sin. So that, as soon as complaining guilt, sets itself before you, and will be seen, you may be assured, that Christ is in you of a truth. For Christ must first come as a discoverer and reprover of sin. It is the infallible proof of his holy presence within you.

Hear him, reverence him, submit to him as a discoverer and reprover of sin. Own his power and presence in the feeling of your guilt, and then he that wounded, will heal, he that found out the sin, will take it away, and he who showed you your den of thieves, will turn it into a holy temple of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And now, sir, you may see, that your doubt and enquiry of me, whether your will was really free, or not, was groundless.

You have no freedom, or power of will, to assume any holy temper, or take hold of such degrees of goodness, as you have a mind to have. For nothing is, or ever can be goodness in you, but the one life, light, and spirit of Christ revealed, formed, and begotten in your soul. Christ in us, is our only goodness, as Christ in us, is our hope of glory. But Christ in us is the pure free gift of God to us. But you have a true and full freedom of will and choice, either to leave, and give up your helpless self to the operation of God on your soul, or to rely upon your own rational industry, and natural strength of mind. This is the truth of the freedom of your will, in your first setting out, which is a freedom that no man wants, or can want so long as he is in the body. And every unregenerate man has this freedom.

If therefore you have not that which you want to have of God, or are not that which you ought to be in Christ Jesus, it is not because you have no free power of leaving yourself in the hands, and

under the operation of God, but because the same freedom of your will, seeks for help where it cannot be had, namely, in some strength and activity of your own faculties. Of this freedom of will it is said, "According to thy faith, so be it done unto thee"; that is to say, according as thou leavest and trustest thyself to God, so will his operation be in thee. This is the real, great magic power of the first turning of the will; of which it is truly said, that it always hath that which it willeth, and can have nothing else. When this freedom of the will wholly leaves itself to God, saying, not mine, but thy will be done, then it hath that, which it willeth. The will of God is done in it. It is in God. It hath divine power. It worketh with God, and by God, and comes at length to be that faith which can remove mountains; and nothing is too hard for it. And thus it is, that every unregenerate son of Adam hath life and death in his own choice, not by any natural power of taking which he will, but by a full freedom, either of leaving, and trusting himself to the redeeming operation of God, which is eternal life, or of acting according to his own will and power in flesh and blood, which is eternal death. And now, my dear friend, let me tell you, that as here lies all the true and real freedom, which cannot be taken from you, so in the constant exercise of this freedom, that is, in a continual leaving yourself to, and depending upon the operation of God in your soul, lies all your road to heaven. No divine virtue can be had any other way.

All the excellency and power of faith, hope, love, patience, and resignation, which are the true and only graces of the spiritual life, have no other root or ground, but this free, full leaving of yourself to God, and are only so many different expressions of your willing nothing, seeking nothing, trusting to nothing, but the life-giving power of his holy presence in your soul. To sum up all in a word. Wait patiently, trust humbly, depend only upon, seek solely to a God of light and love, of mercy and goodness, of glory and majesty, ever dwelling in the inmost depth and spirit of your soul. There you have all the secret, hidden, invisible upholder of all the creation, whose blessed operation will always be found by a humble, faithful, loving, calm, patient introversion of your heart to him, who has his hidden heaven within you, and which will open itself to you, as soon as your heart is left wholly to his eternal ever- speaking WORD, and ever-sanctifying Spirit within you.

Beware of all eagerness and activity of your own natural spirit and temper. Run not in any hasty ways of your own. Be patient under the sense of your own vanity and weakness; and patiently wait for God to do his own work, and in his own way. For you can go no faster, than a full dependence upon God can carry you.

You will perhaps say, Am I then to be idle, and do nothing towards the salvation of my soul? No, you must by no means be idle, but earnestly diligent, according to your measure, in all good works, which the law and the gospel direct you to, both with regard to your self and other people.

Outward good works to other people, may be justly considered as God's errand on which you are sent, and therefore to be done faithfully, according to the will, and in obedience to him that sent you. But nothing that you do, or practice as a good to yourself, and other people, is in its proper state, grows from its right root, or reaches its true end, till you look for no willing, nor depend upon any doing that which is good, but by Christ, the wisdom and power of God, living in you. I caution you only against all eagerness and activity of your own spirit, so far as it leads you to seek, and trust to something that is not God, and Christ within you.

I recommend to you stillness, calmness, patience, not to make you lifeless, and indifferent about good works, or indeed with any regard to them, but solely with regard to your faith, that it may have

its proper soil to grow in, and because all eagerness, restlessness, haste, and impatience, either with regard to God, or ourselves, are not only great hindrances, but real defects of our faith and dependence upon God.

Lastly, be courageous then, and full of hope, not by looking at any strength of your own, or fancying that you now know how to be wiser in yourself, than you have hitherto been; no, this will only help you to find more and more defects of weakness in yourself; but be courageous in faith, and hope, and dependence upon God. And be assured, that the one infallible way to all that is good, is never to be weary in waiting, trusting, and depending upon God manifested in Christ Jesus.

I am your hearty Friend and Well-Wisher.

March 20, 1756.

01.11 Letter 11

To a Person burdened with inward and outward troubles.

Worthy Sir, My heart embraces you, with all the tenderness and affection of Christian love; and I earnestly beg of God, to make me a messenger of his peace to your soul.

You seem to apprehend, I may be much surprised at the account you have given of yourself; but I am neither surprised, nor offended at it; I neither condemn, nor lament your estate, but shall endeavor to show you, how soon it may be made a blessing and happiness to you. In order to which, I shall not enter into a consideration of the different kinds of trouble you have set forth at large. I think it better to lay before you the one true ground and root, from whence all the evil and disorders of human life have sprung. This will make it easy for you to see, what that is, which must, and only can, be the full remedy and relief for all of them, how different soever, either in kind, or degree. The scripture has assured us, that God made man in his own image and likeness; a sufficient proof, that man, in his first state, as he came forth from God, must have been absolutely free from all vanity, want, or distress of any kind, from anything either within, or without him. It would be quite absurd and blasphemous, to suppose, that a creature beginning to exist in the image and likeness of God, should have vanity of life, or vexation of spirit: a Godlike perfection of nature, and a painful, distressed nature, stand in the utmost contrariety to one another.

Again, the scripture has assured us, that man that is born of a woman, hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery: therefore man now is not that creature that he was by his creation. The first divine and Godlike nature of Adam, which was to have been immortally holy in union with God, is lost; and instead of it, a poor mortal of earthly flesh and blood, born like a wild ass's colt, of a short life, and full of misery, is through a vain pilgrimage, to end in dust and ashes. Therefore, let every evil, whether inward, or outward, only teach you this truth, that man has infallibly lost his first divine life in God; and that no possible comfort, or deliverance is to be expected, but only in this one thing, that though man had lost his God, yet God is become man, that man may be again alive in God, as at the first. For all the misery and distress of human nature, whether of body or mind, is wholly owing to this one cause, that God is not in man, nor man in God, as the state of his nature requires: it is, because man has lost that first life of God in his soul, in and for which he was created. He lost this light, and spirit, and life of God, by turning his will, imagination, and desire, into a tasting and sensibility of the good and evil of this earthly bestial world.

Now here are two things raised up in man, instead of the life of God: first, self, or selfishness, brought forth by his choosing to have a wisdom of his own, contrary to the will and instruction of his creator. Secondly, an earthly, bestial, mortal life and body, brought forth by his eating that food, which was poison to his paradisaical nature. Both these must therefore be removed; that is, a man must first totally die to self, and all earthly desires, views, and intentions, before he can be again in God, as his nature and first creation requires. But now if this be a certain and immutable truth, that man, so long as he is a selfish, earthly-minded creature, must be deprived of his true life, the life of God, the spirit of heaven in his soul; then how is the face of things changed! For then, what life is

so much to be dreaded, as a life of worldly ease and prosperity? What a misery, nay what a curse, is there in everything that gratifies and nourishes our self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking? On the other hand, what happiness is there in all inward and outward troubles and vexations, when they force us to feel and know the hell that is hidden within us, and the vanity of everything without us, when they turn all our self-love into self-aborrence and force us to call upon God to save us from ourselves, to give us a new life, new light, and new spirit in Christ Jesus.

"O happy famine," might the poor prodigal have well said, "which, by reducing me to the necessity of asking to eat husks with swine, brought me to myself, and caused my return to my first happiness in my father's house."

Now, I will suppose your distressed state to be as you represent it; inwardly, darkness, heaviness, and confusion of thoughts and passions; outwardly, ill usage from friends, relations, and all the world; unable to strike up the least spark of light or comfort, by any thought or reasoning of your own.

O happy famine, which leaves you not so much as the husk of one human comfort to feed upon! For this is the time and place for all that good and life and salvation to happen to you, which happened to the prodigal son. Your way is as short, and your success as certain as his was: you have no more to do than he had; you need not call out for books, or methods of devotion; for, in your present state, much reading, and borrowed prayers, are not your best method: all that you are to offer to God, all that is to help you to find him to be your savior and redeemer, is best taught and expressed by the distressed state of your heart.

Only let your present and past distress make you feel and acknowledge this twofold great truth: first, that in and of yourself, you are nothing but darkness, vanity, and misery; secondly, that of yourself, you can no more help yourself to light and comfort, than you can create an angel. People at all times can seem to assent to these two truths; but then it is an assent that has no depth or reality, and so is of little or no use: but your condition has opened your heart for a deep and full conviction of these truths. Now give way, I beseech you, to this conviction, and hold these two truths, in the same degree of certainty as you know two and two to be four, and then you are with the prodigal come to yourself, and above HALF YOUR WORK IS DONE. Being now in full possession of these two truths, feeling them in the same degree of certainty, as you feel your own existence, you are, under this sensibility, to give up yourself absolutely and entirely to God in Christ Jesus, as into the hands of infinite love; firmly believing this great and infallible truth, that God has no will towards you, but that of infinite love, and infinite desire to make you a partaker of his divine nature; and that it is as absolutely impossible for the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to refuse all that good and life and salvation which you want, as it is for you to take it by your own power.

O drink deep of this cup! for the precious water of eternal life is in it. Turn unto God with this faith; cast yourself into this abyss of love; and then you will be in that state the prodigal was in, when he said, "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son'"; and all that will be fulfilled in you, which is related of him.

Make this, therefore, the twofold exercise of your heart: now, bowing yourself down before God, in the deepest sense and acknowledgement of your own nothingness and vileness; then, looking up unto God in faith and love, consider him as always extending the arms of his mercy towards you, and full of an infinite desire to dwell in you, as he dwells in angels in heaven. Content yourself with this inward and simple exercise of your heart, for a while; and seek, or like nothing in any book, but that which nourishes and strengthens this state of your heart.

"Come unto me," says the holy Jesus, "all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." Here is more for you to lie upon, more light for your mind, more of unction for your heart, than in volumes of human instruction. Pick up the words of the holy Jesus, and beg of him to be the light and life of your soul: love the sound of his name; for Jesus is the love, the sweetness, the compassionate goodness, of the deity itself; which became man, that so men might have power to become the sons of God. Love and pity and wish well to every soul in the world; dwell in love, and then you dwell in God; hate nothing but the evil that stirs in your own heart.

Teach your heart this prayer, till your heart continually saith, though not with outward words: "O holy Jesus: meek lamb of God! Bread that came down from heaven! Light and life of all holy souls! help me to a true and living faith in thee. O do thou open thyself within me, with all thy holy nature, spirit, tempers, and inclinations, that I may be born again of thee, in thee a new creature, quickened and revived, led and governed, by thy Holy Spirit."

Prayer so practiced, becomes the life of the soul, and the true food of eternity. Keep in this state of application to God; and then you will infallibly find it to be the true way of rising out of the vanity of time, into the riches of eternity. Do not expect, or look for the same degrees of sensible fervor. The matter lies not there. Nature will have its share; but the ups and downs of that are to be overlooked. Whilst your will- spirit is good, and set right, the changes of creaturely fervor lessen not your union with God. It is the abyss of the heart, an unfathomable depth of eternity within us, as much above sensible fervor, as heaven is above earth; it is this that works our way to God, and unites with heaven. This abyss of the heart, is the divine nature and power within us, which never calls upon God in vain; but whether helped or deserted by bodily fervor, penetrates through all outward nature, as easily and effectually as our thoughts can leave our bodies, and reach into the regions of eternity. The poverty of our fallen nature, the depraved workings of flesh and blood, the corrupt tempers of our polluted birth in this world, do us no hurt, so long as the spirit of prayer works contrary to them, and longs for the first birth of the light and spirit of heaven. All our natural evil ceases to be our own evil, as soon as our will- spirit turns from it; it then changes its nature, loses all its poison and death, and only becomes our holy cross, on which we happily die from self and this world into the kingdom of heaven. Would you have done with error, scruple, and delusion? Consider the deity to be the greatest love, the greatest meekness, the greatest sweetness, the eternal unchangeable will to be a good and blessing to every creature; and that all the misery, darkness, and death of fallen angels and fallen men, consist in their having lost their likeness to this divine nature. Consider yourself, and all the fallen world, as having nothing to seek or wish for, but by the spirit of prayer to draw into the life of your soul, rays and sparks of this divine, meek, loving, tender nature of God. Consider the holy Jesus as the gift of God to your soul, in spite of every inward or outward enemy. These three infallible truths, heartily embraced, and made the nourishment of your soul, shorten and secure the way to heaven, and leave no room for error, scruple or delusion

Expect no life, light, strength, or comfort, but from the Spirit of God, dwelling and manifesting his own goodness in your soul. The best of men, and the best of books, can only do you good, so far as they turn you from themselves, and every human thing, to seek, and have, and receive every kind of good from God alone; not a distant, or an absent God, but a God living, moving, and always working in the spirit and heart of your soul.

They never find God, who seek for him by reasoning and speculation; for since God is the highest spirit, and the highest life, nothing but a like spirit, and a like life, can unite with him, find or feel, or know anything of him. Hence it is, that faith, and hope, and love, turned towards God, are the only possible, and also infallible means of obtaining a true and living knowledge of him. And the reason is plain, it is because by these holy tempers, which are the workings of spirit and life within us, we seek the God of life where he is, we call upon him with his own voice, we draw near to him by his own Spirit; for nothing can breathe forth faith, and love, and hope to God, but that Spirit and life which is of God, and which therefore through flesh and blood thus presses towards him, and readily unites with him.

There is not a more infallible truth in the world than this, that neither reasoning nor learning can ever introduce a spark of heaven into our souls: but if this be so, then you have nothing to seek, nor anything to fear, from reason. Life and death are the things in question: they are neither of them the growth of reasoning or learning, but each of them is a state of the soul, and only thus differ, death is the want, and life the enjoyment of its highest good. Reason, therefore, and learning, have no power here; but only by their vain activity to keep the soul insensible of that life and death, one of which is always growing up in it, according as the will and desire of the heart worketh. Add reason to a vegetable, and you add nothing to its life or death. Its life and fruitfulness lieth in the soundness of its root, the goodness of the soil, and the riches it derives from air and light. Heaven and hell grow thus in the soul of every man: his heart is his root; if that is turned from all evil, it is then like the plant in a good soil; when it hungers and thirsts after the divine life, it then infallibly draws the light and Spirit of God into it, which are infinitely more ready and willing to live and fructify in the soul, than light and air to enter into the plant, that hungers after them. For the soul hath its breath, and being, and life, for no other end, but that the TRIUNE God may manifest the riches and powers of his own life in it.

Thus hunger is all, and in all worlds, everything lives in it, and by it; nothing else eats, or partakes of life; and everything eats according to its own hunger. Everything hungers after its own mother, that is, everything has a natural magnetic tendency to partake of that from which it had its being, and can only find its rest in that from whence it came. Dead as well as living things bear witness to this truth: the stones fall to the earth, the sparks fly upwards, for this only reason, because everything must tend towards that from whence it came. Were not angels and the souls of men breathed forth from God, as so many real offsprings of the divine nature, it would be as impossible for them to have any desire of God, as for stones to go upwards, and the flame downwards. Thus you may see, and feel, that the spirit of prayer not only proves that you came from God, but is your certain way of returning to him.

When, therefore, it is the one ruling, never ceasing desire of our hearts, that God may be the beginning and end, the reason and motive, the rule and measure, of our doing, or not doing, from morning to night; then everywhere, whether speaking or silent, whether inwardly or outwardly

employed, we are equally offered up to the eternal Spirit, have our life in him and from him, and are united to him, by that spirit of prayer, which is the comfort, the support, the strength and security of the soul, travelling by the help of God, through the vanity of time into the riches of eternity. For this spirit of prayer, let us willingly give up all that we inherit from our fallen father, to be all hunger and thirst after God; and to have no thought or care, but how to be wholly his devoted instruments; everywhere, and in everything, his adoring, joyful, and thankful servants. Have your eyes shut, and ears stopped to everything, that is not a step in that ladder that reaches from earth to heaven.

Reading is good, hearing is good, conversation and meditation are good; but then they are only good at times and occasions, in a certain degree; and must be used and governed, with such caution, as we eat and drink, and refresh ourselves, or they will bring forth in us the fruits of intemperance. But the spirit of prayer is for all times, and all occasions; it is a lamp that is to be always burning, a light to be ever shining; everything calls for it, everything is to be done in it, and governed by it; because it is, and means, and wills nothing else, but the whole totality of the soul, not doing this or that, but wholly, incessantly given up to God, to be where, and what, and how he pleases. This state of absolute resignation, naked faith, and pure love of God, is the highest perfection, and most purified life of those, who are born again from above, and through the divine power become sons of God: and it is neither more nor less, than what our blessed redeemer has called, and qualified us to long and aspire after, in these words: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven." It is to be sought for in the simplicity of a little child, without being captivated with any mysterious depths or heights of speculation; without nature, grace, or creature, but so far as it brings us nearer to God, forces us to forget and renounce everything for him; to do everything in him, with him, and for him; and to give every breathing, moving, stirring, intention, and desire of our heart, soul, spirit, and life to him.

Let every creature have your love. Love with its fruits of meekness, patience, and humility, is all that we can wish for to ourselves, and our fellow creatures; for this is to live in God, united to him, both for time and eternity. To desire to communicate good to every creature, in the degree we can, and it is capable of receiving from us, is a divine temper; for thus God stands unchangeably disposed towards the whole creation: but let me add my request, as you value the peace which God has brought forth by his Holy Spirit in you, as you desire to be continually taught by an unction from above, that you would on no account enter into any dispute with anyone about the truths of salvation; but give them every help, but that of debating with them; for no man has fitness for the light of the gospel, till he finds an hunger and thirst, and want of something better, than that which he has and is by nature. Yet we ought not to check our inclinations to help others in every way we can. Only do what you do, as a work of God; and then, whatever may be the event, you will have reason to be content with the success that God gives it. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear"; may be enough for you, as well as it was for our blessed Lord. The next thing that belongs to us, and which is also Godlike, is a true unfeigned patience, and meekness, showing every kind of good will and tender affection towards those that turn a deaf ear to us; looking upon it to be full as contrary to God's method, and the good state of our own hearts, to dispute with anyone in contentious words, as to fight with him for the truths of salvation.

"Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," saith our blessed Lord. He called none else, because no one else hath ears to hear, or a heart to receive the truths

of redemption.

Every man is a vain disputer, till such time as something has disturbed his state, and awakened in him a sensibility of his own evil and miserable nature. We are all of us afraid both of inward and outward distress; and yet, till distress comes, our life is but a dream, and we have no awakened sensibility of our own true state.

We are apt to consider parts and abilities, as the proper qualifications for the reception of divine truths; and wonder that a man of a fine understanding should not immediately embrace just and solid doctrines: but the matter is quite otherwise. Had man kept possession of his first rich and glorious state, there had been no foundation for the gospel redemption; and the doctrine of the cross, must have appeared quite unreasonable to be pressed upon him: and therefore says our Lord, "To the poor the gospel is preached." It is solely to them, and none else: that is, to poor fallen man, that has lost all the true natural riches and greatness of his first divine life; to him is the gospel preached. But if a man knows and feels nothing of this poverty of his nature, he is not that person to whom the gospel belongs: it has no more suitableness to his state, than it had to man unfallen: and then the greater his parts and abilities are, the better is he qualified to show the folly of every doctrine of that salvation, of which he has no want.

Such a man, though he may be of an humane, ingenuous, generous and frank nature, of lively parts and much candor, is nevertheless entirely ignorant of the depth of the heart of man, and the necessities of human nature. As yet (though he knows it not) he is only at play and pastime, pleasing himself with supposed deep enquiries after strict truth, whilst he is only sporting himself with lively wandering images of this and that, just as they happen to start up in his mind. Could but he see himself in the state of the poor distressed prodigal son, and find that himself is the very person there recorded, he would then, but not till then, see the fitness of that redemption, which is offered him by the mercy of God in CHRIST JESUS. But such a one, alas! is rich; he is sound; light is in his own power, goodness is in his own possession: he feels no distress or darkness; but has a crucible of reason and judgment, that on every occasion separates gold from dross: and, therefore, he must be left to himself, to his own Elysium, till something more than argument and disputation awakens him out of these golden dreams.

Let us beware also of the religious Pharisee, who raves against spiritual religion, because it touches the very heart string of all systematical divinity, and shakes the very foundation of every BABEL in every country; for not a system of divinity, since systems were in being, whether popish or Protestant, deserves a better name.

All preachers of the true spiritual mystery of the gospel, of a birth, light and life from above, in and by JESUS CHRIST (which are the mystic writers of every age) ever were, and will be, treated by the reigning fashionable orthodoxy, as enemies to the outward gospel, and its services, just as the prophets of God (who were the mystic preachers of the Jewish dispensation) were by the then reigning orthodoxy, condemned and despised, for calling people to a spiritual meaning of the dead letter, to a holiness infinitely greater than that of their outward sacrifices, types, and ceremonies.

Whoever he is that has any situation of his own to defend, be it that of a celebrated preacher, a champion for received orthodoxy, a head, a leader, or follower of any sect, or party, or particular method; or that seems, both in his own eyes, and in the eyes of others, to have made himself

significant in any kind of religious distinction; every such person, sooner or later, will find, that he has much of that very same to give up, which hindered the zealous, and eminently religious Pharisees from converting to CHRIST, in the spirit of a little child. Nor doth it help the matter, that such an one abounds with piety and excellency; for St. Paul was governed by a spirit of great piety, great excellency, and zeal for God. He says of himself, that when he was persecuting the disciples of Christ, he "lived in all good conscience, as touching the Law blameless, and according to the strictest sect of the Jewish religion": for the Pharisees, though many of them had all that hypocrisy and rottenness which Christ laid to their charge, yet as a sect, they were an order of most confessed and resplendent sanctity; and yet the more earnest and upright they were in this kind of zeal for goodness, the more earnestly they opposed and condemned the heavenly mystery of a new life from CHRIST, as appears from St. Paul. This sect of the Pharisees did not cease with the Jewish church; it only lost its old name; it is still in being, and springs now in the same manner from the gospel, as it did then from the Law: it has the same place, lives the same life, does the same work, minds the same things, has the same goodness at heart, has the same religious honor, and claims to piety, in the Christian, as it had in the Jewish church; and as much mistakes the depths of the mystery of the gospel, as that sect mistook the mystery signified by the letter of the Law and the prophets.

It would be easy to show in several instances, how the leaven of that sect works amongst us, just as it did amongst them. "Have any of the rulers believed on him?" was the orthodox question of the ancient Pharisees. Now we Christians readily and willingly condemn the weakness and folly of that question; and yet who does not see, that, for the most part, both priest and people, in every Christian country, live and govern themselves by the folly and weakness of the very same spirit which put that question: for when God, as he has always done from the beginning of the world, raises up private and illiterate persons, full of light and wisdom from above, so as to be able to discover all the workings of the mystery of iniquity, and to open the ground, and truth, and absolute necessity of such an inward spirit and life of CHRIST revealed in us, as time, carnal wisdom, and worldly policy have departed from; when all this is done, by the weakest instruments of God, in such a simplicity and fullness of demonstration, as may be justly deemed a miracle; do not clergy and laity get rid of it all, though ever so unanswerable, merely by the strength of the Pharisees' good old question, saying with them, "Have any of the rulers believed and taught these things? Hath the church in council or convocation? Hath Calvin, Luther, Zwinglius, or any of our renowned system-makers, ever taught or asserted these matters?" But hear what our blessed Lord saith, of the place, the power, and origin of truth: he refers us not to the current doctrines of the times, or to the systems of men, but to his own name, his own nature, his own divinity hidden in us: "My sheep," says he, "hear my voice." Here the whole matter is decisively determined, both where truth is, and who they are that can have any knowledge of it.

HEAVENLY truth is nowhere spoken but by the voice of CHRIST, nor heard but by the power of CHRIST living in the hearer. As he is the eternal WORD of GOD, that speaks forth all the wisdom, and wonders of GOD; so he alone is the Word, that speaks forth all the life, wisdom, and goodness, that is or can be in any creature; it can have none but what it has in him and from him: this is the one unchangeable boundary of truth, goodness, and every perfection of men on earth, or angels in heaven.

Literary learning, from the beginning to the end of time, will have no more of heavenly wisdom, nor any less of worldly foolishness in it, at one time than at another; its nature is one and the same through all ages; what it was in the Jew and the heathen, that same it is in the Christian. Its name, as well as nature, is unalterable, viz., foolishness with God.

I shall add no more, but the two or three following words.

I. Receive every inward and outward trouble, every disappointment, pain, uneasiness, temptation, darkness, and desolation, with both thy hands, as a true opportunity and blessed occasion of dying to self, and entering into a fuller fellowship with thy self-denying, suffering savior.

II. Look at no inward or outward trouble in any other view; reject every other thought about it; and then every kind of trial and distress will become the blessed day of thy prosperity.

III. Be afraid of seeking or finding comfort in anything, but God alone: for that which gives thee comfort, takes so much of thy heart from God. "Quid est cor purum? cui ex toto, et pure sufficit solus Deus, cui nihil sapit, quod nihil delectat, nisi Deus." That is, what constitutes a pure heart? One to which God alone is totally, and purely sufficient; to which nothing relishes, or gives delight, but God alone.

IV. That state is best, which exerciseth the highest faith in, and fullest resignation to God.

V. What is it you want and seek, but that God may be all in all in you? But how can this be, unless all creaturely good and evil become as nothing in you, or to you?

"Oh anima mea, abstrahe te ab omnibus. Quid tibi cum mutabilibus creaturis? Solum sponsum tuum, qui omnium est author creaturarum, expectans, hoc age, ut cor tuum ille liberum et expeditum semper inveniatur, quoties illi ad ipsum venire placuerit." That is, O my soul! abstract thyself from everything. What hast thou to do with changeable creatures? Waiting, and expecting thy bridegroom, who is the author of all creatures, let it be thy sole concern, that he may find thy heart free and disengaged, as often as it shall please him to visit thee. Be assured of this, that sooner or later, we must be brought to this conviction, that everything in ourselves by nature is evil, and must be entirely given up; and that nothing that is creaturely, can make us better than we are by nature. Happy, therefore, and blessed are all those inward or outward troubles, that hasten this conviction in us; that with the whole strength of our souls, we may be driven to seek ALL from and in GOD, without the least thought, hope, or contrivance after any other relief: then it is, that we are made truly partakers of the cross of CHRIST; and from the bottom of our hearts shall be enabled to say, with St. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory in anything, save the cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST: by which I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me."

Give up yourself to God without reserve. This implies such a state or habit of heart, as does nothing of itself, from its own reason, will or choice, but stands always in faith, hope, and absolute dependence upon being led by the Spirit of God into everything that is according to his will; seeking nothing by designing, reasoning, and reflection, how you shall best promote the honor of God, but in singleness of heart, meeting everything that every day brings forth, as something that comes from GOD, and is to be received, and gone through by you, in such an heavenly use of it, as you would suppose the HOLY JESUS would have done, in such occurrences. This is an attainable degree of perfection; and by having CHRIST and his Spirit always in your eye, and

nothing else, you will never be left to yourself, nor without the full guidance of GOD.

01.12 Letter 12

To Mr. T. L. My dearly beloved Friend, I begin, as I did my last, with assuring you, that I love to hear from you.

I am in some concern about the activity of your religious spirit, which I have often cautioned you against. You have seen, and as I think deeply apprehended, the true ground, on which man's redemption stands. This ground has been shown you, not only from the plain letter of scripture, but confirmed by the whole frame of nature.

Everything in heaven and earth, everything that you inwardly or outwardly feel, or know of your own soul, and body, are all shown to bear infallible witness to these two fundamental truths of the gospel: that our first father died to his first life in God; and that nothing in the whole nature of things, can be our redemption, but the first life of God, born again of God in the soul. You have had the fullest proof, that man was created in this high perfection of life. You have had the fullest proof, that Adam had no other way of dying to heaven, or losing his first state in God, but by the working of his will; and that every son of Adam, is to this day, only that which his faith, or the working of his will, or the desire of his heart (for they are all the same thing) maketh him to be. Jesus Christ is the divine nature, which must be alive again in man. But the life of the deity can only arise by a birth in us, by the hunger and faith and desire of the heart, or the working of the will turned to it; and this is the faith in Christ that does all. To what purpose therefore, is so much anxious enquiry about this or that? Why this running after everyone, to hear the history of himself, and the secrets of his own fancied experience?

If you know a man to be a fatalist, do you not enough know, that he cannot explain the mysteries of the gospel, all which have a quite contrary ground.

If a man has no notion, or belief of the fall of man can he tell you either the nature, or the necessity of Christian redemption? What room could there be for the divine philanthropy, if it could be supposed, that man and the world had not a better state, and life from him at first, than they have now?

If a man denies the necessity of the new birth from above, will you believe that this proceeds from an intimate familiarity with Christ, teaching him in private, the disbelief of that which he taught publicly when on earth? What folly to tell you, that you are only in a legal state, unless he could prove to you, that you have no aversion to wickedness, nor abstain from any sin, but so far as the fear and dread of punishment keep you from it. For this is the truth of the legal state; but when sin is disliked, and the commandments kept through a love of God, and a desire of divine goodness, there is the man in Christ a new creature, no longer under the yoke of the Law, but living in the freedom, and Spirit of God.

If a man tells you that Jesus is not God, surely it is time to have no fellowship with him. If he tells you, you are not to pray to God, but to Jesus, who is only a creature, is not this telling you, that it is unlawful for us to pray, as Jesus taught his disciples? And if it was wrong to pray to God, the Old

and New Testament are, from the beginning to the end, full of false religion? Or will he say, that though under the Old Testament men might rightly pray to the deity, yet we, by being Christians, have lost this privilege of relation to, and dependence upon God? But surely, I need not expose the extravagancy of these things, nor exhort you to be weary of such entertainment.

You tell me, that you cannot help thinking with Mr. S. "that all partial systems of salvation, are greatly derogatory to the goodness of God:" but that you would say this to very few, but myself. But dear soul, why should you say this to me? I have without any scruple, openly declared to all the world, that from eternity to eternity, nothing can come from God but mere infinite love. In how many ways have I proved, and asserted, that there neither is, nor can be any wrath, or partiality in God, but that every creature must have all that happiness, which the infinite love and power of God can help it to. Can I, or any creature, possibly say more of an impartiality in God? And is it not quite unreasonable, to ask more about it, or to carry it further? You say "the seeming impossibility of the Spirit and light of God, arising up again in any creature, that has extinguished it, is, you presume, the strongest argument that can be offered, in support of everlasting misery." And therefore you say, "you have chosen, with submission, to examine the force of this principal argument, which runs through the APPEAL, and my other writings." But, my dear friend, how came you to say this? For this is so far from being the principal, or any argument that runs through my Appeal, and other books, that there is not one single word, in all the Appeal, nor any other of my books, that touches upon this matter, till you come to the last book, viz., The Way to Divine Knowledge; and even in that book, the impossibility is so far from being asserted, that it is there affirmed, that this impossibility is not proved, nor ever likely to be so. Will you therefore charge me with proving a thing, that I show cannot be proved? It is my capital doctrine, that God is all love, and merely a will to all goodness; that he must eternally will that to the creature, which he willed at its creation.

But, my dear soul, debate not such matters as these, either with me, or anyone else. Stop your ears to all that you hear about them, and turn from everyone that will lead you into them. The perplexity that you make to yourself in such matters, is death to the divine life within you, is a great abuse of God's goodness towards you, and is a likely way for you to lose the peace and joy of that divine light, which has so largely opened itself within you.

Mr. G. and Mr. S. both of them (as they say) come out of the depths of hell, full of a new risen divine light within them. The first makes me a greater blasphemous of God, than the devils are, (N.B.) because I say, God has no other nature, or will towards every creature, but love and goodness. The other calls me blind, and ignorant, because I have not a self-evident knowledge of the salvation of devils. Now were you to find out a third, laying claim to the same certainty of divine light, as these two do, you might perhaps have them both condemned by one who had a self-evident knowledge of absolute election, and reprobation, and who knew with as great certainty, that God damns some eternally to make his power to be known, as Mr. S. knows Christ to be only a creature, and that prayer is not to be made to God, but solely to this creature.

Dear L. son of my love, I do not know that ever I wasted my spirits in writing, or thinking in the manner of this letter before, and trust I never shall again. But love towards you, and a hearty zeal for your true growth in the spiritual life, has compelled me into this wrangle.

Put away all needless curiosity in divine matters, and look upon everything to be so, but that which helps you to die to yourself, that the Spirit and life of Christ may be formed, and revealed in you. As for the purification of all human nature, either in this world, or some after ages, I fully believe it. And as to that of angels, if it is possible, I am glad of it, and also sure enough, that it will then come to pass.

Dear Soul,

Adieu.

01.13 Letter 13

To the same. My Dear Friend,

I thank you for the favor of yours. In the two extracts, you have sent, the writer says twice, he cannot adopt the dark side of my system. If what I have wrote may be called a system, it has put a full end to all that was dark, and partial, in every other system. It makes all the universe both of nature and grace, to be an edifice of love, kept up and governed by love. For I allow of no other God but love, who from eternity to eternity, can have no other will towards the creature, but to communicate good; and that no creature can have any misery, from which infinite goodness can deliver. Where then is the dark side? Must I assert God to be more than infinitely good?

Dear Soul,

Adieu.

June 9, 1752.

01.14 Letter 14

To the same. My dear L.,

I cannot tell you how much I love you. But that which of all things I have most at heart, with regard to you, is the real progress of your soul in the divine life. Heaven seems to be awakened in you. It is a tender plant. It requires stillness, meekness, and the unity of the heart, totally given up to the unknown workings of the Spirit of God, which will do all its work in the calm soul, that has no hunger or desire, but to escape out of the mire of its earthly life, into its lost union and life in God.

I mention this, out of a fear of your giving into an eagerness into many things, which though seemingly innocent, yet divide and weaken the workings of the divine life within you. For a multiplicity of wills, is the one only evil, disease, and misery, both of our souls and bodies. That which can make the soul to have only one will, and one love, is the universal tincture, both for soul and body. And nothing else is it. That alone can take the fall, or curse out of the body, which can take it out of the soul. For the curse through all nature, and creature, is but one and the same thing, viz., the absence of the heavenly power. Heaven is dead in gold, just as it is dead in man; and its heavenly tincture can only be made alive, in the same manner, and from the same power, as in the inward man is born again of the water, and Spirit from above. Our outward man must be tormented, crucified, mortified in the fire of our own flesh and blood; and then it is as the gross gold in the crucible heated by earthly fire. But as no fiery torments of our own flesh and blood, can glorify our inward man, and set him in his first angelic state, so no outward fire can torment gold into its first heavenly state. Our Lord said to the crucified thief, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Now no one is a divine magus, till he is thus qualified to say to his subject, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise. If he himself is not in paradise, he can do no paradisaical work. But, my friend, let not what I here say, put you upon disputing this point with anyone, for I say it for quite a contrary end, to show you the vanity of all such discourse. My dear Soul,

Adieu.

Oct. 16, 1752.

01.15 Letter 15

To the same. My dear L.,

I heartily thank you for your last. Talk no more of obtruding upon me with your letter. Everything that comes from you is welcome. I have no need to write anything to you, for you know all that I have to say. You stand upon the same ground, that I do. And you have nothing to do, but to be steadfast and unmoveable in that light, which God has vouchsafed to you.

But, my friend, take notice of this, no truths, however solid and well grounded, help you to any divine life, but so far as they are taught, nourished, and strengthened by an unction from above; and that nothing more dries, and extinguishes this heavenly unction, than a talkative, reasoning temper, that is always catching at every opportunity of hearing, or telling some religious matters.

You have found enough, to prove to you, that all must be found in God, manifested in the life of your soul. And I must say again, shut your eyes, and stop your ears, to all religious tales. My dear Soul,

Adieu.

Feb. 12, 1753.

01.16 Letter 16

To the same. My dear L.,

You have communicated to me several letters, that you have written to your friends, and I much approve of the spirit in which you have written them. Only I must repeat, what I have often said, have a care of too much eagerness to set other people right, lest it lead you too far from home, or too much exhaust that breath, which is to keep up the strength of your own inward life. I believe you understand me.

You want a remedy, to prevent the growth of suicide, and madness. They are not to be remedied by an new way of setting forth the folly, and extravagancy of them. When the fruit is evil, there is no remedy, but in putting the root of the tree in a better state.

Pride, is the father and mother of suicide and madness. Would you have a share in removing these evils, you must not cast about for high speculations, there is but one step to be taken, and that is, to show the necessity of dying to pride, and seeking for salvation only in humility. JESUS CHRIST is the only peace, and rest, and satisfaction of human life. This is absolute, and admits of no exception. St. John the Baptist was the true preparer of the way to CHRIST; if you think of any other way, it is labor lost. This point is absolutely determined where CHRIST says, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. If they believe not Moses, nor the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one arose from the dead."

Miracles and demonstrations, you see, are in vain, till Moses, and the prophets are believed.

Now Moses is sin, made known by the Law, and the prophets, are faith and hope in God. And these two things must have their state, and work in the soul, before it can have any benefit from CHRIST and his miracles. If you would therefore give some check to the growth of suicide and madness, it cannot be by attacking them in themselves, or speaking to the unreasonableness of their particular nature, this is as useless, as a miracle to him, that heareth neither Moses, nor the prophets.

Now as Moses and the prophets were of necessity, before the coming of CHRIST, so it must be in every human soul. And this proves the truth, of what has been so often asserted, of the importance of apprehending the fall of man, in its true and full depth. For to hear Moses and the prophets is in reality only this, viz., man become truly sensible of his impure, and fallen nature, and looking up to God to be delivered from it. Then, whether he has, or has not, ever seen the Bible, he is a true believer of Moses and the prophets, is that lost sheep, that is sure of being found, that weary and heavy laden, that must find rest and refreshment in CHRIST.

It matters not therefore, my friend, what you are upon, whether you would save a man from deism, debauchery, or suicide, you must begin in the same place, from one and the same ground, and this as unavoidably, as every fruit must have its beginning from the root, and from the root in its right state. The amiableness of any virtue, or the horrid nature of any vice, whilst only considered

as in themselves, are but as pictures set before our eyes, and have no other effect upon us. And this is the unprofitableness of all moral instructions, whether heathen, or Christian.

If you can help a man to seek, and find, and know himself, and his real relation to God; to know that he has neither inward, nor outward evil, but because he has lost his true state, and place in God; and that therefore nothing can be his peace and happiness, but his first divine life, or nature quickened again in him, then you have done all that you can for him, whatever his malady is. But enough of this.

Dear Soul,

Adieu.

Aug. 4, 1753.

01.17 Letter 17

To the same. My dear L.,

You have a scruple about the wondrous lives of the fathers in the deserts, because in such contrariety to his character, who went about doing good. But if you only consider what you have said of them yourself, that the reading of their lives, at "once struck you with the deepest devotion, and made you think what a noviciate you were in the love of God," you would have reason enough to place them amongst the faithful, and true disciples of him, who went about doing good. For what greater good, than to do that to others, for so many ages, which they have done for you? They are not written to raise an emulation in you, to copy after them; nor is there any reason to think, that their story is not much exaggerated. But be that as it will, it is certain, they were the salt of the world for that time, and that the good providence of God blessed his church with them.

They are not for you to read, but as it were en passant, or for a little change of air, and their particularity of life no more concerns you, than that of John the Baptist.

God's last dispensation to the world, is the opening the ground, and mystery of all things, to which every blindness, and vanity, and strife of human life must, sooner or later, be forced to give up itself. The children of this dispensation have no occasion to look backwards. It is like learning your A B C, when you are called and qualified to read. Be not too fond of abstemiousness, nor too much attached to a milk diet; let nothing be a reason for your doing, or not doing anything of this kind, but the health and strength of your body. As soon as you are able to bear a stronger diet, I would have you by all means to use it. There is no more harm in getting strength from good food, than from sound sleep. And this kind of diet, is only to be used as a remedy for a time.

Dear Soul,

Adieu.

Feb. 9, 1754.

01.18 Letter 18

To the same. My dear friend, The variety of trials, you have lately met with, are but a specimen of what you are to expect, in some form or other, so long as you breathe the air of this fallen world. The longer we are without them, the more our need of them is increased. And they never give great smart, but where something is to be torn off, that sticks too close to us. One reflection upon these sacred words, "My kingdom is not of this world: The Son of Man hath not where to lay his head," are sufficient to take not only the sting out of every cross, that can here befall us, but even to make us afraid, and ashamed of being pleased with anything, that has the name of worldly honor, and prosperity.

You have no reason to wonder at anything you see, or hear, of the partiality, selfishness, envy, and enmity, that so often breaks out between brothers and sisters of the same blood. For if blood-relations, considered as such, could have any true goodness, or unselfish regard to one another, we should not be under the necessity of being born again from above. Will it do you any good to tell you, that thus says my heart, without speaking a word. "Let nothing live in me, but the redeeming power of my holy Jesus, nothing pray in me but thy Holy Spirit." This is my ship, in which, I would be always at sea. All that I seek, or mean, either for myself, or others, by every height and depth of divine knowledge, given us by God in his illuminated Behmen, is only for this end, that we may be more willing, and glad to become such little children, as our Lord has told us, are the only heirs of the kingdom of God. The piercing critic may, and naturally will grow in pride, as fast as his skill in words discovers itself. And every kind of knowledge, that shows the scholar, the orator, the disputer, the commentator, the historian, his own powers, and abilities, are the same temptation to him, that Eve had from the serpent; and he will get no more good by the love and relish of such knowledge, than she got by her love of the tree, that was so desirable to make one wise. But he whose eyes are opened, to see into this mystery of all things, sees nothing but death to himself, and to everything, that he had called, or delighted in as his own. This is the bold depth of his knowledge. And if you would know its aspiring height, it consists in learning to know, that which the angels and twenty-four elders about the throne of God, knew, when they cast down their crowns, before him that sat on the throne, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, thou art worthy to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created. It is to know that the triune majesty of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are the threefold power, life, glory, and perfection of every creature, that sings praises to God, in heaven and in earth. This is the proud knowledge of those, who are let into the holy of holies, opened by the Spirit of God in his chosen instrument, Behmen. Which goes no deeper, than to see the nothingness of man, ascends no higher, than to know that God is all; which begets nothing in man, but that which was begotten in Paul, when he cried out, "God forbid, that I should glory in anything, but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

01.19 Letter 19

To the same. My dear Friend, Your strictures upon messieurs of the foundery, the tabernacles, are very just. These gentlemen seem to have no other bottom to stand upon, but that of zeal. I hope God will direct it for them, that more good may come from it, than the world is willing to believe. But I say no more of them. I would advise you not to enter into disputes with them, nor any others, in defense of those principles, which are the very life and heart of the Law, the prophets, and the gospel. No one begins to object against them, but on the account of something that is personal, either with regard to himself, or the author of them, or because they are contrary to his views and situation in the world. He who could free himself from these prejudices, would want no one to persuade him the truth of them.

Mr. J. W. is an ingenious man; and the reason why his letter to me, is such a juvenile composition of emptiness, and pertness, as is below the character of any man, who had been serious in religion but half a month, is because, it was not ability, but necessity, that put his pen into his hand. He had condemned my books, preached much against them, and to make all sure, forbid his people the use of them. And for a cover to all this, he promised from time to time to write against them. Therefore an answer was to be made at all adventures. What you happen to hear of Mr. J. W. concerning me, or my books, let it die with you. Wish him God speed in everything that is good. But this you may easily know, that he, and the pope, have the same reasons, and are under the same necessity of condemning and anathematizing the mystery revealed by God, in J. B.

Adieu.

Sept., 1756.

P.S. I have no objection to your learning the French language, but think you much in the right, in intending to proceed very leisurely in it, and as it were by the by. To learn, and love the language of the internal speaker, is more than to have the tongues of men and angels.

01.20 Letter 20

To the same. My dear Friend,

I was much concerned at the account you sent me, of the state of your health, and think it very advisable, to seek out for help. But there is the difficulty where to find it. All is so very superficial in the art of physic, and from so poor a ground, that one has little to like in one physician more than in another, but his personal tempers and behavior. Air, and gentle exercise much pursued, must be greatly beneficial to you. If your physician be for your purpose, he will not load you with shop-medicines, nor ought you to submit to anyone that does. Nothing can assist you, but some simple regimen, that gradually lessens the hectic in your blood. My dear brother pilgrim, be of good comfort, our road of life is such, that weakness can help us on as fast as strength. Use outward medicines, as if you used them not. The universal is within you, and whether you find it in a sickly, or a healthy body, is but a small matter.

Daily, hourly, thankful resignation to God in e verything, is the best regimen, you can enter into, both for soul and body. Every good wish attends my dear fellow-traveller out of time, into eternity.

Farewell.

Oct. 10, 1756.

01.21 Letter 21

LETTER XXI. To G. W. The large account you have given of yourself, is very affecting, and I hope God will turn all the variety of your past distress, into means of a future solid peace, and rest in his divine love. To be weary and heavy laden, is to have the highest fitness to receive that rest, that CHRIST alone can give. These are the persons that he called to him, when he was upon earth. They who are content with themselves, are in the utmost danger of never knowing that happiness, for which they were created. For a while, consider yourself in such solitude, as if there was only God and you in the world, free from every thought, but that of desiring to be wholly and solely his, and looking wholly to his goodness, to be delivered out of the misery of your fallen state.

Stand firmly in this faith, that God and the kingdom of heaven, are certainly within you, and within you for this only reason, that they may become your salvation. As all therefore is within, so let all your care be turned inwards, in loving, adoring, and praying to this GOD and CHRIST within you. Be not too eager about much reading. Nor read anything, but that which nourishes, strengthens, and establishes this faith in you, of an inward savior, who is the life of your soul. To grow up in this faith, is taking the best means, of attaining to the best knowledge in all divine matters.

Cast away all reflections about yourself, the world, or your past life. And let all be swallowed up, or lost in this joyful thought, that you have found the messiah, the savior of the world, not in books, not in history, but in the birth, and bottom of your own soul. Give yourself up to this birth of heaven within you, expect all from it, let it be the humble, faithful, longing desire of your heart, and desire no knowledge, but that which is born of it, and proceeds from it. Stand only in this thirst of knowledge, and then all that you know will be spirit and life. With a Heart full of good Wishes to you,

I am,

Yours, May 8, 1750.

01.22 Letter 22

To the same. My dear Friend,

I know not myself, how to write to the most illuminated person upon earth, for advice, or instruction. And the more dark, and distressed my state should be, the more I should be averse to seek counsel of any creature; not from an opinion of any sufficiency in myself, but from a fullness of conviction, that I run away from relief, and deprive myself of the true light, and comfort, by not seeking, and depending upon God ALONE for it.

All my writings have no other end, but to communicate this conviction to my readers, and consequently to teach them to have done with me, as soon as I have convinced them, that GOD and CHRIST and the kingdom of heaven are only to be found by man, in his own heart, and only capable of being found there, by his own love of them, faith in them, and absolute dependence upon them.

What room, therefore, for calling out for help and direction, when once it is known, that all consists in an implicit blind faith, in purity of love, and total resignation to the Spirit of GOD? For where can these be exercised, but in the states and trials through which human life must pass. And to acquiesce in God, when things are inwardly, and outwardly easy with us, but to cast about for help from something that is not God, when distress and darkness come upon us, is the error of errors, and the greatest hindrance to our true union with GOD in CHRIST JESUS.

I am with much Truth and Sincerity, Your affectionate Friend.

Sept. 22, 1754

01.23 Letter 23

To the same. My dear Friend, The charge of Spinozism brought against me by Dr. Warburton, has all the folly and weakness that can well be imagined. For as Spinozism, is nothing else but a gross confounding of God and nature, making them to be only one and the same thing, so the full absurdity, and absolute impossibility of it, can only be fundamentally proved, by that doctrine which can go to the bottom of the matter, and demonstrate the essential, eternal, and absolute distinction, between God and nature; a thing done over and over, from page to page in those books, from which the doctor has extracted Spinozism, just with as much acuteness, as if he had spied rank Warburtonianism, in my letter to the Right Reverend the Bishop of London.

Now although the difference between God and nature, has always been supposed, and believed, yet the true ground of such distinction, or the why, the how, and in what, they are essentially different, and must be so to all eternity, was to be found in no books, till the goodness of God, in a way not less than that of miracle, made a poor illiterate man, in the simplicity of a child, to open and relate the deep mysterious ground of all things; in which is shown the birth and beginning of nature, or the first workings of the inconceivable God, opening and manifesting his hidden, triune deity, in an outward state of glory, in the splendor of united fire, light, and spirit, all kindled, and distinguished, all united and beatified, by the hidden, invisible, inconceivable, supernatural Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, working all the glories in heaven, and every kind of life, and blessing on earth, by visible, and invisible fire, light, and spirit. This is the wonderful gift of God to these last distracted ages of the world; and as every purpose of God must stand, and sooner or later produce all that, which God intended by it; so the more the wise and the learned in all churches, reject this counsel of God, the more they will promote its success over themselves, and only help it, to come forth with greater strength, and glory to God, by being owned, and proclaimed by the mouths of babes, and sucklings.

Babel hath always had men for its builders; but the kingdom of God ever was, and ever will be made up of little children.

Farewell.

April 10, 1757.

P.S. I have read the pamphlet you sent on Divinity Studies. It may be said to be much better, than most of the kind in this and the last century, and infinitely beyond Mr. Wesley's Babylonish Address to the Clergy; but yet so wrong, as to be worse than no advice at all. We seem to be further from the gospel, in point of spirit, than in distance of time. What shall I say? Babel is not a city, it is the whole Christian world. As to all these directors of divinity-students, no more folly need be laid to their charge, than is done by our Lord in these words, "Without me ye can do nothing; as my Father sent me, so send I you; the Holy Spirit shall guide you into all truth." To all which the apostle subscribeth in these words, "Who hath made us able ministers, not of the letter, but of the spirit."

Now, put these words of Christ and his apostles, at the beginning and end of Mr. Wesley's Address, and then you will see that almost all that is betwixt them, is empty babble, fitter for an old grammarian, that was grown blear-eyed in mending dictionaries, than for one who had tasted the powers of the world to come, and had found the truth as it is in Jesus.

01.24 Letter 24

To Mr. T. L. My dear L.,

Tamper with no physicians, but content yourself, to have that share of health, which a regular and good life can help you to. Reflect not upon your predominant complexion, or how long it will be, before you get from under its power. St. Paul wanted to be delivered from his thorn in the flesh. He had all he prayed for, though the thorn might continue, when God said to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee"; this was better to him, than if his thorn had been taken from him. This enabled him to say, "I will glory in my infirmities; for when I am weak, then I am strong." You believe, that if it was not for earnest and continual prayers, your turn to melancholy would get the better of you. You cannot believe this too much, for nothing else can preserve you, from being led away by every other evil temper. But let resignation to God, be the predominant part of your spirit of prayer; it is not so much ardent desires, as humble resignation to be as God pleases, that keeps the heart in the highest union with him. Faith and hope and love get their best strength, and work their highest work, when resignation is the salt wherewith they are seasoned.

You think, if you were to live an hundred years in an abstracted contemplation, some property of nature, would still be occasionally breaking forth in you. What occasion had you, my friend, to make this complaint about such a contemplation?

You have no business with it, nor any reason to expect it should do anything for you. Had you changed your words, and said, I believe if I were for a hundred years to be wholly trusting in, and depending upon God, to do that for me, which he has promised to do for all that trust in him, it would not be done: Had you expressed your complaint in these words, you would have seen, that neither faith, nor hope, nor love, nor resignation, would have allowed you to make it. Look at yourself, at the power of time, or anything that this or that complexion does, and then you may be afraid of everything; but look at God, as him that is to do all for you, and in you, and then you need be afraid of nothing. A thorn, or no thorn, bad or good blood, with all its effects, lose all their difference, as soon as you know, that you are not your own, nor left to yourself, nor where to seek a physician, that will not leave you unhealed.

We know that all things must work together for good, to them that love God. Now what signifies what the things are, if we are to have the same good from them, be they what they will? Let complexion show itself, let the dead ashes of old sins, seem to be ready to come to life again, what is all this, but helping us to be more alive unto God? Flesh will be flesh as long as we live, but every state of the flesh may help us to grow in the Spirit. Therefore rejoice evermore, in everything give thanks, and call nothing but this, abstracted contemplation.

Farewell.

01.25 Letter 25

To a Clergyman of Westmoreland.

Reverend Sir,

Concerning the following texts, God hardened the heart of pharaoh; "He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth"; "Good and evil are from the Lord"; "I create light, and I create darkness"; you ask, how these things can be consistently affirmed of a God, all love and goodness to his creatures?

I would ask you also, is there any difficulty of admitting the truth of this scripture, "In God we live, and move, and have our being"? does this clash with the idea of a God all love and goodness to the creatures? Now take all the contrary things that are said of God, with relation to that which passes between God and man, and they all imply no more, affirm no more, than the single foregoing text, namely, that in every state of the life of man, be it what it will, either under a sense and enjoyment of good, or the power and pain of evil, it is all owing to this divine, original, essential relation between God and man, or because in him we live, and move, and have our being. For man, thus come from God, must through the whole course, or endless ages of his life, neither know, nor find, nor feel anything of good or evil, life or death, happiness or misery, but solely because of that, which God is in him, and to him, and because of that, which he is in God, and hath from him, by his original birth or creation. The earthly animals, whose birth is only in and from this world, can have no evil of sin, or misery in their state, from God; and that only for this one reason, because they are not born of God, or partakers of the divine nature. Therefore God's creating evil in man, is the same thing, as if it were said, the divine birth in man, is that which creates his evil, because he could have no sin of a wrathful, proud, hardened heart, these things could neither exist in him, or be known by him, but because he came into being by a divine birth. Angels could not be diabolical spirits of darkness, fiery dragons of wrath, fury, malice, vengeance, envy, hatred, but because they were all born of God, to live and move and have their being in him. This has created all the evil of every kind, that they can feel or know in their whole state.

All the difficulty of reconciling such contrary things as are said of God, that he willeth only life and good, and yet that evil and death, are said to come from him, arises from our considering the operations of God, in a creaturely manner, or as we should understand the same contrary things, if they were affirmed of any creature. Whereas the operation of God, in its whole kind and nature, is as different from anything that can be done by creatures, as the work and manner of creation, is different, in power, nature, and manner, from that which creatures can do to one another. For (N.B.) the operation of God is never in or with the creature in any other manner, or doing any other thing, but that which it was and did in the creation of them. This, and this alone is the working of the deity in heaven and on earth; nothing comes from him, or is done by him through all the eternity of his creatures, but that essential manifestation of himself in them, which began the glory and perfection of their first existence. Now from this one, single, immutable operation of God, that he can be nothing else in, or towards the creature, but that same love and goodness, that he was

to it, at its creation, it necessarily follows, that to the creature that turns from him, God can be nothing else to it, but the cause of all its evil and miserable state. Hence is that of the apostle, that "sin cometh by the Law, because where there is no Law, there is no transgression." Now God, or the divine nature in man, is the one great Law of God in man, from which, all that is good and all that is evil in him, hath its whole state and nature. His life can have no holiness or goodness in it, but as the divine nature within him, is the law by which he lives. He can commit no other sin, nor feel any kind of hurt or evil from it, but what comes from resisting, or rebelling against that of God, which is in him; and therefore the good and evil of man, are equally from God. And yet this could not be, but because of this ground, viz., that God is unchangeable love and goodness, and has only one will and work of love and goodness towards the creature. Just as the Law could not make sin, or evil, but because it has no sin or evil in itself, but is immutably righteous, holy, and good, and has only one will and one work towards man, whether he receives good or evil by it. Therefore the righteous, holy Law, that is so, because it never changes its good will, and work towards man, can truly say of itself these two contrary things, I create good, and I create evil, without the least contradiction. In the like truth, and from the same ground, it must be said, that happiness and misery, life and death, tenderness and hardness of heart, are from God, or because God is that which he is, in and to the birth and life of man. This is the one true key to the state of man before his fall, to his state after his fall, and to the whole nature of his redemption. All which three states, are in a few words of our savior, set forth in the clearest and strongest degree of light. "I am the true vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, bringeth forth much fruit." This was man's first created state of glory and perfection, it was a living and abiding in God, such a birth and communion of life with him, and from him, as the branch hath in and from the vine. The nature of man's fallen state, and whence he has all the evil that is in it, is set forth in the following words, "If a man abide not in me" (the true vine) "he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and they are cast into the fire and burned." This comprehends the whole of man's fallen state, namely, a being broken off from the life of God, and therefore become such a poor, withered, helpless creature, as may have all that done to him, as a firebrand of hell and devils, which men may do to a broken off, withered branch of the vine. And his state is as different from that of his creation, as a withered branch, smoking and burning in the fire, is different from its first state of life and growth in the rich spirit of the vine. Again, the whole of man's redeemed state, is in the following words, "I am the bread of life, that came down from heaven; He that eateth this bread shall live for ever; Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, dwelleth in me, and I in him." This is our whole redemption, it consists in nothing else, but having the full life of God, or birth of Christ begotten, and born in us again. And thus do these three states of man fully show, that our first perfection, our miserable fall, and blessed redemption, have all that they have in them, whether of glory, or misery, merely and solely because God alone is all that is good, and can be nothing else but good towards the creature; and that neither angel, nor man can be happy or miserable, but because it either hath, or hath not, this one God of goodness essentially living and operating in it.

What a number of things called religion, are here cut off at once? since nothing is life, happiness, and glory, but the one essential operation of the triune God of love, and goodness within us; nothing is death, evil, or misery, but the departure, or turning from this essential God of our lives, to something that we would have from ourselves, or the creatures that are about us. And how greatly is he deluded, who living among the throng of religious schemes, thinks this, or that, or

anything in nature, can be his atonement, his reconciliation, and union with God, but the spirit, the body, and the blood of Christ forming themselves into a new creature within him. Then, and then only is he that first man that God created, in whom alone he can be well pleased. But till then, he is that man, whom the cherub's two-edged flaming sword will not suffer to enter into paradise. How is it now, that we are to regain that first birth of Christ? Why just in the same way, as Adam had it at first. What did he then do? How did he help forward God's creating power? Now creating again, or restoring a first life in God, is just the same thing, and the same sole work of God, as creating us at first; and therefore we can have no more share of power in the one, than in the other. Nothing lies upon us as creatures fallen from God, or is required of us with regard to our growth in God, but not to resist that, which God is doing towards a new creation of us. That which God is doing towards the new creation of us, had its beginning before the foundation of the world. "In Christ Jesus," saith St. Paul, "we were chosen before the foundation of the world"; the same as saying, that God out of his great mercy, had chosen to preserve a seed of the WORD and SPIRIT of God in fallen man, which through the mediation of a God incarnate, should revive into that fullness of stature in Christ Jesus, in which Adam was at first created. And all this work of God towards a new creation, is by that same essential operation of God in us, which at first created us in his image and likeness. And therefore nothing belongs to man in it, but only to yield himself up to it, and not resist it.

Now who is it, that may be said to resist it? It is everyone who does not deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Christ. For everything but this, is that flesh that warreth against the spirit. The whole life of the natural man, resisteth all that essential operation of God, which would create us again in Christ Jesus. Further, every religious man resisteth it, in and by and through the whole course of his religion, who takes anything to be the truth of piety, the truth of devotion, the truth of religious worship, but faith, and hope, and trust, and dependence upon that alone, which the all-creating WORD, and all-sanctifying SPIRIT of God, inwardly, essentially, and vitally worketh in his soul. Would you know, how you are to understand this essential operation of the triune holy deity in our souls, and why nothing else is, or can be that grace or help of God, which bringeth salvation, take this earthly similitude of the matter. The light and air of this world, are universal powers, that are essential to the life of all the creatures of this world. They are essential, because nothing sees, till the light has brought forth a birth of itself in the essence of the creature, which birth of light can last no longer, than it is essentially united with the operation of that universal light which brought it forth: Air is also essential to the life of the creature, because nothing lives, till a birth of the air is born in it, nor any longer, than its own in-born air, is in essential union with that universal air, and operation of air, that first brought it forth. Now from this essential, unalterable relation between light and air, and seeing, living creatures, it plainly follows, that darkness and death, may be ascribed to them, as well as seeing and life.

Thus, if light and air could say anything of themselves in outward words, of that which they are, and do to all animals; if the light was to say, It is I that make seeing and blind eyes; if the air was to say, I create life, and I create death; could there be any difficulty of understanding, or allowing the truth of these words? Or could they be true in any other sense, but because where light is not, there is the cause of darkness, and where air is not, there is the cause of death. And so in the strictest truth of the words, seeing and blind eyes are from the light; living and dead bodies are from the air. Because darkness could not be, but because light does not shine in it, nor the body be dead, but because the breathing of the air is not in it.

It is thus, with the essential operation of the triune holy God, in the life of all divine and godly creatures, whether men or angels. The light and Holy Spirit of God, are universal powers, and essential to the birth of a godly life in the creature; which creaturely birth of a divine life, can begin no sooner, than the WORD and SPIRIT of God bring forth a birth of themselves in the creature, nor subsist any longer, than it is united with, and under the continual operation of that Word and Spirit, which brought it forth. Hence it is truly said, that spiritual life, and spiritual death, spiritual good and spiritual evil happiness and misery are from God, and that for this one reason, because there is no good, but in God, nor any other operation of God in, and to the creature, but that of heavenly life, light, love, and goodness. When man, created in the image and likeness of God, to be an habitation and manifestation of the triune God of goodness, had by the perverseness of a false will, turned from his holy state of life in God, and so was dead to the blessed union, and essential operation of God in his soul, yet the goodness of God towards man, altered not, but stood in the same good will towards man as at the first, and willed, and could will nothing else towards the whole human nature, but that every individual of it, might be saved from that state of death and misery in an earthly nature, into which they were fallen.

Hence, that is, from this unchangeable love of God towards man, which could no more cease, than God could cease, came forth that wonderful scene of providence, of such a variety of means, and dispensations, of visions, voices, and messages from heaven, of law, of prophecies, of promises and threatenings, all adapted to the different states, conditions, and ages of the fallen world, for no other end, but by every art of divine wisdom, and contrivance of love, to break off man from his earthly delusion, and beget in him a sense of his lost glory, and so make him capable of finding again that blessed essential operation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in his soul, which was the essential glory of his first creation.

Now, as in this scene of a divine and redeeming providence, God had to do with a poor, blind, earthly creature, that had lost all sense of heavenly things, as they are in themselves, so the wisdom of God, must often, as it were, humanize itself, and condescend to speak of himself after the manner of men. He must speak of his eyes, his ears, his hands, his nose, because the earthly creature, the mere natural man, could no otherwise be brought into any sense of that, which God was to him. But now all this process of divine providence, was only for the sake of something higher; the mystery of God in man, and man in God, still lay hid, and was no more opened, than the mystery of a redeeming Christ, was opened in the type of a paschal lamb.

Pentecost alone was that, which took away all veils, and showed the kingdom of God, as it was in itself, and set man again under the immediate, essential operation of God, which first gave birth to a holy Adam in paradise. Types and shadows ended, because the substance of them was found. The cloven tongues of fire had put an end to them, by opening the divine eyes, which Adam had closed up, unstopping the spiritual ears, that he had filled with clay, and making his dumb sons to speak with new tongues. And what did they say? They said all old things were gone, that a new heaven and a new earth were coming forth, that God himself was manifested in the flesh of men, who were now all taught of God. And what were they taught? That same which Adam was taught by his first created life in God, namely, that the immediate, essential operation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, was henceforth the birthright of all that were become true disciples of Christ. Thus ended the old creation, and the fall of man, in a God manifested in the flesh, dying in and for the world, and coming again in spirit, to be the life and light of all the sons of Adam.

Look now at all God's dispensations to the day of Pentecost, in this true point of view, as so many schools of different discipline and education of the natural man, till by a birth from above, he could bear the language of heaven, and be taught of God, and then you will sufficiently see the childish folly of those gray-headed doctors, who forgetting that the last times are come, when God will be known only as a spirit, worshipped only in spirit, because everything else is but shadow, and not the truth, yet set up themselves as masters, or rabbis of new schools of their own, which can only keep up that dotting learning, and wisdom of words, which compelled the learned Jews, for the sake of God, and goodness, for the sake of Law and prophecy to crucify the Christ of God, as a Beelzebub, and blasphemer. This old logic and criticism of scribes and Pharisees, is that which robs disputing Christians of the truth as it is in Jesus, and instead of the true bread that came down from heaven, feeds their unregenerate hearts with the dry husks of that, which can be got from text set against text in the outward letter. Nay so wise are these verbal proficients, as to think the gospel must be false, and the Bible itself only fit to be burned, if all that, is not to be ascribed to God, as true of him, as he is in himself, which in condescension to the poor, ignorant, fallen, earthly creature, he speaks of his eyes, his ears, his hands, his turning his back, and turning his face, his coming down, and going up, his fiery wrath, his destroying fury, everlasting vengeance. Whereas all these things are said, not because of that, which God is in himself, in his holy, supernatural being, but because of that, which man is, in the blindness of his fallen state, so ignorant of God, so averse to godliness, as only capable for a time, to be instructed by the impressions of such language: That is, till the threatenings of the Law, and the word of prophecy have done their work, and that day star ariseth in the heart, which knoweth, and teacheth, that CREATOR, REDEEMER, and LOVE, are the one true unchangeable, triune God, that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which from everlasting to everlasting have only one will, and one work of heavenly life, light, and love in, and towards the creature. And as true as this is, so true is it also, that from the first to the last man, no one was, or ever will be any further from this essential operation of the holy deity in his soul, but so far as he hath withdrawn himself from it. "God hardened the heart of pharaoh"; this saith neither more nor less, than that pharaoh had withdrawn his heart from God. When God saith to Moses, "I will harden his heart, that he will not let the people go"; it hath no other meaning, than to give to Moses that same full assurance of pharaoh's state, which he gave to Jeremiah at another time. "Thou shalt" (saith God) "speak all these words to them," (N.B.) "but they will not hearken to thee, thou shalt call unto them, but they will not answer thee." Jeremiah 7:27. God helped pharaoh to his hardened heart, just as he helped Adam not to be afraid of eating of the evil tree, by assuring him, that certain death was hid in it. But Adam's turning from God, to hear the voice and instruction of his own reason and imagination, and the suggestions of a satanical serpent, was that which created in him a new hardened heart, bold enough to eat of the forbidden tree. Now here, sir, I would have you observe, that this rise of the first sin, full demonstrates how the matter unalterably stands between God and every sinner, to the end of the world; there cannot be the smallest variation, either on the side of God, or on the side of the sinner. The whole nature of God, his one unalterable will and work, stands in the same full opposition and contrariety to every work, of sin in every man, as it did to Adam's first transgression. Nothing new will ever be in any sin, it has but one way of coming into the world, it must always be born out of self and satan, as the first was. And that which God did to prevent the first sin, saying to Adam, Eat not, that same miraculous voice of love, keeps saying, and saying to every son of Adam, Sin not.

Yet so wise in the ways of God, are some divinity-students, as to teach and preach, that the whole world, through its thousands of years, has been bringing forth its millions of myriads of sinners all round the globe, who as soon as they have done with the vanity and misery of this world, are to be roaring in the hottest fire of an eternal hell. For what? Why, because they have been just as wicked, as the decrees of God required and forced them to be. And also through every age of the world, there hath always been a little number of righteous, who were to go to heaven, which number had no littleness in it, but because God would not suffer it to be greater. Can a charge like this be brought against satan? Nay, doth it not even free satan from all the evil that is charged upon him, and make him, though going about as a roaring lion, to be as insignificant a tool in the work of sin, as the preacher is in the work of godliness, though with ever so loud a voice, he beseeches the reprobate to be reconciled to God, or with tears in his eyes, exhorts the elect not to depart from him?

You once, I remember, said to me, that you thought I over did the matter, in my censure upon learning. Let learning therefore speak for itself. Let its own works praise it. What has it done? What has brought forth a multiplicity of churches, but that very same acuteness of learning, which asserts and proves there is but one? Whence comes transubstantiation, election, reprobation, justification of several sorts, necessity and insignificancy of works, Socinianism, Arianism, but from that knowledge of history, and critical skill in words, which is the glory of the learned world.

"Without me ye can do nothing," saith Christ. "That which a man soweth, that shall he reap," saith the apostle. Truths like these, of which the scripture is full, would keep all believers in the true church, attentive to the one thing needful, had not a learning falsely so called, filled all eyes with the dust of darkness.

Now, sir, be as sober as you will about the use and power of learning, logic, and eloquence, in the doctrines of salvation; condemn the bad use that heretics, schismatics, Arians and Socinians have made of them; yet let me whisper this truth into your ear, that you will never be delivered from the delusion and cheat of your own learning, till by a light of life risen up within you, you come to see, and know, that you want no more learning, to change you from a sinner into a saint, than Mary Magdalen did.

God said to Abraham, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." This was the Hebrew school, in which the Father of the faithful, was to learn to be perfect. But here now comes the scholar- critic, and finds, that matters stand not thus now, because the glorious light of the gospel (he says) has discovered that all lies in an election and reprobation, and that salvation and damnation come from nothing else, the apostle expressly saying, "It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." What a learned strife has there been about the meaning of these words? And yet they mean not one jot more or less, than when the apostle saith, "The natural man knoweth not the things of the spirit, neither can he know them." All that is in the one text, is in the other; and both of them say only this one great and good truth, namely, that the creature can have no divine life, light, goodness, and happiness, but from that, which the holy triune God is, and operates by a birth of his holy nature in it.

Farewell.

FINIS.

02.00 A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE

A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE ADAPTED TO THE STATE AND CONDITION OF ALL ORDERS OF CHRISTIANS BY WILLIAM LAW, A.M. (1906 VERSION)

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. St. Luke 8:8. “And behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me.” Revelation 12:12. A SERIOUS CALL TO A DEVOUT AND HOLY LIFE LIST OF OTHER WORKS

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APPENDICES OF THE PRESENT EDITION OF THE LIFE OF WILLIAM LAW OF THE
OPINIONS OF WILLIAM LAW OF THE SERIOUS CALL

02.00a Other Works

Letters to Bishop of Bangor 1717-1719 Fable of the Bees Unlawfulness of Stage Entertainments On Christian Perfection A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life, etc . The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, etc . On the Lord's Supper Answer to Dr. Trapp's Discourse The Spirit of Prayer Christian Regeneration " Where shall I go ... to be in the Truth," letter to a friend The Way to Divine Knowledge The Spirit of Love Confutation of Warburton's Defense of Christianity Of Justification by Faith and Works Letters on Important Subjects, and on Several Occasions Address to the Clergy Letters to a Lady inclined to enter the Church of Rome (1731-2) Collected Works , 9 vols 1762 EDITOR'S NOTE Law's "Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life" was first published in 1728, when he had been resident tutor for a time in the house at Putney of Edward Gibbon. He accompanied his pupil, a son of the same name, who became father to the great historian, to Cambridge in 1727; and when this son went abroad, he returned to the Gibbon household. According to Gibbon's "Autobiography," Law drew the portraits of Flavia and Miranda in the "Devout Life" from the two daughters of the house, Catherine and Hester. But, as Leslie Stephen pointed out, he would hardly have done this while himself still a member and spiritual adviser of the family.

Moreover, he had ample opportunities of meeting the Flavias and Mirandas of his day. On accompanying young Edward Gibbon to Cambridge, Law was already well acquainted with the University, for he had graduated there, and become fellow of Emmanuel College in 1711.

Law's "Three Letters to the Bishop of Bangor," in 1717, were the first distinct sign he afforded of his intellectual quality and his unique powers as an independent religious thinker. In 1726 appeared his "Absolute Unlawfulness of the Stage Entertainment;" also his "Practical Treatise on Christian Perfection," which confessedly influenced John and Charles Wesley, both of whom afterwards visited him at Putney. But they were temperamentally out of sympathy with his mysticism, and they parted company with him definitely as time went on. It was in 1740 that Law settled at King's Cliffe, where, with the aid of Mrs. Hutcheson, widow of a disciple and friend, and Miss Hester Gibbon, he proceeded to carry out in downright everyday practice the ideas of the "Serious Life." Here the rules were homely, hospitable, austere, and simple; and charity to the poor, practices of extreme generosity, kindness to animals, and attention to the smaller virtues, proved the absolute reality of Law's own "Call." The life at King's Cliffe was not unlike that of the household at Little Giddings described in "John Inglesant." Law latterly had come much under the influence of Jacob Boehme, but the mystics had profoundly appealed to him from the first. His "Way to Divine Knowledge," which was by way of preamble to a new English edition of the works of Boehme, appeared in 1752. We must not forget Dr. Johnson's tribute to the "Serious Call": that it was the first occasion of his "thinking in earnest of religion after he became capable of rational inquiry." William Law was born in 1686, and died in 1761 at King's Cliffe.

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02.01. Chapter 1

Concerning the nature and extent of Christian devotion.

DEVOTION is neither private nor public prayer; but prayers, whether private or public, are particular parts or instances of devotion. Devotion signifies a life given, or devoted, to God. He, therefore, is the devout man, who lives no longer to his own will, or the way and spirit of the world, but to the sole will of God, who considers God in everything, who serves God in everything, who makes all the parts of his common life parts of piety, by doing everything in the Name of God, and under such rules as are conformable to His glory. We readily acknowledge, that God alone is to be the rule and measure of our prayers; that in them we are to look wholly unto Him, and act wholly for Him; that we are only to pray in such a manner, for such things, and such ends, as are suitable to His glory.

Now let any one but find out the reason why he is to be thus strictly pious in his prayers, and he will find the same as strong a reason to be as strictly pious in all the other parts of his life. For there is not the least shadow of a reason why we should make God the rule and measure of our prayers; why we should then look wholly unto Him, and pray according to His will; but what equally proves it necessary for us to look wholly unto God, and make Him the rule and measure of all the other actions of our life. For any ways of life, any employment of our talents, whether of our parts, our time, or money, that is not strictly according to the will of God, that is not for such ends as are suitable to His glory, are as great absurdities and failings, as prayers that are not according to the will of God. For there is no other reason why our prayers should be according to the will of God, why they should have nothing in them but what is wise, and holy, and heavenly; there is no other reason for this, but that our lives may be of the same nature, full of the same wisdom, holiness, and heavenly tempers, that we may live unto God in the same spirit that we pray unto Him. Were it not our strict duty to live by reason, to devote all the actions of our lives to God, were it not absolutely necessary to walk before Him in wisdom and holiness and all heavenly conversation, doing everything in His Name, and for His glory, there would be no excellency or wisdom in the most heavenly prayers. No, such prayers would be absurdities; they would be like prayers for wings, when it was no part of our duty to fly. As sure, therefore, as there is any wisdom in praying for the Spirit of God, so sure is it, that we are to make that Spirit the rule of all our actions; as sure as it is our duty to look wholly unto God in our prayers, so sure is it that it is our duty to live wholly unto God in our lives. But we can no more be said to live unto God, unless we live unto Him in all the ordinary actions of our life, unless He be the rule and measure of all our ways, than we can be said to pray unto God, unless our prayers look wholly unto Him. So that unreasonable and absurd ways of life, whether in labor or diversion, whether they consume our time, or our money, are like unreasonable and absurd prayers, and are as truly an offense unto God. It is for lack of knowing, or at least considering this, that we see such a mixture of ridicule in the lives of many people. You see them strict as to some times and places of devotion, but when the service of the Church is over, they are but like those that seldom or never come there. In their way of life, their manner of spending their time and money, in their cares and fears, in their pleasures and indulgences, in

their labor and diversions, they are like the rest of the world. This makes the loose part of the world generally make a jest of those that are devout, because they see their devotion goes no farther than their prayers, and that when they are over, they live no more unto God, until the time of prayer returns again; but live by the same pleasure and fancy, and in as full an enjoyment of all the follies of life as other people. This is the reason why they are the jest and scorn of careless and worldly people; not because they are really devoted to God, but because they appear to have no other devotion but that of occasional prayers.

JULIUS is very fearful of missing prayers; all the parish supposes Julius to be sick, if he is not at Church. But if you were to ask him why he spends the rest of his time by pleasure or chance? why he is a companion of the silliest people in their most silly pleasures? why he is ready for every impertinent entertainment and diversion? If you were to ask him why there is no amusement too trifling to please him? why he is busy at all balls and assemblies? why he gives himself up to an idle, gossiping conversation? why he lives in foolish friendships and fondness for particular people, that neither need nor deserve any particular kindness? why he allows himself in foolish hatreds and resentments against particular people without considering that he is to love everybody as himself? If you ask him why he never puts his conversation, his time, and fortune, under the rules of religion? Julius has no more to say for himself than the most disorderly person. For the whole tenor of Scripture lies as directly against such a life, as against debauchery and intemperance--he that lives such a course of idleness and folly, lives no more according to the religion of Jesus Christ, than he that lives in gluttony and intemperance. If a man was to tell Julius that there was no occasion for so much constancy at prayers, and that he might, without any harm to himself, neglect the service of the Church, as the generality of people do, Julius would think such a one to be no Christian, and that he ought to avoid his company. But if a person only tells him, that he may live as the generality of the world does, that he may enjoy himself as others do, that he may spend his time and money as people of fashion do, that he may conform to the follies and frailties of the generality, and gratify his tempers and passions as most people do, Julius never suspects that man to lack a Christian spirit, or that he is doing the devil's work. And if Julius was to read all the New Testament from the beginning to the end, he would find his course of life condemned in every page of it. And indeed there cannot anything be imagined more absurd in itself, than wise, and sublime, and heavenly prayers, added to a life of vanity and folly, where neither labor nor diversions, neither time nor money, are under the direction of the wisdom and heavenly tempers of our prayers. If we were to see a man pretending to act wholly with regard to God in everything that he did, that would neither spend time nor money, nor take any labor or diversion, but so far as he could act according to strict principles of reason and piety, and yet at the same time neglect all prayer, whether public or private, would we not be amazed at such a man, and wonder how he could have so much folly along with so much religion? Yet this is as reasonable as for any person to pretend to strictness in devotion, to be careful of observing times and places of prayer, and yet letting the rest of his life, his time and labor, his talents and money, be disposed of without any regard to strict rules of piety and devotion. For it is as great an absurdity to suppose holy prayers, and divine petitions, without a holiness of life suitable to them, as to suppose a holy and divine life without prayers.

Let any one therefore think how easily he could confute a man that pretended to great strictness of life without prayer, and the same arguments will as plainly confute another, that pretends to

strictness of prayer, without carrying the same strictness into every other part of life. For to be weak and foolish in spending our time and fortune, is no greater a mistake, than to be weak and foolish in relation to our prayers. And to allow ourselves in any ways of life that neither are, nor can be offered to God, is the same irreligion, as to neglect our prayers, or use them in such a manner as make them an offering unworthy of God. The short of the matter is this; either reason and religion prescribe rules and ends to all the ordinary actions of our life, or they do not--if they do, then it is as necessary to govern all our actions by those rules, as it is necessary to worship God. For if religion teaches us anything concerning eating and drinking, or spending our time and money; if it teaches us how we are to use and disdain the world; if it tells us what tempers we are to have in common life, how we are to be disposed towards all people; how we are to behave towards the sick, the poor, the old, the destitute; if it tells us whom we are to treat with a particular love, whom we are to regard with a particular esteem; if it tells us how we are to treat our enemies, and how we are to mortify and deny ourselves; he must be very weak that can think these parts of religion are not to be observed with as much exactness, as any doctrines that relate to prayers.

It is very observable, that there is not one command in all the Gospel for public worship; and perhaps it is a duty that is least insisted upon in Scripture of any other. The frequent attendance at it is never so much as mentioned in all the New Testament. Whereas that religion or devotion which is to govern the ordinary actions of our life is to be found in almost every verse of Scripture. Our blessed Savior and His Apostles are wholly taken up in doctrines that relate to common life. They call us to renounce the world, and differ in every temper and way of life, from the spirit and the way of the world--to renounce all its goods, to fear none of its evils, to reject its joys, and have no value for its happiness--to be as new-born babes, that are born into a new state of things--to live as pilgrims in spiritual watching, in holy fear, and heavenly aspiring after another life--to take up our daily cross, to deny ourselves, to profess the blessedness of mourning, to seek the blessedness of poverty of spirit--to forsake the pride and vanity of riches, to take no thought for the morrow, to live in the profoundest state of humility, to rejoice in worldly sufferings--to reject the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--to bear injuries, to forgive and bless our enemies, and to love mankind as God loves them--to give up our whole hearts and affections to God, and strive to enter through the strait gate into a life of eternal glory. This is the common devotion which our blessed Savior taught, in order to make it the common life of all Christians. Is it not therefore exceeding strange that people should place so much piety in the attendance upon public worship, concerning which there is not one precept of our Lord's to be found, and yet neglect these common duties of our ordinary life, which are commanded in every page of the Gospel? I call these duties the devotion of our common life, because if they are to be practiced, they must be made parts of our common life; they can have no place anywhere else. If contempt of the world and heavenly affection is a necessary temper of Christians, it is necessary that this temper appear in the whole course of their lives, in their manner of using the world, because it can have no place anywhere else. If self-denial be a condition of salvation, all that would be saved must make it a part of their ordinary life. If humility be a Christian duty, then the common life of a Christian is to be a constant course of humility in all its kinds. If poverty of spirit be necessary, it must be the spirit and temper of every day of our lives. If we are to relieve the naked, the sick, and the prisoner, it must be the common charity of our lives, as far as we can render ourselves able to perform it. If we are to love our enemies, we must make our common life a visible exercise and demonstration of that love. If contentment and thankfulness, if the patient bearing of evil be duties

to God, they are the duties of every day, and in every circumstance of our life. If we are to be wise and holy as the new-born sons of God, we can no otherwise be so, but by renouncing everything that is foolish and vain in every part of our common life. If we are to be in Christ new creatures, we must show that we are so, by having new ways of living in the world. If we are to follow Christ, it must be in our common way of spending every day. Thus it is in all the virtues and holy tempers of Christianity; they are not ours unless they be the virtues and tempers of our ordinary life. So that Christianity is so far from leaving us to live in the common ways of life, conforming to the folly of customs, and gratifying the passions and tempers which the spirit of the world delights in, it is so far from indulging us in any of these things, that all its virtues which it makes necessary to salvation are only so many ways of living above and contrary to the world, in all the common actions of our life. If our common life is not a common course of humility, self-denial, renunciation of the world, poverty of spirit, and heavenly affection, we do not live the lives of Christians. But yet though it is thus plain that this, and this alone, is Christianity--a uniform, open, and visible practice of all these virtues, yet it is as plain, that there is little or nothing of this to be found, even among the better sort of people. You see them often at Church, and pleased with fine preachers--but look into their lives, and you see them just the same sort of people as others are, that make no pretenses to devotion. The difference that you find between them, is only the difference of their natural tempers. They have the same taste of the world, the same worldly cares, and fears, and joys; they have the same turn of mind, equally vain in their desires. You see the same fondness for state and equipage, the same pride and vanity of dress, the same self-love and indulgence, the same foolish friendships, and groundless hatreds, the same levity of mind, and trifling spirit, the same fondness for diversions, the same idle dispositions, and vain ways of spending their time in visiting and conversation, as the rest of the world, that make no pretenses to devotion.

I do not mean this comparison, between people seemingly good with profligate people; but between people of sober lives. Let us take an instance in TWO MODEST WOMEN--let it be supposed that one of them is careful of times of devotion, and observes them through a sense of duty, and that the other has no hearty concern about it, but is at Church seldom or often, just as it happens. Now it is a very easy thing to see this difference between these people. But when you have seen this, can you find any farther difference between them? Can you find that their common life is of a different kind? Are not the tempers, and customs, and manners of the one, of the same kind as of the other? Do they live as if they belonged to different worlds, had different views in their heads, and different rules and measures of all their actions? Have they not the same goods and evils? Are they not pleased and displeased in the same manner, and for the same things? Do they not live in the same course of life? does one seem to be of this world, looking at the things that are temporal, and the other to be of another world, looking wholly at the things that are eternal? Does the one live in pleasure, delighting herself in show or dress, and the other live in self-denial and mortification, renouncing everything that looks like vanity, either of person, dress, or carriage? Does the one follow public diversions, and trifle away her time in idle visits, and corrupt conversation, and does the other study all the arts of improving her time, living in prayer and watching, and such good works as may make all her time turn to her advantage, and be placed to her account at the last day? Is the one careless of expense, and glad to be able to adorn herself with every costly ornament of dress, and does the other consider her fortune as a talent given her by God, which is to be improved religiously, and no more to be spent on vain and needless ornaments than it is to be buried in the earth? Where must you look, to find one person of religion

differing in this manner, from another than, has none? And yet if they do not differ in these things which are here related, can it with any sense be said, the one is a good Christian, and the other not?

Take another instance among the men? LEO has a great deal of good nature, has kept what they call good company, hates everything that is false and base, is very generous and brave to his friends; but has concerned himself so little with religion that he hardly knows the difference between a Jew and a Christian. EUSEBIUS, on the other hand, has had early impressions of religion, and buys books of devotion. He can talk of all the feasts and fasts of the Church, and knows the names of most men that have been eminent for piety. You never hear him swear, or make a loose jest; and when he talks of religion, he talks of it as of a matter of the greatest concern. Here you see, that one person has religion enough, according to the way of the world, to be reckoned a pious Christian, and the other is so far from all appearance of religion, that he may fairly be reckoned a Heathen; and yet if you look into their common life; if you examine their chief and ruling tempers in the greatest articles of life, or the greatest doctrines of Christianity, you will not find the least difference imaginable.

Consider them with regard to the use of the world, because that is what everybody can see. Now to have right notions and tempers with relation to this world, is as essential to religion as it have right notions of God. And it is as possible for a man to worship a crocodile, and yet be a pious man, as to have his affections set upon this world, and yet be a good Christian. But now if you consider Leo and Eusebius in this respect, you will find them exactly alike, seeking, using, and enjoying, all that can be gotten in this world in the same manner, and for the same ends. You will find that riches, prosperity, pleasures, indulgences, state equipages, and honor, are just as much the happiness of Eusebius as they are of Leo. And yet if Christianity has not changed a man's mind and temper with relation to these things, what can we say that it has done for him? For if the doctrines of Christianity were practiced, they would make a man as different from other people, as to all worldly tempers, sensual pleasures, and the pride of life, as a wise man is different from a fool; it would be as easy a thing to know a Christian by his outward course of life, as it is now difficult to find anybody that lives it. For it is notorious that Christians are now not only like other men in their frailties and infirmities, this might be in some degree excusable--but the complaint is, they are like Heathen in all the main and chief points of their lives. They enjoy the world, and live every day in the same tempers, and the same designs, and the same indulgences, as those who don't know God.

Everybody that is capable of any reflection, must have observed, that this is generally the state even of devout people, whether men or women. You may see them different from other people, so far as to times and places of prayer, but generally like the rest of the world in all the other parts of their lives--that is, adding Christian devotion to a Heathen life. I have the authority of our blessed Savior for this remark, where He says, "So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them." Matthew 6:31-32 But if to be thus affected even with the necessary things of this life, shows that we are not yet of a Christian spirit, but are like the Heathen, surely to enjoy the vanity and folly of the world as they did, to be like them in the main chief tempers of our lives, in self-love and indulgence, in sensual pleasures and diversions, in the vanity of dress, the love of show and greatness, or any other gaudy distinctions of fortune, is a

much greater sign of an Heathen temper. And, consequently, they who add devotion to such a life, must be said to pray as Christians, but live as heathens.

02.02. Chapter 2

An inquiry into the reason, WHY the generality of Christians fall so far short of the holiness and devotion of Christianity.

It may now be reasonably inquired, how it comes to pass, that the lives even of the better sort of people are thus strangely contrary to the principles of Christianity? But before I give a direct answer to this, I desire it may also be inquired, how it comes to pass that swearing is so common a vice among Christians? It is indeed not yet so common among women, as it is among men. But among men this sin is so common that perhaps there are more than two in three that are guilty of it through the whole course of their lives, swearing more or less, just as it happens, some constantly, others only now and then as it were by chance. Now I ask, why is it, that two in three of the men are guilty of so gross and profane a sin as this is? There is neither ignorance nor human infirmity to plead for it; it is against an express commandment, and the most plain doctrines of our blessed Savior. Do but now find the reason why the generality of men live in this notorious vice, and then you will have found the reason why the generality even of the better sort of people live so contrary to Christianity. Now the reason of common swearing is this; it is because men have not so much as the intention to please God in all their actions. For let a man but have so much piety as to intend to please God in all the actions of his life, as the happiest and best thing in the world, and then he will never swear again. It will be as impossible for him to swear, while he feels this intention within himself, as it is impossible for a man that intends to please his prince, to go up and abuse him to his face.

It seems but a small and necessary part of piety to have such a sincere intention as this; and that he has no reason to look upon himself as a disciple of Christ who is not thus far advanced in piety. And yet it is purely for lack of this degree of piety that you see such a mixture of sin and folly in the lives even of the better sort of people. It is for lack of this intention that you see men that profess religion, yet live in swearing and sensuality; that you see clergymen given to pride, and covetousness, and worldly enjoyments. It is for lack of this intention, that you see women that profess devotion, yet living in all the folly and vanity of dress, wasting their time in idleness and pleasures, and in all such instances of state and equipage as their estates will reach. For let but a woman feel her heart full of this intention, and she will find it as impossible to 'patch or paint' her face, as to curse or swear; she will no more desire to shine at balls or assemblies, or make a figure among those that are most finely dressed, than she will desire to dance upon a rope to please spectators--she will know, that the one is as far from the wisdom and excellency of the Christian spirit as the other.

It was this general intention that made the primitive Christians such eminent instances of piety, and made the goodly fellowship of the saints, and all the glorious army of martyrs and confessors. And if you will here stop, and ask yourselves, why you are not as pious as the primitive Christians were, your own heart will tell you, that it is neither through ignorance nor inability, but purely because you never thoroughly intended it. You observe the same Sunday worship that they did;

and you are strict in it, because it is your full intention to be so. And when you as fully intend to be like them in their ordinary common life, when you intend to please God in all your actions, you will find it as possible, as to be strictly exact in the service of the Church. And when you have this intention to please God in all your actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world, you will find in you as great an aversion to everything that is vain and impertinent in common life, whether of business or pleasure, as you now have to anything that is profane. You will be as fearful of living in any foolish way, either of spending your time, or your fortune, as you are now fearful of neglecting the public worship.

Now, who that lacks this general sincere intention, can be reckoned a Christian? And yet if it was among Christians, it would change the whole face of the world--true piety, and exemplary holiness, would be as common and visible, as buying and selling, or any trade in life.

Let a clergyman be but thus pious, and he will converse as if he had been brought up by an Apostle; he will no more think and talk of noble preferment, than of noble eating, or a glorious chariot. He will no more complain of the frowns of the world, or a small position, or the lack of a patron, than he will complain of the lack of a laced coat, or a running horse. Let him but intend to please God in all his actions, as the happiest and best thing in the world, and then he will know, that there is nothing noble in a clergyman, but a burning zeal for the salvation of souls; nor anything poor in his profession, but idleness and a worldly spirit.

Again, let a tradesman but have this intention, and it will make him a saint in his shop; his everyday business will be a course of wise and reasonable actions, made holy to God, by being done in obedience to His will and pleasure. He will buy and sell, and labor and travel, because by so doing he can do some good to himself and others. But then, as nothing can please God but what is wise, and reasonable, and holy, so he will neither buy nor sell, nor labor in any other manner, nor to any other end, but such as may be shown to be wise, and reasonable, and holy. He will therefore consider, not what arts, or methods, or application, will soonest make him richer and greater than his brethren, or remove him from a shop to a life of state and pleasure; but he will consider what arts, what methods, what application can make worldly business most acceptable to God, and make a life of trade a life of holiness, devotion, and piety. This will be the temper and spirit of every tradesman; he cannot stop short of these degrees of piety, whenever it is his intention to please God in all his actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world. And on the other hand, whoever is not of this spirit and temper in his trade and profession, and does not carry it on only so far as is best subservient to a wise, and holy, and heavenly life, it is certain that he has not this intention; and yet without it, who can be shown to be a follower of Jesus Christ?

Again, let the gentleman of birth and fortune but have this intention, and you will see how it will carry him from every appearance of evil, to every instance of piety and goodness. He cannot live by chance, or as pleasure and fancy carry him, because he knows that nothing can please God but a wise and regular course of life. He cannot live in idleness and indulgence, in sports and gaming, in pleasures and intemperance, in vain expenses and high living, because these things cannot be turned into means of piety and holiness, or made so many parts of a wise and religious life. As he thus removes from all appearance of evil, so he hastens and aspires after every instance of goodness. He does not ask what is allowable and pardonable, but what is commendable and praiseworthy. He does not ask whether God will forgive the folly of our lives,

the madness of our pleasures, the vanity of our expenses, the richness of our equipage, and the careless consumption of our time; but he asks whether God is pleased with these things, or whether these are the appointed ways of gaining His favor. He does not inquire, whether it be pardonable to hoard up money, to adorn ourselves with diamonds, and gild our chariots, while the widow and the orphan, the sick and the prisoner, need to be relieved; but he asks, whether God has required these things at our hands, whether we shall be called to account at the last day for the neglect of them; because it is not his intent to live in such ways as, for anything we know, God may perhaps pardon; but to be diligent in such ways, as we know that God will infallibly reward.

He will not therefore look at the lives of Christians, to learn how he ought to spend his estate, but he will look into the Scriptures, and make every doctrine, parable, precept, or instruction, that relates to rich men, a law to himself in the use of his estate. He will have nothing to do with costly apparel, because the rich man in the Gospel was clothed with purple and fine linen. He denies himself the pleasures and indulgences which his estate could procure, because our blessed Savior says, "Woe unto you that are rich! for you have received your consolation." He will have but one rule for charity, and that will be, to spend all that he can that way, because the Judge of the living and dead has said, that all that is so given, is given to Him. He will have no hospitable table for the rich and wealthy to come and feast with him, in good eating and drinking; because our blessed Lord says, "When you make a dinner, call not your friends, nor your brethren, neither your kinsman, nor your rich neighbors, lest they also bid you again, and a recompense be made you. But when you make a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind--and you shall be blessed--for they cannot recompense you--for you shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." He will waste no money in gilded roofs, or costly furniture--he will not be carried from pleasure to pleasure in expensive state and equipage, because an inspired Apostle has said, that "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

Let not any one look upon this as an imaginary description of charity, that looks fine in the notion, but cannot be put in practice. For it is so far from being an imaginary, impracticable form of life, that it has been practiced by great numbers of Christians in former ages, who were glad to turn their whole estates into a constant course of charity. And it is so far from being impossible now, that if we can find any Christians that sincerely intend to please God in all their actions, as the best and happiest thing in the world, whether they be young or old, single or married, men or women, if they have but this intention, it will be impossible for them to do otherwise. This one principle will infallibly carry them to this height of charity, and they will find themselves unable to stop short of it. For how is it possible for a man that intends to please God in the use of his money, and intends it because he judges it to be his greatest happiness; how is it possible for such a one, in such a state of mind, to bury his money in needless, impertinent finery, in covering himself or his horses with gold, while there are any works of piety and charity to be done with it, or any ways of spending it well? This is as strictly impossible, as for a man that intends to please God in his words, to go into company on purpose to swear and lie. For as all waste and unreasonable expense is done designedly, and with deliberation, so no one can be guilty of it, whose constant intention is to please God in the use of his money.

I have chosen to explain this matter, by appealing to this intention, because it makes the case so plain, and because every one that has a mind may see it in the clearest light, and feel it in the

strongest manner, only by looking into his own heart. For it is as easy for every person to know whether he intends to please God in all his actions, as for any servant to know whether this be his intention towards his master. Every one also can as easily tell how he lays out his money, and whether he considers how to please God in it, as he can tell where his estate is, and whether it be in money or land. So that here is no plea left for ignorance or frailty as to this matter; everybody is in the light, and everybody has power. And no one can fail, but he that is not so much a Christian, as to intend to please God in the use of his estate.

You see two people--one is regular in public and private prayer, the other is not. Now the reason of this difference is not this, that one has strength and power to observe prayer, and the other has not; but the reason is this, that one intends to please God in the duties of devotion, and the other has no intention about it. Now the case is the same, in the right or wrong use of our time and money. You see one person throwing away his time in sleep and idleness, in visiting and diversions, and his money in the most vain and unreasonable expenses. You see another careful of every day, dividing his hours by rules of reason and religion, and spending all his money in works of charity--now the difference is not owing to this, that one has strength and power to do thus, and the other has not; but it is owing to this, that one intends to please God in the right use of all his time, and all his money, and the other has no intention about it. Here, therefore, let us judge ourselves sincerely; let us not vainly content ourselves with the common disorders of our lives, the vanity of our expenses, the folly of our diversions, the pride of our habits, the idleness of our lives, and the wasting of our time, fancying that these are such imperfections as we fall into through the unavoidable weakness and frailty of our natures; but let us be assured, that these disorders of our common life are owing to this, that we have not so much Christianity as to intend to please God in all the actions of our life, as the best and happiest thing in the world. So that we must not look upon ourselves in a state of common and pardonable imperfection, but in such a state as lacks the first and most fundamental principle of Christianity, that is, an intention to please God in all our actions. And if any one was to ask himself, how it comes to pass, that there are any degrees of sobriety which he neglects, any practices of humility which he lacks, any method of charity which he does not follow, any rules of redeeming time which he does not observe, his own heart will tell him, that it is because he never intended to be so exact in those duties. For whenever we fully intend it, it is as possible to conform to all this regularity of life, as it is possible for a man to observe times of prayer. So that the fault does not lie here, that we desire to be good and perfect, but through the weakness of our nature fall short of it; but it is, because we have not piety enough to intend to be as good as we can, or to please God in all the actions of our life. This we see is plainly the case of him that spends his time in sports when he should be at Church; it is not his lack of power, but his lack of intention or desire to be there. And the case is plainly the same in every other folly of human life. She that spends her time and money in the unreasonable ways and fashions of the world, does not do so because she lacks power to be wise and religious in the management of her time and money, but because she has no intention or desire of being so. When she feels this intention, she will find it as possible to act up to it, as to be strictly sober and chaste, because it is her care and desire to be so. This doctrine does not suppose that we have no need of Divine grace, or that it is in our own power to make ourselves perfect. It only supposes, that through the lack of a sincere intention of pleasing God in all our actions we fall into such irregularities of life as by the ordinary means of grace we would have power to avoid; and that we have not that perfection, which our present state of grace makes us capable of, because we do not

so much as intend to have it. It only teaches us that the reason why you see no real mortification or self-denial, no eminent charity, no profound humility, no heavenly affection, no true contempt of the world, no Christian meekness, no sincere zeal, no eminent piety in the common lives of Christians, is this, because they do not so much as intend to be exact and exemplary in these virtues.

02.03. Chapter 3

Of the great danger and folly, of not intending to be as eminent and exemplary as we can, in the practice of all Christian virtues.

Although the goodness of God, and His rich mercies in Christ Jesus, are a sufficient assurance to us, that He will be merciful to our unavoidable weakness and infirmities, that is, to such failings as are the effects of ignorance or surprise; yet we have no reason to expect the same mercy towards those sins which we have lived in, through a lack of intention to avoid them. For instance; the case of a common swearer, who dies in that guilt, seems to have no title to the Divine mercy; for this reason, because he can no more plead any weakness or infirmity in his excuse, than the man that hid his talent in the earth could plead his lack of strength to keep it out of the earth. But now, if this be right reasoning in the case of a common swearer, that his sin is not to be reckoned a pardonable frailty, because he has no weakness to plead in its excuse, why then do we not carry this way of reasoning to its true extent? Why do not we as much condemn every other error of life, that has no more weakness to plead in its excuse than common swearing? For if swearing be so bad a thing, because it might be avoided, if we did but sincerely intend it, must not then all other erroneous ways of life be very guilty, if we live in them, not through weakness and inability, but because we never sincerely intended to avoid them? For instance; you perhaps have made no progress in the most important Christian virtues, you have scarce gone half way in humility and charity; now if your failure in these duties is purely owing to your lack of intention of performing them in any true degree, have you not then as little to plead for yourself, and are you not as much without all excuse, as the common swearer? Why, therefore, do you not press these things home upon your conscience? Why do you not think it as dangerous for you to live in such defects, as are in your power to amend, as it is dangerous for a common swearer to live in the breach of that duty, which it is in his power to observe? Is not negligence, and a lack of sincere intention, as blamable in one case as in another?

You, it may be, are as far from Christian perfection, as the common swearer is from keeping the third commandment; are you not therefore as much condemned by the doctrines of the Gospel, as the swearer is by the third commandment? You perhaps will say, that all people fall short of the perfection of the Gospel, and therefore you are content with your failings. But this is saying nothing to the purpose. For the question is not whether Gospel perfection can be fully attained, but whether you come as near it as a sincere intention and careful diligence can carry you. Whether you are not in a much lower state than you might be, if you sincerely intended, and carefully labored, to advance yourself in all Christian virtues? If you are as forward in the Christian life as your best endeavors can make you, then you may justly hope that your imperfections will not be laid to your charge--but if your defects in piety, humility, and charity, are owing to your negligence, and lack of sincere intention to be as eminent as you can in these virtues, then you leave yourself as much without excuse as he that lives in the sin of swearing, through the lack of a sincere intention to depart from it. The salvation of our souls is set forth in Scripture as a thing of difficulty, that requires all our diligence, that is to be worked out with fear and trembling. We are told, that

"strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads unto life, and few there be that find it." That "many are called, but few are chosen." And that many will miss of their salvation, who seem to have taken some pains to obtain it--as in these words, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate--for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able." Here our blessed Lord commands us to STRIVE to enter in, because many will fail, who only SEEK to enter. By which we are plainly taught, that religion is a state of labor and striving, and that many will fail of their salvation; not because they took no pains or care about it, but because they did not take pains and care enough; they only sought, but did not strive to enter in.

Every Christian, therefore, should as well examine his life by these doctrines as by the commandments. For these doctrines are as plain marks of our condition, as the commandments are plain marks of our duty. For if salvation is only given to those who strive for it, then it is as reasonable for me to consider whether my course of life be a course of striving to obtain it, as to consider whether I am keeping any of the commandments. If my religion is only a formal compliance with those modes of worship that are in fashion where I live; if it costs me no pains or trouble; if it lays me under no rules and restraints; if I have no careful thoughts and sober reflections about it--is it not great weakness to think that I am striving to enter in at the strait gate? If I am seeking everything that can delight my senses, and regale my appetites; spending my time and fortune in pleasures, in diversions, and worldly enjoyments; a stranger to watchings, fastings, prayers, and mortification; how can it be said that I am working out my salvation with fear and trembling? If there is nothing in my life and conversation that shows me to be different from Jews and Heathen; if I use the world, and worldly enjoyments, as the generality of people now do, and in all ages have done; why should I think that I am among those few who are walking in the narrow way to Heaven? And yet if the way is narrow, if none can walk in it but those that strive, is it not as necessary for me to consider, whether the way I am in be narrow enough, or the labor I take be a sufficient striving, as to consider whether I sufficiently observe the second or third commandment? The sum of this matter is this--From the above mentioned, and many other passages of Scripture, it seems plain, that our salvation depends upon the sincerity and perfection of our endeavors to obtain it. Weak and imperfect men shall, notwithstanding their frailties and defects, be received, as having pleased God, if they have done their utmost to please Him. The rewards of charity, piety, and humility, will be given to those, whose lives have been a careful labor to exercise these virtues in as high a degree as they could. We cannot offer to God the service of Angels; we cannot obey Him as man in a state of perfection could; but fallen men can do their best, and this is the perfection that is required of us; it is only the perfection of our best endeavors, a careful labor to be as perfect as we can. But if we stop short of this, for anything we know, we stop short of the mercy of God, and leave ourselves nothing to plead from the terms of the Gospel. For God has there made no promises of mercy to the slothful and negligent. His mercy is only offered to our frail and imperfect, but best endeavors, to practice all manner of righteousness. As the law to Angels is angelical righteousness, as the law to perfect beings is strict perfection, so the law to our imperfect natures is, the best obedience that our frail nature is able to perform. The measure of our love to God, seems in justice to be the measure of our love of every virtue. We are to love and practice it with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength. And when we cease to live with this regard to virtue, we live below our nature, and, instead of being able to plead our infirmities, we stand chargeable with negligence. It is for this reason that we are exhorted to work out our salvation with fear and trembling; because unless our heart and passions are eagerly bent

upon the work of our salvation; unless holy fears animate our endeavors, and keep our consciences strict and tender about every part of our duty, constantly examining how we live, and how fit we are to die; we shall in all probability fall into a state of negligence, and sit down in such a course of life, as will never carry us to the rewards of Heaven. And he that considers, that a just God can only make such allowances as are suitable to His justice, that our works are all to be examined by fire, will find that fear and trembling are proper tempers for those that are drawing near so great a trial. And indeed there is no probability, that any one should do all the duty that is expected from him, or make that progress in piety, which the holiness and justice of God requires of him, but he that is constantly afraid of falling short of it.

Now this is not intended to possess people's minds with a scrupulous anxiety, and discontent in the service of God, but to fill them with a just fear of living in sloth and idleness, and in the neglect of such virtues as they will need at the day of Judgment. It is to excite them to an earnest examination of their lives, to such zeal, and care, and concern after Christian perfection, as they use in any matter that has gained their heart and affections. It is only desiring them to be so apprehensive of their state, so humble in the opinion of themselves, so earnest after higher degrees of piety, and so fearful of falling short of happiness, as the great Apostle Paul was, when he thus wrote to the Philippians--"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect--but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And then he adds, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded." But now, if the Apostle thought it necessary for those, who were in his state of perfection, to be "thus minded," that is, thus laboring, pressing, and aspiring after some degree of holiness, to which they were not then arrived, surely it is much more necessary for us, who are born in the dregs of time, and laboring under great imperfections, to be "thus minded," that is, thus earnest and striving after such degrees of a holy and Divine life, as we have not yet attained. The best way for any one to know how much he ought to aspire after holiness, is to consider, not how much will make his present life easy, but to ask himself, how much he thinks will make him easy at the hour of death. Now any man that dares be so serious, as to put this question to himself, will be forced to answer, that at death, every one will wish that he had been as perfect as human nature can be. Is not this therefore sufficient to put us not only upon wishing, but laboring after all that perfection, which we shall then lament the lack of? Is it not excessive folly to be content with such a course of piety as we already know cannot content us, at a time when we shall so need it, as to have nothing else to comfort us? How can we carry a severer condemnation against ourselves, than to believe, that, at the hour of death, we shall need the virtues of the Saints, and wish that we had been among the first servants of God, and yet take no methods of arriving at their height of piety, while we are alive?

Though this is an absurdity that we can easily pass over at present, while the health of our bodies, the passions of our minds, the noise, and hurry, and pleasures, and business of the world, lead us on with eyes that see not, and ears that hear not; yet, at death, it will set itself before us in a dreadful magnitude, it will haunt us like a dismal spirit, and our conscience will never let us take our eyes from it. We see in worldly matters, what a torment self condemnation is, and how hardly a man is able to forgive himself, when he has brought himself into any calamity or disgrace, purely by his own folly. The affliction is made doubly tormenting, because he is forced to charge it all

upon himself, as his own act and deed, against the nature and reason of things, and contrary to the advice of all his friends.

Now by this we may in some degree guess how terrible the pain of that self-condemnation will be, when a man shall find himself in the miseries of death under the severity of a self-condemning conscience, charging all his distress upon his own folly and madness, against the sense and reason of his own mind, against all the doctrines and precepts of religion, and contrary to all the instructions, calls, and warnings, both of God and man.

PENITENS was a busy, notable tradesman, and very prosperous in his dealings, but died in the thirty-fifth year of his age. A little before his death, when the doctors had given him over, some of his neighbors came one evening to see him, at which time he spoke thus to them-

"I see, my friends, the tender concern you have for me, by the grief that appears in your countenances, and I know the thoughts that you have now about me. You think how melancholy a case it is, to see so young a man, and in such flourishing business, delivered up to death. And perhaps, had I visited any of you in my condition, I should have had the same thoughts of you. But now, my friends, my thoughts are no more like your thoughts than my condition is like yours. It is no trouble to me now to think, that I am to die young, or before I have raised an estate. These things are now sunk into such mere nothings, that I have no name little enough to call them by. For if in a few days or hours, I am to leave this carcass to be buried in the earth, and to find myself either forever happy in the favor of God, or eternally separated from all light and peace, can any words sufficiently express the littleness of everything else?

"Is there any dream like the dream of life, which amuses us with the neglect and disregard of these things? Is there any folly like the folly of our manly state, which is too wise and busy, to be at leisure for these reflections? When we consider death as a misery, we only think of it as a miserable separation from the enjoyments of this life. We seldom mourn over an old man that dies rich, but we lament the young, that are taken away in the progress of their fortune. You yourselves look upon me with pity, not that I am going unprepared to meet the Judge of the living and the dead, but that I am to leave a prosperous trade in the flower of my life. This is the wisdom of our manly thoughts. And yet what folly of the silliest children is so great as this? For what is there miserable, or dreadful in death, but the consequences of it? When a man is dead, what does anything signify to him, but the state he is then in?

"Our poor friend Lepidus died, you know, as he was dressing himself for a feast--do you think it is now part of his trouble, that he did not live until that entertainment was over? Feasts, and business, and pleasures, and enjoyments, seem great things to us, while we think of nothing else; but as soon as we add death to them, they all sink into an equal littleness; and the soul that is separated from the body no more laments the loss of business, than the losing of a feast. If I am now going into the joys of God, could there be any reason to grieve, that this happened to me before I was forty years of age? Could it be a sad thing to go to Heaven, before I had made a few more bargains, or stood a little longer behind a counter? And if I am to go among lost spirits, could there be any reason to be content, that this did not happen to me until I was old, and full of riches? If good Angels were ready to receive my soul, could it be any grief to me, that I was dying upon a poor bed in a garret? And if God has delivered me up to evil spirits, to be dragged by them to places of torments, could it be any comfort to me, that they found me upon a bed of nobility? When

you are as near death as I am, you will know that all the different states of life, whether of youth or age, riches or poverty, greatness or lowliness, signify no more to you, than whether you die in a poor or stately palace. The greatness of those things which follow death makes all that goes before it sink into nothing. Now that judgment is the next thing that I look for, and everlasting happiness or misery is come so near me, all the enjoyments and prosperities of life seem as vain and insignificant, and to have no more to do with my happiness, than the clothes that I wore before I could speak.

"But, my friends, how am I surprised that I have not always had these thoughts? for what is there in the terrors of death, in the vanities of life, or the necessities of piety, but what I might have as easily and fully seen in any part of my life? What a strange thing is it, that a little health, or the poor business of a shop, should keep us so senseless of these great things, that are coming so fast upon us!

"Just as you came in my chamber, I was thinking with myself, what numbers of souls there are now in the world, in my condition at this very time, surprised with a summons to the other world; some taken from their shops and farms, others from their sports and pleasures, these at suits of law, those at gaming tables, some on the road, others at their own firesides, and all seized at an hour when they thought nothing of it; frightened at the approach of death, confounded at the vanity of all their labors, designs, and projects, astonished at the folly of their past lives, and not knowing which way to turn their thoughts, to find any comfort. Their consciences flying in their faces, bringing all their sins to their remembrance, tormenting them with deepest convictions of their own folly, presenting them with the sight of the angry Judge, the worm that never dies, the fire that is never quenched, the gates of hell, the powers of darkness, and the bitter pains of eternal death.

"Oh, my friends! bless God that you are not of this number, that you have time and strength to employ yourselves in such works of piety, as may bring you peace at the last. And take this along with you, that there is nothing but a life of great piety, or a death of great stupidity, that can keep off these apprehensions. Had I now a thousand worlds, I would give them all for one year more, that I might present unto God one year of such devotion and good works, as I never before so much as intended. You, perhaps, when you consider that I have lived free from scandal and debauchery, and in the communion of the Church, wonder to see me so full of remorse and self-condemnation at the approach of death. But, alas! what a poor thing is it, to have lived only free from murder, theft, and adultery, which is all that I can say of myself. You know, indeed, that I have never been reckoned a drunkard--but you are, at the same time, witnesses, and have been frequent companions of my intemperance, sensuality, and great indulgence. And if I am now going to a judgment, where nothing will be rewarded but good works, I may well be concerned, that though I am no drunkard, yet I have no Christian sobriety to plead for me.

"It is true, I have lived in the communion of the Church, and generally frequented its worship and service on Sundays, when I was neither too idle, or not otherwise disposed of by my business and pleasures. But, then, my conformity to the public worship has been rather a thing of course, than any real intention of doing that which the service of the Church supposes--had it not been so, I had been oftener at Church, more devout when there, and more fearful of ever neglecting it.

"But the thing that now surprises me above all wonders is this, that I never had so much as a general intention of living up to the piety of the Gospel. This never so much as entered into my

head or my heart. I never once in my life considered whether I was living as the laws of religion direct, or whether my way of life was such, as would procure me the mercy of God at this hour. And can it be thought that I have kept the Gospel terms of salvation, without ever so much as intending, in any serious and deliberate manner, either to know them, or keep them? Can it be thought that I have pleased God with such a life as He requires, though I have lived without ever considering what He requires, or how much I have performed? How easy a thing would salvation be, if it could fall into my careless hands, who have never had so much serious thought about it, as about any one common bargain that I have made?

"In the business of life I have used prudence and reflection. I have done everything by rules and methods. I have been glad to converse with men of experience and judgment, to find out the reasons why some fail and others succeed in any business. I have taken no step in trade but with great care and caution, considering every advantage or danger that attended it. I have always had my eye upon the main end of business, and have studied all the ways and means of being a gainer by all that I undertook. But what is the reason that I have brought none of these tempers to religion? What is the reason that I, who have so often talked of the necessity of rules, and methods, and diligence, in worldly business, have all this while never once thought of any rules, or methods, or managements, to carry me on in a life of piety?

"Do you think anything can astonish and confound a dying man like this? What pain do you think a man must feel, when his conscience lays all this folly to his charge, when it shall show him how regular, exact, and wise he has been in small matters, that are passed away like a dream, and how stupid and senseless he has lived, without any reflection, without any rules, in things of such eternal moment, as no heart can sufficiently conceive them? Had I only my frailties and imperfections to lament at this time, I would lie here humbly trusting in the mercies of God. But, alas! how can I call a general disregard, and a thorough neglect of all religious improvement, a frailty or imperfection, when it was as much in my power to have been exact, and careful, and diligent in a course of piety, as in the business of my trade? I could have called in as many helps, have practiced as many rules, and been taught as many certain methods of holy living, as of thriving in my shop, had I but so intended, and desired it.

"Oh, my friends! a careless life, unconcerned and inattentive to the duties of religion, is so without all excuse, so unworthy of the mercy of God, such a shame to the sense and reason of our minds, that I can hardly conceive a greater punishment, than for a man to be thrown into the state that I am in, to reflect upon it."

Penitens was here going on, but had his mouth stopped by a convulsion, which never allowed him to speak any more. He lay convulsed about twelve hours, and then gave up the spirit. Now if every reader would imagine this Penitens to have been some particular acquaintance or relation of his, and fancy that he saw and heard all that is here described; that he stood by his bedside when his poor friend lay in such distress and agony, lamenting the folly of his past life, it would, in all probability, teach him such wisdom as never entered into his heart before. If to this he should consider how often he himself might have been surprised in the same state of negligence, and made an example to the rest of the world, this double reflection, both upon the distress of his friend, and the goodness of that God, who had preserved him from it, would in all likelihood soften his heart into holy tempers, and make him turn the remainder of his life into a regular course of

piety. This therefore being so useful a meditation, I shall here leave the reader, as I hope, seriously engaged in it.

02.04. Chapter 4

We can please God in no state or employment of life, but by intending and devoting it all to His honor and glory.

Having in the first chapter stated the general nature of devotion, and shown that it implies not any form of prayer, but a certain form of life, that is offered to God, not at any particular times or places, but everywhere and in everything; I shall now descend to some particulars, and show how we are to devote our labor and employment, our time and fortunes, unto God. As a good Christian should consider every place as holy, because God is there, so he should look upon every part of his life as a matter of holiness, because it is to be offered unto God. The profession of a clergyman is a holy profession, because it is a ministration in holy things, an attendance at the altar. But worldly business is to be made holy unto the Lord, by being done as a service to Him, and in conformity to His Divine will. For as all men, and all things in the world, as truly belong unto God, as any places, things, or people, that are devoted to Divine service, so all things are to be used, and all people are to act in their several states and employments, for the glory of God.

Men of worldly business, therefore, must not look upon themselves as at liberty to live to themselves, to sacrifice to their own pleasures and tempers, because their employment is of a worldly nature. But they must consider, that, as the world and all worldly professions as truly belong to God, as people and things that are devoted to the altar, so it is as much the duty of men in worldly business to live wholly unto God, as it is the duty of those who are devoted to Divine service. As the whole world is God's, so the whole world is to act for God. As all men have the same relation to God, as all men have all their powers and faculties from God, so all men are obliged to act for God, with all their powers and faculties. As all things are God's, so all things are to be used and regarded as the things of God. For men to abuse things on earth, and live to themselves, is the same rebellion against God, as for angels to abuse things in Heaven; because God is just the same Lord of all on earth, as He is the Lord of all in Heaven. Things may, and must differ in their use, but yet they are all to be used according to the will of God. Men may, and must differ in their employments, but yet they must all act for the same ends, as dutiful servants of God, in the right and pious performance of their several callings. Clergymen must live wholly unto God in one particular way, that is, in the exercise of holy offices, in the ministration of prayers and Sacraments, and a zealous distribution of spiritual goods. But men of other employments are, in their particular ways, as much obliged to act as the servants of God, and live wholly unto Him in their several callings. This is the only difference between clergymen and people of other callings. When it can be shown, that men might be vain, covetous, sensual, worldly-minded, or proud in the exercise of their worldly business, then it will be allowable for clergymen to indulge the same tempers in their sacred profession. For though these tempers are most odious and most criminal in clergymen, who besides their baptismal vow, have a second time devoted themselves to God, to be His servants, not in the common offices of human life, but in the spiritual service of the most holy sacred things, and who are therefore to keep themselves as separate and different from the common life of other men, as a church or an altar is to be kept separate from houses and tables of

common use; yet as all Christians are by their Baptism devoted to God, and made professors of holiness, so are they all in their several callings to live as holy and heavenly people; doing everything in their common life only in such a manner, as it may be received by God, as a service done to Him. For things spiritual and temporal, sacred and common, must, like men and angels, like Heaven and earth, all conspire in the glory of God. As there is but one God and Father of us all, whose glory gives light and life to everything that lives, whose presence fills all places, whose power supports all beings, whose providence rules all events; so everything that lives, whether in Heaven or earth, whether they be thrones or principalities, men or angels, they must all, with one spirit, live wholly to the praise and glory of this one God and Father of them all. Angels as angels, in their heavenly ministrations; but men as men, women as women, bishops as bishops, priests as priests, and deacons as deacons; some with things spiritual, and some with things temporal, offering to God the daily sacrifice of a reasonable life, wise actions, purity of heart, and heavenly affections. This is the common business of all people in this world. It is not left to any women in the world to trifle away their time in the follies and impertinences of a fashionable life, nor to any men to resign themselves up to worldly cares and concerns; it is not left to the rich to gratify their passions in the indulgences and pride of life, nor to the poor, to vex and torment their hearts with the poverty of their state; but men and women, rich and poor, must, with bishops and priests, walk before God in the same wise and Holy Spirit, in the same denial of all vain tempers, and in the same discipline and care of their souls; not only because they have all the same rational nature, and are servants of the same God, but because they all need the same holiness, to make them fit for the same happiness, to which they are all called.

It is therefore absolutely necessary for all Christians, whether men or women, to consider themselves as people that are devoted to holiness, and so order their common ways of life, by such rules of reason and piety, as may turn it into continual service unto Almighty God. Now to make our labor, or employment, an acceptable service unto God, we must carry it on with the same spirit and temper, that is required in giving of alms, or any work of piety. For, if "whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do," we must "do all to the glory of God"; if "we are to use this world as if we used it not"; if we are to "present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God"; if "we are to live by faith, and not by sight," and to "have our conversation in heaven"; then it is necessary that the common way of our life, in every state, be made to glorify God by such tempers as make our prayers and adorations acceptable to Him. For if we are worldly or earthly-minded in our employments, if they are carried on with vain desires, and covetous tempers, only to satisfy ourselves, we can no more be said to live to the glory of God, than gluttons and drunkards can be said to eat and drink to the glory of God. As the glory of God is one and the same thing, so whatever we do suitable to it must be done with one and the same spirit. That same state and temper of mind which makes our alms and devotions acceptable, must also make our labor, or employment, a proper offering unto God. If a man labors to be rich, and pursues his business, that he may raise himself to a state of figure and glory in the world, he is no longer serving God in his employment; he is acting under other masters, and has no more title to a reward from God, than he that gives alms, that he may be seen, or prays, that he may be heard of men. For vain and earthly desires are no more allowable in our employments, than in our alms and devotions. For these tempers of worldly pride, and vain-glory, are not only evil, when they mix with our good works, but they have the same evil nature, and make us odious to God, when they enter into the common business of our employment.

If it were allowable to indulge covetous or vain passions in our worldly employments, it would then be allowable to be vain-glorious in our devotions. But as our aims and devotions are not an acceptable service, but when they proceed from a heart truly devoted to God, so our common employment cannot be reckoned a service to Him, but when it is performed with the same temper and piety of heart. Most of the employments of life are in their own nature lawful; and all those that are so may be made a substantial part of our duty to God, if we engage in them only so far, and for such ends, as are suitable to beings that are to live above the world, all the time that they live in the world. This is the only measure of our application to any worldly business, let it be what it will, where it will; it must have no more of our hands, our hearts, or our time, than is consistent with a hearty, daily, careful preparation of ourselves for another life. For as all Christians, as such have renounced this world, to prepare themselves by daily devotion, and universal holiness, for an eternal state of quite another nature, they must look upon worldly employments, as upon worldly needs, and bodily infirmities; things not to be desired but only to be endured and suffered, until death and the resurrection have carried us to an eternal state of real happiness.

Now he that does not look at the things of this life in this degree of littleness, cannot be said either to feel or believe the greatest truths of Christianity. For if he thinks anything great or important in human business, can he be said to feel or believe those Scriptures, which represent this life, and the greatest things of life, as bubbles, vapors, dreams, and shadows? If he thinks figure, and show, and worldly glory, to be any proper happiness of a Christian, how can he be said to feel or believe this doctrine, "Blessed are you when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake"? For surely, if there was any real happiness in figure, and show, and worldly glory; if these things deserved our thoughts and care; it could not be matter of the highest joy, when we are torn from them by persecutions and sufferings. If, therefore, a man will so live, as to show that he feels and believes the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity, he must live above the world; this is the temper that must enable him to do the business of life, and yet live wholly unto God, and to go through some worldly employment with a heavenly mind. And it is as necessary that people live in their employments with this temper, as it is necessary that their employment itself be lawful. The husbandman that tills the ground is employed in an honest business, that is necessary in life and very capable of being made an acceptable service unto God. But if he labors and toils, not to serve any reasonable ends of life, but in order to have his plough made of silver, and to have his horses harnessed in gold, the honesty of his employment is lost as to him, and his labor becomes his folly. A tradesman may justly think that it is agreeable to the will of God, for him to sell such things as are innocent and useful in life, such as help both himself, and others, to a reasonable support, and enable them to assist those that need to be assisted. But if, instead of this, he trades only with regard to himself, without any other rule than that of his own temper; if it be his chief end in it to grow rich, that he may live in figure and indulgence, and to be able to retire from business to idleness and luxury; his trade, as to him, loses all its innocency, and is so far from being an acceptable service to God that it is only a more plausible course of covetousness, self-love, and ambition. For such a one turns the necessities of employment into pride and covetousness, just as the drunkard and glutton turn the necessities of eating and drinking into gluttony and drunkenness. Now he that is up early and late, that sweats and labors for these ends, that he may be some time or other rich, and live in pleasure and indulgence, lives no more to the glory of God, than he that plays and games for the same ends. For though there is a great difference between trading and

gaming, yet most of that difference is lost, when men once trade with the same desires and tempers, and for the same ends, that others game.

Charity, and fine dressing, are things very different; but if men give alms for the same reasons that others dress fine, only to be seen and admired, charity is then but like the vanity of fine clothes. In like manner, if the same motives make some people painful and industrious in their trades, which make others constant at gaming, such pains are but like the pains of gaming.

CALIDUS has traded above thirty years in the greatest city of the kingdom; he has been so many years constantly increasing his trade and his fortune. Every hour of the day is with him an hour of business; and though he eats and drinks very heartily, yet every meal seems to be in a hurry, and he would say grace if he had time. Calidus ends every day at the tavern, but has not leisure to be there until near nine o'clock. He is always forced to drink a good hearty glass, to drive thoughts of business out of his head, and make his spirits drowsy enough for sleep. He does business all the time that he is rising, and has settled several matters before he can get to his counting-room. His prayers are a short petition or two, which he never misses in stormy, tempestuous weather, because he has always some business or other at sea. Calidus will tell you, with great pleasure, that he has been in this hurry for so many years, and that it must have killed him long ago, but that it has been a rule with him to get out of the town every Saturday, and make the Sunday a day of quiet, and good refreshment in the country. He is now so rich, that he would leave off his business, and amuse his old age with building, and furnishing a fine house in the country, but that he is afraid he should grow melancholy if he was to quit his business. He will tell you, with great gravity, that it is a dangerous thing for a man that has been used to get money, ever to leave it off. If thoughts of religion happen at any time to steal into his head, Calidus contents himself with thinking, that he never was a friend to heretics, and infidels, that he has always been civil to the minister of his parish, and very often given something to the charity schools.

Now this way of life is at such a distance from all the doctrine and discipline of Christianity, that no one can live in it through ignorance or frailty. Calidus can no more imagine that he is "born again of the Spirit"; that he is "in Christ a new creature"; that he lives here as a stranger and a pilgrim, setting his affections on things above, and laying up treasures in heaven — he can no more imagine this, than he can think that he has been all his life an Apostle working miracles, and preaching the Gospel. It must also be owned, that the generality of trading people, especially in great towns, are too much like Calidus. You see them all the week buried in business, unable to think of anything else; and then spending the Sunday in idleness and refreshment, in wandering into the country, in such visits and jovial meetings, as make it often the worst day of the week. Now they do not live thus, because they cannot support themselves with less care and application to business; but they live thus because they want to grow rich in their trades, and to maintain their families in some such figure and degree of finery, as a reasonable Christian life has no occasion for. Take away but this temper, and then people of all trades will find themselves at leisure to live every day like Christians, to be careful of every duty of the Gospel, to live in a visible course of religion, and be every day strict observers both of private and public prayer.

Now the only way to do this, is for people to consider their trade as something that they are obliged to devote to the glory of God, something that they are to do only in such a manner as that they may make it a duty to Him. Nothing can be right in business, that is not under these rules. The

Apostle commands servants to be obedient to their masters "in singleness of heart, as unto Christ. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not to men." This passage sufficiently shows, that all Christians are to live wholly unto God in every state and condition, doing the work of their common calling in such a manner, and for such ends, as to make it a part of their devotion or service to God. For certainly if poor slaves are not to comply with their business as men-pleasers, if they are to look wholly unto God in all their actions, and serve in singleness of heart, as unto the Lord, surely men of other employments and conditions must be as much obliged to go through their business with the same singleness of heart; not as pleasing the vanity of their own minds, not as gratifying their own selfish worldly passions, but as the servants of God in all that they have to do. For surely no one will say, that a slave is to devote his state of life unto God, and make the will of God the sole rule and end of his service, but that a tradesman need not act with the same spirit of devotion in his business. For this is as absurd, as to make it necessary for one man to be more just or faithful than another. It is therefore absolutely certain that no Christian is to enter any farther into business, nor for any other ends, than such as he can in singleness of heart offer unto God, as a reasonable service. For the Son of God has redeemed us for this only end, that we should, by a life of reason and piety, live to the glory of God; this is the only rule and measure for every order and state of life. Without this rule, the most lawful employment becomes a sinful state of life.

Take away this from the life of a clergyman, and his holy profession serves only to expose him to a greater damnation. Take away this from tradesmen, and shops are but so many houses of greediness and filthy lucre. Take away this from gentlemen, and the course of their life becomes a course of sensuality, pride, and extravagance. Take away this rule from our tables, and all falls into gluttony and drunkenness. Take away this measure from our dress and habits, and all is turned into such paint, and glitter, and ridiculous ornaments, as are a real shame to the wearer. Take away this from the use of our fortunes, and you will find people sparing in nothing but charity. Take away this from our diversions, and you will find no sports too silly, nor any entertainments too vain and corrupt, to be the pleasure of Christians.

If, therefore, we desire to live unto God, it is necessary to bring our whole life under this law, to make His glory the sole rule and measure of our acting in every employment of life. For there is no other true devotion, but this of living devoted to God in the common business of our lives. So that men must not content themselves with the lawfulness of their employments, but must consider whether they use them, as they are to use everything as strangers and pilgrims, that are baptized into the resurrection of Jesus Christ, that are to follow Him in a wise and heavenly course of life, in the mortification of all worldly desires, and in purifying and preparing their souls for the blessed enjoyment of God. For to be vain, or proud, or covetous, or ambitious, in the common course of our business, is as contrary to these holy tempers of Christianity, as cheating and dishonesty. If a glutton was to say, in excuse of his gluttony, that he only eats such things as it is lawful to eat, he would make as good an excuse for himself, as the greedy, covetous, ambitious tradesman, that should say, he only deals in lawful business. For as a Christian is not only required to be honest, but to be of a Christian spirit, and make his life an exercise of humility, repentance, and heavenly affection, so all tempers that are contrary to these are as contrary to Christianity, as cheating is contrary to honesty. So that the matter plainly comes to this; all irregular tempers in trade and

business are but like irregular tempers in eating and drinking. Proud views, and vain desires, in our worldly employments, are as truly vices and corruptions, as hypocrisy in prayer, or vanity in alms. And there can be no reason given, why vanity in our alms should make us odious to God, but what will prove any other kind of pride to be equally odious.

He that labors and toils in a calling, that he may make a figure in the world and draw the eyes of people upon the splendor of his condition, is as far from the pious humility of a Christian, as he that gives alms that he may be seen of men. For the reason why pride and vanity in our prayers and alms renders them an unacceptable service to God, is not because there is anything particular in prayers and alms, that cannot allow of pride, but because pride is in no respect, nor in anything, made for man; it destroys the piety of our prayers and alms, because it destroys the piety of everything that it touches, and renders every action that it governs incapable of being offered unto God. So that if we could so divide ourselves, as to be humble in some respects, and proud in others, such humility would be of no service to us, because God requires us as truly to be humble in all our actions and designs, as to be true and honest in all our actions and designs. And as a man is not honest and true, because he is so to a great many people, or upon several occasions, but because truth and honesty is the measure of all his dealings with everybody; so the case is the same in humility, or any other temper; it must be the general ruling habit of our minds, and extend itself to all our actions and designs, before it can be imputed to us. We indeed sometimes talk, as if a man might be humble in some things, and proud in others; humble in his dress, but proud of his learning; humble in his person, but proud in his views and designs. But though this may pass in common discourse, where few things are said according to strict truth, it cannot be allowed, when we examine into the nature of our actions. It is very possible for a man that lives by cheating, to be very punctual in paying for what he buys; but then every one is assured, that he does not do so out of any principle of true honesty. In like manner it is very possible for a man that is proud of his estate, ambitious in his views, or vain of his learning, to disregard his dress and person in such a manner as a truly humble man would do; but to suppose that he does so out of a true principle of religious humility, is fully as absurd as to suppose that a cheat pays for what he buys out of a principle of religious honesty. As, therefore, all kinds of dishonesty destroy our pretenses to an honest principle of mind, so all kinds of pride destroy our pretenses to an humble spirit. No one wonders that those prayers and alms, which proceed from pride and ostentation, are odious to God; but yet it is as easy to show, that pride is as pardonable there as anywhere else. If we could suppose that God rejects pride in our prayers and alms, but bears with pride in our dress, or estates, it would be the same thing as to suppose, that God condemns falsehood in some actions, but allows it in others. For pride, in one thing, differs from pride in another thing, as the robbing of one man differs from the robbing of another.

Again, if pride and ostentation is so odious that it destroys the merit and worth of the most reasonable actions, surely it must be equally odious in those actions which are only founded in the weakness and infirmity of our nature. As thus, alms are commanded by God, as excellent in themselves, as true instances of a divine temper, but clothes are only allowed to cover our shame; surely, therefore, it must at least be as odious a degree of pride, to be vain in our clothes, as to be vain in our alms. Again, we are commanded to "pray without ceasing," as a means of rendering our souls more exalted and divine, but we are forbidden to lay up treasures upon earth; and can we think that it is not as bad to be vain of those treasures which we are forbidden to lay up, as to

be vain of those prayers which we are commanded to make?

Women are required to have their heads covered, and to adorn themselves with decency--if, therefore, they are vain in those things which are expressly forbidden, if they patch and paint that part, which can only be adorned by decency, surely they have as much to repent of for such a pride, as they have, whose pride is the motive to their prayers and charity. This must be granted; unless we will say, that it is more pardonable to glory in our shame, than to glory in our virtue.

All these instances are only to show us the great necessity of such a regular and uniform piety, as extends itself to all the actions of our common life. That we must eat and drink, and dress and discourse, according to the sobriety of the Christian spirit, engage in no employments but such as we can truly devote unto God, nor pursue them any farther than so far as conduces to the reasonable ends of a holy, devout life. That we must be honest, not only on particular occasions, and in such instances as are applauded in the world, easy to be performed, and free from danger, or loss, but from such a living principle of justice, as makes us love truth and integrity in all its instances, follow it through all dangers, and against all opposition; as knowing that the more we pay for any truth, the better is our bargain, and that then our integrity becomes a pearl, when we have parted with all to keep it. That we must be humble, not only in such instances as are expected in the world, or suitable to our tempers, or confined to particular occasions; but in such a humility of spirit, as renders us meek and lowly in the whole course of our lives, as shows itself in our dress, our person, our conversation, our enjoyment of the world, the tranquillity of our minds, patience under injuries, submission to superiors, and condescensions to those that are below us, and in all the outward actions of our lives. That we must devote, not only times and places to prayer, but be everywhere in the spirit of devotion; with hearts always set towards Heaven, looking up to God in all our actions, and doing everything as His servants; living in the world as in a holy temple of God, and always worshiping Him, though not with our lips, yet with the thankfulness of our hearts, the holiness of our actions, and the pious and charitable use of all His gifts. That we must not only send up petitions and thoughts to Heaven, but must go through all our worldly business with a heavenly spirit, as members of Christ's mystical body; that, with new hearts and new minds, we may turn an earthly life into a preparation for a life of greatness and glory in the kingdom of Heaven.

Now the only way to arrive at this piety of spirit, is to bring all your actions to the same rule as your devotions and alms. You very well know what it is, that makes the piety of your alms or devotions; now the same rules, the same regard to God, must render everything else that you do, a fit and acceptable service unto God. Enough, I hope, has been said, to show you the necessity of thus introducing religion into all the actions of your common life, and of living and acting with the same regard to God, in all that you do, as in your prayers and alms.

Eating is one of the lowest actions of our lives; it is common to us with mere animals; yet we see that the piety of all ages of the world has turned this ordinary action of an animal life into a piety to God, by making every meal to begin and end with devotion. We see yet some remains of this custom in most Christian families, some such little formality as shows you, that people used to call upon God at the beginning and end of their meals. But, indeed, it is now generally performed, as to look more like a mockery upon devotion, than any solemn application of the mind unto God. In one house you may perhaps see the head of the family just pulling off his hat; in another, half getting

up from his seat; another shall, it may be, proceed so far as to make as if he said something; but, however, these little attempts are the remains of some devotion that was formerly used at such times, and are proofs that religion has formerly belonged to this part of common life. But to such a pass are we now come, that though the custom is yet preserved, yet we can hardly bear with him that seems to perform it, with any degree of seriousness, and look upon it as a sign of a fanatical temper, if a man is not done as soon as he begins. I would not be thought to plead for the necessity of long prayers at these times; but thus much I think may be said, that if prayer is proper at these times, we ought to oblige ourselves to use such a form of words, as should show that we solemnly appeal to God for such graces and blessings as are then proper to the occasion. Otherwise the mock ceremony, instead of blessing our food, does but accustom us to trifle with devotion, and give us a habit of being unaffected with our prayers. If every head of a family was, at the return of every meal, to oblige himself to make a solemn adoration of God, in such a decent manner as becomes a devout mind, it would be very likely to teach him that swearing, sensuality, gluttony, and loose discourse, were very improper at those meals, which were to begin and end with devotion. And if in these days of general corruption, this part of devotion is fallen into a mock ceremony, it must be imputed to this cause, that sensuality and intemperance have got too great a power over us, to allow us to add any devotion to our meals. But thus much must be said, that when we are as pious as Jews and Heathens of all ages have been, we shall think it proper to pray at the beginning and end of our meals.

I have appealed to this pious custom of all ages of the world, as a proof of the reasonableness of the doctrine of this and the foregoing chapters; that is, as a proof that religion is to be the rule and measure of all the actions of ordinary life. For surely, if we are not to eat, but under such rules of devotion, it must plainly appear, that whatever else we do, must, in its proper way, be done with the same regard to the glory of God, and agreeably to the principles of a devout and pious mind.

02.05. Chapter 5

People that are free from the necessity of labor and employments, are to consider themselves as devoted to God in a higher degree. A great part of the world are free from the necessities of labor and employments, and have their time and fortunes at their own disposal. But as no one is to live in his employment according to his own pleasure, or for such ends as please his own fancy, but is to do all his business in such a manner as to make it a service unto God; so those who have no particular employment are so far from being left at greater liberty to live to themselves, to pursue their own pleasures, and spend their time and fortunes as they please, that they are under greater obligations of living wholly unto God in all their actions. The freedom of their situation lays them under a greater necessity of always choosing, and doing, the best things. They are those, of whom much will be required, because much is given unto them. A slave can only live unto God in one particular way, that is, by religious patience and submission in his state of slavery. But all ways of holy living, all instances, and all kinds of virtue, lie open to those who are masters of themselves, their time, and their fortune. It is as much the duty, therefore, of such people. to make a wise use of their liberty, to devote themselves to all kinds of virtue, to aspire after everything that is holy and pious, to endeavor to be eminent in all good works, and to please God in the highest and most perfect manner; it is as much their duty to be thus wise in the conduct of themselves, and thus extensive in their endeavors after holiness, as it is the duty of a slave to be resigned unto God in his state of slavery. You are no laborer, or tradesman, you are neither merchant nor soldier; consider yourself, therefore, as placed in a state in some degree like that of good Angels who are sent into the world as ministering spirits, for the general good of mankind, to assist, protect, and minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation. For the more you are free from the common necessities of men, the more you are to imitate the higher perfections of Angels. Had you, SERENA, been obliged, by the necessities of life, to wash clothes for your maintenance, or to wait upon some mistress that demanded all your labor, it would then be your duty to serve and glorify God, by such humility, obedience, and faithfulness, as might adorn that state of life. It would then be recommended to your care, to improve that one talent to its greatest height. That when the time came, that mankind were to be rewarded for their labors by the great Judge of living and dead, you might be received with a "Well done, good and faithful servant--enter into the joy of your Lord." But as God has given you five talents, as He has placed you above the necessities of life, as He has left you in the hands of yourself, in the happy liberty of choosing the most exalted ways of virtue; as He has enriched you with many gifts of fortune, and left you nothing to do, but to make the best use of a variety of blessings, to make the most of a short life, to study your own perfection, the honor of God, and the good of your neighbor; so it is now your duty to imitate the greatest servants of God, to inquire how the most eminent saints have lived, to study all the arts and methods of perfection, and to set no bounds to your love and gratitude to the bountiful Author of so many blessings.

It is now your duty to turn your five talents into five more, and to consider how your time, and leisure, and health, and fortune, may be made so many happy means of purifying your own soul,

improving your fellow-creatures in the ways of virtue, and of carrying you at last to the greatest heights of eternal glory. As you have no mistress to serve, so let your own heart be the object of your daily care and attendance. Be sorry for its impurities, its spots, and imperfections, and study all the holy arts of restoring it to its natural and primitive purity. Delight in its service, and beg of God to adorn it with every grace and perfection. Nourish it with good works, give it peace in solitude, get it strength in prayer, make it wise with reading, enlighten it by meditation, make it tender with love, sweeten it with humility, humble it with penitence, enliven it with psalms and hymns, and comfort it with frequent reflections upon future glory. Keep it in the presence of God, and teach it to imitate those guardian Angels, which, though they attend on human affairs, and the lowest of mankind, yet "always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven."

This, Serena, is your profession. For as sure as God is one God, so sure it is, that He has but one command to all mankind, whether they be bond or free, rich or poor; and that is, to act up to the excellency of that nature which He has given them, to live by reason, to walk in the light of religion, to use everything as wisdom directs, to glorify God in all His gifts, and dedicate every condition of life to His service. This is the one common command of God to all mankind. If you have an employment, you are to be thus reasonable, and pious, and holy, in the exercise of it; if you have time and a fortune in your own power, you are obliged to be thus reasonable, and holy, and pious, in the use of all your time, and all your fortune. The right religious use of everything and every talent, is the indispensable duty of every being that is capable of knowing right and wrong. For the reason why we are to do anything as unto God, and with regard to our duty, and relation to Him, is the same reason why we are to do everything as unto God, and with regard to our duty, and relation to Him. That which is a reason for our being wise and holy in the discharge of all our business, is the same reason for our being wise and holy in the use of all our money. As we have always the same natures, and are everywhere the servants of the same God, as every place is equally full of His presence, and everything is equally His gift, so we must always act according to the reason of our nature; we must do everything as the servants of God; we must live in every place, as in His presence; we must use everything, as that ought to be used which belongs to God. Either this piety, and wisdom, and devotion is to go through every way of life, and to extend to the use of everything, or it is to go through no part of life. If we might forget ourselves, or forget God, if we might disregard our reason, and live by pleasure and fancy, in anything, or at any time, or in any place, it would be as lawful to do the same in everything, at fancy, at every time, and every place. If therefore some people fancy that they must be grave and solemn at Church, but may be silly and frantic at home; that they must live by some rule on the Sunday, but may spend other days by chance; that they must have some times of prayer, but may waste the rest of their time as they please; that they must give some money in charity, but may squander away the rest as they have a mind; such people have not enough considered the nature of religion, or the true reasons of piety. For he that upon principles of reason can tell why it is good to be wise and heavenly-minded at Church, can tell that it is always desirable to have the same tempers in all other places. He that truly knows why he should spend any time well, knows that it is never allowable to throw any time away. He that rightly understands the reasonableness and excellency of charity, will know that it can never be excusable to waste any of our money in pride and folly, or in any needless expenses. For every argument that shows the wisdom and excellency of charity, proves the wisdom of spending all our fortune well. Every argument that proves the wisdom and reasonableness of having times of prayer, shows the wisdom and reasonableness of losing none

of our time. If any one could show that we need not always act as in the Divine presence, that we need not consider and use everything as the gift of God, that we need not always live by reason, and make religion the rule of all our actions; the same arguments would show that we need never act as in the presence of God, nor make religion and reason the measure of any of our actions.

If, therefore, we are to live unto God at any time, or in any place, we are to live unto Him at all times, and in all places. If we are to use anything as the gift of God, we are to use everything as His gift. If we are to do anything by strict rules of reason and piety, we are to do everything in the same manner. Because reason, and wisdom, and piety, are as much the best things at all times, and in all places, as they are the best things at any time or in any place. If it is our glory and happiness to have a rational nature, that is endued with wisdom and reason, that is capable of imitating the Divine nature, then it must be our glory and happiness to improve our reason and wisdom, to act up to the excellency of our rational nature, and to imitate God in all our actions, to the utmost of our power.

They therefore who confine religion to times and places, and some little rules of retirement, who think that it is being too strict and rigid to introduce religion into common life, and make it give laws to all their actions and ways of living, they who think thus, not only mistake, but they mistake the whole nature of religion. For surely they mistake the whole nature of religion, who can think any part of their life is made more easy, for being free from it. They may well be said to mistake the whole nature of wisdom, who do not think it desirable to be always wise. He has not learned the nature of piety, who thinks it too much to be pious in all his actions. He does not sufficiently understand what reason is, who does not earnestly desire to live in everything according to it. If we had a religion that consisted in absurd superstitions, that had no regard to the perfection of our nature, people might well be glad to have some part of their life excused from it. But as the religion of the Gospel is only the refinement and exaltation of our best faculties, as it only requires a life of the highest reason, as it only requires us to use this world as in reason it ought to be used, to live in such tempers as are the glory of intelligent beings, to walk in such wisdom as exalts our nature, and to practice such piety as will raise us to God; who can think it grievous to live always in the spirit of such a religion, to have every part of his life full of it, but he that would think it much more grievous to be as the Angels of God in Heaven?

Farther, as God is one and the same Being, always acting like Himself, and suitably to His own nature, so it is the duty of every being that He has created, to live according to the nature that He has given it, and always to act like itself. It is therefore an immutable law of God, that all rational beings should act reasonably in all their actions; not at this time, or in that place, or upon this occasion, or in the use of some particular thing, but at all times, in all places, on all occasions, and in the use of all things. This is a law that is as unchangeable as God, and can no more cease to be, than God can cease to be a God of wisdom and order. When, therefore, any being that is endued with reason does an unreasonable thing at any time, or in any place, or in the use of anything, it sins against the great law of its nature, abuses itself, and sins against God, the Author of that nature.

They, therefore, who plead for indulgences and vanities, for any foolish fashions, customs, and pleasures of the world, for the misuse of our time or money, plead for a rebellion against our nature, for a rebellion against God, who has given us reason for no other end than to make it the

rule and measure of all our ways of life. When, therefore, you are guilty of any folly, or extravagance, or indulge any vain temper, do not consider it as a small matter, because it may seem so if compared to some other sins; but consider it, as it is acting contrary to your nature, and then you will see that there is nothing small that is unreasonable; because all unreasonable ways are contrary to the nature of all rational beings, whether men or Angels--neither of which can be any longer agreeable to God, than so far as they act according to the reason and excellence of their nature. The infirmities of human life make such food and clothing necessary for us, as Angels do not need; but then it is no more allowable for us to turn these necessities into follies, and indulge ourselves in the luxury of food, or the vanities of dress, than it is allowable for Angels to act below the dignity of their proper state. For a reasonable life, and a wise use of our proper condition, is as much the duty of all men, as it is the duty of all Angels and intelligent beings. These are not speculative flights, or imaginary notions, but are plain and undeniable laws, that are founded in the nature of rational beings, who as such are obliged to live by reason, and glorify God by a continual right use of their several talents and faculties. So that though men are not Angels, yet they may know for what ends, and by what rules, men are to live and act, by considering the state and perfection of Angels. Our blessed Savior has plainly turned our thoughts this way, by making this petition a constant part of all our prayers, "Your will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven."--A plain proof, that the obedience of men is to imitate the obedience of Angels, and that rational beings on earth are to live unto God, as rational beings in Heaven live unto Him.

When, therefore, you would represent to your mind, how Christians ought to live unto God, and in what degrees of wisdom and holiness they ought to use the things of this life, you must not look at the world's philosophies, but you must look up to God, and the society of Angels, and think what wisdom and holiness is fit to prepare you for such a state of glory. You must look to all the highest precepts of the Gospel, you must examine yourself by the spirit of Christ, you must think how the wisest men in the world have lived, you must think how departed souls would live if they were again to act the short part of human life; you must think what degrees of wisdom and holiness you will wish for, when you are leaving the world. Now this is not over-straining the matter, or proposing to ourselves any needless perfection. It is but barely complying with the Apostle's advice, where he says, "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Php 4:8) For no one can come near the doctrine of this passage, but he that proposes to himself to do everything in this life as the servant of God, to live by reason in everything that he does, and to make the wisdom and holiness of the Gospel the rule and measure of his desiring and using every gift of God.

02.06. Chapter 6

Containing the great obligations, and the great advantages of making a wise and religious use of our estates and fortunes. As the holiness of Christianity consecrates all states and employments of life unto God, as it requires us to aspire after a universal obedience, doing and using everything as the servants of God, so are we more specially obliged to observe this religious exactness in the use of our estates and fortunes. The reason of this would appear very plain, if we were only to consider, that our estate is as much the gift of God, as our eyes or our hands, and is no more to be buried or thrown away at pleasure, than we are to put out our eyes, or throw away our limbs as we please. But, besides this consideration, there are several other great and important reasons why we should be religiously exact in the use of our estates.

First, because the manner of using our money or spending our estate enters so far into the business of every day, and makes so great a part of our common life, that our common life must be much of the same nature as our common way of spending our estate. If reason and religion governs us in this, then reason and religion have got great hold of us; but if pleasure, pride, and fancy, are the measures of our spending our estate, then pleasure, pride, and fancy, will have the direction of the greatest part of our life.

Secondly, another great reason for devoting all our estate to right uses, is this--because it is capable of being used to the most excellent purposes, and is so great a means of doing good. If we waste it we do not waste a trifle, that signifies little, but we waste that which might be made as eyes to the blind, as a husband to the widow, as a father to the orphan; we waste that which not only enables us to minister worldly comforts to those that are in distress, but that which might purchase for ourselves everlasting treasures in Heaven. So that if we part with our money in foolish ways, we part with a great power of comforting our fellow-creatures, and of making ourselves forever blessed. If there is nothing so glorious as doing good, if there is nothing that makes us so like to God, then nothing can be so glorious in the use of our money, as to use it all in works of love and goodness, making ourselves friends, and fathers, and benefactors, to all our fellow-creatures, imitating the Divine love, and turning all our power into acts of generosity, care, and kindness to such as are in need of it.

If a man had eyes, and hands, and feet, that he could give to those that needed them; if he should either lock them up in a chest, or please himself with some needless or ridiculous use of them, instead of giving them to his brethren that were blind and lame, would we not justly reckon him an inhuman wretch? If he should rather choose to amuse himself with furnishing his house with those things, than to entitle himself to an eternal reward, by giving them to those that needed eyes and hands, might we not justly reckon him mad?

Now money has very much the nature of eyes and feet; if we either lock it up in chests, or waste it in needless and ridiculous expenses upon ourselves, while the poor and the distressed need it for their necessary uses; if we consume it in the ridiculous ornaments of apparel, while others are starving in nakedness; we are not far from the cruelty of him, that chooses rather to adorn his

house with the hands and eyes than to give them to those that need them. If we choose to indulge ourselves in such expensive enjoyments as have no real use in them, such as satisfy no real need, rather than to entitle ourselves to an eternal reward, by disposing of our money well, we are guilty of his madness, who rather chooses to lock up eyes and hands, than to make himself forever blessed, by giving them to those that need them. For after we have satisfied our own sober and reasonable needs, all the rest of our money is but like spare eyes or hands; it is something that we cannot keep to ourselves without being foolish in the use of it, something that can only be used well, by giving it to those that need it.

Thirdly, if we waste our money, we are not only guilty of wasting a talent which God has given us, we are not only guilty of making that useless, which is so powerful a means of doing good, but we do ourselves this further harm, that we turn this useful talent into a powerful means of corrupting ourselves; because so far as it is spent wrong, so far it is spent in support of some wrong temper, in gratifying some vain and unreasonable desires, in conforming to those fashions, and pride of the world, which, as Christians and reasonable men, we are obliged to renounce. As wit and fine parts cannot be trifled away, and only lost, but will expose those that have them into greater follies, if they are not strictly devoted to piety; so money, if it is not used strictly according to reason and religion, can not only be trifled away, but it will betray people into greater follies, and make them live a more silly and extravagant life, than they could have done without it. If, therefore, you do not spend your money in doing good to others, you must spend it to the hurt of yourself. You will act like a man, that should refuse to give that as a cordial to a sick friend, though he could not drink it himself without inflaming his blood. For this is the case of superfluous money; if you give it to those that need it, it is a cordial; if you spend it upon yourself in something that you do not need, it only inflames and disorders your mind, and makes you worse than you would be without it.

Consider again the aforementioned comparison; if the man that would not make a right use of spare eyes and hands, should, by continually trying to use them himself, spoil his own eyes and hands, we might justly accuse him of still greater madness. Now this is truly the case of riches spent upon ourselves in vain and needless expenses; in trying to use them where they have no real use, nor any real need, we only use them to our great hurt, in creating unreasonable desires, in nourishing ill tempers, in indulging our passions, and supporting a worldly, vain turn of mind. For high eating and drinking, fine clothes, and fine houses, state and equipage, gay pleasures, and diversions, do all of them naturally hurt and disorder our hearts; they are the food and nourishment of all the folly and weakness of our nature, and are certain means to make us vain and worldly in our tempers. They are all of them the support of something, that ought not to be supported; they are contrary to that sobriety and piety of heart which relishes Divine things; they are like so many weights upon our minds, that make us less able, and less inclined, to raise up our thoughts and affections to the things that are above. So that money thus spent is not merely wasted or lost, but it is spent to bad purposes, and miserable effects, to the corruption and disorder of our hearts, and to the making us less able to live up to the sublime doctrines of the Gospel.

It is but like keeping money from the poor, to buy poison for ourselves. For so much as is spent in the vanity of dress, may be reckoned so much laid out to fix vanity in our minds. So much as is laid out for idleness and indulgence, may be reckoned so much given to render our hearts dull and sensual. So much as is spent in state and equipage, may be reckoned so much spent to dazzle your own eyes, and render you the idol of your own imagination. And so in everything, when you

go from reasonable needs, you only support some unreasonable temper, some turn of mind, which every good Christian is called upon to renounce. So that on all accounts, whether we consider our fortune as a talent, and trust from God, or the great good that it enables us to do, or the great harm that it does to ourselves, if idly spent; on all these great accounts it appears, that it is absolutely necessary to make reason and religion the strict rule of using all our fortune.

Every exhortation in Scripture to be wise and reasonable, satisfying only such needs as God would have satisfied; every exhortation to be spiritual and heavenly, pressing after a glorious change of our nature; every exhortation to love our neighbor as ourselves, to love all mankind as God has loved them, is a command to be strictly religious in the use of our money. For none of these tempers can be complied with, unless we be wise and reasonable, spiritual and heavenly, exercising a brotherly love, a godlike charity, in the use of all our fortune. These tempers, and this use of our worldly goods, is so much the doctrine of all the New Testament, that you cannot read a chapter without being taught something of it. I shall only produce one remarkable passage of Scripture, which is sufficient to justify all that I have said concerning this religious use of all our fortune.

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.' "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' "The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' "They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' "He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46)

I have quoted this passage at length, because if one looks at the way of the church, one would hardly think that Christians had ever read this part of Scripture. For what is there in the lives of Christians, that looks as if their salvation depended upon these good works? And yet the necessity of them is here asserted in the highest manner, and pressed upon us by a lively description of the glory and terrors of the day of judgment. Some people, even of those who may be reckoned virtuous Christians, look upon this text only as a general recommendation of occasional works of charity; whereas it shows the necessity not only of occasional charities now and then, but the necessity of such an entire charitable life, as is a continual exercise of all such works of charity, as

we are able to perform. You admit, that you have no title to salvation, if you have neglected these good works; because such people as have neglected them are, at the last day, to be placed on the left hand, and banished with a "Depart, you cursed." There is, therefore, no salvation but in the performance of these good works. Who is it, therefore, that may be said to have performed these good works? Is it he that has some time assisted a prisoner, or relieved the poor or sick? This would be as absurd as to say, that he had performed the duties of devotion, who had some time said his prayers. Is it, therefore, he that has several times done these works of charity? This can no more be said, than he can be said to be the truly just man, who had done acts of justice several times.

What is the rule, therefore, or measure of performing these good works? How shall a man trust that he performs them as he ought? Now the rule is very plain and easy, and such as is common to every other virtue, or good temper, as well as to charity. Who is the humble, or meek, or devout, or just, or faithful man? Is it he that has several times done acts of humility, meekness, devotion, justice, or fidelity? No; but it is he that lives in the habitual exercise of these virtues. In like manner, he only can be said to have performed these works of charity, who lives in the habitual exercise of them to the utmost of his power. He only has performed the duty of Divine love, who loves God with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. And he only has performed the duty of these good works, who has done them with all his heart, and with all his mind, and with all his strength. For there is no other measure of our doing good, than our power of doing it. The Apostle Peter puts this question to our blessed Savior--"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus says unto him, I say not unto you, Until seven times, but, Until seventy times seven." (Matthew 28:21, 22) Not as if after this number of offenses a man might then cease to forgive; but the expression of seventy times seven, is to show us, that we are not to bound our forgiveness by any number of offenses, but are to continue forgiving the most repeated offenses against us. Thus our Savior says in another place, "If he trespass against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to you, saying, I repent; you shall forgive him." (Luke 17:4) If, therefore, a man ceases to forgive his brother, because he has forgiven him often already; if he excuses himself from forgiving this man, because he has forgiven several others; such a one breaks this law of Christ, concerning the forgiving one's brother.

Now the rule of forgiving is also the rule of giving; you are not to give, or do good to seven, but to seventy times seven. You are not to cease from giving, because you have given often to the same person, or to other people; but must look upon yourself as much obliged to continue relieving those that continue in need, as you were obliged to relieve them once or twice. Had it not been in your power, you had been excused from relieving any person once; but if it is in your power to relieve people often, it is as much your duty to do it often, as it is the duty of others to do it but seldom, because they are but seldom able.

He that is not ready to forgive every brother, as often as he needs to be forgiven, does not forgive like a disciple of Christ. And he that is not ready to give to every brother that needs to have something given him, does not give like a disciple of Christ. For it is as necessary to give to seventy times seven, to live in the continual exercise of all good works to the utmost of our power, as it is necessary to forgive until seventy times seven, and live in the habitual exercise of this forgiving temper, towards all that need it. And the reason of all this is very plain, because there is

the same goodness, the same excellency, and the same necessity of being thus charitable at one time as at another.

It is as much the best use of our money, to be always doing good with it, as it is the best use of it at any particular time; so that which is a reason for a charitable action, is as good a reason for a charitable life. That which is a reason for forgiving one offense, is the same reason for forgiving all offenses. For such charity has nothing to recommend it today, but what will be the same recommendation of it tomorrow; and you cannot neglect it at one time, without being guilty of the same sin, as if you neglected it at another time. As sure, therefore, as these works of charity are necessary to salvation, so sure is it that we are to do them to the utmost of our power; not today, or tomorrow, but through the whole course of our life.

If, therefore, it be our duty at any time to deny ourselves any needless expenses, to be moderate and frugal, that we may have to give to those that are in need, it is as much our duty to do so at all times, that we may be further able to do more good. For if it is at any time a sin to prefer needless vain expense to works of charity, it is so at all times; because charity as much excels all needless and vain expenses at one time as at another. So that if it is ever necessary to our salvation, to take care of these works of charity, and to see that we make ourselves in some degree capable of doing them, it is as necessary to our salvation, to take care to make ourselves as capable as we can be, of performing them in all the parts of our life.

Either, therefore, you must so far renounce your Christianity, as to say that you need never perform any of these good works; or you must own that you are to perform them all your life in as high a degree as you are able. There is no middle way to be taken, any more than there is a middle way between pride and humility, or temperance and intemperance. If you do not strive to fulfill all charitable works, if you neglect any of those who are in your power, and deny assistance to those that need what you can give, let it be when it will, or where it will, you number yourself among those that lack Christian charity. Because it is as much your duty to do good with all that you have, and to live in the continual exercise of good works, as it is your duty to be temperate in all that you eat and drink.

Hence also appears the necessity of renouncing all those foolish and unreasonable expenses, which the pride and folly of mankind have made so common and fashionable in the world. For if it is necessary to do good works, as far as you are able, it must be as necessary to renounce those needless ways of spending money which render you unable to do works of charity. You must therefore no more conform to these ways of the world than you must conform to the vices of the world; you must no more spend with those that idly waste their money as their own pleasure leads them, than you must drink with the drunken, or indulge yourself with the epicure--because a course of such expenses is no more consistent with a life of charity than excess in drinking is consistent with a life of sobriety.

When, therefore, any one tells you of the lawfulness of expensive apparel, or the innocence of pleasing yourself with costly indulgences, only imagine that the same person was to tell you, that you need not do works of charity; that Christ does not require you to do good unto your poor brethren, as unto Him; and then you will see the wickedness of such advice. For to tell you that you may live in such expenses, as make it impossible for you to live in the exercise of good works, is the same thing as telling you that you need not have any care about such good works

themselves.

02.07. Chapter 7

How the imprudent use of an estate corrupts all the tempers of the mind, and fills the heart with empty and ridiculous passions, through the whole course of life; represented in the character of FLAVIA.

It has already been observed, that a prudent and religious care is to be used in the manner of spending our money or estate, because the manner of spending our estate makes so great a part of our common life, and is so much the business of every day, that according as we are wise, or imprudent, in this respect, the whole course of our lives will be rendered either very wise or very full of folly.

People that are well inclined to religion, that receive instructions of piety with pleasure and satisfaction, often wonder how it comes to pass that they make no greater progress in that religion which they so much admire. Now the reason of it is this--it is because religion lives only in their head, but something else has possession of their heart; and therefore they continue from year to year mere admirers and praisers of piety, without ever coming up to the reality and perfection of its precepts. If it be asked why religion does not get possession of their hearts, the reason is this--it is not because they live in gross sins, or debaucheries, for their regard to religion preserves them from such disorders; but it is because their hearts are constantly employed, perverted, and kept in a wrong state by the indiscreet use of such things as are lawful to be used. The use and enjoyment of their estate is lawful, and therefore it never comes into their heads to imagine any great danger from that quarter. They never reflect, that there is a vain and imprudent use of their estate, which so disorders the heart, and supports it in such sensuality and dullness, such pride and vanity, as makes it incapable of receiving the life and spirit of piety. For our souls may receive an infinite hurt, and be rendered incapable of all virtue, merely by the use of innocent and lawful things. What is more innocent than rest and retirement? And yet what more dangerous than sloth and idleness? What is more lawful than eating and drinking? And yet what more destructive of all virtue, what more fruitful of all vice, than sensuality and indulgence? How lawful and praiseworthy is the care of a family! And yet how certainly are many people rendered incapable of all virtue, by a worldly and covetous temper!

Now it is for lack of religious exactness in the use of these innocent and lawful things, that religion cannot get possession of our hearts. And it is in the right and prudent management of ourselves, as to these things, that all the art of holy living chiefly consists. Gross sins are plainly seen and easily avoided by people that profess religion. But the indiscreet and dangerous use of innocent and lawful things, as it does not shock and offend our consciences, so it is difficult to make people at all sensible of the danger of it. A gentleman that expends all his estate in sports, and a woman that lays out all her fortune upon herself, can hardly be persuaded that the spirit of religion cannot exist in such a way of life. These people, as has been observed, may live free from debaucheries, they may be friends of religion, so far as to praise and speak well of it, and admire it in their imaginations; but it cannot govern their hearts, and be the spirit of their actions, until they change

their way of life, and let religion give laws to the use and spending of their estate. For a woman that loves dress, that thinks no expense too great to bestow upon the adorning of her person, cannot stop there. For that temper draws a thousand other follies along with it, and will render the whole course of her life, her business, her conversation, her hopes, her fears, her tastes, her pleasures, and diversions, all suitable to it.

Flavia and Miranda are two maiden sisters, that have each of them two hundred pounds a year. They buried their parents twenty years ago, and have since that time spent their estate as they pleased. FLAVIA has been the wonder of all her friends, for her excellent management, in making so surprising a figure on so moderate a fortune. Several ladies that have twice her fortune are not able to be always so genteel, and so constant at all places of pleasure and expense. She has everything that is in the fashion, and is in every place where there is any diversion. Flavia is very orthodox, she talks warmly against heretics and schismatics, is generally at Church, and often at the Sacrament. She once commended a sermon that was against the pride and vanity of dress, and thought it was very just against Lucinda, whom she takes to be a great deal finer than she need to be. If any one asks Flavia to do something in charity, if she likes the person who makes the proposal, or happens to be in a right temper, she will toss him half-a-crown, or a crown, and tell him if he knew what a long clothing bill she had just received, he would think it a great deal for her to give. A quarter of a year after this, she hears a sermon upon the necessity of charity; she thinks the man preaches well, that it is a very proper subject, that people need much to be put in mind of it; but she applies nothing to herself, because she remembers that she gave a crown some time ago, when she could so ill spare it. As for poor people themselves, she will admit of no complaints from them; she is very positive they are all cheats and liars, and will say anything to get relief; and therefore it must be a sin to encourage them in their evil ways. You would think Flavia had the tenderest conscience in the world, if you were to see how scrupulous and apprehensive she is of the guilt and danger of giving amiss.

She buys all books of wit and pleasure, and has made an expensive collection of all our English poets. For she says, one cannot have a true taste of any of them without being very conversant with them all. She will sometimes read a book of piety, if it is a short one, if it is much commended for style and language, and she can find where to borrow it. Flavia is very idle, and yet very fond of fine work; this makes her often sit working in bed until noon, and be told many a long story before she is up; so that I need not tell you, that her morning devotions are not always rightly performed. Flavia would be a miracle of piety, if she was but half so careful of her soul as she is of her body. The rising of a pimple in her face, the sting of a gnat, will make her keep her room two or three days, and she thinks they are very rash people that do not take care of things in time. This makes her so over-careful of her health, that she never thinks she is well enough; and so over-indulgent, that she never can be really well. So that it costs her a great deal in sleeping medicines and waking medicines, in spirits for the head, in drops for the nerves, in cordials for the stomach, and in saffron for her tea.

If you visit Flavia on the Sunday, you will always meet good company, you will know what is doing in the world, you will hear the last lampoon, be told who wrote it, and who is meant by every name that is in it. You will hear what plays were acted that week, which is the finest song in the opera, who was intolerable at the last assembly, and what games are most in fashion. Flavia thinks they are atheists that play at cards on the Sunday, but she will tell you the nicety of all the games, what

cards she held, how she played them, and the history of all that happened at play, as soon as she comes from Church. If you would know who is crude and ill-natured, who is vain and foppish, who lives too high, and who is in debt; if you would know what is the quarrel at a certain house, or who are in love; if you would know how late Belinda comes home at night, what clothes she has bought, how she loves compliments, and what a long story she told at such a place; if you would know how cross Lucius is to his wife, what ill-natured things he says to her when nobody hears him; if you would know how they hate one another in their hearts, though they appear so kind in public; you must visit Flavia on the Sunday. But still she has so great a regard for the holiness of the Sunday, that she has turned a poor old widow out of her house, as a profane wretch, for having been found once mending her clothes on the Sunday night. Thus lives Flavia; and if she lives ten years longer, she will have spent about fifteen hundred and sixty Sundays after this manner. She will have worn about two hundred different suits of clothes. Out of these thirty years of her life, fifteen will have been disposed of in bed; and, of the remaining fifteen, about fourteen will have been consumed in eating, drinking, dressing, visiting, conversation, reading and hearing plays and romances, at operas, assemblies, balls and diversions. For you may reckon all the time that she is up, thus spent, except about an hour and a half, that is disposed of at Church, most Sundays in the year. With great management, and under mighty rules of economy, she will have spent sixty hundred pounds upon herself--and only some shillings, crowns, or half-crowns, that have gone from her in accidental charities. I shall not go so far as to say that it is impossible for Flavia to be saved; but thus much must be said, that she has no grounds from Scripture to think she is in the way of salvation. For her whole life is in direct opposition to all those tempers and practices which the Gospel has made necessary to salvation. If you were to hear her say, that she had lived all her life like Anna the prophetess, who "departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day," you would look upon her as very untruthful; and yet this would be no greater a falsification, than for her to say that she had been "striving to enter in at the strait gate," or making any one doctrine of the Gospel a rule of her life. She may as well say, that she lived with our Savior when He was upon earth, as that she has lived in imitation of Him, or made it any part of her care to live in such tempers as He required of all those that would be His disciples. She may as truly say, that she has every day washed the saints' feet, as that she has lived in Christian humility and poverty of spirit; and as reasonably think, that she has taught a charity school, as that she has lived in works of charity. She has as much reason to think that she has been a sentinel in an army, as that she has lived in watching and self-denial. And it may as fairly be said, that she lived by the labor of her hands, as that she had given all diligence to make her calling and election sure. And here it is to be well observed, that the poor, vain turn of mind, the irreligion, the folly, and vanity of this whole life of Flavia, is all owing to the manner of using her estate. It is this that has formed her spirit, that has given life to every idle temper, that has supported every trifling passion, and kept her from all thoughts of a prudent, useful, and devout life. When her parents died, she had no other thought about her two hundred pounds a year, but that she had so much money to do what she would with, to spend upon herself, and purchase the pleasures and gratifications of all her passions. And it is this setting out, this false judgment and indiscreet use of her fortune, that has filled her whole life with the same indiscretion, and kept her from thinking of what is right, and wise, and pious, in everything else.

If you have seen her delighted in plays and romances, in scandal and backbiting, easily flattered, and soon affronted; if you have seen her devoted to pleasures and diversions, a slave to every

passion in its turn, nice in everything that concerned her body or dress, careless of everything that might benefit her soul, always wanting some new entertainment, and ready for every happy invention in show or dress, it was because she had purchased all these tempers with the yearly revenue of her fortune. She might have been humble, serious, devout, a lover of good books, an admirer of prayer and retirement, careful of her time, diligent in good works, full of charity and the love of God, but that the imprudent use of her estate forced all the contrary tempers upon her. And it was no wonder that she should turn her time, her mind, her health, and strength, to the same uses that she turned her fortune. It is owing to her being wrong in so great an article of life, that you can see nothing wise, or reasonable, or pious, in any other part of it. Now, though the irregular trifling spirit of this character belongs, I hope, but to few people, yet many may here learn some instruction from it, and perhaps see something of their own spirit in it. For as Flavia seems to be undone by the unreasonable use of her fortune, so the lowness of most people's virtue, the imperfections of their piety, and the disorders of their passions, are generally owing to their imprudent use and enjoyment of lawful and innocent things. More people are kept from a true sense and taste of religion, by a regular kind of sensuality and indulgence in minor things, than by gross drunkenness. More men live regardless of the great duties of piety, through too great a concern for worldly goods, than through direct injustice.

One man would perhaps be devout, if he had not so great a taste for the fine arts. Another is deaf to all the motives of piety, by indulging an idle, slothful temper. Could you cure this man of his great curiosity and inquisitive temper, or that of his false satisfaction and thirst after learning, you need do no more to make them both become men of great piety. If this woman would make fewer visits, or that not be always talking, they would neither of them find it half so hard to be affected with religion. For all these things are only little, when they are compared to great sins; and though they are little in that respect, yet they are great, as they are impediments and hindrances to a pious spirit. For as contemplation is the only eye of the soul, as the truths of religion can be seen by nothing else, so whatever raises a levity of mind, a trifling spirit, renders the soul incapable of seeing, apprehending, and relishing the doctrines of piety. Would we therefore make a real progress in religion, we must not only abhor gross and notorious sins, but we must regulate the innocent and lawful parts of our behavior, and put the most common and allowed actions of life under the rules of discretion and piety.

02.08. Chapter 8

How the wise and pious use of an estate naturally carries us to great perfection in all the virtues of the Christian life; represented in the character of MIRANDA.

Any one pious regularity of any one part of our life, is of great advantage, not only on its own account, but as it accustoms us to live by rule, and think of the government of ourselves. A man of business, that has brought one part of his affairs under certain rules, is in a fair way to take the same care of the rest. So he that has brought any one part of his life under the rules of religion, may thence be taught to extend the same order and regularity into other parts of his life. If any one is so wise as to think his time too precious to be disposed of by chance, and left to be devoured by anything that happens in his way; if he lays himself under a necessity of observing how every day goes through his hands, and obliges himself to a certain order of time in his business, his retirements, and devotions; it is hardly to be imagined how soon such a conduct would reform, improve, and perfect the whole course of his life. He that once thus knows the value, and reaps the advantage of a well-ordered time, will not long be a stranger to the value of anything else that is of any real concern to him. A rule that relates even to the smallest part of our life, is of great benefit to us, merely as it is a rule. For, as the Proverb says, "He that has begun well, has half done"--so he that has begun to live by rule, has gone a great way towards the perfection of his life. By rule, must here be constantly understood, a religious rule observed upon a principle of duty to God. For if a man should oblige himself to be moderate in his meals, only in regard to his stomach; or abstain from drinking, only to avoid the headache; or be moderate in his sleep, through fear of a lethargy; he might be exact in these rules, without being at all the better man for them. But when he is moderate and regular in any of these things, out of a sense of Christian sobriety and self-denial, that he may offer unto God a more reasonable and holy life, then it is, that the smallest rule of this kind is naturally the beginning of great piety. For the smallest rule in these matters is of great benefit, as it teaches us some part of the government of ourselves, as it keeps up a tenderness of mind, as it presents God often to our thoughts, and brings a sense of religion into the ordinary actions of our common life.

If a man, whenever he was in company, where any one swore, talked lewdly, or spoke evil of his neighbor, would make it a rule to himself, either gently to reprove him, or, if that was not proper, then to leave the company as decently as he could, he would find that this little rule, like a little leaven hid in a great quantity of meal, would spread and extend itself through the whole form of his life. If another should oblige himself to abstain on the Lord's day from any innocent and lawful things, as traveling, visiting, common conversation, and discoursing upon worldly matters, as trade, news, and the like; if he should devote the day, besides the public worship, to greater retirement, reading, devotion, instruction, and works of charity; though it may seem but a small thing or a needless nicety, to require a man to abstain from such things as may be done without sin, yet whoever would try the benefit of so little a rule, would perhaps thereby find such a change made in his spirit, and such a taste of piety raised in his mind, as he was an entire stranger to before.

It would be easy to show, in many other instances, how little and small matters are the first steps and natural beginnings of great perfection. But the two things which, of all others, most need to be under a strict rule, and which are the greatest blessings both to ourselves and others, when they are rightly used, are our TIME and our MONEY. These talents are continual means and opportunities of doing good. He that is piously strict, and exact in the wise management of either of these, cannot be long ignorant of the right use of the other. And he that is happy in the religious care and disposal of them both, is already ascended several steps upon the ladder of Christian perfection.

MIRANDA (the sister of Flavia) is a sober, reasonable Christian--as soon as she was mistress of her time and fortune, it was her first thought how she might best fulfill everything that God required of her in the use of them, and how she might make the best and happiest use of this short life. She depends upon the truth of what our blessed Lord has said, that there is but "One thing needful," and therefore makes her whole life but one continual labor after it. She has but one reason for doing or not doing, for liking or not liking anything, and that is, the will of God. She is not so weak as to pretend to add what is called the 'fine lady' to the true Christian; Miranda thinks too well to be taken with the sound of such silly words; she has renounced the world to follow Christ in the exercise of humility, charity, devotion, abstinence, and heavenly affections; and that is Miranda's fine breeding.

While she was under her mother, she was forced to be genteel, to live in ceremony, to sit up late at nights, to be in the folly of every fashion, and always visiting on Sundays; to go patched, and loaded with a burden of finery, to the Holy Sacrament; to be in every polite conversation; to hear profaneness at the playhouse, and wanton songs and love intrigues at the opera; to dance at public places, that fops (a fop is a person who is devoted to, or vain about his appearance or dress) and fools might admire the fineness of her shape, and the beauty of her motions. The remembrance of this way of life makes her exceeding careful to atone for it by a contrary behavior. Miranda does not divide her duty between God, her neighbor, and herself; but she considers all as due to God, and so does everything in His Name, and for His Sake. This makes her consider her fortune as the gift of God, that is to be used, as everything is that belongs to God, for the wise and reasonable ends of a Christian and holy life. Her fortune therefore is divided between herself and several other poor people, and she has only her part of relief from it.

She thinks it the same folly to indulge herself in needless, vain expenses, as to give to other people to spend in the same way. Therefore as she will not give a poor man money to go see a puppet-show, neither will she allow herself any to spend in the same manner; thinking it very proper to be as wise herself as she expects poor men should be. For it is a folly and a crime in a poor man, says Miranda, to waste what is given him in foolish trifles, while he lacks food, drink, and clothes. And is it less folly, or a less crime in me, to spend that money in silly diversions, which might be so much better spent in imitation of the Divine goodness, in works of kindness and charity towards my fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians? If a poor man's own necessities are a reason why he should not waste any of his money idly, surely the necessities of the poor, the excellency of charity, which is received as done to Christ Himself, is a much greater reason why no one should ever waste any of his money. For if he does so, he does not only do like the poor man, only waste that which he needs himself, but he wastes that which is needed for the most noble use, and which Christ Himself is ready to receive at his hands. And if we are angry at a poor

man, and look upon him as a wretch, when he throws away that which should buy his own bread; how must we appear in the sight of God, if we make a wanton idle use of that which should buy bread and clothes for the hungry and naked brethren, who are as near and dear to God as we are, and fellow-heirs of the same state of future glory? This is the spirit of Miranda, and thus she uses the gifts of God; she herself is only one of a certain number of poor people, that are relieved out of her fortune, and she only differs from them in the blessedness of giving. Excepting her necessary food, she never spent near ten pounds a year upon herself. If you were to see her, you would wonder what poor body it was, that was so surprisingly neat and clean. She has but one rule that she observes in her dress, to be always clean and in the cheapest things. Everything about her resembles the purity of her soul, and she is always clean without, because she is always pure within. Every morning sees her early at her prayers; she rejoices in the beginning of every day, because it begins all her pious rules of holy living, and brings the fresh pleasure of repeating them. She seems to be as a guardian angel to those that dwell about her, with her watchings and prayers, blessing the place where she dwells, and making intercession with God for those that are asleep. Her devotions have had some intervals, and God has heard several of her private prayers, before the light is allowed to enter into her sister's room. Miranda does not know what it is to have a dull half-day; the returns of her hours of prayer, and her religious exercises, come too often to let any considerable part of it lie heavy upon her hands. When you see her at work, you see the same wisdom that governs all her other actions; she is either doing something that is necessary for herself, or necessary for others, who need to be assisted. There is scarcely a poor family in the neighborhood, but wears something or other that has had the labor of her hands. Her wise and pious mind neither desires the amusement, nor can bear with the folly, of idle and impertinent work. She can admit of no such folly as this in the day because she has to answer for all her actions at night. When there is no wisdom to be observed in the employment of her hands, when there is no useful or charitable work to be done, Miranda will work no more. At her table she lives strictly by this rule of holy Scripture, "Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." This makes her begin and end every meal, as she begins and ends every day, with acts of devotion--she eats and drinks only for the sake of living, and with so regular an abstinence, that every meal is an exercise of self-denial, and she humbles her body every time that she is forced to feed it. If Miranda was to run a race for her life, she would submit to a diet that was proper for it. But as the race which is set before her is a race of holiness, purity, and heavenly affection, which she is to finish in a corrupt, disordered body of earthly passions, so her everyday diet has only this one end, to make her body fitter for this spiritual race. She does not weigh her meat in a pair of scales, but she weighs it in a much better balance; so much as gives a proper strength to her body, and renders it able and willing to obey the soul, to join in psalms and prayers, and lift up eyes and hands towards heaven with greater readiness--so much is Miranda's meal. So that Miranda will never have her eyes swell with fatness, or pant under a heavy load of flesh, until she has changed her religion. The holy Scriptures, especially of the New Testament, are her daily study; these she reads with a watchful attention, constantly casting an eye upon herself, and trying herself by every doctrine that is there. When she has the New Testament in her hand, she supposes herself at the feet of our Savior and His Apostles, and makes everything that she learns of them so many laws of her life. She receives their sacred words with as much attention and reverence as if she saw them, and knew that they were just come from Heaven, on purpose to teach her the way that leads to it. She thinks that the trying of herself every day by the doctrines of

Scripture, is the only possible way to be ready for her trial at the last day. She is sometimes afraid that she lays out too much money in books, because she cannot forbear buying all practical books of any note, especially such as enter into the heart of religion, and describe the inward holiness of the Christian life. But of all human writings, the lives of pious people and eminent saints are her greatest delight. In these she searches as for hidden treasure, hoping to find some secret of holy living, some uncommon degree of piety, which she may make her own. By this means Miranda has her head and her heart so stored with all the principles of wisdom and holiness, she is so full of the one main business of life, that she finds it difficult to converse upon any other subject; and if you are in her company, when she thinks it proper to talk, you must be made wiser and better, whether you desire or not. To relate her charity, would be to relate the history of every day for twenty years; for so long has all her fortune been spent that way. She has set up near twenty poor tradesmen that had failed in their business, and saved as many from failing. She has educated several poor children, that were picked up in the streets, and put them in a way of an honest employment. As soon as any laborer is confined at home with sickness, she sends him, until he recovers, twice the value of his wages, that he may have one part to give to his family as usual, and the other to provide things convenient for his sickness. In a family seems too large to be supported by the labor of those that can work in it, she pays their rent, and gives them something yearly towards their clothing. By this means, there are several poor families that live in a comfortable manner, and are from year to year blessing her in their prayers.

If there is any poor man or woman that is more than ordinarily wicked and reprobate, Miranda has her eye upon them; she watches their time of need and adversity; and if she can discover that they are in any great straits, or affliction, she gives them speedy relief. She has this care for this sort of people, because she once saved a very profligate person from being carried to prison, who immediately became a true penitent. There is nothing in the character of Miranda more to be admired than this temper. For this tenderness of affection towards the most abandoned sinners is the highest instance of a Divine and God-like soul.

Miranda once passed by a house, where the man and his wife were cursing and swearing at one another in a most dreadful manner, and three children crying about them--this sight so much affected her compassionate mind, that she went the next day, and bought the three children, that they might not be ruined by living with such wicked parents; they now live with Miranda, are blessed with her care and prayers, and all the good works which she can do for them. They hear her talk, they see her live, they join with her in psalms and prayers. The eldest of them has already converted his parents from their wicked life, and shows a turn of mind so remarkably pious, that Miranda intends him for holy orders; that, being thus saved himself, he may be zealous in the salvation of souls, and do to other miserable objects as she has done to him.

Miranda is a constant relief to poor people in their misfortunes and accidents--there are sometimes little misfortunes that happen to them, which of themselves they could never be able to overcome. The death of a cow or a horse, or some little robbery, would keep them in distress all their lives. She does not allow them to grieve under such accidents as these. She immediately gives them the full value of their loss, and makes use of it as a means of raising their minds towards God. She has a great tenderness for old people that are grown past their ability to labor. The parish allowance to such people is very seldom a comfortable maintenance--for this reason they are the constant objects of her care--she adds so much to their allowance, as somewhat exceeds the wages they

got when they were young. This she does to comfort the infirmities of their age, that, being free from trouble and distress, they may serve God in peace and tranquillity of mind. She has generally a large number of this kind, who, by her charities and exhortations to holiness, spend their last days in great piety and devotion.

Miranda never lacks compassion, even to common beggars; especially towards those that are old or sick, or full of sores, or lack eyes or limbs. She hears their complaints with tenderness, gives them some proof of her kindness, and never rejects them with hard or reproachful language, for fear of adding affliction to her fellow-creatures. If a poor old traveler tells her that he has neither strength, nor food, nor money left, she never bids him go to the place from whence he came, or tells him that she cannot relieve him, because he may be a cheat, or she does not know him; but she relieves him for that reason, because he is a stranger and unknown to her. For it is the most noble part of charity to be kind and tender to those whom we never saw before, and perhaps never may see again in this life. "I was a stranger, and you took me in," says our blessed Savior--but who can perform this duty, that will not relieve people that are unknown to him?

Miranda considers that Lazarus was a common beggar, that he was the care of Angels, and carried into Abraham's bosom. She considers that our blessed Savior and His Apostles were kind to beggars; that they spoke comfortably to them, healed their diseases, and restored eyes and limbs to the lame and blind; that Peter said to the beggar that asked an alms from him, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I you--in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." Miranda, therefore, never treats beggars with disregard and aversion; but she imitates the kindness of our Savior and His Apostles towards them; and though she cannot, like them, work miracles for their relief, yet she relieves them with that power that she has; and may say, with the Apostle, "Such as I have give I you, in the name of Jesus Christ."

It may be, says Miranda, that I may often give to those that do not deserve it, or that will make an ill use of my alms. But what then? Is not this the very method of Divine goodness? Does not God make "His sun to rise on the evil and on the good"? Is not this the very goodness that is recommended to us in Scripture, that, by imitating of it, we may be children of our Father which is in Heaven, who "sends rain on the just and on the unjust"? And shall I withhold a little money, or food, from my fellow-creature, for fear he should not be good enough to receive it of me? Do I beg of God to deal with me, not according to my merit, but according to His own great goodness; and shall I be so absurd as to withhold my charity from a poor brother, because he may perhaps not deserve it? Shall I use a measure towards him, which I pray God never to use towards me? Besides, where has the Scripture made merit the rule or measure of charity? On the contrary, the Scripture says, "If your enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink."

Now this plainly teaches us, that the merit of people is to be no rule of our charity; but that we are to do acts of kindness to those that least of all deserve it. For if I am to love and do good to my worst enemies--if I am to be charitable to them, notwithstanding all their spite and malice; surely merit is no measure of charity. If I am not to withhold my charity from such bad people, and who are at the same time my enemies, surely I am not to deny alms to poor beggars, whom I neither know to be bad people, nor any way my enemies. You will perhaps say, that by this means I encourage people to be beggars. But the same thoughtless objection may be made against all kinds of charities, for they may encourage people to depend upon them. The same may be said

against forgiving our enemies, for it may encourage people to do us hurt. The same may be said even against the goodness of God, that by pouring His blessings on the evil and on the good, on the just and on the unjust, evil and unjust men are encouraged in their wicked ways. The same may be said against clothing the naked, or giving medicines to the sick; for that may encourage people to neglect themselves, and be careless of their health. But when the love of God dwells in you, when it has enlarged your heart, and filled you with affections of mercy and compassion, you will make no more such objections as these. When you are at any time turning away the poor, the old, the sick, and helpless traveler, the lame, or the blind, ask yourself this question, Do I sincerely wish these poor creatures may be as happy as Lazarus, that was carried by Angels into Abraham's bosom? Do I sincerely desire that God would make them fellow-heirs with me in eternal glory? Now if you search into your soul, you will find that there is none of these motions there; that you are wishing nothing of this. For it is impossible for any one heartily to wish a poor creature so great a happiness, and yet not have a heart to give him a small alms. For this reason, says Miranda, as far as I can, I give to all, because I pray to God to forgive all; and I cannot refuse an alms to those whom I pray God to bless, whom I wish to be partakers of eternal glory, but am glad to show some degree of love to such as, I hope, will be the objects of the infinite love of God. And if, as our Savior has assured us, it be more blessed to give than to receive, we ought to look upon those that ask our alms, as so many friends and benefactors, that come to do us a greater good than they can receive, that come to exalt our virtue, to be witnesses of our charity, to be monuments of our love, to be our advocates with God, to be to us in Christ's stead, to appear for us in the day of judgment, and to help us to a blessedness greater than our alms can bestow on them. This is the spirit, and this is the life, of the devout Miranda; and if she lives ten years longer, she will have spent sixty hundred pounds in charity; for that which she allows herself, may fairly be reckoned among her alms. When she dies, she must shine among Apostles, and saints, and martyrs; she must stand among the first servants of God, and be glorious among those that have fought the good fight, and finished their course with joy.

02.09. Chapter 9

Containing some reflections upon the life of Miranda, and showing how it may, and ought to be imitated by all of her sex.

Now this life of Miranda, which I heartily recommend to the imitation of her sex, however contrary it may seem to the way and fashion of the world, is yet suitable to the true spirit, and founded upon the plainest doctrines of Christianity. To live as she does, is as truly suitable to the Gospel of Christ, as to be baptized, or to receive the Sacrament. Her spirit is that which animated the saints of former ages; and it is because they lived as she does, that we now celebrate their memories, and praise God for their examples. There is nothing that is whimsical, trifling, or unreasonable in her character, but everything there described is a right and proper instance of a solid and real piety. It is as easy to show that it is whimsical to go to Church, or to say one's prayers, as that it is whimsical to observe any of these rules of life. For all Miranda's rules of living unto God, of spending her time and fortune, of eating, working, dressing, and conversing, are as substantial parts of a reasonable and holy life, as devotion and prayer. For there is nothing to be said for the wisdom of sobriety, the wisdom of devotion, the wisdom of charity, or the wisdom of humility, but what is as good an argument for the wise and reasonable use of apparel. Neither can anything be said against the folly of luxury, the folly of sensuality, the folly of extravagance, the folly of prodigality, the folly of ambition, of idleness, or indulgence, but what must be said against the folly of dress. For religion is as deeply concerned in the one as in the other. If you may be vain in one thing, you may be vain in everything; for one kind of vanity only differs from another, as one kind of intemperance differs from another. If you spend your fortune in the needless, vain finery of dress, you cannot condemn prodigality, or extravagance, or luxury, without condemning yourself. If you fancy that it is your only folly, and that therefore there can be no great matter in it, you are like those that think they are only guilty of the folly of covetousness, or the folly of ambition.

Now though some people may live so plausible a life, as to appear chargeable with no other fault than that of covetousness or ambition; yet the case is not as it appears, for covetousness or ambition cannot subsist in a heart, in other respects rightly devoted to God. In like manner, though some people may spend most that they have in needless, expensive ornaments of dress, and yet seem to be in every other respect truly pious, yet it is certainly false; for it is as impossible for a mind that is in a true state of religion, to be vain in the use of clothes, as to be vain in the use of alms or devotions. Now to convince you of this from your own reflections, let us suppose that some eminent saint, as, for instance, that the holy Virgin Mary was sent into the world, to be again in a state of trial for a few years, and that you were going to her, to be edified by her great piety; would you expect to find her dressed out, and adorned in fine and expensive clothes? No. You would know, in your own mind, that it was as impossible, as to find her learning to dance. Do but add saint, or holy, to any person, either man or woman, and your own mind tells you immediately, that such a character cannot admit of the vanity of fine apparel. A saint genteelly dressed, is as great nonsense as an Apostle in an embroidered suit; every one's own natural sense convinces him of the inconsistency of these things. Now what is the reason, that, when you think of a saint, or

eminent servant of God, you cannot admit of the vanity of apparel? Is it not because it is inconsistent with such a right state of heart, such true and exalted piety? And is not this, therefore, a demonstration, that where such vanity is admitted, there a right state of heart, true and exalted piety, must needs be lacking? For as certainly as the holy Virgin Mary could not indulge herself, or conform to the vanity of the world in dress and figure, so certain is it, that none can indulge themselves in this vanity, but those who lack her piety of heart; and consequently it must be owned, that all needless and expensive finery of dress is the effect of a disordered heart, that is not governed by the true spirit of religion.

Covetousness is not a crime because there is any harm in gold or silver, but because it supposes a foolish and unreasonable state of mind, that is fallen from its true good, and sunk into such a poor and wretched satisfaction. In like manner, the expensive finery of dress is not a crime because there is anything good or evil in clothes, but because the expensive ornaments of clothing show a foolish and unreasonable state of heart, that is fallen from right notions of human nature, that abuses the end of clothing, and turns the necessities of life into so many instances of pride and folly.

All the world agrees in condemning remarkable fops. Now what is the reason of this? Is it because there is anything sinful in their particular dress, or affected manners? No--but it is because all people know that it shows the state of a man's mind, and that it is impossible for so ridiculous an outside to have anything wise, or reasonable, or good within. And, indeed, to suppose a fop of great piety, is as much nonsense, as to suppose a coward of great courage. So that all the world agrees in owning, that the use and manner of clothes is a mark of the state of a man's mind, and, consequently, that it is a thing highly essential to religion. But then it should be well considered, that as it is not only the drunkard that is guilty of intemperance, but every one that transgresses the right and religious measures of eating and drinking; so it should be considered, that it is not only the fop that is guilty of the vanity and abuse of dress, but everyone that departs from the reasonable and religious ends of clothing. As, therefore, every argument against drunkenness is as good an argument against all kinds of intemperance; so every argument against the vanity of fops, is as good an argument against all vanity and abuse of dress. For they are all of the same kind, and only differ as one degree of intemperance may differ from another. She who only paints her face a little, may as justly accuse another because she paints a great deal, as she that uses but a common finery of dress, accuse another that is excessive in her finery. For as, in the matter of temperance, there is no rule but the sobriety that is according to the doctrines and spirit of our religion; so, in the matter of apparel, there is no rule to be observed, but such a right use of clothes as is strictly according to the doctrines and spirit of our religion. To pretend to make the way of the world our measure in these things, is as weak and absurd as to make the way of the world the measure of our sobriety, abstinence, or humility. It is a pretense that is exceedingly absurd in the mouths of Christians, who are to be so far from conforming to the fashions of this life, that to have overcome the world, is made an essential mark of Christianity. This therefore is the way that you are to judge of the crime of vain apparel--you are to consider it as an offense against the proper use of clothes, as covetousness is an offense against the proper use of money; you are to consider it as an indulgence of proud and unreasonable tempers, as an offense against the humility and sobriety of the Christian spirit; you are to consider it as an offense against all those doctrines that require you to do all to the glory of God, that require you to make a right use of your

talents; you are to consider it as an offense against all those texts of Scripture that command you to love your neighbor as yourself, to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and do all works of charity that you are able--so that you must not deceive yourself with saying, Where can be the harm of clothes? for the covetous man might as well say, Where can be the harm of gold or silver? but you must consider, that it is a great deal of harm to lack that wise, and reasonable, and humble state of heart, which is according to the spirit of religion, and which no one can have in the manner that he ought to have it, who indulges himself either in the vanity of dress, or the desire of riches.

There is therefore nothing right in the use of clothes, or in the use of anything else in the world, but the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel. Every other use of things (however polite and fashionable in the world) distracts and disorders the heart, and is inconsistent with that inward state of piety, that purity of heart, that wisdom of mind, and regularity of affection, which Christianity requires. If you would be a good Christian, there is but one way--you must live wholly unto God--and if you would live wholly unto God, you must live according to the wisdom that comes from God; you must act according to right judgments of the nature and value of things; you must live in the exercise of holy and heavenly affections, and use all the gifts of God to His praise and glory.

Some people, perhaps, who admire the purity and perfection of this life of Miranda, may say, How can it be proposed as a common example? How can we who are married, or we who are under the direction of our parents, imitate such a life? It is answered, Just as you may imitate the life of our blessed Savior and His Apostles. The circumstances of our Savior's life, and the state and condition of His Apostles, were more different from yours, than those of Miranda's are; and yet their life, the purity and perfection of their behavior, is the common example that is proposed to all Christians. It is their spirit, therefore, their piety, their love of God, that you are to imitate, and not the particular form of their life. Act under God as they did, direct your common actions to that end which they did, glorify your proper state with such love of God, such charity to your neighbor, such humility and self-denial, as they did; and then, though you are only teaching your own children, and Paul is converting whole nations, yet you are following his steps, and acting after his example. Do not think, therefore, that you cannot, or need not, be like Miranda, because you are not in her state of life; for as the same spirit and temper would have made Miranda a saint, though she had been forced to labor for a maintenance, so if you will but aspire after her spirit and temper, every form and condition of life will furnish you with sufficient means of employing it. Miranda is what she is, because she does everything in the Name of God, and with regard to her duty to Him; and when you do the same, you will be exactly like her, though you are ever so different from her in the outward state of your life.

You are married, you say; therefore you have not your time and fortune in your power as she has. It is very true; and therefore you cannot spend so much time, nor so much money, in the manner that she does. But now Miranda's perfection does not consist in this, that she spends so much time, or so much money in such a manner, but that she is careful to make the best use of all that time, and all that fortune, which God has put into her hands. If you, therefore, make the best use of all that time and money which are at your disposal, then you will be like Miranda. If she has two hundred pounds a year, and you have only two mites, have you not the more reason to be exceeding exact in the wisest use of them? If she has a great deal of time, and you have but a little, ought you not to be the more watchful and circumspect, lest that little should be lost?

You say, if you were to imitate the plainness and cheapness of her dress, you would offend your husbands. First, Be very sure that this is true, before you make it an excuse. Secondly, If your husbands do really require you to patch your faces, to expose your breasts naked, and to be fine and expensive in all your apparel, then take these two resolutions--First, To forbear from all this, as soon as your husbands will permit you. Secondly, To use your utmost endeavors to recommend yourselves to their affections by such solid virtues, as may correct the vanity of their minds, and teach them to love you for such qualities as will make you amiable in the sight of God and His holy Angels. As to this doctrine concerning the plainness and modesty of dress, it may perhaps be thought by some to be sufficiently confuted by asking, whether all people are to be clothed in the same manner? These questions are generally put by those who had rather perplex the plainest truths, than be obliged to follow them.

Let it be supposed, that I had recommended a universal plainness of diet. Is it not a thing sufficiently reasonable to be universally recommended? But would it thence follow, that the nobleman and the laborer were to live upon the same food? Suppose I had pressed an universal temperance, does not religion enough justify such a doctrine? But would it therefore follow, that all people were to drink the same liquors, and in the same quantity? In like manner, though plainness and sobriety of dress is recommended to all, yet it does by no means follow, that all are to be clothed in the same manner. Now what is the particular rule with regard to temperance? How shall particular people that use different liquors, and in different quantities, preserve their temperance? Is not this the rule? Are they not to guard against indulgence, to make their use of liquors a matter of conscience, and allow of no refreshments, but such as are consistent with the strictest rules of Christian sobriety?

Now transfer this rule to the matter of apparel, and all questions about it are answered. Let every one but guard against the vanity of dress, let them but make their use of clothes a matter of conscience, let them but desire to make the best use of their money; and then everyone has a rule, that is sufficient to direct them in every state of life. This rule will no more let the great be vain in their dress, than intemperate in their liquors; and yet will leave it as lawful to have some difference in their apparel, as to have some difference in their drink. But now will you say, that you may use the finest, richest wines, when, and as you please; that you may be as expensive in them as you have a mind, because different liquors are allowed? If not, how can it be said, that you may use clothes as you please, and wear the richest things you can get, because the bare difference of clothes is lawful? For as the lawfulness of different liquors leaves no room, nor any excuse, for the smallest degree of intemperance in drinking, so the lawfulness of different apparel leaves no room, nor any excuse, for the smallest degrees of vanity in dress. To ask what is vanity in dress, is no more a puzzling question, than to ask, what is intemperance in drinking. And though religion does not here state the particular measure for all individuals, yet it gives such general rules as are a sufficient direction in every state of life. He that lets religion teach him that the end of drinking is only so far to refresh our spirits, as to keep us in good health, and make soul and body fitter for all the offices of a holy and pious life, and that he is to desire to glorify God by a right use of this liberty, will always know what intemperance is, in his particular state. So he that lets religion teach him that the end of clothing is only to hide our shame and nakedness, and to secure our bodies from the injuries of weather, and that he is to desire to glorify God by a sober and wise use of this necessity, will always know what vanity of dress is, in his particular state. And he that thinks it a

needless nicety to talk of the religious use of apparel, has as much reason to think it a needless nicety to talk of the religious use of liquors. For luxury and indulgence in dress is as great an abuse, as luxury and indulgence in eating and drinking. And there is no avoiding either of them, but by making religion the strict measure of our allowance in both cases. And there is nothing in religion to excite a man to this pious exactness in one case, but what is as good a motive to the same exactness in the other.

Farther, as all things that are lawful are not therefore expedient, so there are some things lawful in the use of liquors and apparel, which, by abstaining from them for pious ends, may be made means of great perfection. Thus, for instance, if a man should deny himself such use of liquors as is lawful; if he should refrain from such expense in his drink as might be allowed without sin; if he should do this, not only for the sake of a more pious self-denial, but that he might be able to relieve and refresh the helpless, poor, and sick--if another should abstain from the use of that which is lawful in dress, if he should be more frugal and humble in his clothing than the necessities of religion absolutely require; if he should do this not only as a means of a better humility, but that he may be more able to clothe other people; these people might be said to do that which was highly suitable to the true spirit, though not absolutely required by the letter, of the law of Christ. For if those who give a cup of cold water to a disciple of Christ shall not lose their reward, how dear must they be to Christ, who often give themselves water, that they may be able to give wine to the sick and languishing members of Christ's body! But to return. All that has been here said to married women, may serve for the same instruction to such as are still under the direction of their parents. Now though the obedience which is due to parents does not oblige them to carry their virtues no higher than their parents require them; yet their obedience requires them to submit to their direction in all things not contrary to the laws of God. If, therefore, your parents require you to live more in the fashion and conversation of the world, or to be more expensive in your dress and person, or to dispose of your time otherwise than suits with your desires after greater perfection, you must submit, and bear it as your cross, until you are at liberty to follow the higher counsels of Christ, and have it in your power to choose the best ways of raising your virtue to its greatest height. Now although, while you are in this state, you may be obliged to forego some means of improving your virtue, yet there are some others to be found in it, that are not to be had in a life of more liberty. For if in this state, where obedience is so great a virtue, you comply in all things lawful, out of a pious, tender sense of duty, then those things which you thus perform are, instead of being hindrances of your virtue, turned into means of improving it. What you lose by being restrained from such things as you would choose to observe, you gain by that excellent virtue of obedience, in humbly complying against your temper.

Now what is here granted, is only in things lawful, and therefore the diversion of our English stage is here excepted; being elsewhere proved, as I think, to be absolutely unlawful. Thus much to show how people under the direction of others may imitate the wise and pious life of Miranda. But as for those who are altogether in their own hands, if the liberty of their state makes them covet the best gifts, if it carries them to choose the most excellent ways, if they, having all in their own power, should turn the whole form of their life into a regular exercise of the highest virtues, happy are they who have so learned Christ! All people cannot receive this saying. Those who are able to receive it, let them receive it, and bless that Spirit of God, who has put such good motions into their hearts.

God may be served and glorified in every state of life. But as there are some states of life more desirable than others, that more purify our natures, that more improve our virtues, and dedicate us unto God in a higher manner, so those who are at liberty to choose for themselves seem to be called by God to be more eminently devoted to His service. Ever since the beginning of Christianity there have been two orders, or ranks of people, among good Christians. The one that feared and served God in the common offices and business of a secular worldly life. The other, renouncing the common business, and common enjoyments of life, as riches, marriage, honors, and pleasures, devoted themselves to voluntary poverty, virginity, devotion, and retirement, that by this means they might live wholly unto God, in the daily exercise of a Divine and heavenly life. This testimony I have from the famous ecclesiastical historian Eusebius, who lived at the time of the first General Council, when the faith of our Nicene Creed was established, when the Church was in its greatest glory and purity, when its Bishops were so many holy fathers and eminent saints. "Therefore," said he, "there has been instituted in the Church of Christ, two ways, or manners, of living. The one, raised above the ordinary state of nature, and common ways of living, rejects wedlock, possessions, and worldly goods, and, being wholly separate and removed from the ordinary conversation of common life, is appropriated and devoted solely to the worship and service of God, through an exceeding degree of heavenly love.

"They who are of this order of people seem dead to the life of this world, and, having their bodies only upon earth, are in their minds, and contemplations dwelling in heaven. From whence, like so many heavenly inhabitants, they look down upon human life, making intercessions and oblations to Almighty God for the whole race of mankind. And this not with the blood of beasts, or the fat, or smoke, and burning of bodies, but with the highest exercises of true piety, with cleansed and purified hearts, and with the whole of life strictly devoted to virtue. These are their sacrifices, which they continually offer unto God, imploring His mercy and favor for themselves and their fellow-creatures. "Christianity receives this as the perfect manner of life.

"The other is of a lower form, and, suiting itself more to the condition of human nature, admits of chaste wedlock, the care of children and family, of trade and business, and goes through all the employments of life under a sense of piety, and fear of God.

"Now they who have chosen this manner of life, have their set times for retirement and spiritual exercises, and particular days are set apart for their hearing and learning the word of God. And this order of people is considered as in the second state of piety." (Eusebius)

Thus this learned historian. If, therefore, people of either sex, moved with the life of Miranda, and desirous of perfection, should unite themselves into little societies, professing voluntary poverty, virginity, retirement, and devotion, living upon bare necessaries, that some might be relieved by their charities, and all be blessed with their prayers, and benefited by their example; or if, for lack of this, they should practice the same manner of life, in as high a degree as they could by themselves; such people would be so far from being chargeable with any superstition, or blind devotion, that they might be justly said to restore that piety, which was the boast and glory of the Church, when its greatest saints were alive. Now as this learned historian observes; that it was an exceeding great degree of heavenly love, that carried these people so much above the common ways of life to such an eminent state of holiness; so it is not to be wondered at, that the religion of Jesus Christ should fill the hearts of many Christians with this high degree of love. For a religion

that opens such a scene of glory, that discovers things so infinitely above all the world, that so triumphs over death, that assures us of such mansions of bliss, where we shall so soon be as the Angels of God in Heaven; what wonder is it, if such a religion, such truths and expectations, should, in some holy souls, destroy all earthly desires, and make the ardent love of heavenly things, be the one continual passion of their hearts? If the religion of Christians is founded upon the infinite humiliation, the cruel mockings and scourgings, the tremendous sufferings, the poor, persecuted life, and painful death, of the crucified Son of God; what wonder is it, if many humble adorers of this profound mystery, many affectionate lovers of a crucified Lord, should renounce their share of worldly pleasures, and give themselves up to a continual course of mortification and self-denial, that thus suffering with Christ here, they may reign with Him hereafter?

If truth itself has assured us that there is but one thing needful, what wonder is it that there should be some among Christians so full of faith, as to believe this in the highest sense of the words, and to desire such a separation from the world, that their care and attention to the one thing needful may not be interrupted? If our blessed Lord has said, "If you will be perfect, go and sell that you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven--and come and follow me"; what wonder is it, that there should be among Christians some such zealous followers of Christ, so intent upon heavenly treasure, so desirous of perfection, that they should renounce the enjoyment of their estates, choose a voluntary poverty, and relieve all the poor that they are able?

If the chosen vessel, Paul, has said, "He that is unmarried cares for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord"--and that "there is this difference also between a wife and a virgin; the unmarried woman cares for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit"; what wonder is it if the purity and perfection of the virgin state has been the praise and glory of the Church in its first and purest ages? that there have always been some so desirous of pleasing God, so zealous after every degree of purity and perfection, so glad of every means of improving their virtue, that they have renounced the comforts and enjoyments of wedlock, to trim their lamps, to purify their souls, and wait upon God in a state of perpetual virginity? And if in these our days we lack examples of these several degrees of perfection, if neither clergy nor laity are enough of this spirit; if we are so far departed from it, that a man seems, like Paul at Athens, a setter forth of strange doctrines, when he recommends self-denial, renunciation of the world, regular devotion, retirement, virginity, and voluntary poverty, it is because we are fallen into an age, where the love not only of many, but of most, is waxed cold.

I have made this little appeal to antiquity, and quoted these few passages of Scripture, to support some uncommon practices in the life of Miranda; and to show that her highest rules of holy living, her devotion, self-denial, renunciation of the world, her charity, virginity, voluntary poverty, are founded in the most sublime counsels of Christ and His Apostles, suitable to the high expectations of another life, proper instances of a heavenly love, and all followed by the greatest saints of the best and purest ages of the Church. "He that has ears to hear, let him hear.

02.10. Chapter 10

Showing how all orders and ranks of men and women, of all ages, are obliged to devote themselves unto God.

I have in the foregoing chapters, gone through the several great instances of Christian devotion, and shown that all the parts of our common life, our employments, our talents, and gifts of fortune, are all to be made holy and acceptable unto God by a wise and religious use of everything, and by directing our actions and designs to such ends as are suitable to the honor and glory of God. I shall now show that this regularity of devotion, this holiness of common life, this religious use of everything that we have, is a devotion that is the duty of all orders of Christian people.

FULVIUS has had a learned education, and taken his degrees in the university; he came from thence, that he might be free from any rules of life. He takes no employment upon him, nor enters into any business, because he thinks that every employment or business calls people to the careful performance and just discharge of its several duties. When he is grave, he will tell you that he did not enter into holy orders, because he looks upon it to be a state that requires great holiness of life, and that it does not suit his temper to be so good. He will tell you that he never intends to marry, because he cannot oblige himself to that regularity of life and good behavior, which he takes to be the duty of those that are at the head of a family. He refused to be godfather to his nephew, because he will have no trust of any kind to answer for. Fulvius thinks that he is conscientious in this conduct, and is therefore content with the most idle, impertinent, and careless life. He has no religion, no devotion, no pretenses to piety. He lives by no rules, and thinks all is very well, because he is neither a priest, nor a father, nor a guardian, nor has any employment, or family, to look after. But Fulvius, you are a rational creature, and, as such, are as much obliged to live according to reason and order, as a priest is obliged to attend to the altar, or a guardian to be faithful to his trust--if you live contrary to reason, you do not commit a small crime, you do not break a small trust; but you break the law of your nature, you rebel against God who gave you that nature, and put yourself among those whom the God of reason and order will punish as apostates and deserters. Though you have no employment, yet, as you are baptized into the profession of Christ's religion, you are as much obliged to live according to the holiness of the Christian spirit, and perform all the promises made at your Baptism, as any man is obliged to be honest and faithful in his calling. If you abuse this great calling, you are not false in a small matter, but you abuse the precious blood of Christ; you crucify the Son of God afresh; you neglect the highest instances of Divine goodness; you disgrace the Church of God; you blemish the body of Christ; you abuse the means of grace, and the promises of glory; and it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. It is therefore great folly for anyone to think himself at liberty to live as he pleases, because he is not in such a state of life as some others are--for if there is anything dreadful in the abuse of any trust; if there is anything to be feared for the neglect of any calling; there is nothing more to be feared than the wrong use of our reason, nor anything more to be dreaded than the neglect of our Christian calling, which is not to serve the little uses of a short life, but to redeem souls unto God, to fill Heaven with saints, and finish a kingdom of

eternal glory unto God. No man, therefore, must think himself excused from the exactness of piety and morality, because he has chosen to be idle and independent in the world; for the necessities of a reasonable and holy life are not founded in the several conditions and employments of this life, but in the immutable nature of God, and the nature of man. A man is not to be reasonable and holy, because he is a priest, or a father of a family; but he is to be a pious priest, and a good father, because piety and goodness are the laws of human nature. Could any man please God, without living according to reason and order, there would be nothing displeasing to God in an idle priest, or a reprobate father. He, therefore, that abuses his reason, is like him that abuses the priesthood; and he that neglects the holiness of the Christian life, is as the man that disregards the most important trust.

If a man were to choose to put out his eyes, rather than enjoy the light, and see the works of God; if he should voluntarily kill himself by refusing to eat and drink; every one would own that such a one was a rebel against God, that justly deserved His highest indignation. You would not say that this was only sinful in a priest, or a master of a family, but in every man as such. Now wherein does the sinfulness of this behavior consist? Does it not consist in this, that he abuses his nature, and refuses to act that part for which God has created him? But if this be true, then all people that abuse their reason, that act a different part from that for which God created them, are like this man, rebels against God, and on the same account subject to His wrath.

Let us suppose that this man, instead of putting out his eyes, had only employed them in looking at ridiculous things, or shut them up in sleep; that instead of starving himself to death, by not eating at all, he should turn every meal into a feast, and eat and drink like an epicure; could he be said to have lived more to the Glory of God? Could he any more be said to act the part for which God had created him, than if he had put out his eyes, and starved himself to death? Now do but suppose a man acting unreasonably; do but suppose him extinguishing his reason, instead of putting out his eyes, and living in a course of folly and impertinence, instead of starving himself to death; and then you have found out as great a rebel against God. For he that puts out his eyes, or murders himself, has only this guilt, that he abuses the powers that God has given him; that he refuses to act that part for which he was created, and puts himself into a state that is contrary to the Divine will. And surely this is the guilt of every one that lives an unreasonable, unholy, and foolish life. As, therefore, no particular state, or private life, is an excuse for the abuse of our bodies, or self-murder, so no particular state, or private life, is an excuse for the abuse of our reason, or the neglect of the holiness of the Christian religion. For surely it is as much the will of God that we should make the best use of our rational faculties, that we should conform to the purity and holiness of Christianity, as it is the will of God that we should use our eyes, and eat and drink for the preservation of our lives.

Until, therefore, a man can show that he sincerely endeavors to live according to the will of God, to be that which God requires him to be; until he can show that he is striving to live according to the holiness of the Christian religion; whoever he be, or wheresoever he be, he has all that to answer for, that they have, who refuse to live, who abuse the greatest trusts, and neglect the highest calling in the world. Everybody acknowledges that all orders of men are to be equally and exactly honest and faithful; there is no exception to be made in these duties, for any private or particular state of life. Now, if we would but attend to the reason and nature of things, if we would but consider the nature of God, and the nature of man, we would find the same necessity for every

other right use of our reason, for every grace, or religious temper of the Christian life; we would find it as absurd to suppose that one man must be exact in piety, and another need not, as to suppose that one man must be exact in honesty, but another need not; for Christian humility, sobriety, devotion, and piety, are as great and necessary parts of a reasonable life, as justice and honesty. And on the other hand, pride, sensuality, and covetousness, are as great disorders of the soul, are as high an abuse of our reason, and as contrary to God, as cheating and dishonesty. Theft and dishonesty seem, indeed, to vulgar eyes, to be greater sins, because they are so hurtful to civil society, and are so severely punished by human laws. But if we consider mankind in a higher view, as God's order or society of rational beings, that are to glorify Him by the right use of their reason, and by acting conformably to the order of their nature, we shall find that every temper that is equally contrary to reason and order, that opposes God's ends and designs, and disorders the beauty and glory of the rational world, is equally sinful in man, and equally odious to God. This would show us that the sin of sensuality is like the sin of dishonesty, and renders us as great objects of the Divine displeasure.

Again--if we consider mankind in a farther view, as a redeemed order of fallen spirits, that are baptized into a fellowship with the Son of God; to be temples of the Holy Spirit; to live according to His holy inspirations; to offer to God the reasonable sacrifice of a humble, pious, and thankful life; to purify themselves from the disorders of their fall; to make a right use of the means of grace, in order to be sons of eternal glory; if we look at mankind in this true light, then we shall find that all tempers that are contrary to this holy society, that are abuses of this infinite mercy, all actions that make us unlike to Christ, that disgrace His body, that abuse the means of grace, and oppose our hopes of glory, have everything in those who can make us forever odious unto God. So that though pride and sensuality, and other vices of the like kind, do not hurt civil society as cheating and dishonesty do; yet they hurt that society, and oppose those ends, which are greater and more glorious in the eyes of God than all the societies that relate to this world. Nothing, therefore, can be more false than to imagine, that because we are private people, that have taken upon us no charge or employment of life, therefore we may live more at large, indulge our appetites, and be less careful of the duties of piety and holiness; for it is as good an excuse for cheating and dishonesty. Because he that abuses his reason, that indulges himself in lust and sensuality, and neglects to act the wise and reasonable part of a true Christian, has everything in his life to render him hateful to God, that is to be found in cheating and dishonesty.

If, therefore, you rather choose to be an idle epicure than to be unfaithful; if you rather choose to live in lust and sensuality, than to injure your neighbor in his goods; you have made no better a provision for the favor of God, than he that rather chooses to rob a house than to rob a church. For the abusing of our own nature is as great a disobedience against God, as the injuring our neighbor; and he that lacks piety towards God, has done as much to damn himself, as he that lacks honesty towards men. Every argument, therefore, that proves it necessary for all men in all stations of life to be truly honest, proves it equally necessary for all men in all stations of life to be truly holy and pious, and do all things in such a manner as is suitable to the glory of God.

Again--another argument to prove that all orders of men are obliged to be thus holy and devout in the common course of their lives, in the use of everything that they enjoy, may be taken from our obligation to prayer. It is granted that prayer is a duty that belongs to all states and conditions of men--now if we inquire into the reason of this, why no state of life is to be excused from prayer, we

shall find it as good a reason why every state of life is to be made a state of piety and holiness in all its parts. For the reason why we are to pray unto God, and glorify Him with hymns, and psalms of thanksgiving, is this, because we are to live wholly unto God, and glorify Him all possible ways. It is not because the praises of words, or forms of thanksgiving, are more particularly parts of piety, or more the worship of God than other things; but it is because they are possible ways of expressing our dependence, our obedience and devotion to God.

Now if this be the reason of verbal praises and thanksgivings to God, because we are to live unto God all possible ways, then it plainly follows, that we are equally obliged to worship and glorify God in all other actions that can be turned into acts of piety and obedience to Him. And, as actions are of much more significance than words, it must be a much more acceptable worship of God, to glorify Him in all the actions of our common life, than with any little form of words at any particular times. Thus, if God is to be worshiped with forms of thanksgivings, he that makes it a rule to be content and thankful in every part and incident of his life, because it comes from God, praises God in a much higher manner than he that has some set time for singing of psalms. He that dares not say an ill-natured word, or do an unreasonable thing, because he considers God as everywhere present, performs a better devotion than he that dares not miss the Church. To live in the world as a stranger and a pilgrim, using all its enjoyments as if we used them not, making all our actions so many steps towards a better life, is offering a better sacrifice to God than any forms of holy and heavenly prayers. To be humble in all our actions, to avoid every appearance of pride and vanity, to be meek and lowly in our words, actions, dress, behavior, and designs, in imitation of our blessed Savior, is worshipping God in a higher manner than they who have only times to fall low on their knees in devotions. He that contents himself with necessaries, that he may give the remainder to those that need it; that dares not to spend any money foolishly, because he considers it as a talent from God which must be used according to His will, praises God with something that is more glorious than songs of praise. He that has appointed times for the use of wise and pious prayers, performs a proper instance of devotion; but he that allows himself no times, nor any places, nor any actions, but such as are strictly conformable to wisdom and holiness, worships the Divine nature with the most true and substantial devotion. For who does not know, that it is better to be pure and holy, than to talk about purity and holiness? No, who does not know, that a man is to be reckoned no farther pure, or holy, or just, than as he is pure, and holy, and just in the common course of his life? But if this be plain, then it is also plain, that it is better to be holy, than to have holy prayers. Prayers, therefore, are so far from being a sufficient devotion, that they are the smallest parts of it. We are to praise God with words and prayers, because it is a possible way of glorifying God, who has given us such faculties, as may be so used. But then as words are but small things in themselves, as times of prayer are but little, if compared with the rest of our lives; so that devotion which consists in times and forms of prayer is but a very small thing, if compared to that devotion which is to appear in every other part and circumstance of our lives.

Again--as it is an easy thing to worship God with forms of words, and to observe times of offering them unto Him, so it is the smallest kind of piety. And, on the other hand, as it is more difficult to worship God with our substance, to honor Him with the right use of our time, to offer to Him the continual sacrifice of self-denial and mortification; as it requires more piety to eat and drink only for such ends as may glorify God, to undertake no labor, nor allow of any diversion, but where we can act in the Name of God; as it is more difficult to sacrifice all our corrupt tempers, correct all our

passions, and make piety to God the rule and measure of all the actions of our common life; so the devotion of this kind is a much more acceptable service unto God, than those words of devotion which we offer to Him either in the Church or in our closet.

Every sober reader will easily perceive that I do not intend to lessen the true and great value of prayers, either public or private; but only to show him that they are certainly but a very slender part of devotion, when compared to a devout life. To see this in a yet clearer light, let us suppose a person to have appointed times for praising God with psalms and hymns, and to be strict in the observation of them; let it be supposed, also, that in his common life he is restless and uneasy, full of murmurings and complaints at everything, never pleased but by chance, as his temper happens to carry him, but murmuring and repining at the very seasons, and having something to dislike in everything that happens to him. Now, can you conceive anything more absurd and unreasonable than such a character as this? Is such a one to be reckoned thankful to God, because he has forms of praise which he offers to Him? No, is it not certain that such forms of praise must be so far from being an acceptable devotion to God, that they must be abhorred as an abomination?

Now the absurdity which you see in this instance, is the same in any other part of our life; if our common life has any contrariety to our prayers, it is the same abomination as songs of thanksgiving in the mouths of murmurers. Bended knees, while you are clothed with pride; heavenly petitions, while you are hoarding up treasures upon earth; holy devotions, while you live in the follies of the world; prayers of meekness and charity, while your heart is the seat of pride and resentment; hours of prayer, while you give up days and years to idle diversions, impertinent visits, and foolish pleasures; are as absurd, unacceptable services to God, as forms of thanksgiving from a person that lives in repinings and discontent. So that, unless the common course of our lives be according to the common spirit of our prayers, our prayers are so far from being a real or sufficient degree of devotion, that they become an empty lip-labor, or, what is worse, a notorious hypocrisy.

Seeing, therefore, we are to make the spirit and temper of our prayers the common spirit and temper of our lives, this may serve to convince us that all orders of people are to labor and aspire after the same utmost perfection of the Christian life. For as all Christians are to use the same holy and heavenly devotions, as they are all with the same earnestness to pray for the Spirit of God, so is it a sufficient proof that all orders of people are, to the utmost of their power, to make their life agreeable to that one Spirit, for which they are all to pray. As certain, therefore, as the same holiness of prayers requires the same holiness of life, so certain is it, that all Christians are called to the same holiness of life. A soldier, or a tradesman, is not called to minister at the altar, or preach the Gospel; but every soldier or tradesman is as much obliged to be devout, humble, holy, and heavenly-minded, in all the parts of his common life, as a clergyman is obliged to be zealous, faithful, and laborious, in all parts of his profession. And all this for this one plain reason, because all people are to pray for the same holiness, wisdom, and Divine tempers, and to make themselves as fit as they can for the same Heaven. All men, therefore, as men, have one and the same important business, to act up to the excellency of their rational nature, and to make reason and order the law of all their designs and actions. All Christians, as Christians, have one and the same calling, to live according to the excellency of the Christian spirit, and to make the sublime precepts of the Gospel the rule and measure of all their tempers in common life. The one thing needful to one, is the one thing needful to all. The merchant is no longer to hoard up treasures upon earth;

the soldier is no longer to fight for glory; the great scholar is no longer to pride himself in the depths of science; but they must all with one spirit "count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus." The fine lady must teach her eyes to weep, and be clothed with humility. The polite gentleman must exchange the gay thoughts of wit and fancy, for a broken and a contrite heart. The man of quality must so far renounce the dignity of his birth, as to think himself miserable until he is born again. Servants must consider their service as done unto God. Masters must consider their servants as their brethren in Christ, that are to be treated as their fellow-members of the mystical body of Christ. 105 Young ladies must either devote themselves to piety, prayer, self-denial, and all good works, in a virgin state of life; or else marry, in order to be holy, sober, and prudent in the care of a family, bringing up their children in piety, humility, and devotion, and abounding in all other good works, to the utmost of their state and capacity.

They have no choice of anything else, but must devote themselves to God in one of these states. They may choose a married, or a single life; but it is not left to their choice, whether they will make either state a state of holiness, humility, devotion, and all other duties of the Christian life. It is no more left in their power, because they have fortunes, or are born of rich parents, to divide themselves between God and the world, or take such pleasures as their fortune will afford them, than it is allowable for them to be sometimes chaste and modest, and sometimes not. They are not to consider how much religion may secure them a fair character, or how they may add devotion to an impertinent, vain, and giddy life; but must look into the spirit and temper of their prayers, into the nature and end of Christianity; and then they will find that, whether married or unmarried, they have but one business upon their hands; to be wise, and pious, and holy, not in little modes and forms of worship, but in the whole turn of their minds, in the whole form of all their behavior, and in the daily course of common life.

Young gentlemen must consider what our blessed Savior said to the young gentleman in the Gospel; he bid him sell all that he had, and give to the poor. Now though this text should not oblige all people to sell all, yet it certainly obliges all kinds of people to employ all their estates in such wise and reasonable and charitable ways, as may sufficiently show that all that they have is devoted to God, and that no part of it is kept from the poor to be spent in needless, vain, and foolish expenses. If, therefore, young gentlemen propose to themselves a life of pleasure and indulgence, if they spend their estates in high living, in luxury and intemperance, in state and equipage, in pleasures and diversions, in sports and gaming, and such like profligate gratifications of their foolish passions, they have as much reason to look upon themselves to be Angels, as to be disciples of Christ.

Let them be assured, that it is the one only business of a Christian gentleman, to distinguish himself by good works, to be eminent in the most sublime virtues of the Gospel, to bear with the ignorance and weakness of the vulgar, to be a friend and patron to all that dwell about him, to live in the utmost heights of wisdom and holiness, and show through the whole course of his life a true religious greatness of mind. They must aspire after such a humility, as they might have learned from seeing the blessed Jesus, and show no other spirit of a gentleman, but such as they might have got by living with the holy Apostles. They must learn to love God with all their heart, with all their soul, and with all their strength, and their neighbor as themselves; and then they have all the greatness and distinction that they can have here, and are fit for an eternal happiness in Heaven hereafter. Thus in all orders and conditions, either of men or women, this is the one common

holiness, which is to be the common life of all Christians. The merchant is not to leave devotion to the clergyman, nor the clergyman to leave humility to the laborer; women of fortune are not to leave it to the poor of their sex to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, to adorn themselves in modest apparel, humility, and sobriety; nor poor women leave it to the rich to attend at the worship and service of God. Great men must be eminent for true poverty of spirit; and people of a low and afflicted state must greatly rejoice in God. The man of strength and power is to forgive and pray for his enemies, and the innocent sufferer, that is chained in prison, must, with Paul and Silas, at midnight sing praises to God. For God is to be glorified, holiness is to be practiced, and the spirit of religion is to be the common spirit of every Christian, in every state and condition of life. For the Son of God did not come from above to add an external form of worship to the several ways of life that are in the world, and so to leave people to live as they did before, in such tempers and enjoyments as the fashion and spirit of the world approves; but as He came down from Heaven altogether Divine and heavenly in His own nature, so it was to call mankind to a Divine and heavenly life; to the highest change of their own nature and temper; to be born again of the Holy Spirit; to walk in the wisdom and light and love of God, and to be like Him to the utmost of their power; to renounce all the most plausible ways of the world, whether of greatness, business, or pleasure; to a mortification of all their most agreeable passions; and to live in such wisdom, and purity, and holiness, as might fit them to be glorious in the enjoyment of God to all eternity.

Whatever, therefore, is foolish, ridiculous, vain, or earthly, or sensual, in the life of a Christian, is something that ought not to be there; it is a spot and a defilement that must be washed away with tears of repentance. But if anything of this kind runs through the course of our whole life, if we allow ourselves in things that are either vain, foolish, or sensual, we renounce our profession. For as sure as Jesus Christ was wisdom and holiness, as sure as He came to make us like Himself, and to be baptized into His Spirit, so sure is it, that none can be said to keep to their Christian profession, but they who, to the utmost of their power, live a wise and holy and heavenly life. This, and this alone, is Christianity--a universal holiness in every part of life, a heavenly wisdom in all our actions, not conforming to the spirit and temper of the world, but turning all worldly enjoyments into means of piety and devotion to God. But now, if this devout state of heart, if these habits of inward holiness, be true religion, then true religion is equally the duty and happiness of all orders of men; for there is nothing to recommend it to one, that is not the same recommendation of it to all states of people. If it be the happiness and glory of a bishop to live in this devout spirit, full of these holy tempers, doing everything as unto God, it is as much the glory and happiness of all men and women, whether young or old, to live in the same spirit. And whoever can find any reasons why an ancient bishop should be intent upon Divine things, turning all his life into the highest exercises of piety, wisdom, and devotion, will find them so many reasons why he should, to the utmost of his power, do the same himself. If you say that a bishop must be an eminent example of Christian holiness, because of his high and sacred calling, you say right. But if you say that it is more to his advantage to be exemplary, than it is yours, you greatly mistake--for there is nothing to make the highest degrees of holiness desirable to a bishop, but what makes them equally desirable to every young person of every family. For an exalted piety, high devotion, and the religious use of everything, is as much the glory and happiness of one state of life, as it is of another. Do but fancy in your mind what a spirit of piety you would have in the best bishop in the world, how you would have him love God, how you would have him imitate the life of our Savior and His Apostles, how you would have him live above the world, shining in all the instances of a heavenly life, and then

you have found out that spirit which you ought to make the spirit of your own life. I desire every reader to dwell awhile upon this reflection, and perhaps he will find more conviction from it than he imagines. Every one can tell how good and pious he would have some people to be; every one knows how wise and reasonable a thing it is in a bishop to be entirely above the world, and be an eminent example of Christian perfection; as soon as you think of a wise and ancient bishop, you fancy some exalted degree of piety, a living example of all those holy tempers which you find described in the Gospel.

Now, if you ask yourself, What is the happiest thing for a young clergyman to do? you must be forced to answer, that nothing can be so happy and glorious for him, as to be like that excellent holy bishop. If you go on and ask, What is the happiest thing for any young gentleman or his sisters to do? the answer must be the same; that nothing can be so happy or glorious for them as to live in such habits of piety, in such exercises of a Divine life, as this good old bishop does. For everything that is great and glorious in religion, is as much the true glory of every man or woman, as it is the glory of any bishop. If high degrees of Divine love, if fervent charity, if spotless purity, if heavenly affection, if constant mortification, if frequent devotion, be the best and happiest way of life for any Christian, it is so for every Christian.

Consider again--if you were to see a bishop in the whole course of his life living below his character, conforming to all the foolish tempers of the world, and governed by the same cares and fears which govern vain and worldly men, what would you think of him? Would you think that he was only guilty of a small mistake? No, you would condemn him as erring in that which is not only the most, but the only important matter that relates to him. Stay awhile in this consideration, until your mind is fully convinced how miserable a mistake it is in a bishop to live a careless worldly life. While you are thinking in this manner, turn your thoughts towards some of your acquaintance, your brother or sister, or any young person. Now, if you see the common course of their lives to be not according to the doctrines of the Gospel, if you see that their way of life cannot be said to be a sincere endeavor to enter in at the strait gate, you see something that you are to condemn, in the same degree, and for the same reasons. They do not commit a small mistake, but are wrong in that which is their all, and mistake their true happiness, as much as that bishop does, who neglects the high duties of his calling. Apply this reasoning to yourself; if you find yourself living an idle, indulgent, vain life, choosing rather to gratify your passions than to live up to the doctrines of Christianity, and practice the plain precepts of our blessed Lord, you have all that blindness and unreasonableness to charge upon yourself, that you can charge upon any irregular bishop. For all the virtues of the Christian life, its perfect purity, its heavenly tempers, are as much the sole rule of your life, as the sole rule of the life of a bishop. If you neglect these holy tempers, if you do not eagerly aspire after them, if you do not show yourself a visible example of them, you are as much fallen from your true happiness, you are as great an enemy to yourself and have made as bad a choice, as that bishop, that chooses rather to enrich his family than to be like an Apostle. For there is no reason why you should think the highest holiness, the most heavenly tempers, to be the duty and happiness of a bishop, but what is as good a reason why you should think the same tempers to be the duty and happiness of all Christians. And as the wisest bishop in the world is he who lives in the greatest heights of holiness, who is most exemplary in all the exercises of a Divine life, so the wisest youth, the wisest woman, whether married or unmarried, is she that lives in the highest degrees of Christian holiness, and all the exercises of a Divine and heavenly life.

02.11. Chapter 11

Showing how great devotion fills our lives with the greatest peace and happiness that can be enjoyed in this world.

Some people will perhaps object, that all these rules of holy living unto God in all that we do, are too great a restraint upon human life; that it will be made too anxious a state, by thus introducing a regard to God in all our actions; and that by depriving ourselves of so many seemingly innocent pleasures, we shall render our lives dull, uneasy, and melancholy. To which it may be answered, First, That these rules are prescribed for, and will certainly procure a quite contrary end. That instead of making our lives dull and melancholy, they will render them full of contentment and strong satisfactions. That by these rules, we only change the childish satisfactions of our vain and sickly passions, for the solid enjoyments and real happiness of a sound mind.

Secondly, That as there is no foundation for comfort in the enjoyments of this life, but in the assurance that a wise and good God governs the world, so the more we find out God in everything, the more we apply to Him in every place, the more we look up to Him in all our actions, the more we conform to His will, the more we act according to His wisdom, and imitate His goodness, by so much the more do we enjoy God, partake of the Divine nature, and heighten and increase all that is happy and comfortable in human life.

Thirdly, He that is endeavoring to subdue, and root out of his mind, all those passions of pride, envy, and desire for rank, fame, or power, which religion opposes, is doing more to make himself happy, even in this life, than he that is contriving means to indulge them. For these passions are the causes of all the disquiets and vexations of human life--they are the dropsies and fevers of our minds, vexing them with false appetites, and restless cravings after such things as we do not need, and spoiling our taste for those things which are our proper good. Do but imagine that you somewhere or other saw a man that proposed reason as the rule of all his actions; that had no desires but after such things as nature needs, and religion approves; that was as pure from all the motions of pride, envy, and covetousness, as from thoughts of murder; that, in this freedom from worldly passions, he had a soul full of Divine love, wishing and praying that all men may have what they need of worldly things, and be partakers of eternal glory in the life to come. Do but fancy a man living in this manner, and your own conscience will immediately tell you, that he is the happiest man in the world, and that it is not in the power of the richest fancy to invent any higher happiness in the present state of life.

And, on the other hand, if you suppose him to be in any degree less perfect; if you suppose him but subject to one foolish fondness or vain passion, your own conscience will again tell you that he so far lessens his own happiness, and robs himself of the true enjoyment of his other virtues. So true is it, that the more we live by the rules of religion, the more peaceful and happy do we render our lives. Again; as it thus appears that real happiness is only to be had from the greatest degrees of piety, the greatest denials of our passions, and the strictest rules of religion; so the same truth will appear from a consideration of human misery.

If we look into the world, and view the disquiets and troubles of human life, we shall find that they are all owing to our violent and irreligious passions. Now all trouble and uneasiness is founded in the lack of something or other--would we, therefore, know the true cause of our troubles and disquiets, we must find out the cause of our needs; because that which creates and increases our needs, does, in the same degree, create and increase our troubles and disquiets.

God Almighty has sent us into the world with very few needs; food, and drink, and clothing, are the only things necessary in life; and as these are only our present needs, so the present world is well furnished to supply these needs. If a man had half the world in his power, he can make no more of it than this; as he needs it only to support an animal life, so is it unable to do anything else for him, or to afford him any other happiness. This is the state of man--born with few needs, and into a large world very capable of supplying them. So that one would reasonably suppose that men should pass their lives in contentment and thankfulness to God; at least, that they should be free from violent disquiets and vexations, as being placed in a world that has more than enough to relieve all their needs. But if to all this we add, that this short life, thus furnished with all that we need in it, is only a short passage to eternal glory, where we shall be clothed with the brightness of Angels, and enter into the joys of God, we might still more reasonably expect that human life should be a state of peace, and joy, and delight in God. Thus it would certainly be, if reason had its full power over us.

But, alas! though God, and nature, and reason, make human life thus free from needs and so full of happiness; yet our passions, in rebellion against God, against nature and reason, create a new world of evils and fill human life with imaginary needs, and vain disquiets. The man of pride has a thousand desires, which only his own pride has created; and these render him as full of trouble as if God had created him with a thousand appetites, without creating anything that was proper to satisfy them. Envy and ambition have also their endless needs, which disquiet the souls of men, and by their contradictory motions, render them as foolishly miserable, as those that want to fly and creep at the same time. Let but any complaining, disturbed man, tell you the ground of his uneasiness, and you will plainly see that he is the author of his own torment; that he is vexing himself at some imaginary evil, which will cease to torment him as soon as he is content to be that which God, and nature, and reason, require him to be.

If you should see a man passing his days in disquiet, because he could not walk upon the water, or catch birds as they fly by him, you would readily confess that such a one might thank himself for such uneasiness. But now if you look into all the most tormenting disquiets of life, you will find them all thus absurd--where people are only tormented by their own folly, and vexing themselves at such things as no more concern them, nor are any more their proper good, than walking upon the water, or catching birds. What can you conceive more silly and extravagant, than to suppose a man racking his brains, and studying night and day how to fly? — wandering from his own house and home, wearying himself with climbing upon every ascent, courting everybody he meets to lift him up from the ground, bruising himself with continual falls, and at last breaking his neck? — and all this from an imagination that it would be glorious to have the eyes of people gazing up at him, and mighty happy to eat, and drink, and sleep, at the top of the highest trees in the kingdom--would you not readily own that such a one was only disturbed by his own folly? If you ask, what it signifies to suppose such silly creatures as these, as are nowhere to be found in human life? It may be answered, that wherever you see an ambitious man, there you see this vain

and senseless flyer.

Again--if you should see a man that had a large pond of water, yet living in continual thirst, not allowing himself to drink half a draught, for fear of lessening his pond; if you should see him wasting his time and strength, in fetching more water to his pond; always thirsty, yet always carrying a bucket of water in his hand, watching early and late to catch the drops of rain, gazing after every cloud, and running greedily into every mire and mud, in hopes of water, and always studying how to make every ditch empty itself into his pond--if you should see him grow gray and old in these anxious labors, and at last end an anxious, thirsty life, by falling into his own pond; would you not say that such a one was not only the author of all his own disquiets, but was foolish enough to be reckoned among idiots and madmen? But yet foolish and absurd as this character is, it does not represent half the follies, and absurd disquiets, of the covetous man. I could now easily proceed to show the same effects of all our other passions, and make it plainly appear that all our miseries, vexations, and complaints, are entirely of our own making, and that, in the same absurd manner, as in these instances of the covetous and ambitious man. Look where you will, you will see all worldly vexations, but like the vexation of him that was always in mire and mud in search of water to drink, when he had more at home than was sufficient for a hundred horses.

CELIA is always telling you how provoked she is, what intolerable, shocking things happen to her, what monstrous manner of treatment she suffers, and what vexations she meets with everywhere. She tells you that her patience is quite worn out, and there is no bearing the behavior of people. Every assembly that she is at, sends her home provoked; something or other has been said, or done, that no reasonable, well-bred person ought to bear. Poor people that need her charity are sent away with hasty answers, not because she has not a heart to part with any money, but because she is too full of some trouble of her own to attend to the complaints of others. Celia has no business upon her hands but to receive the income of a plentiful fortune; but yet, by the doleful turn of her mind, you would be apt to think that she had neither food nor lodging. If you see her look more pale than ordinary, if her lips tremble when she speaks to you, it is because she is just come from a visit, where Lupus took no notice at all of her, but talked all the time to Lucinda, who has not half her fortune. When cross accidents have so disordered her spirits, that she is forced to send for the doctor, to make her able to eat, she tells him in great anger at Providence, that she never was well since she was born, and that she envies every beggar that she sees in health. This is the disquiet life of Celia, who has nothing to torment her but her own spirit. If you could inspire her with Christian humility, you need do no more to make her as happy as any person in the world. This virtue would make her thankful to God for half so much health as she has had, and help her to enjoy more for the time to come. This virtue would keep off tremblings of the spirits, and loss of appetite, and her blood would need nothing else to sweeten it. I have just touched upon these absurd characters, for no other end but to convince you, in the plainest manner, that the strictest rules of religion are so far from rendering a life dull, anxious, and uncomfortable (as is above objected), that, on the contrary, all the miseries, vexations, and complaints, that are in the world, are owing to the want of religion; being directly caused by those absurd passions which religion teaches us to deny. For all the needs which disturb human life, which make us uneasy to ourselves, quarrelsome with others, and unthankful to God; which weary us in vain labors and foolish anxieties; which carry us from project to project, from place to place, in a futile pursuit of we know not what, are the wants which neither God, nor nature, nor reason, has subjected us to, but

are solely infused into us by pride, envy, ambition, and covetousness. So far, therefore, as you reduce your desires to such things as nature and reason require; so far as you regulate all the motions of your heart by the strict rules of religion, so far you remove yourself from that infinity of desires and vexations, which torment every heart that is left to itself. Most people, indeed, confess that religion preserves us from a great many evils, and helps us in many respects to a more happy enjoyment of ourselves; but then they imagine that this is only true of such a moderate share of religion, as only gently restrains us from the excesses of our passions. They suppose that the strict rules and restraints of an exalted piety are such contradictions to our nature, as must needs make our lives dull and uncomfortable. Although the weakness of this objection sufficiently appears from what has been already said, yet I shall add one word more to it. This objection supposes that religion, moderately practiced, adds much to the happiness of life; but that such heights of piety as the perfection of religion requires, have a contrary effect. It supposes, therefore, that it is happy to be kept from the excesses of envy, but unhappy to be kept from other degrees of envy. That it is happy to be delivered from a boundless ambition, but unhappy to be without a more moderate ambition. It supposes, also, that the happiness of life consists in a mixture of virtue and vice, a mixture of ambition and humility, charity and envy, heavenly affection and covetousness. All which is as absurd as to suppose that it is happy to be free from excessive pains, but unhappy to be without more moderate pains--or that the happiness of health consisted in being partly sick and partly well. For if humility be the peace and rest of the soul, then no one has so much happiness from humility, as he that is the most humble. If excessive envy is a torment of the soul, he most perfectly delivers himself from torment, that most perfectly extinguishes every spark of envy. If there is any peace and joy in doing any action according to the will of God, he that brings the most of his actions to this rule, does most of all increase the peace and joy of his life. And thus it is in every VIRTUE; if you act up to every degree of it, the more happiness you have from it. And so of every VICE; if you only abate its excesses, you do but little for yourself; but if you reject it in all degrees, then you feel the true ease and joy of a reformed mind. As for example--If religion only restrains the excesses of revenge, but lets the spirit still live within you in lesser instances, your religion may have made your life a little more outwardly decent, but not made you at all happier, or easier in yourself. But if you have once sacrificed all thoughts of revenge, in obedience to God, and are resolved to return good for evil at all times, that you may render yourself more like to God, and fitter for His mercy in the kingdom of love and glory; this is a height of virtue that will make you feel its happiness.

Secondly, As to those satisfactions and enjoyments, which an exalted piety requires us to deny ourselves, this deprives us of no real comfort of life. For, first, Piety requires us to renounce no ways of life, where we can act reasonably, and offer what we do to the glory of God. All ways of life, all satisfactions and enjoyments, that are within these bounds, are no way denied us by the strictest rules of piety. Whatever you can do, or enjoy, as in the presence of God, as His servant, as His rational creature that has received reason and knowledge from Him; all that you can perform conformably to a rational nature, and the will of God, all this is allowed by the laws of piety. And will you think that your life will be uncomfortable unless you may displease God, be a fool, and mad, and act contrary to that reason and wisdom which He has implanted in you? And as for those satisfactions which we dare not offer to a holy God, which are only invented by the folly and corruption of the world, which inflame our passions, and sink our souls into grossness and sensuality, and render us incapable of the Divine favor, either here or hereafter; surely it can be no

uncomfortable state of life to be rescued by religion from such self-murder, and to be rendered capable of eternal happiness.

Let us suppose a person destitute of that knowledge which we have from our senses, placed somewhere alone by himself, in the midst of a variety of things which he did not know how to use; that he has by him bread, wine, water, golden dust, iron chains, gravel, garments, fire, etc. Let it be supposed that he has no knowledge of the right use of these things, nor any direction from his senses how to quench his thirst, or satisfy his hunger, or make any use of the things about him. Let it be supposed, that in his thirst he puts golden dust into his eyes; when his eyes hurt, he puts wine into his ears; that in his hunger, he puts gravel into his mouth; that in pain, he loads himself with the iron chains; that feeling cold, he puts his feet in the water; that being frightened at the fire, he runs away from it; that being weary, he makes a seat of his bread. Let it be supposed, that through his ignorance of the right use of the things that are about him, he will vainly torment himself while he lives, and at last die, blinded with dust, choked with gravel, and loaded with irons.

Let it be supposed that some good being came to him, and showed him the nature and use of all the things that were about him, and gave him such strict rules of using them, as would certainly, if observed, make him the happier for all that he had, and deliver him from the pains of hunger, and thirst, and cold. Now could you with any reason affirm, that those strict rules of using those things that were about him, had rendered that poor man's life dull and uncomfortable? Now this is in some measure a representation of the strict rules of religion; they only relieve our ignorance, save us from tormenting ourselves, and teach us to use everything about us to our proper advantage.

Man is placed in a world full of variety of things; his ignorance makes him use many of them as absurdly as the man that put dust in his eyes to relieve his thirst, or put on chains to remove pain. Religion, therefore, here comes in to his relief, and gives him strict rules of using everything that is about him; that by so using them suitably to his own nature, and the nature of the things, he may have always the pleasure of receiving a right benefit from them. It shows him what is strictly right in food, and drink, and clothes; and that he has nothing else to expect from the things of this world, but to satisfy such needs of his own; and then to extend his assistance to all his brethren, that, as far as he is able, he may help all his fellow-creatures to the same benefit from the world that he has. It tells him that this world is incapable of giving him any other happiness; and that all endeavors to be happy in heaps of money, or acres of land, in fine clothes, rich beds, stately equipage, and show and splendor, are only vain endeavors, ignorant attempts after impossibilities, these things being no more able to give the least degree of happiness, than dust in the eyes can cure thirst, or gravel in the mouth satisfy hunger; but, like dust and gravel misapplied, will only serve to render him more unhappy by such an ignorant misuse of them.

It tells him that although this world can do no more for him than satisfy these needs of the body, yet that there is a much greater good prepared for man than eating, drinking, and dressing; that it is yet invisible to his eyes, being too glorious for the apprehension of flesh and blood; but reserved for him to enter upon, as soon as this short life is over; where, in a new body formed to an angelic likeness, he shall dwell in the light and glory of God to all eternity. It tells him that this state of glory will be given to all those that make a right use of the things of this present world, who do not blind themselves with golden dust, or eat gravel, or groan under loads of iron of their own putting on; but use bread, water, wine, and garments, for such ends as are according to nature and reason; and

who, with faith and thankfulness, worship the kind Giver of all that they enjoy here, and hope for hereafter.

Now can any one say that the strictest rules of such a religion as this debar us of any of the comforts of life? Might it not as justly be said of those rules that only hinder a man from choking himself with gravel? For the strictness of these rules only consists in the exactness of their rectitude. Who would complain of the severe strictness of a law that, without any exception, forbade the putting of dust into our eyes? Who could think it too rigid, that there were no abatements? Now this is the strictness of religion; it requires nothing of us strictly, or without abatements, but where every degree of the thing is wrong, where every indulgence does us some hurt.

If religion forbids all instances of revenge, without any exception, it is because all revenge is of the nature of poison; and though we do not take so much as to put an end to life, yet if we take any at all, it corrupts the whole mass of blood, and makes it difficult to be restored to our former health.

If religion commands a universal charity, to love our neighbor as ourselves, to forgive and pray for all our enemies without any reserve; it is because all degrees of love are degrees of happiness, that strengthen and support the Divine life of the soul, and are as necessary to its health and happiness, as proper food is necessary to the health and happiness of the body.

If religion has laws against laying up treasures upon earth, and commands us to be content with food and clothing, it is because every other use of the world is abusing it to our own vexation, and turning all its conveniences into snares and traps to destroy us. It is because this plainness and simplicity of life secures us from the cares and pains of restless pride and envy, and makes it easier to keep that straight road that will carry us to eternal life.

If religion says, "Sell that you have, and give to the poor," it is because there is no other natural or reasonable use of our riches, no other way of making ourselves happier for them; it is because it is as strictly right to give others that which we do not need ourselves, as it is right to use so much as our own needs require. For if a man has more food than his own nature requires, how base and unreasonable is it to invent foolish ways of wasting it, and make sport for his own full belly, rather than let his fellow-creatures have the same comfort from food which he has had. It is so far, therefore, from being a hard law of religion, to make this use of our riches, that a reasonable man would rejoice in that religion which teaches him to be happier in that which he gives away, than in that which he keeps for himself; which teaches him to make spare food and clothing be greater blessings to him, than that which feeds and clothes his own body.

If religion requires us sometimes to fast, and deny our natural appetites, it is to lessen that struggle and war that is in our nature, it is to render our bodies fitter instruments of purity, and more obedient to the good motions of Divine grace; it is to dry up the springs of our passions that war against the soul, to cool the flame of our blood, and render the mind more capable of Divine meditations. So that although these abstinences give some pain to the body, yet they so lessen the power of bodily appetites and passions and so increase our taste of spiritual joys, that even these severities of religion, when practiced with discretion, add much to the comfortable enjoyment of our lives.

If religion calls us to a life of watching and prayer it is because we live among a crowd of enemies, and are always in need of the assistance of God. If we are to confess and bewail our sins, it is because such confessions relieve the mind, and restore it to ease; as burdens and weights taken off the shoulders, relieve the body, and make it easier to itself. If we are to be frequent and fervent in holy petitions, it is to keep us steady in the sight of our true God, and that we may never lack the happiness of a lively faith, a joyful hope, and well-grounded trust in God. If we are to pray often, it is that we may be often happy in such secret joys as only prayer can give; in such communications of the Divine Presence, as will fill our minds with all the happiness that beings not in Heaven are capable of. Was there anything in the world more worth our care, was there any exercise of the mind, or any conversation with men, that turned more to our advantage than this communion with God, we should not be called to such a continuance in prayer. But if a man considers what it is that he leaves when he retires to devotion, he will find it no small happiness to be so often relieved from doing nothing, or nothing to the purpose; from dull idleness, unprofitable labor, or vain conversation. If he considers that all that is in the world, and all that is doing in it, is only for the body, and bodily enjoyments, he will have reason to rejoice at those hours of prayer, which carry him to higher consolations, which raise him above these poor concerns, which open to his mind a scene of greater things, and accustom his soul to the hope and expectation of them.

If religion commands us to live wholly unto God, and to do all to His glory, it is because every other way is living wholly against ourselves, and will end in our own shame and confusion of face. As everything is dark, that God does not enlighten; as everything is senseless, that has not its share of knowledge from Him; as nothing lives, but by partaking of life from Him; as nothing exists, but because He commands it to be; so there is no glory or greatness, but what is of the glory and greatness of God.

We indeed may talk of human glory as we may talk of human life, or human knowledge--but as we are sure that human life implies nothing of our own but a dependent living in God, or enjoying so much life in God; so human glory, whenever we find it, must be only so much glory as we enjoy in the glory of God. This is the state of all creatures, whether men or Angels; as they make not themselves, so they enjoy nothing from themselves--if they are great, it must be only as great receivers of the gifts of God; their power can only be so much of the Divine power acting in them; their wisdom can be only so much of the Divine wisdom shining within them; and their light and glory, only so much of the light and glory of God shining upon them. As they are not men or Angels, because they had a mind to be so themselves, but because the will of God formed them to be what they are; so they cannot enjoy this or that happiness of men or Angels, because they have a mind to it, but because it is the will of God that such things be the happiness of men, and such things the happiness of Angels. But now if God be thus all in all; if His will is thus the measure of all things, and all natures; if nothing can be done, but by His power; if nothing can be seen, but by a light from Him; if we have nothing to fear, but from His justice; if we have nothing to hope for, but from His goodness; if this is the nature of man, thus helpless in himself; if this is the state of all creatures, as well those in Heaven as those on earth; if they are nothing, can do nothing, can suffer no pain, nor feel any happiness, but so far, and in such degrees, as the power of God does all this; if this be the state of things, then how can we have the least glimpse of joy or comfort, how can we have any peaceful enjoyment of ourselves, but by living wholly unto that God, using and doing everything conformably to His will? A life thus devoted unto God, looking wholly

unto Him in all our actions, and doing all things suitably to His glory, is so far from being dull and uncomfortable, that it creates new comforts in everything that we do. On the contrary, would you see how happy they are who live according to their own wills, who cannot submit to the dull and melancholy business of a life devoted unto God; look at the man in the parable, to whom his Lord had given one talent. He could not bear the thoughts of using his talent according to the will of Him from whom he had it, and therefore he chose to make himself happier in a way of his own. "Lord," says he, "I knew you, that you are a hard man, reaping where you had not sown, and gathering where you had not scattered seed--and I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the earth! lo, there you have that is yours." His Lord, having convicted him out of his own mouth, despatches him with this sentence, "Cast the unprofitable servant into outer darkness--there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Here you see how happy this man made himself, by not acting wholly according to his Lord's will. It was, according to his own account, a happiness of murmuring and discontent; I knew you, says he, that you were a hard man--it was a happiness of fears and apprehensions; I was, says he, afraid--it was a happiness of vain labors and fruitless travels; I went, says he, and hid your talent; and after having been awhile the jest of foolish passions, tormenting fears, and fruitless labor, he is rewarded with darkness, eternal weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

Now this is the happiness of all those who look upon a strict and exalted piety, that is, a right use of their talent, to be a dull and melancholy state of life. They may live a while free from the restraints and directions of religion; but, instead thereof, they must be under the absurd government of their passions--they must, like the man in the parable, live in murmurings and discontents, in fears and apprehensions. They may avoid the labor of doing good, of spending their time devoutly, of laying up treasures in Heaven, of clothing the naked, of visiting the sick; but then they must, like this man, have labors and pains in vain, that tend to no use or advantage, that do no good either to themselves or others; they must travel, and labor, and work, and dig, to hide their talent in the earth. They must, like him, at their Lord's coming, be convicted out of their own mouths, be accused by their own hearts, and have everything that they have said and thought of religion, be made to show the justice of their condemnation to eternal darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth. This is the purchase that they make, who avoid the strictness and perfection of religion, in order to live happily. On the other hand, would you see a short description of the happiness of a life rightly employed, wholly devoted to God, you must look at the man in the parable to whom his Lord had given five talents. "Lord," says he, "you delivered unto me five talents; behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His Lord said unto him, well done, you good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things--enter into the joy of your Lord." Here you see a life that is wholly intent upon the improvement of the talents, that is devoted wholly unto God, is a state of happiness, prosperous labors, and glorious success. Here are not, as in the former case, any uneasy passions, murmurings, vain fears, and fruitless labors. The man is not toiling and digging in the earth for no end or advantage; but his pious labors prosper in his hands, his happiness increases upon him; the blessing of five becomes the blessing of ten talents; and he is received with a "Well done, good and faithful servant--enter into the joy of your Lord."

Now as the case of these men in the parable left nothing else to their choice, but either to be happy in using their gifts to the glory of the Lord, or miserable by using them according to their own

pleasures and fancies; so the state of Christianity leaves us no other choice. All that we have, all that we are, all that we enjoy, are only so many talents from God--if we use them to the ends of a pious and holy life, our five talents will become ten, and our labors will carry us into the joy of our Lord; but if we abuse them to the gratifications of our own passions, sacrificing the gifts of God to our own pride and vanity, we shall live here in vain labors and foolish anxieties, shunning religion as a melancholy thing, accusing our Lord as a hard master, and then fall into everlasting misery.

We may for a while amuse ourselves with names and sounds, and shadows of happiness; we may talk of this or that greatness and dignity; but if we desire real happiness, we have no other possible way to it but by improving our talents, by so holily and piously using the powers and faculties of men in this present state, that we may be happy and glorious in the powers and faculties of Angels in the world to come. How ignorant, therefore, are they of the nature of religion, of the nature of man, and the nature of God, who think a life of strict piety and devotion to God to be a dull uncomfortable state; when it is so plain and certain that there is neither comfort nor joy to be found in anything else!

02.12. Chapter 12

The happiness of a life wholly devoted to God farther proved, from the vanity, the sensuality, and the ridiculous poor enjoyments, which they are forced to take up with who live according to their own pleasures. This represented in various characters.

We may still see more of the happiness of a life devoted unto God, by considering the poor contrivances for happiness, and the contemptible ways of life, which they are thrown into, who are not under the directions of a strict piety, but seeking after happiness by other methods. If one looks at their lives, who live by no rule but their own pleasures and fancies; if one sees but what it is which they call joy, and greatness, and happiness; if one sees how they rejoice, and repent, change and fly from one delusion to another; one shall find great reason to rejoice, that God has appointed a strait and narrow way, that leads unto life—and that we are not left to the folly of our own minds, or forced to take up such shadows of joy and happiness, as the weakness and folly of the world has invented. I say invented; because those things which make up the joy and happiness of the world are mere inventions, which have no foundation in nature and reason, are no way the proper good or happiness of man, no way perfect either in his body, or his mind, or carry him to his true end. As for instance; when a man proposes to be happy in ways of ambition, by raising himself to some imaginary heights above other people, this is truly an invention of happiness, which has no foundation in nature, but is as mere a cheat of our own making, as if a man should intend to make himself happy by climbing up a ladder. If a woman seeks for happiness from fine colors or spots upon her face, from jewels and rich clothes, this is as merely an invention of happiness, as contrary to nature and reason, as if she should propose to make herself happy by painting a post, and putting the same finery upon it.

It is in this respect that I call these joys and happiness of the world mere inventions of happiness, because neither God, nor nature, nor reason, has appointed them as such; but whatever appears joyful, or great, or happy in them, is entirely created or invented by the blindness and vanity of our own minds. And it is on these inventions of happiness that I desire you to cast your eye, that you may thence learn, how great a good religion is, which delivers you from such a multitude of follies, and vain pursuits, as are the torment and vexation of minds that wander from their true happiness in God.

Look at FLATUS, and learn how miserable they are, who are left to the folly of their own passions. Flatus is rich and in health, yet always uneasy, and always searching after happiness. Every time you visit him, you find some new project in his head; he is eager upon it as something that is more worth his while, and will do more for him than anything that is already past. Every new thing so seizes him, that if you were to take him from it, he would think himself quite undone. His sanguine temper, and strong passions, promise him so much happiness in everything, that he is always cheated, and is satisfied with nothing. At his first setting out in life, fine clothes were his delight, his inquiry was only after the best tailors and wig-makers, and he had no thoughts of excelling in anything but dress. He spared no expense, but carried every nicety to its greatest height. But this

happiness not answering his expectations, he left off his brocades, put on a plain coat, railed at fops and beaux, and gave himself up to gaming with great eagerness. This new pleasure satisfied him for some time--he envied no other way of life. But being, by the fate of play, drawn into a duel, where he narrowly escaped his death, he left off the dice, and sought for happiness no longer among the gamesters. The next thing that seized his wandering imagination was the diversions of the town--and for more than a twelvemonth you heard him talk of nothing but ladies, drawing-rooms, birthdays, plays, balls, and assemblies. But, growing sick of these, he had recourse to hard drinking. Here he had many a merry night, and met with stronger joys than any he had felt before. Here he had thoughts of setting up his staff, and looking out no farther; but unluckily falling into a fever, he grew angry at all strong liquors, and took his leave of the happiness of being drunk. The next attempt after happiness carried him into the field; for two or three years, nothing was so happy as hunting; he entered upon it with all his soul, and leaped more hedges and ditches than had ever been known in so short a time. You never saw him but in a green coat; he was the envy of all that blew the horn, and always spoke to his dogs in great propriety of language. If you met him at home, in a bad day, you would hear him blow his horn, and be entertained with the surprising events of the last noble chase. No sooner had Flatus outdone all the world in the breed and education of his dogs, built new kennels, new stables, and bought a new hunting-seat, but he immediately got sight of another happiness, hated the senseless noise and hurry of hunting, gave away the dogs, and was, for some time after, deep in the pleasures of building. Now he invents new kinds of dovecotes, and has such contrivances in his barns and stables as were never seen before; he wonders at the dullness of the old builders, is wholly bent upon the improvement of architecture, and will hardly hang a door in the ordinary way. He tells his friends that he never was so delighted in anything in his life; that he has more happiness among his bricks and mortar than ever he had at court; and that he is contriving how to have some little matter to do that way as long as he lives. The next year he leaves his house unfinished, complains to everybody of masons and carpenters, and devotes himself wholly to the happiness of riding about. After this, you can never see him but on horseback, and so highly delighted with this new way of life, that he would tell you, give him but his horse and a clean country to ride in, and you might take all the rest to yourself. A variety of new saddles and bridles, and a great change of horses, added much to the pleasure of this new way of life. But, however, having, after some time, tired both himself and his horses, the happiest thing he could think of next, was to go abroad and visit foreign countries; and there indeed happiness exceeded his imagination, and he was only uneasy that he had begun so fine a life no sooner. The next month he returned home, unable to bear any longer the impertinence of foreigners. After this he was a great student for one whole year; he was up early and late at his Italian grammar, that he might have the happiness of understanding the opera, whenever he would hear one, and not be like those unreasonable people, that are pleased with they know not what.

Flatus is very ill-natured, or otherwise, just as his affairs happen to be when you visit him; if you find him when some project is almost worn out, you will find a peevish ill-bred man; but if you had seen him just as he entered upon his riding regimen, or began to excel in sounding of the horn, you had been saluted with great civility. Flatus is now at a full stand, and is doing what he never did in his life before, he is reasoning and reflecting with himself. He loses several days in considering which of his cast-off ways of life he shall try again. But here a new project comes in to his relief. He is now living upon herbs, and running about the country to get himself into as good

exercise as any running footman in the kingdom.

I have been thus circumstantial in so many foolish particulars of this kind of life, because I hope that every particular folly that you here see will naturally turn itself into an argument for the wisdom and happiness of a religious life. If I could lay before you a particular account of all the circumstances of terror and distress, that daily attend a life at sea, the more particular I was in the account, the more I would make you feel and rejoice in the happiness of living upon the land. In like manner, the more I enumerate the follies, anxieties, delusions, and restless desires, which go through every part of a life devoted to human passions, and worldly enjoyments, the more you must be affected with that peace, and rest, and solid content, which religion gives to the souls of men.

If you but just cast your eye upon a madman, or a fool, it perhaps signifies little or nothing to you; but if you were to attend them for some days, and observe the lamentable madness and stupidity of all their actions, this would be an affecting sight, and would make you often bless yourself for the enjoyment of your reason and senses. Just so, if you are only told in the gross, of the folly and madness of a life devoted to the world, it makes little or no impression upon you; but if you are shown how such people live every day; if you see the continual folly and madness of all their particular actions and designs; this would be an affecting sight, and make you bless God for having given you a greater happiness to aspire after. So that characters of this kind, the more folly and ridicule they have in them, provided that they be but natural, are most useful to correct our minds; and therefore are nowhere more proper than in books of devotion and practical piety. And as, in several cases, we best learn the nature of things, by looking at that which is contrary to them; so perhaps we best apprehend the excellency of wisdom, by contemplating the wild extravagancies of folly. I shall therefore continue this method a little farther, and endeavor to recommend the happiness of piety to you, by showing you, in some other instances, how miserably and poorly they live, who live without it. But you will perhaps say, that the ridiculous, restless life of Flatus is not the common state of those who resign themselves up to live by their own pleasures, and neglect the strict rules of religion; and that therefore it is not so great an argument of the happiness of a religious life, as I would make it. I answer, that I am afraid it is one of the most general characters in life; and that few people can read it, without seeing something in it that belongs to themselves. For where shall we find that wise and happy man, who has not been eagerly pursuing different appearances of happiness, sometimes thinking it was here, and sometimes there? And if people were to divide their lives into particular stages, and ask themselves what they were pursuing, or what it was which they had chiefly in view, when they were twenty years old, what at twenty-five, what at thirty, what at forty, what at fifty, and so on, until they were brought to their last bed; numbers of people would find that they had liked, and disliked, and pursued, as many different appearances of happiness, as are to be seen in the life of Flatus. And thus it must necessarily be, more or less, with all those who propose any other happiness, than that which arises from a strict and regular piety.

But, secondly, let it be granted, that the generality of people are not of such restless, fickle tempers as Flatus--the difference then is only this, Flatus is continually changing and trying something new, but others are content with some one state; they do not leave gaming, and then fall to hunting. But they have so much steadiness in their tempers, that some seek after no other happiness, but that of heaping up riches; others grow old in the sports of the field; others are

content to drink themselves to death, without the least inquiry after any other happiness. Now is there anything more happy or reasonable in such a life as this, than in the life of Flatus? Is it not as great and desirable, as wise and happy, to be constantly changing from one thing to another, as to be nothing else but a gatherer of money, a hunter, a gamester, or a drunkard, all your life? Shall religion be looked upon as a burden, as a dull and melancholy state, for calling men from such happiness as this, to live according to the laws of God, to labor after the perfection of their nature, and prepare themselves for an endless state of joy and glory in the presence of God? But turn your eyes now another way, and let the trifling joys, the gewgaw happiness of FELICIANA, teach you how wise they are, what delusion they escape, whose hearts and hopes are fixed upon a happiness in God. If you were to live with Feliciana but one half-year, you would see all the happiness that she is to have as long as she lives. She has no more to come, but the poor repetition of that which could never have pleased once, but through a littleness of mind, and lack of thought. She is to be again dressed fine, and keep her visiting day. She is again to change the color of her clothes, again to have a new head-dress, and again put patches on her face. She is again to see who acts best at the playhouse, and who sings finest at the opera. She is again to make ten visits in a day, and be ten times in a day trying to talk artfully, easily, and politely, about nothing. She is to be again delighted with some new fashion; and again angry at the change of some old one. She is to be again at cards, and gaming at midnight, and again in bed at noon. She is to be again pleased with hypocritical compliments, and again disturbed at imaginary affronts. She is to be again pleased with her good luck at gaming, and again tormented with the loss of her money. She is again to prepare herself for a birthday, and again to see the town full of good company. She is again to hear the cabals and intrigues of the town; again to have a secret details of private amours, and early notices of marriages, quarrels, and partings. If you see her come out of her chariot more briskly than usual, converse with more spirit, and seem fuller of joy than she was last week, it is because there is some surprising new dress or new diversion just come to town.

These are all the substantial and regular parts of Feliciana's happiness; and she never knew a pleasant day in her life, but it was owing to some one, or more, of these things. It is for this happiness that she has always been deaf to the reasonings of religion, that her heart has been too gay and cheerful to consider what is right or wrong in regard to eternity; or to listen to the sound of such dull words, as wisdom, piety, and devotion. It is for fear of losing some of this happiness, that she dares not meditate on the immortality of her soul, consider her relation to God, or turn her thoughts towards those joys which make saints and Angels infinitely happy in the presence and glory of God. But now let it here be observed, that as poor a round of happiness as this appears, yet most women that avoid the restraint of religion for a gay life, must be content with very small parts of it. As they have not Feliciana's fortune and figure in the world, so they must give away the comforts of a pious life for a very small part of her happiness. And if you look into the world, and observe the lives of those women whom no arguments can persuade to live wholly unto God, in a wise and pious employment of themselves, you will find most of them to be such as lose all the comforts of religion, without gaining the tenth part of Feliciana's happiness. They are such as spend their time and fortunes only in mimicking the pleasures of richer people; and rather look and long after, than enjoy those delusions, which are only to be purchased by considerable fortunes.

But, if a woman of high birth and great fortune, having read the Gospel, should rather wish to be an under servant in some pious family, where wisdom, piety, and great devotion, directed all the actions of every day; if she should rather wish this than to live at the top of Felician's happiness; I should think her neither mad, nor melancholy; but that she judged as rightly of the spirit of the Gospel, as if she had rather wished to be poor Lazarus at the gate, than to be the rich man clothed in purple and fine linen, and faring sumptuously every day. But to proceed--would you know what a happiness it is to be governed by the wisdom of religion, and to be devoted to the joys and hopes of a pious life, look at the poor condition of SUCCUS, whose greatest happiness is a good night's rest in bed, and a good meal when he is up. When he talks of happiness, it is always in such expressions as show you that he has only his bed and his dinner in his thoughts. This regard to his meals and repose makes Succus order all the rest of his time with relation to them. He will undertake no business that may hurry his spirits, or break in upon his hours of eating and rest. If he reads, it shall only be for half an hour, because that is sufficient to amuse the spirits; and he will read something that may make him laugh, as rendering the body fitter for its food and rest. Or if he has, at any time, a mind to indulge a grave thought, he always has recourse to a useful treatise upon the ancient cookery.

Succus is an enemy to all party-matters, having made it an observation that there is as good eating among the Whigs as among the Tories. He talks coolly and moderately upon all subjects, and is as fearful of falling into a passion, as of catching cold; being very positive that they are both equally injurious to the stomach. If ever you see him more hot than ordinary, it is upon some provoking occasion, when the dispute about cookery runs very high, or in the defense of some beloved dish, which has often made him happy. But he has been so long upon these subjects, is so well acquainted with all that can be said on both sides, and has so often answered all objections, that he generally decides the matter with great gravity. Succus is very loyal, and as soon as ever he likes any wine he drinks the king's health with all his heart. Nothing could put rebellious thoughts into his head, unless he should live to see a proclamation against eating of pheasants' eggs. All the hours that are not devoted either to repose or nourishment, are looked upon by Succus as waste-time, or spare-time. For this reason he lodges near a coffeehouse and a tavern, that when he rises in the morning, he may be near the news, and when he parts at night, he may not have far to go to bed. In the morning you always see him in the same place in the coffee-room; and if he seems more attentively engaged than ordinary, it is because some criminal has broken out of Newgate, or some lady was robbed last night, but they cannot tell where. When he has learned all that he can, he goes home to settle the matter with the barber's boy that comes to shave him. The next waste-time that lies upon his hands, is from dinner to supper. And if melancholy thoughts ever come into his head, it is at this time, when he is often left to himself for an hour or more, and that, after the greatest pleasure he knows is just over. He is afraid to sleep, because he has heard it is not healthful at that time, so that he is forced to refuse so welcome a guest. But here he is soon relieved, by a settled method of playing at cards, until it is time to think of some little nice matter for supper. After this Succus takes his glass, talks on the excellency of the English constitution, and praises that minister the most, who keeps the best table. On a Sunday night you may sometimes hear him condemning the iniquity of the town drunks; and the bitterest thing that he says against them, is this, that he verily believes some of them are so abandoned, as not to have a regular meal, or a sound night's sleep, in a week. At eleven, Succus bids all good-night, and parts in great friendship. He is presently in bed, and sleeps until it is time

to go to the coffee-house next morning. If you were to live with Succus for a twelvemonth, this is all that you would see in his life, except a few curses and oaths that he uses as occasion offers. And now I cannot help making this reflection--That as I believe the most likely means in the world to inspire a person with true piety, is to see the example of some eminent professor of religion, so the next thing that is likely to fill one with the same zeal, is to see the folly, the baseness, and poor satisfactions, of a life destitute of religion. As the one excites us to love and admire the wisdom and greatness of religion, so the other may make us fearful of living without it. For who can help blessing God for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory, when he sees what variety of folly they sink into, who live without it? Who would not heartily engage in all the labors and exercises of a pious life, be "steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord," when he sees what dull sensuality, what poor views, what gross enjoyments, they are left to, who seek for happiness in other ways? So that, whether we consider the greatness of religion, or the littleness of all other things, and the lowliness of all other enjoyments, there is nothing to be found, in the whole nature of things, for a thoughtful mind to rest upon, but a happiness in the hopes of religion.

Consider now with yourself, how unreasonably it is pretended that a life of strict piety must be a dull and anxious state. For can it, with any reason, be said that the duties and restraints of religion must render our lives heavy and melancholy, when they only deprive us of such happiness, as has been here laid before you? Must it be tedious and tiresome to live in the continual exercise of charity, devotion, and temperance, to act wisely and virtuously, to do good to the utmost of your power, to imitate the Divine perfections, and prepare yourself for the enjoyment of God? Must it be dull and tiresome to be delivered from blindness and vanity, from false hopes and vain fears, to improve in holiness, to feel the comforts of conscience in all your actions, to know that God is your Friend, that all must work for your good, that neither life nor death, neither men nor devils, can do you any harm; but that all your sufferings and doings that are offered unto God, all your watchings and prayers, and labors of love and charity, all your improvements, are in a short time to be rewarded with everlasting glory in the presence of God--must such a state as this be dull and tiresome, for lack of such happiness as Flatus, or Felician, enjoys?

Now if this cannot be said, then there is no happiness or pleasure lost, by being strictly pious; nor has the devout man anything to envy in any other state of life. For all the arts and contrivances in the world, without religion, cannot make more of human life, or carry its happiness to any greater height, than Flatus and Felician have done. The finest wit, the greatest genius upon earth, if not governed by religion, must be as foolish, and base, and vain in his methods of happiness, as the poor Succus.

If you were to see a man dully endeavoring all his life to satisfy his thirst, by holding up one and the same empty cup to his mouth, you would certainly despise his ignorance. But if you should see others of brighter parts, and finer understandings, ridiculing the dull satisfaction of one cup, and thinking to satisfy their own thirst by a variety of gilt and golden empty cups; would you think that these were ever the wiser, or happier, or better employed, for their finer parts? Now this is all the difference that you can see in the happiness of this life. The dull and heavy soul may be content with one empty appearance of happiness, and be continually trying to hold one and the same empty cup to his mouth all his life. But then let the wit, the great scholar, the fine genius, the great statesman, the polite gentleman, lay all their heads together, and they can only show you more and various empty appearances of happiness; give them all the world into their hands, let them cut

and carve as they please, they can only make a greater variety of empty cups. So that if you do not think it hard to be deprived of the pleasures of gluttony, for the sake of religion, you have no reason to think it hard to be restrained from any other worldly pleasure. For search as deep, and look as far as you will, there is nothing here to be found, that is nobler, or greater, than high eating and drinking, unless you look for it in the wisdom and laws of religion. And if all that is in the world, are only so many empty cups, what does it signify which you take, or how many you take, or how many you have?

If you would but accustom yourself to such meditations as these, to reflect upon the vanity of all orders of life without piety, to consider how all the ways of the world are only so many different ways of error, blindness, and mistake; you would soon find your heart made wiser and better by it. These meditations would awaken your soul into a zealous desire of that solid happiness, which is only to be found in recourse to God. Examples of great piety are not now common in the world; it may not be your happiness to live within sight of any, or to have your virtue inflamed by their light and fervor. But the misery and folly of worldly men is what meets your eyes in every place, and you need not look far to see how poorly, how vainly, men dream away their lives, for lack of religious wisdom. This is the reason that I have laid before you so many characters of the vanity of a worldly life, to teach you to make a benefit of the corruption of the age, and that you may be made wise, though not by the sight of what piety is, yet by seeing what misery and folly reigns where piety is not. If you would turn your mind to such reflections as these, your own observation would carry this instruction much farther, and all your conversation and acquaintance with the world would be a daily conviction to you of the necessity of seeking some greater happiness, than all the poor enjoyments of this world can give. To meditate upon the perfection of the Divine attributes, to contemplate the glories of Heaven, to consider the joys of saints and angels, living forever in the brightness and glory of the Divine Presence; these are the meditations of souls advanced in piety, and not so suited to every capacity. But to see and consider the emptiness and error of all worldly happiness; to see the grossness of sensuality, the poorness of pride, the stupidity of covetousness, the vanity of dress, the delusion of honor, the blindness of our passions, the uncertainty of our lives, and the shortness of all worldly projects; these are meditations that are suited to all capacities, fitted to strike all minds; they require no depth of thought or sublime speculation, but are forced upon us by all our senses, and taught us by almost everything that we see and hear. This is that wisdom that "cries and puts forth her voice" in the streets, that stands at all our doors, that appeals to all our senses, teaching us in everything, and everywhere, by all that we see, and all that we hear, by births and burials, by sickness and health, by life and death, by pains and poverty, by misery and vanity, and by all the changes and chances of life, that there is nothing else for man to look after, no other end in nature for him to drive at, but a happiness which is only to be found in the hopes and expectations of religion.

02.13. Chapter 13

That not only a life of vanity, or sensuality, but even the most regular kind of life, that is not governed by great devotion, sufficiently shows its miseries and emptiness, to the eyes of all the world. This represented in various characters.

It is a very remarkable saying of our Lord and Savior to His disciples, in these words--"Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." They teach us two things; first, that the dullness and heaviness of men's minds, with regard to spiritual matters, is so great, that it may justly be compared to the lack of eyes and ears. Secondly, That God has so filled everything and every place, with motives and arguments for a godly life, that they who are but so blessed, so happy as to use their eyes and their ears, must needs be affected with them. Now though this was, in a more especial manner, the case of those whose senses were witnesses of the life, and miracles, and doctrines, of our blessed Lord, yet it is as truly the case of all Christians at this time. For the reasons of religion, the calls to piety, are so written and engraved upon everything, and present themselves so strongly, and so constantly, to all our senses in everything that we meet, that they can be disregarded by eyes that see not, and ears that hear not.

What greater motive to a religious life, than the vanity, and the poorness of all worldly enjoyments? And yet who can help seeing and feeling this every day of his life? What greater call to look towards God, than the pains, the sickness, the crosses and vexations of this life? And yet whose eyes and ears are not daily witnesses of them? What miracles could more strongly appeal to our senses, or what message from Heaven speak louder to us, than the daily dying and departure of our fellow-creatures? So that the one thing needful, or the great end of life, is not left to be discovered by fine reasoning and deep reflections; but is pressed upon us, in the plainest manner, by the experience of all our senses, by everything that we meet with in life. Let us but intend to see and hear, and then the whole world becomes a book of wisdom and instruction to us; all that is regular in the order of nature, all that is accidental in the course of things, all the mistakes and disappointments that happen to ourselves, all the miseries and errors that we see in other people, become so many plain lessons of advice to us; teaching us, with as much assurance as an Angel from Heaven, that we can not raise ourselves to any true happiness, but by turning all our thoughts, our wishes, and endeavors, after the happiness of another life.

It is this right use of the world that I would lead you into, by directing you to turn your eyes upon every shape of human folly, that you may thence draw fresh arguments and motives of living to the best and greatest purposes of your creation. And if you would but carry this intention about you, of profiting by the follies of the world, and of learning the greatness of religion, from the littleness and vanity of every other way of life; if, I say, you would but carry this intention in your mind, you would find every day, every place, and every person, a fresh proof of their wisdom, who choose to live wholly unto God. You would then often return home the wiser, the better, and the more strengthened in religion, by everything that has fallen in your way.

OCTAVIUS is a learned, ingenious man, well versed in most parts of literature, and no stranger to any kingdom in Europe. The other day, being just recovered from a lingering fever, he took upon him to talk thus to his friends- My glass, says he, is almost run out; and your eyes see how many marks of age and death I bear about me--but I plainly feel myself sinking away faster than any standers-by imagine. I fully believe that one year more will conclude my reckoning. The attention of his friends was much raised by such a declaration, expecting to hear something truly excellent from so learned a man, who had but a year longer to live. When Octavius proceeded in this manner--For these reasons, says he, my friends, I have left off all taverns; the wine of those places is not good enough for me, in this decay of nature. I must now be selective in what I drink; I cannot pretend to do as I have done; and therefore am resolved to furnish my own cellar with a little of the very best, though it cost me ever so much. I must also tell you, my friends, that age forces a man to be wise in many other respects, and makes us change many of our opinions and practices. You know how much I have liked a large acquaintance; I now condemn it as an error. Three or four cheerful, diverting companions, are all that I now desire; because I find, that in my present infirmities, if I am left alone, or to grave company, I am not so easy to myself. A few days after Octavius had made this declaration to his friends, he relapsed into his former illness, was committed to a nurse, who closed his eyes before his fresh parcel of wine came in. Young EUGENIUS, who was present at this discourse, went home a new man, with full resolutions of devoting himself wholly unto God. I never, says Eugenius, was so deeply affected with the wisdom and importance of religion, as when I saw how poorly and basely the learned Octavius was to leave the world, through the lack of it- "How often had I envied his great learning, his skill in languages, his knowledge of antiquity, his address, and fine manner of expressing himself upon all subjects! But when I saw how poorly it all ended, what was to be the last year of such a life, and how foolishly the master of all these accomplishments was then forced to talk, for lack of being acquainted with the joys and expectations of piety, I was thoroughly convinced that there was nothing to be envied or desired, but a life of true piety; nor anything so poor and comfortless as a death without it."

Now as the young Eugenius was thus edified and instructed in the present case; so if you are so happy as to have anything of his thoughtful temper, you will meet with variety of instruction of this kind; you will find that arguments for the wisdom and happiness of a strict piety offer themselves in all places, and appeal to all your senses in the plainest manner. You will find that all the world preaches to an attentive mind; and that if you have but ears to hear, almost everything you meet teaches you some lesson of wisdom. But now, if to these admonitions and instructions, which we receive from our senses, from an experience of the state of human life; if to these we add the lights of religion, those great truths which the Son of God has taught us; it will be then as much past all doubt, that there is but one happiness for man, as that there is but one God. For since religion teaches us that our souls are immortal, that piety and devotion will carry them to an eternal enjoyment of God, and that carnal, worldly tempers will sink them into an everlasting misery with damned spirits, what gross nonsense and stupidity is it, to give the name of joy or happiness to anything but that which carries us to this joy and happiness in God! Was all to die with our bodies, there might be some pretense for those different sorts of happiness, that are now so much talked of; but since our all begins at the death of our bodies; since all men are to be immortal, either in misery or happiness, in a world entirely different from this; since they are all hastening hence at all uncertainties, as fast as death can cut them down; some in sickness, some in health, some

sleeping, some waking, some at midnight, others at cock-crowing, and all at hours that they know not of; is it not certain that no man can exceed another in joy and happiness, but so far as he exceeds him in those virtues which fit him for a happy death?

COGNATUS is a sober, regular clergyman, of good reputation in the world, and well esteemed in his parish. All his parishioners say he is an honest man, and very notable at making a bargain. The farmers listen to him, with great attention, when he talks of the prospered time of selling corn. He has been, for twenty years, a diligent observer of markets, and has raised a considerable fortune by good management. Cognatus is very orthodox, and full of esteem for our English Liturgy; and if he has not prayers on Wednesdays and Fridays, it is because his predecessor had not used the parish to any such custom. As he cannot serve both his livings himself, so he makes it matter of conscience to keep a sober curate upon one of them, whom he hires to take care of all the souls in the parish, at as cheap a rate as a sober man can be procured. Cognatus has been very prosperous all his time; but still he has had the uneasiness and vexations that they have, who are deep in worldly business. Taxes, losses, crosses, bad mortgages, bad tenants, and the hardness of the times, are frequent subjects of his conversation; and a good or bad season has a great effect upon his spirits.

Cognatus has no other end in growing rich, but that he may leave a considerable fortune to a niece, whom he has politely educated in expensive finery, by what he has saved out of the tithes of two livings. The neighbors look upon Cognatus as a happy clergyman, because they see him (as they call it) in good circumstances; and some of them intend to dedicate their own sons to the Church, because they see how well it has succeeded with Cognatus, whose father was but an ordinary man. But now if Cognatus, when he first entered into holy orders, had perceived how absurd a thing it is to grow rich by the Gospel; if he had proposed to himself the example of some primitive or other; if he had the piety of the great Augustine in his eye, who dare not enrich any of his relations out of the revenue of the Church; if, instead of twenty years' care to lay up treasures upon earth, he had distributed the income of every year, in the most Christian acts of charity and compassion; if, instead of tempting his niece to be proud, and providing her with such ornaments as the Apostle forbids, he had clothed, comforted, and assisted numbers of widows, orphans and distressed, who were all to appear for him at the last day; if, instead of the cares and anxieties of bad bonds, troublesome mortgages, and ill bargains, he had the constant comfort of knowing that his treasure was securely laid up, where neither moth corrupts, nor thieves break through and steal; could it with any reason be said that he had mistaken the spirit and dignity of his order, or lessened any of that happiness which is to be found in his sacred employment?

If, instead of rejoicing in the happiness of a second living, he had thought it as unbecoming the office of a clergyman to traffic for gain in holy things, as to open a shop; if he had thought it better to recommend some honest labor to his niece, than to support her in idleness by the labors of a curate; better that she should lack fine clothes and a rich husband, than that cures of souls should be farmed about, and brother clergymen not allowed to live by those altars at which they serve—if this had been the spirit of Cognatus, could it, with any reason, be said, that these rules of religion, this strictness of piety, had robbed Cognatus of any real happiness? Could it be said that a life thus governed by the spirit of the Gospel, must be dull and melancholy, if compared to that of raising a fortune for a niece?

Now as this cannot be said in the present case, so in every other kind of life, if you enter into the particulars of it, you will find, that however easy and prosperous it may seem, yet you cannot add piety to any part of it without adding so much of a better joy and happiness to it. Look now at that condition of life, which draws the envy of all eyes.

NEGOTIUS is a temperate, honest man. He served his time under a master of great trade, but has, by his own management, made it a more considerable business than ever it was before. For thirty years past, he has written fifty or sixty letters in a week, and is busy in corresponding with all parts of Europe. The general good of trade seems to Negotius to be the general good of life; whomsoever he admires, whatever he commends or condemns, either in Church or State, is admired, commended, or condemned, with some regard to trade. As money is continually pouring in upon him, so he often lets it go in various kinds of expense and generosity, and sometimes in ways of charity. Negotius is always ready to join in any public contribution. If a purse is making at any place where he happens to be, whether it be to buy a plate for a horse race, or to redeem a prisoner out of jail, you are always sure of having something from him. He has given a fine ring of bells to a Church in the country--and there is much expectation that he will some time or other make a more beautiful front to the market-house than has yet been seen in any place. For it is the generous spirit of Negotius to do nothing in a lowly way.

If you ask what it is that has secured Negotius from all scandalous vices, it is the same thing that has kept him from all strictness of devotion—it is his great business. He has always had too many important things in his head, his thoughts have been too much employed, to allow him to fall either into any courses of profligacy, or to feel the necessity of an inward, solid piety. For this reason he hears of the pleasures of debauchery, and the pleasures of piety, with the same indifference; and has no more desire of living in the one, than in the other, because neither of them consists with that turn of mind, and multiplicity of business, which are his happiness.

If Negotius was asked what it is which he drives at in life, he would be as much at a loss for an answer, as if he was asked what any other person is thinking of. For though he always seems to himself to know what he is doing, and has many things in his head, which are the motives of his actions; yet he cannot tell you of any one general end in life, that he has chosen with deliberation, as being truly worthy of all his labor and pains. He has several confused notions in his head which have been a long time there; such as these, that is, that it is something great to have more business than other people; to have more dealings upon his hands than a hundred of the same profession; to grow continually richer and richer, and to raise an immense fortune before he dies. The thing that seems to give Negotius the greatest life and spirit, and to be most in his thoughts, is an expectation that he has, that he shall die richer than any of his business ever did. The generality of people, when they think of happiness, think of Negotius, in whose life every instance of happiness is supposed to meet; sober, prudent, rich, prosperous, generous, and charitable.

Let us now, therefore, look at this condition in another, but truer light. Let it be supposed, that this same Negotius was a painful, laborious man, every day deep in variety of affairs; that he neither drank nor debauched; but was sober and regular in his business. Let it be supposed that he grew old in this course of trading; and that the end and design of all this labor, and care, and application to business, was only this, that he might die possessed of more than a hundred thousand pairs of boots and spurs, and as many greatcoats. Let it be supposed that the sober part of the world say

of him, when he is dead, that he was a great and happy man, a thorough master of business, and had acquired a hundred thousand pairs of boots and spurs when he died. Now if this was really the case, I believe it would be readily granted, that a life of such business was as poor and ridiculous as any that can be invented. But it would puzzle any one to show that a man that has spent all his time and thoughts in business and hurry that he might die, as it is said, worth a hundred thousand pounds, is any whit wiser than he who has taken the same pains to have as many pairs of boots and spurs when he leaves the world. For if the temper and state of our souls be our whole state; if the only end of life be to die as free from sin, and as exalted in virtue, as we can; if naked as we came, so naked are we to return, and to stand a trial before Christ and His holy Angels, for everlasting happiness or misery; what can it possibly signify what a man had, or had not, in this world? What can it signify what you call those things which a man has left behind him; whether you call them his or any one's else; whether you call them trees or fields, or birds and feathers; whether you call them a hundred thousand pounds, or a hundred thousand pairs of boots and spurs? I say, call them; for the things signify no more to him than the names.

Now it is easy to see the folly of a life thus spent, to furnish a man with such a number of boots and spurs. But yet there needs no better faculty of seeing, no finer understanding, to see the folly of a life spent in making a man a possessor of ten towns before he dies. For if, when he has got all his towns, or all his boots, his soul is to go to its own place among separate spirits, and his body be laid by in a coffin, until the last trumpet calls him to judgment; where the inquiry will be, how humbly, how devoutly, how purely, how meekly, how piously, how charitably, how heavenly, we have spoken, thought, and acted, while we were in the body; how can we say, that he who has worn out his life in raising a hundred thousand pounds, has acted wiser for himself, than he who has had the same care to procure a hundred thousand of anything else? But farther--let it now be supposed that Negotius, when he first entered into business, happening to read the Gospel with attention, and eyes open, found that he had a much greater business upon his hands than that to which he had served an apprenticeship; that there were things which belong to man, of much more importance than all that our eyes can see; so glorious, as to deserve all our thoughts; so dangerous, as to need all our care; and so certain, as never to deceive the faithful laborer. Let it be supposed, that, from reading this book, he had discovered that his soul was more to him than his body; that it was better to grow in the virtues of the soul, than to have a large body or a full purse; that it was better to be fit for heaven, than to have variety of fine houses upon the earth; that it was better to secure an everlasting happiness, than to have plenty of things which he cannot keep; better to live in habits of humility, piety, devotion, charity, and self-denial, than to die unprepared for judgment; better to be most like our Savior, or some eminent saint, than to excel all the tradesmen in the world in business and bulk of fortune. Let it be supposed that Negotius, believing these things to be true, entirely devoted himself to God at his first setting out in the world, resolving to pursue his business no farther than was consistent with great devotion, humility, and self-denial; and for no other ends, but to provide himself with a sober subsistence, and to do all the good that he could to the souls and bodies of his fellow-creatures.

Let it therefore be supposed, that instead of the continual hurry of business, he was frequent in his retirements, and a strict observer of all the hours of prayer; that, instead of restless desires after more riches, his soul has been full of the love of God and heavenly affection, constantly watching against worldly tempers, and always aspiring after Divine grace; that, instead of worldly cares and

contrivances, he was busy in fortifying his soul against all approaches of sin; that, instead of costly show, and the expensive luxuriance of a splendid life, he loved and exercised all instances of humility and lowliness; that, instead of great dainties and full tables, his house only furnished a sober refreshment to those that needed it. Let it be supposed that his contentment kept him free from all kinds of envy; that his piety made him thankful to God in all crosses and disappointments; that his charity kept him from being rich, by a continual distribution to all objects of compassion. Now, had this been the Christian spirit of Negotius, can any one say, that he had lost the true joy and happiness of life, by thus conforming to the spirit, and living up to the hopes of the Gospel? Can it be said, that a life made exemplary by such virtues as these, which keep Heaven always in our sight, which both delight and exalt the soul here, and prepare it for the presence of God hereafter, must be poor and dull, if compared to that of heaping up riches, which can neither stay with us, nor we with them?

It would be endless to multiply examples of this kind, to show you how little is lost, and how much is gained, by introducing a strict and exact piety into every condition of human life. I shall now, therefore, leave it to your own meditation, to carry this way of thinking farther, hoping that you are enough directed by what is here said, to convince yourself, that a true and exalted piety is so far from rendering any life dull and tiresome, that it is the only joy and happiness of every condition in the world.

Imagine to yourself some person in a consumption, or any other lingering distemper that was incurable. If you were to see such a man wholly intent upon doing everything in the spirit of religion, making the wisest use of all his time, fortune, and abilities; if he was for carrying every duty of piety to its greatest height, and striving to have all the advantage that could be had from the remainder of his life; if he avoided all business, but such as was necessary; if he was averse to all the follies and vanities of the world, had no taste for finery and show, but sought for all his comfort in the hopes and expectations of religion; you would certainly commend his prudence, you would say that he had taken the right method to make himself as joyful and happy as any one can be in a state of such infirmity. On the other hand, if you should see the same person, with trembling hands, short breath, thin jaws, and hollow eyes, wholly intent upon business and bargains, as long as he could speak; if you should see him pleased with fine clothes, when he could scarce stand to be dressed, and laying out his money in horses and dogs, rather than purchase the prayers of the poor for his soul, which was so soon to be separated from his body you would certainly condemn him as a weak, silly man. Now as it is easy to see the reasonableness, the wisdom, and happiness, of a religious spirit in a consumptive man, so if you pursue the same way of thinking, you will as easily perceive the same wisdom and happiness of a pious temper, in every other state of life. For how soon will every man that is in health, be in the state of him that is in a consumption! How soon will he lack all the same comforts and satisfactions of religion, which every dying man needs! And if it be wise and happy to live piously, because we have not above a year to live, is it not being more wise, and making ourselves more happy, because we may have more years to come? If one year of piety before we die is so desirable, are not more years of piety much more desirable? If a man had five fixed years to live, he could not possibly think at all, without intending to make the best use of them all. When he saw his stay so short in this world, he must needs think that this was not a world for him; and when he saw how near he was to another world that was eternal, he must surely think it very necessary to be very diligent in preparing himself for it. Now as

reasonable as piety appears in such a circumstance of life, it is yet more reasonable in every circumstance of life, to every thinking man. For, who but a madman can reckon that he has five years certain to come? And if it be reasonable and necessary to deny our worldly tempers, and live wholly unto God, because we are certain that we are to die at the end of five years; surely it must be much more reasonable and necessary for us to live in the same spirit, because we have no certainty that we shall live five weeks. Again, if we were to add twenty years to the five, which is in all probability more than will be added to the lives of many people, who are at man's estate; what a poor thing is this! How small a difference is there between five and twenty-five years! It is said, that a day is with God as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day; because, in regard to His eternity, this difference is as nothing.

Now, as we are all created to be eternal, to live in an endless succession of ages upon ages, where thousands, and millions of thousands of years will have no proportion to our everlasting life in God--so with regard to this eternal state, which is our real state, twenty-five years is as poor a pittance as twenty-five days. Now we can never make any true judgment of time as it relates to us, without considering the true state of our duration. If we are temporary beings, then a little time may justly be called a great deal in relation to us; but if we are eternal beings, then the difference of a few years is as nothing.

If we were to suppose three different sorts of rational beings, all of different, but fixed duration, one sort that lived certainly only a month, the other a year, and the third a hundred years. Now if these beings were to meet together, and talk about time, they must talk in a very different language--half an hour to those that were to live but a month, must be a very different thing to what it is to those who are to live a hundred years. As, therefore, time is thus different a thing with regard to the state of those who enjoy it, so if we would know what time is with regard to ourselves, we must consider our state.

Now since our eternal state is as certainly ours, as our present state; since we are as certainly to live forever, as we now live at all; it is plain, that we cannot judge of the value of any particular time, as to us, but by comparing it to that eternal duration, for which we are created. If you would know what five years signify to a being that was to live a hundred, you must compare five to a hundred, and see what proportion it bears to it; and then you will judge right. So if you would know what twenty years signify to a son of Adam, you must compare it not to a million of ages, but to an eternal duration, to which no number of millions bears any proportion; and then you will judge right, by finding it nothing. Consider therefore this; how would you condemn the folly of a man, that should lose his share of future glory, for the sake of being rich, or great, or praised, or delighted in any enjoyment, only one poor day before he was to die! But if the time will come, when a number of years will seem less to everyone, than a day does now, what a condemnation must it then be, if eternal happiness should appear to be lost for something less than the enjoyment of a day! Why does a day seem a trifle to us now? It is because we have years to set against it. It is the duration of years that makes it appear as nothing. What a trifle therefore must the years of a man's age appear, when they are forced to be set against eternity, when there shall be nothing but eternity to compare them with!

Now this will be the case of every man, as soon as he is out of the body; he will be forced to forget the distinctions of days and years, and to measure time, not by the course of the sun, but by

setting it against eternity. As the fixed stars, by reason of our being placed at such a distance from them, appear but as so many points; so when we, placed in eternity, shall look back upon all time, it will all appear but as a moment. Then, a luxury, an indulgence, a prosperity, a greatness of fifty years, will seem to every one that looks back upon it, as the same poor short enjoyment as if he had been snatched away in his first sin. These few reflections upon time are only to show how poorly they think, how miserably they judge, who are less careful of an eternal state, because they may be at some years' distance from it, than they would be if they knew they were within a few weeks of it.

02.14. Chapter 14

Concerning that part of devotion which relates to times and hours of prayer. Of daily early prayer in the morning. How we are to improve our forms of prayer, and how to increase the spirit of devotion.

Having in the foregoing chapters shown the necessity of a devout spirit, or habit of mind, in every part of our common life, in the discharge of all our business, in the use of all the gifts of God; I come now to consider that part of devotion, which relates to times and hours of prayer. I take it for granted, that every Christian, that is in health, is up early in the morning; for it is much more reasonable to suppose a person up early, because he is a Christian, than because he is a laborer, or a tradesman, or a servant, or has business that needs him. We naturally conceive some abhorrence of a man that is in bed when he should be at his labor or in his shop. We cannot tell how to think anything good of him, who is such a slave to drowsiness as to neglect his business for it.

Let this therefore teach us to conceive how odious we must appear in the sight of Heaven, if we are in bed, shut up in sleep and darkness, when we should be praising God; and are such slaves to drowsiness, as to neglect our devotions for it. For if he is to be blamed as a slothful drone, that rather chooses the lazy indulgence of sleep, than to perform his proper share of worldly business; how much more is he to be reproached, that would rather lie folded up in a bed, than be raising up his heart to God in acts of praise and adoration!

Prayer is the nearest approach to God, and the highest enjoyment of Him, that we are capable of in this life. It is the noblest exercise of the soul, the most exalted use of our best faculties, and the highest imitation of the blessed inhabitants of Heaven. When our hearts are full of God, sending up holy desires to the throne of grace, we are then in our highest state, we are upon the utmost heights of human greatness; we are not merely before kings and princes, but in the presence and audience of the Lord of all the world, and can be no higher, until death is swallowed up in glory! On the other hand, SLEEP is the poorest, dullest refreshment of the body, that is so far from being intended as an enjoyment, that we are forced to receive it either in a state of insensibility, or in the folly of dreams. Sleep is such a dull, stupid state of existence, that even among mere animals, we despise them most which are most drowsy. He, therefore, that chooses to increase the slothful indulgence of sleep, rather than be early at his devotions to God, chooses the dullest refreshment of the body, before the highest, noblest employment of the soul; he chooses that state which is a reproach to mere animals, rather than that exercise which is the glory of Angels.

You will perhaps say, though you rise late, yet you are always careful of your devotions when you are up. It may be so. But what then? Is it well done of you to rise late, because you pray when you are up? Is it pardonable to waste great part of the day in bed, because sometime after you say your prayers? It is as much your duty to rise to pray, as to pray when you are risen. And if you are late at your prayers, you offer to God the prayers of an idle, slothful worshiper, that rises to prayers as idle servants rise to their labor. Farther; if you fancy that you are careful of your devotions when

you are up, though it be your custom to rise late, you deceive yourself; for you cannot perform your devotions as you ought. For he that cannot deny himself this drowsy indulgence, but must pass away good part of the morning in it, is no more prepared for prayer when he is up, than he is prepared for fasting, abstinence, or any other self-denial. He may indeed more easily read over a form of prayer, than he can perform these duties; but he is no more disposed to enter into the true spirit of prayer than he is disposed to fasting. For sleep thus indulged gives a softness and idleness to all our tempers, and makes us unable to relish anything but what suits with an idle state of mind, and gratifies our natural tempers, as sleep does. So that a person who is a slave to this idleness is in the same temper when he is up; and though he is not asleep, yet he is under the effects of it; and everything that is idle, indulgent, or sensual, pleases him for the same reason that sleep pleases him; and, on the other hand, everything that requires care, or trouble, or self-denial, is hateful to him, for the same reason that he hates to rise. He that places any happiness in this morning indulgence, would be glad to have all the day made happy in the same manner; though not with sleep, yet with such enjoyments as gratify and indulge the body in the same manner as sleep does; or, at least, with such as come as near to it as they can. The remembrance of a warm bed is in his mind all the day, and he is glad when he is not one of those that sit starving in a church.

Now you do not imagine that such a one can truly mortify that body which he thus indulges--yet you might as well think this, as that he can truly perform his devotions; or live in such a drowsy state of indulgence, and yet relish the joys of a spiritual life. For surely no one will pretend to say that he knows and feels the true happiness of prayer, who does not think it worth his while to be early at it. It is not possible in nature for an epicure to be truly devout--he must renounce this habit of sensuality, before he can relish the happiness of devotion. Now he that turns sleep into an idle indulgence, does as much to corrupt and disorder his soul, to make it a slave to bodily appetites, and keep it incapable of all devout and heavenly tempers, as he that turns the necessities of eating into a course of indulgence. A person that eats and drinks too much does not feel such effects from it, as those do who live in notorious instances of gluttony and intemperance--but yet his course of indulgence, though it be not scandalous in the eyes of the world, nor such as torments his own conscience, is a great and constant hindrance to his improvement in virtue; it gives him eyes that see not, and ears that hear not; it creates a sensuality in the soul, increases the power of bodily passions, and makes him incapable of entering into the true spirit of religion.

Now this is the case of those who waste their time in sleep; it does not disorder their lives, or wound their consciences, as notorious acts of intemperance do; but, like any other more moderate course of indulgence, it silently, and by smaller degrees, wears away the spirit of religion, and sinks the soul into a state of dullness and sensuality. If you consider devotion only as a time of so much prayer, you may perhaps perform it, though you live in this daily indulgence; but if you consider it as a state of the heart, as a lively fervor of the soul, that is deeply affected with a sense of its own misery and infirmities, and desires the Spirit of God more than all things in the world--you will find that the spirit of indulgence, and the spirit of prayer, cannot subsist together.

Mortification of all kinds is the very life and soul of piety; but he that has not so small a degree of it, as to be able to be early at his prayers, can have no reason to think that he has taken up his cross, and is following Christ. What conquest has he got over himself; what right hand has he cut off; what trials is he prepared for; what sacrifice is he ready to offer unto God, who cannot be so cruel

to himself as to rise to prayer at such time as the drudging part of the world are content to rise to their labor? Some people will not scruple to tell you, that they indulge themselves in sleep, because they have nothing to do; and that; if they had either business or pleasure to rise to, they would not lose so much of their time in sleep. But such people must be told that they mistake the matter; that they have a great deal of business to do; they have a hardened heart to change; they have the whole spirit of religion to get. For surely he that thinks devotion to be of less moment than business or pleasure; or that he has nothing to do because nothing but his prayers need him, may be justly said to have the whole spirit of religion to seek.

You must not therefore consider how small a crime it is to rise late, but you must consider how great a misery it is to lack the spirit of religion, to have a heart not rightly affected with prayer; and to live in such softness and idleness, as makes you incapable of the most fundamental duties of a truly Christian and spiritual life. This is a right way of judging of the crime of wasting great part of your time in bed. You must not consider the thing barely in itself, but what it proceeds from; what virtues it shows to be lacking; what vices it naturally strengthens. For every habit of this kind discovers the state of the soul, and plainly shows the whole turn of your mind. If our blessed Lord used to pray early before day; if He spent whole nights in prayer; if the devout Anna was day and night in the temple; if Paul and Silas at midnight sang praises unto God; if the primitive Christians, for several hundred years, besides their hours of prayers in the daytime, met publicly in the churches at midnight, to join in psalms and prayers; is it not certain that these practices showed the state of their heart? Are they not so many plain proofs of the whole turn of their minds? And if you live in a contrary state, wasting great part of every day in sleep, thinking any time soon enough to be at your prayers; is it not equally certain, that this practice as much shows the state of your heart, and the whole turn of your mind? So that if this indulgence is your way of life, you have as much reason to believe yourself destitute of the true spirit of devotion, as you have to believe the Apostles and saints of the primitive Church were truly devout. For as their way of life was a demonstration of their devotion, so a contrary way of life is as strong a proof of a lack of devotion. When you read the Scriptures, you see a religion that is all life, and spirit, and joy, in God; that supposes our souls risen from earthly desires, and bodily indulgences, to prepare for another body, another world, and other enjoyments. You see Christians represented as temples of the Holy Spirit, as children of the day, as candidates for an eternal crown, as watchful virgins, that have their lamps always burning, in expectation of the bridegroom. But can he be thought to have this joy in God, this care of eternity, this watchful spirit, who has not zeal enough to rise to his prayers? When you look into the writings and lives of the first Christians, you see the same spirit that you see in the Scriptures. All is reality, life, and action. Watching and prayers, self-denial and mortification, was the common business of their lives. From that time to this, there has been no person like them, eminent for piety, who has not, like them, been eminent for self-denial and mortification. This is the only royal way that leads to a kingdom. But how far are you from this way of life, or rather how contrary to it, if, instead of imitating their strictness and mortification, you cannot so much as renounce so poor an indulgence, as to be able to rise to your prayers! If self-denials and bodily sufferings, if watchings and fastings, will be marks of glory at the day of judgment, where must we hide our heads, that have slumbered away our time in sloth and softness?

You perhaps now find some pretenses to excuse yourselves from that severity of fasting and self-denial, which the first Christians practiced. You fancy that human nature is grown weaker, and that the difference of climates may make it not possible for you to observe their methods of self-denial and strictness in these colder countries. But all this is but pretense--for the change is not in the outward state of things, but in the inward state of our minds. When there is the same spirit in us that there was in the Apostles and primitive Christians, when we feel the weight of religion as they did, when we have their faith and hope, we shall take up our cross, and deny ourselves, and live in such methods of mortification as they did. Had Paul lived in a cold country, had he had a constitution made weak with a sickly stomach, and often infirmities, he would have done as he advised Timothy, he would have mixed a little wine with his water. But still he would have lived in a state of self-denial and mortification. He would have given this same account of himself- "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beats the air--but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection--lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

After all, let it now be supposed, that you imagine there is no necessity for you to be so sober and vigilant, so fearful of yourself, so watchful over your passions, so apprehensive of danger, so careful of your salvation, as the Apostles were. Let it be supposed, that you imagine that you need less self-denial and mortification, to subdue your bodies, and purify your souls, than they needed; that you need not have your loins girt, and your lamps burning, as they had; will you therefore live in a quite contrary state? Will you make your life as constant a course of softness and indulgence, as theirs was of strictness and self-denial? If therefore you should think that you have time sufficient, both for prayer and other duties, though you rise late; yet let me persuade you to rise early, as an instance of self-denial. It is so small a one, that, if you cannot comply with it, you have no reason to think yourself capable of any other.

If I were to desire you not to study the gratifications of your palate, in the niceties of foods and drinks, I would not insist much upon the crime of wasting your money in such a way, though it be a great one; but I would desire you to renounce such a way of life, because it supports you in such a state of sensuality and indulgence, as renders you incapable of relishing the most essential doctrines of religion. For the same reason, I do not insist much on the crime of wasting so much of your time in sleep, though it be a great one; but I desire you to renounce this indulgence, because it gives a softness and idleness to your soul, and is so contrary to that lively, zealous, watchful, self-denying spirit, which was not only the spirit of Christ and His Apostles, the spirit of all the saints and martyrs which have ever been among men, but must be the spirit of all those who would not sink in the common corruption of the world. Here, therefore, we must fix our charge against this practice; we must blame it, not as having this or that particular evil, but as a general habit, that extends itself through our whole spirit, and supports a state of mind that is wholly wrong. It is contrary to piety; not as accidental slips and mistakes in life are contrary to it, but in such a manner, as an ill habit of body is contrary to health. On the other hand, if you were to rise early every morning, as an instance of self-denial, as a method of renouncing indulgence, as a means of redeeming your time, and fitting your spirit for prayer, you would find mighty advantages from it. This method, though it seems such a small circumstance of life, would in all probability be a means of great piety. It would keep it constantly in your head, that softness and idleness were to be avoided, that self-denial was a part of Christianity. It would teach you to exercise power over

yourself, and make you able by degrees to renounce other pleasures and tempers that war against the soul. This one rule would teach you to think of others--it would dispose your mind to exactness, and would be very likely to bring the remaining part of the day under rules of prudence and devotion. But above all, one certain benefit from this method you will be sure of having, it will best fit and prepare you for the reception (or filling) of the Holy Spirit. When you thus begin the day in the spirit of religion, renouncing sleep, because you are to renounce softness, and redeem your time; this disposition, as it puts your heart into a good state, so it will procure the assistance of the Holy Spirit--what is so planted and watered will certainly have an increase from God. You will then speak from your heart, your soul will be awake, your prayers will refresh you like food and drink, you will feel what you say, and begin to know what saints and holy men have meant, by fervors of devotion. He that is thus prepared for prayer, who rises with these dispositions, is in a very different state from him who has no rules of this kind; who rises by chance, as he happens to be weary of his bed, or is able to sleep no longer. If such a one prays only with his mouth; if his heart feels nothing of that which he says; if his prayers are only things of course; if they are a lifeless form of words, which he only repeats because they are soon said; there is nothing to be wondered at in all this; for such dispositions are the natural effect of such a state of life.

Hoping, therefore, that you are now enough convinced of the necessity of rising early to your prayers, I shall proceed to lay before you a method of daily prayer. I do not take upon me to prescribe to you the use of any particular forms of prayer, but only to show you the necessity of praying at such times, and in such a manner. You will here find some helps, how to furnish yourself with such forms of prayer as shall be useful to you. And if you are such a proficient in the spirit of devotion, that your heart is always ready to pray in its own language, in this case I press no necessity of borrowed forms. For though I think a form of prayer very necessary and expedient for public worship, yet if any one can find a better way of raising his heart unto God in private, than by prepared forms of prayer, I have nothing to object against it; my design being only to assist and direct such as stand in need of assistance.

Thus much, I believe, is certain, that the generality of Christians ought to use forms of prayer at all the regular times of prayer. It seems right for every one to begin with a form of prayer; and if, in the midst of his devotions, he finds his heart ready to break forth into new and higher strains of devotion, he should leave his form for a while, and follow those desires of his heart. This seems to be the true liberty of private devotion; it should be under the direction of some form; but not so tied down to it, but that it may be free to take such new expressions, as its present desires happen to furnish it with; which sometimes are more affecting, and carry the soul more powerfully to God, than any expressions that were ever used before.

All people that have ever made any reflections upon what passes in their own hearts, must know that they are mighty changeable in regard to devotion. Sometimes our hearts are so awakened, have such strong apprehensions of the Divine Presence, are so full of deep compunction for our sins, that we cannot confess them in any language but that of tears. Sometimes the light of God's countenance shines so brightly upon us, we see so far into the invisible world, we are so affected with the wonders of the love and goodness of God, that our hearts worship and adore in a language higher than that of words, and we feel transports of devotion, which only can be felt. On the other hand, sometimes we are so sunk into our bodies, so dull and unaffected with that which concerns our souls, that our hearts are as much too low for our prayers; we cannot keep pace with

our forms of confession, or feel half of that in our hearts which we have in our mouths; we thank and praise God with forms of words, but our hearts have little or no share in them. It is therefore highly necessary to provide against this inconstancy of our hearts, by having at hand such forms of prayer as may best suit us when our hearts are in their best state, and also be most likely to raise and stir them up when they are sunk into dullness. For, as words have a power of affecting our hearts on all occasions, as the same thing differently expressed has different effects upon our minds, so it is reasonable that we should make this advantage of language, and provide ourselves with such forms of expression as are most likely to move and enliven our souls, and fill them with sentiments suitable to them. The first thing that you are to do, when you are upon your knees, is to shut your eyes, and with a short silence let your soul place itself in the presence of God; that is, you are to use this, or some other better method, to separate yourself from all common thoughts, and make your heart as sensible as you can of the Divine presence. Now if this recollection of spirit is necessary; as who can say it is not? then how poorly must they perform their devotions, who are always in a hurry; who begin them in haste, and hardly allow themselves time to repeat their very form, with any gravity or attention! Theirs is properly 'saying prayers', instead of 'praying'. To proceed--if you were to accustom yourself (as far as you can) to pray always in the same place; if you were to reserve that place for devotion, and not allow yourself to do anything common in it; if you were never to be there yourself, but in times of devotion; if any little room, or (if that cannot be) if any particular part of a room was thus used, this kind of consecration of it as a place holy unto God, would have an effect upon your mind, and dispose you to such tempers, as would very much assist your devotion. For by having a place thus sacred in your room, it would in some measure resemble a chapel or house of God. This would dispose you to be always in the spirit of religion, when you were there; and fill you with wise and holy thoughts, when you were by yourself. Your own apartment would raise in your mind such sentiments as you have when you stand near an altar; and you would be afraid of thinking or doing anything that was foolish near that place, which is the place of prayer and holy communion with God. When you begin your petitions, use such various expressions of the attributes of God, as may make you most sensible of the greatness and power of the Divine Nature. Begin, therefore, in words like these--O Being of all beings, Fountain of all light and glory, gracious Father of men and Angels, whose universal Spirit is everywhere present, giving life, and light, and joy, to all Angels in Heaven, and all creatures upon earth, etc. For these representations of the Divine attributes, which show us in some degree the Majesty and greatness of God, are an excellent means of raising our hearts into lively acts of worship and adoration. What is the reason that most people are so much affected with this petition in the Burial Service of our Church--"Yet, O Lord God most holy, O Lord most mighty, O holy and most merciful Savior, deliver us not into the bitter pains of eternal death"? It is, because the joining together of so many great expressions gives such a description of the greatness of the Divine Majesty, as naturally affects every sensible mind. Although, therefore, prayer does not consist in fine words, or studied expressions; yet as words speak to the soul, as they have a certain power of raising thoughts in the soul; so those words which speak of God in the highest manner, which most fully express the power and presence of God, which raise thoughts in the soul most suitable to the greatness and providence of God, are the most useful and most edifying in our prayers. When you direct any of your petitions to our blessed Lord, let it be in some expressions of this kind--O Savior of the world, God of God, Light of Light; You that are the brightness of Your Father's glory, and the express Image of His Person; You that are the Alpha

and Omega, the Beginning and End of all things; You that have destroyed the power of the devil; that have overcome death; You that are entered into the Holy of Holies, that sit at the right hand of the Father, that are high above all thrones and principalities, that make intercession for all the world; You that are the Judge of the living and dead; You that will speedily come down in Your Father's glory, to reward all men according to their works, be my Light and my Peace, etc. For such representations, which describe so many characters of our Savior's nature and power, are not only proper acts of adoration, but will, if they are repeated with any attention, fill our hearts with the highest favors of true devotion.

Again; if you ask any particular grace of our blessed Lord, let it be in some manner like this--O Holy Jesus, Son of the most High God, You that were scourged at a pillar, stretched and nailed upon a cross, for the sins of the world, unite me to Your cross, and fill my soul with Your holy, humble, and suffering spirit. O Fountain of mercy, You that saved the thief upon the cross, save me from the guilt of a sinful life; You that cast seven devils out of Mary Magdalene, cast out of my heart all evil thoughts and wicked tempers. O Giver of life, You that raised Lazarus from the dead, raise up my soul from the death and darkness of sin. You that gave to Your Apostles power over unclean spirits, give me power over my own heart. You that appeared unto Your disciples when the doors were shut, do appear unto me in the secret apartment of my heart. You that cleansed the lepers, heal the sick, and give sight to the blind, cleanse my heart, heal the disorders of my soul, and fill me with heavenly light.

Now these kind of appeals have a double advantage; first, as they are so many proper acts of our faith, whereby we not only show our belief of the miracles of Christ, but turn them at the same time into so many instances of worship and adoration. Secondly, as they strengthen and increase the faith of our prayers, by presenting to our minds so many instances of that power and goodness, which we call upon for our own assistance. For he that appeals to Christ, as casting out devils and raising the dead, has then a powerful motive in his mind to pray earnestly, and depend faithfully upon His assistance.

Again--in order to fill your prayers with excellent strains of devotion, it may be of use to you to observe this farther rule--When at any time, either in reading the Scripture or any book of piety, you meet with a passage that more than ordinarily affects your mind, and seems, as it were, to give your heart a new motion towards God, you should try to turn it into the form of a petition, and then give it a place in your prayers. By this means you will be often improving your prayers, and storing yourself with proper forms of making the desires of your heart known unto God. At all the stated hours of prayer, it will be of great benefit to you to have something fixed, and something at liberty, in your devotions. You should have some fixed subject, which is constantly to be the chief matter of your prayer at that particular time; and yet have liberty to add such other petitions, as your condition may then require. For instance--as the morning is to you the beginning of a new life; as God has then given you a new enjoyment of yourself, and a fresh entrance into the world; it is highly proper that your first devotions should be a praise and thanksgiving to God, as for a new creation; and that you should offer and devote body and soul, all that you are, and all that you have, to His service and glory. Receive, therefore, every day as a resurrection from death, as a new enjoyment of life; meet every rising sun with such sentiments of God's goodness, as if you had seen it, and all things, newly created upon your account--and under the sense of so great a blessing, let your joyful heart praise and magnify so good and glorious a Creator. Let, therefore,

praise and thanksgiving, and offering of yourself unto God, be always the fixed and certain subject of your first prayers in the morning; and then take the liberty of adding such other devotions, as the incidental variation of your state, or the incidental variation of your heart, shall then make most needful and expedient for you. For one of the greatest benefits of private devotion consists in rightly adapting our prayers to those two conditions; the variation of our state, and the variation of our hearts. By the variation of our state, is meant the difference of our external state or condition, as of sickness, health, pains, losses, disappointments, troubles, particular mercies, or judgments, from God; all sorts of kindnesses, injuries, or reproaches, from other people. Now as these are great parts of our state of life, as they make great difference in it by continually changing; so our devotion will be made doubly beneficial to us, when it watches to receive and sanctify all these changes of our state, and turns them all into so many occasions of a more particular application to God of such thanksgiving, such resignation, such petitions, as our present state more especially requires. And he that makes every change in his state a reason of presenting unto God some particular petitions suitable to that change, will soon find that he has taken an excellent means not only of praying with fervor, but of living as he prays. The next condition, to which we are always to adapt some part of our prayers, is the variation of our hearts; by which is meant the different state of the tempers of our hearts, as of love, joy, peace, tranquillity, dullness and dryness of spirit, anxiety, discontent, motions of envy and ambition, dark and disconsolate thoughts, resentments, fretfulness, and peevish tempers. Now as these tempers, through the weakness of our nature, will have their succession, more or less, even in pious minds; so we should constantly make the present state of our heart the reason of some particular application to God.

If we are in the delightful calm of sweet and easy passions, of love and joy in God, we should then offer the grateful tribute of thanksgiving to God for the possession of so much happiness, thankfully owning and acknowledging Him as the bountiful Giver of it all. If, on the other hand, we feel ourselves laden with heavy passions, with dullness of spirit, anxiety, and uneasiness, we must then look up to God in acts of humility, confessing our unworthiness, opening our troubles to Him, beseeching Him in His good time to lessen the weight of our infirmities, and to deliver us from such passions as oppose the purity and perfection of our souls. Now by thus watching and attending to the present state of our hearts, and suiting some of our petitions exactly to their needs, we shall not only be well acquainted with the disorders of our souls, but also be well exercised in the method of curing them. By this prudent and wise application of our prayers, we shall get all the relief from them that is possible--and the very changeableness of our hearts will prove a means of exercising a greater variety of holy tempers.

Now, by all that has here been said, you will easily perceive, that people careful of the greatest benefit of prayer ought to have a great share in the forming and composing their own devotions. As to that part of their prayers which is always fixed to one certain subject, in that they may use the help of forms composed by other people; but in that part of their prayers which they are always to suit to the present state of their life, and the present state of their heart, there they must let the sense of their own condition help them to such kinds of petition, thanksgiving, or resignation, as their present state more especially requires. Happy are they who have this business and employment upon their hands! And now, if people of leisure, whether men or women, who are so much at a loss how to dispose of their time, who are forced into poor contrivances, idle visits, and ridiculous diversions, merely to get rid of hours that hang heavily upon their hands; if such were to

appoint some certain spaces of their time to the study of devotion, searching after all the means and helps to attain a devout spirit; if they were to collect the best forms of devotion, to accustom themselves to transcribe the finest passages of Scripture-prayers; if they were to collect the devotions, confessions, petitions, praises, resignations, and thanksgivings, which are scattered up and down in the Psalms, and range them under proper heads, as so much proper fuel for the flame of their own devotion; if their minds were often thus employed, sometimes meditating upon them, sometimes getting them by heart, and making them as habitual as their own thoughts, how fervently would they pray, who came thus prepared to prayer! And how much better would it be, to make this benefit of leisure time, than to be dully and idly lost in the poor impertinences of a playing, visiting, wandering life! How much better would it be, to be thus furnished with hymns and anthems of the saints, and teach their souls to ascend to God, than to corrupt, bewilder, and confound their hearts with the wild fancies, the lustful thoughts of lewd poets! Now though people of leisure seem called more particularly to this study of devotion, yet people of much business or labor must not think themselves excused from this, or some better method of improving their devotion. For the greater their business is, the more need they have of some such method as this, to prevent its power over their hearts, to secure them from sinking into worldly tempers, and preserve a sense and taste of heavenly things in their minds. And a little time regularly and constantly employed to any one use or end, will do great things, and produce mighty effects. And it is for lack of considering devotion in this light, as something that is to be nursed and cherished with care, as something that is to be made part of our business, that is to be improved with care and contrivance, by art and method, and a diligent use of the best helps; it is for lack of considering it in this light that so many people are so little benefited by it and live and die strangers to that spirit of devotion, which, by a prudent use of proper means, they might have enjoyed in a high degree. For though the spirit of devotion is the gift of God, and not attainable by any mere power of our own, yet it is mostly given to, and never withheld from, those who, by a wise and diligent use of proper means, prepare themselves for the reception of it. And it is amazing to see how eagerly men employ their parts, their sagacity, time, study, application, and exercise--how all helps are called to their assistance, when anything is intended and desired in worldly matters; and how dull, negligent, and unimproved they are; how little they use their parts, sagacity, and abilities, to raise and increase their devotion!

MUNDANUS is a man of excellent parts, and clear apprehension. He is well advanced in age, and has made a great figure in business. Every part of trade and business that has fallen in his way has had some improvement from him; and he is always contriving to carry every method of doing anything well to its greatest height. Mundanus aims at the greatest perfection in everything. The soundness and strength of his mind, and his right way of thinking upon things, make him intent upon removing all imperfections. He can tell you all the defects and errors in all the common methods, whether of trade, building, or improving land or manufactures. The clearness and strength of his understanding, which he is constantly improving by continual exercise in these matters, by often digesting his thoughts in writing, and trying everything every way, has rendered him a great master of most concerns in human life.

Thus has Mundanus gone on, increasing his knowledge and judgment, as fast as his years came upon him. The one only thing which has not fallen under his improvement, nor received any benefit from his judicious mind, is his devotion--this is just in the same poor state it was, when he was only

six years of age, and the old man prays now in that little form of words which his mother used to hear him repeat night and morning. This Mundanus, that hardly ever saw the poorest utensil, or ever took the lowest trifle into his hand, without considering how it might be made or used to better advantage, has gone all his life long praying in the same manner as when he was a child; without ever considering how much better or oftener he might pray; without considering how improbable the spirit of devotion is, how many helps a wise and reasonable man may call to his assistance, and how necessary it is, that our prayers should be enlarged, varied, and suited to the particular state and condition of our lives.

If Mundanus sees a book of devotion, he passes it by, as he does a spelling-book, because he remembers that he learned to pray, so many years ago, under his mother, when he learned to spell. Now how poor and pitiable is the conduct of this man of sense, who has so much judgment and understanding in everything, but that which is the whole wisdom of man! And how miserably do many people, more or less, imitate this conduct! All which seems to be owing to a strange, infatuated state of negligence, which keeps people from considering what devotion is. For if they did but once proceed so far as to reflect about it, or ask themselves any questions concerning it, they would soon see that the spirit of devotion was like any other sense or understanding, that is only to be improved by study, care, application, and the use of such means and helps as are necessary to make a man a proficient in any art or science.

CLASSICUS is a man of learning, and well versed in all the best authors of antiquity. He has read them so much, that he has entered into their spirit, and can very ingeniously imitate the manner of any of them. All their thoughts are his thoughts, and he can express himself in their language. He is so great a friend to this improvement of the mind, that if he lights on a young scholar, he never fails to advise him concerning his studies. Classicus tells his young man, he must not think that he has done enough when he has only learned languages; but that he must be daily conversant with the best authors, read them again and again, catch their spirit by living with them, and that there is no other way of becoming like them, or of making himself a man of taste and judgment. How wise might Classicus have been, and how much good might he have done in the world, if he had but thought as justly of devotion, as he does of learning! He never, indeed, says anything shocking or offensive about devotion, because he never thinks, or talks, about it. It gets nothing from him but neglect and disregard. The two Testaments would not have had so much as a place among his books, but that they are both to be had in Greek. Classicus thinks that he sufficiently shows his regard for the Holy Scripture, when he tells you, that he has no other books of piety besides them.

It is very well, Classicus, that you prefer the Bible to all other books of piety. But if you will have no other book of piety besides the Bible, because it is the best, how comes it, Classicus, that you do not content yourself with one of the best books among the Greeks and Romans? How comes it that you are so greedy and eager after all of them? How comes it that you think the knowledge of one is a necessary help to the knowledge of the other? How comes it that you are so earnest, so laborious, so expensive of your time and money, to restore broken periods, and scraps of the ancients? How comes it that you read so many commentators upon Cicero, Horace, and Homer, and not one upon the Gospel? How comes it that you love to read a man? How comes it that your love of Cicero and Ovid makes you love to read an author that writes like them; and yet your esteem for the Gospel gives you no desire, no, prevents your reading such books as breathe the very spirit of the Gospel? How comes it that you tell your young scholar, he must not content

himself with barely understanding his authors, but must be continually reading them all, as the only means of entering into their spirit, and forming his own judgment according to them? Why then must the Bible lie alone in your study? Is not the spirit of the saints, the piety of the holy followers of Jesus, as good and necessary a means of entering into the spirit and taste of the gospel, as the reading of the ancients is of entering into the spirit of antiquity? Is the spirit of poetry only to be got by much reading of poets and orators? And is not the spirit of devotion to be got in the same way, by frequently reading the holy thoughts, and pious strains of devout men? Is your young poet to search after every line that may give new wings to his fancy, or direct his imagination? And is it not as reasonable for him who desires to improve in the Divine life, that is, in the love of heavenly things, to search after every strain of devotion that may move, kindle, and inflame the holy ardor of his soul? Do you advise your orator to translate the best orations, to commit much of them to memory, to be frequently exercising his talent in this manner, that habits of thinking and speaking justly may be formed in his mind? And is there not the same benefit and advantage to be made by books of devotion? Should not a man use them in the same way, that habits on devotion, and aspiring to God in holy thoughts, may be well formed in his soul?

Now the reason why Classicus does not think and judge thus reasonably of devotion, is owing to his never thinking of it in any other manner than as the repeating a form of words. It never in his life entered his head, to think of devotion as a state of the heart, as an improvable talent of the mind, as a temper that is to grow and increase like our reason and judgment, and to be formed in us by such a regular, diligent use of proper means, as are necessary to form any other wise habit of mind. And it is for lack of this, that he has been content all his life with the bare letter of prayer, and eagerly bent upon entering into the spirit of heathen poets and orators. And it is much to be lamented, that numbers of scholars are more or less chargeable with this excessive folly; so negligent of improving their devotion, and so desirous of other poor accomplishments; as if they thought it a nobler talent to be able to write an epigram in the turn of Martial, than to live, and think, and pray to God, in the spirit of Augustine. And yet, to correct this temper, and fill a man with a quite contrary spirit, there seems to be no more required, than the bare belief in the truth of Christianity. And if you were to ask Mundanus and Classicus, or any man of business or learning, whether piety is not the highest perfection of man, or devotion the greatest attainment in the world, they must both be forced to answer in the affirmative, or else give up the truth of the Gospel. For to set any accomplishment against devotion, or to think anything, or all things in this world, bears any proportion to its excellency, is the same absurdity in a Christian, as it would be in a philosopher to prefer a meal to the greatest improvement in knowledge. For as philosophy professes purely the search and inquiry after knowledge, so Christianity supposes, intends, desires, and aims at nothing else but the raising fallen man to a Divine life, to such habits of holiness, such degrees of devotion, as may fit him to enter among the holy inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven. He that does not believe this of Christianity, may be reckoned an infidel; and he that believes thus much has faith enough to give him a right judgment of the value of things, to support him in a sound mind, and enable him to conquer all the temptations which the world shall lay in his way. To conclude this chapter. Devotion is nothing else but right understandings and right affections towards God. All practices, therefore, that heighten and improve our true comprehension of God, all ways of life that tend to nourish, raise, and fix our affections upon Him, are to be reckoned so many helps and means to fill us with devotion. As Prayer is the proper fuel of this holy flame, so we must use all our care and contrivance to give prayer its full power--as by alms, self-denial,

frequent retirements, and holy readings, composing forms for ourselves, or using the best we can get, adding length of time, and observing hours of prayer--changing, improving, and suiting our devotions to the condition of our lives, and the state of our hearts. Those who have most leisure seem more especially called to a more eminent observance of these holy rules of a devout life. And they, who, by the necessity of their state, and not through their own choice, have but little time to employ thus, must make the best use of that little they have. For this is the certain way of making devotion produce a devout life.

02.15. Chapter 15

Of chanting, or singing of psalms in our private devotions. Of the excellency and benefit of this kind of devotion. Of the great effects it has upon our hearts. Of the means of performing it in the best manner.

You have seen, in the foregoing chapter, what means and methods you are to use, to raise and improve your devotion; how early you are to begin your prayers, and what is to be the subject of your first devotions in the morning. There is one thing still remaining, that you must be required to observe, not only as fit and proper to be done, but as such as cannot be neglected without great blemish to your devotions--and that is to begin all your prayers with a psalm. This is so right, is so beneficial to devotion, has so much effect upon our hearts, that it may be insisted upon as a common rule for all people. I do not mean, that you should read over a psalm, but that you should chant or sing one of those psalms, which we commonly call the reading psalms. For singing is as much the proper use of a psalm as devout supplication is the proper use of a form of prayer; and a psalm only read is very much like a prayer that is only looked over. Now the method of chanting a psalm, such as is used in the colleges, in the universities, and in some churches, is such as all people are capable of. The change of the voice in thus chanting of a psalm is so small and natural, that everybody is able to do it, and yet sufficient to raise and keep up the gladness of our hearts. You are, therefore, to consider this chanting of a psalm as a necessary beginning of your devotions, as something that is to awaken all that is good and holy within you, that is to call your spirits to their proper duty, to set you in your best posture towards heaven, and tune all the powers of your soul to worship and adoration. For there is nothing that so clears a way for your prayers, nothing that so disperses dullness of heart, nothing that so purifies the soul from poor and little passions, nothing that so opens heaven, or carries your heart so near it, as these songs of praise.

They create a sense and delight in God, they awaken holy desires, they teach you how to ask, and they prevail with God to give. They kindle a holy flame, they turn your heart into an altar, your prayers into incense, and carry them as a sweet-smelling savor to the throne of grace. The difference between singing and reading a psalm will easily be understood, if you consider the difference between reading and singing a common song that you like. While you only read it, you only like it, and that is all; but as soon as you sing it, then you enjoy it, you feel the delight of it; it has gotten hold of you, your passions keep pace with it, and you feel the same spirit within you that seems to be in the words. If you were to tell a person that has such a song, that he need not sing it, that it was sufficient to peruse it, he would wonder what you meant; and would do you think as absurd as if you were to tell him that he should only look at his food, to see whether it was good, but need not eat it--for a song of praise not sung, is very like any other good thing not made use of.

You will perhaps say, that singing is a particular talent, that belongs only to particular people, and that you have neither voice nor ear to make any music. If you had said that singing is a general talent, and that people differ in that as they do in all other things, you had said something much

truer. For how vastly do people differ in the talent of thinking, which is not only common to all men, but seems to be the very essence of human nature. How readily do some people reason upon everything! and how scarcely do others reason upon anything! How clearly do some people discourse upon the most abstruse matters! and how confusedly do others talk upon the plainest subjects! Yet no one desires to be excused from thought, or reason, or discourse, because he has not these talents, as some people have them. But it is fully as just for a person to think himself excused from thinking upon God, from reasoning about his duty to Him, or discoursing about the means of salvation, because he has not these talents in any fine degree; this is fully as just, as for a person to think himself excused from singing the praises of God, because he has not a fine ear, or a musical voice. For as it is speaking, and not graceful speaking, that is a required part of prayer; as it is bowing, and not genteel bowing, that is a proper part of adoration; so it is singing, and not artful, fine singing, that is a required way of praising God. If a person was to forbear praying, because he had an odd tone in his voice, he would have as good an excuse as he has, that forbears from singing psalms, because he has but little management of his voice. And as a man's speaking his prayers, though in an odd tone, may yet sufficiently answer all the ends of his own devotion; so a man's singing of a psalm, though not in a very musical way, may yet sufficiently answer all the ends of rejoicing in, and praising God.

Secondly, This objection might be of some weight, if you were desired to sing to entertain other people; but is not to be admitted in the present case, where you are only required to sing the praises of God, as a part of your private devotion. If a person that has a very ill voice, and a bad way of speaking, was desired to be the mouth of a congregation, it would be a very proper excuse for him, to say that he had not a voice, or a way of speaking, that was proper for prayer. But he would be very absurd, if, for the same reason, he should neglect his own private devotions. Now this is exactly the case of singing psalms--you may not have the talent of singing, so as to be able to entertain other people, and therefore it is reasonable to excuse yourself from it; but if for that reason you should excuse yourself from this way of praising God, you would be guilty of a great absurdity--because singing is no more required for the music that is made by it, than prayer is required for the fine words that it contains, but as it is the natural and proper expression of a heart rejoicing in God. Our blessed Savior and His Apostles sang a hymn--but it may reasonably be supposed, that they rather rejoiced in God, than made fine music. Do but so live, that your heart may truly rejoice in God, that it may feel itself affected with the praises of God; and then you will find that this state of your heart will neither lack a voice nor ear to find a tune for a psalm. Every one, at some time or other, finds himself able to sing in some degree; there are some times and occasions of joy, that make all people ready to express their sense of it in some sort of harmony. The joy that they feel forces them to let their voice have a part in it. He therefore that says he lacks a voice, or an ear, to sing a psalm, mistakes the case--he lacks that spirit that really rejoices in God; the dullness is in his heart, and not in his ear--and when his heart feels a true joy in God, when it has a full relish of what is expressed in the Psalms, he will find it very pleasant to make the motions of his voice express the motions of his heart.

Singing, indeed, as it is improved into an art; as it signifies the running of the voice through such and such a compass of notes, and keeping time with a studied variety of changes, is not natural, nor the effect of any natural state of the mind; so in this sense, it is not common to all people, any more than those invented and practiced motions which make fine dancing are common to all

people. But singing, as it signifies a motion of the voice suitable to the motions of the heart, and the changing of its tone according to the meaning of the words which we utter, is as natural and common to all men, as it is to speak high when they threaten in anger, or to speak low when they are dejected and ask for a pardon.

All men therefore are singers, in the same manner as all men think, speak, laugh, and lament. For singing is no more an invention, than grief or joy are inventions. Every state of the heart naturally puts the body into some state that is suitable to it, and is proper to show it to other people. If a man is angry, or disdainful, no one need instruct him how to express these passions by the tone of his voice. The state of his heart disposes him to a proper use of his voice. If therefore there are but few singers of divine songs, if people need to be exhorted to this part of devotion, it is because there are but few whose hearts are raised to that height of piety, as to feel any motions of joy and delight in the praises of God.

Imagine to yourself that you had been with Moses when he was led through the Red Sea; that you had seen the waters divide themselves, and stand on an heap on both sides; that you had seen them held up until you had passed through, then let fall upon your enemies; do you think that you would then have lacked a voice or an ear to have sung with Moses, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and he is become my salvation." I know your own heart tells you, that all people must have been singers upon such an occasion. Let this therefore teach you, that it is the heart that tunes a voice to sing the praises of God; and that if you cannot sing the same words now with joy, it is because you are not so affected with the salvation of the world by Jesus Christ, as the Jews were, or you yourself would have been, with their deliverance at the Red Sea. That it is the state of the heart that disposes to rejoice in any particular kind of singing, may be easily proved from a variety of observations upon human nature. An old debauchee may, according to the language of the world, have neither voice nor ear, if you only sing a psalm, or a song in praise of virtue to him; but yet, if in some easy tune you sing something that celebrates his former debauches, he will then, though he has no teeth in his head, show you that he has both a voice and an ear to join in such music. You then awaken his heart, and he as naturally sings to such words, as he laughs when he is pleased. And this will be the case in every song that touches the heart--if you celebrate the ruling passion of any man's heart, you put his voice in tune to join with you. Thus if you can find a man, whose ruling temper is devotion, whose heart is full of God, his voice will rejoice in those songs of praise, which glorify that God, that is the joy of his heart, though he has neither voice nor ear for other music. Would you, therefore, delightfully perform this part of devotion, it is not so necessary to learn a tune, or practice upon notes, as to prepare your heart; for, as our blessed Lord says, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders," etc., so it is equally true, that out of the heart proceed holy joys, thanksgiving, and praise. If you can once say with David, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed;" it will be very easy and natural to add, as he did, "I will sing, and give praise."

Secondly, Let us now consider another reason for this kind of devotion. As singing is a natural effect of joy in the heart, so it has also a natural power of rendering the heart joyful. The soul and body are so united, that they have each of them power over one another in their actions. Certain thoughts and sentiments in the soul produce such and such motions and actions in the body; and, on the other hand, certain motions and actions of the body have the same power of raising such and such thoughts and sentiments in the soul. So that, as singing is the natural effect of joy in the

mind, so it is as truly a natural cause of raising joy in the mind. As devotion of the heart naturally breaks out into outward acts of prayer; so outward acts of prayer are natural means of raising the devotion of the heart. It is thus in all states and tempers of the mind--as the inward state of the mind produces outward actions suitable to it, so those outward actions have the like power of raising an inward state of mind suitable to them. As anger produces angry words, so angry words increase anger. So that if we barely consider human nature, we shall find, that singing or chanting the psalms is as proper and necessary to raise our hearts to a delight in God, as prayer is proper and necessary to excite in us the spirit of devotion. Every reason for one is in all respects as strong a reason for the other. If, therefore, you would know the reason and necessity of singing psalms, you must consider the reason and necessity of praising and rejoicing in God; because singing of psalms is as much the true exercise and support of the spirit of thanksgiving, as prayer is the true exercise and support of the spirit of devotion. And you may as well think that you can be devout as you ought, without the use of prayer, as that you can rejoice in God as you ought without the practice of singing psalms--because this singing is as much the natural language of praise and thanksgiving, as prayer is the natural language of devotion. The union of soul and body is not a mixture of their substances, as we see bodies united and mixed together, but consists solely in the mutual power that they have of acting upon one another. If two people were in such a state of dependence upon one another, that neither of them could act, or move, or think, or feel, or suffer, or desire anything, without putting the other into the same condition, one might properly say that they were in a state of strict union, although their substances were not united together. Now this is the union of the soul and body--the substance of the one cannot be mixed or united with the other; but they are held together in such a state of union, that all the actions and sufferings of the one, are at the same time the actions and sufferings of the other. The soul has no thought or passion, but the body is concerned in it; the body has no action or motion, but what in some degree affects the soul.

Now as it is the solitary will of God that is the reason and cause of all the powers and effects which you see in the world; as the sun gives light and heat, not because it has any natural power of so doing; as it is fixed in a certain place, and other bodies moving about it, not because it is in the nature of the sun to stand still, and in the nature of other bodies to move about it, but merely because it is the will of God that they should be in such a state; as the eye is the organ, or instrument of seeing, not because the skins, and coats, and pleasures of the eye have a natural power of giving sight; as the ears are the organs, or instruments of hearing, not because the make of the ear has any natural power over sounds, but merely because it is the will of God that seeing and hearing should be thus received; so, in like manner, it is the solitary will of God, and not the nature of a human soul or body, that is the cause of this union between the soul and the body.

Now if you rightly apprehend this short account of the union of the soul and body, you will see a great deal into the reason and necessity of all the outward parts of religion. This union of our souls and bodies is the reason both why we have so little, and so much, power over ourselves. It is owing to this union that we have so little power over our souls; for as we cannot prevent the effects of external objects upon our bodies, as we cannot command outward causes, so we cannot always command the inward state of our minds; because, as outward objects act upon our bodies without our leave, so our bodies act upon our minds by the laws of the union of the soul and the body; and thus you see it is owing to this union, that we have so little power over ourselves. On the

other hand, it is owing to this union that we have so much power over ourselves. For as our souls, in a great measure, depend upon our bodies; and as we have great power over our bodies; as we can command our outward actions, and oblige ourselves to such habits of life as naturally produce habits in the soul; as we can mortify our bodies, and remove ourselves from objects that inflame our passions; so we have a great power over the inward state of our souls.

Again, as we are masters of our outward actions; as we can force ourselves to outward acts of reading, praying, singing, and the like, and as all these bodily actions have an effect upon the soul; as they naturally tend to form such and such tempers in our hearts; so by being masters of these outward, bodily actions, we have great power over the inward state of the heart--and thus it is owing to this union that we have so much power over ourselves.

Now from this you may also see the necessity and benefit of singing psalms, and of all the outward acts of religion; for if the body has so much power over the soul, it is certain that all such bodily actions as affect the soul are of great weight in religion. Not as if there was any true worship, or piety, in the actions themselves, but because they are proper to raise and support that spirit, which is the true worship of God. Though therefore the seat of religion is in the heart, yet since our bodies have a power over our hearts; since outward actions both proceed from, and enter into the heart; it is plain that outward actions have a great power over that religion which is seated in the heart. We are therefore as well to use outward helps, as inward meditation, in order to beget and fix habits of piety in our hearts. This doctrine may easily be carried too far; for by calling in too many outward means of worship, it may degenerate into superstition; as, on the other hand, some have fallen into the contrary extreme. For, because religion is justly placed in the heart, some have pursued that notion so far as to renounce vocal prayer, and other outward acts of worship, and have resolved all religion into a quietism, or mystic communions with God in silence. Now these are two extremes equally prejudicial to true religion; and ought not to be objected either against internal or external worship. As you ought not to say that I encourage that quietism by placing religion in the heart; so neither ought you to say, that I encourage superstition, by showing the benefit of outward acts of worship. For since we are neither all soul, nor all body; seeing none of our actions are either separately of the soul, or separately of the body; seeing we have no habits but such as are produced by the actions both of our souls and bodies; it is certain that if we would arrive at habits of devotion, or delight in God, we must not only meditate and exercise our souls, but we must practice and exercise our bodies to all such outward actions as are conformable to these inward tempers.

If we would truly prostrate our souls before God, we must use our bodies to postures of lowliness; if we desire true favors of devotion, we must make prayer the frequent labor of our lips. If we would banish all pride and passion from our hearts, we must force ourselves to all outward actions of patience and meekness. If we would feel inward motions of joy and delight in God, we must practice all the outward acts of it, and make our voices call upon our hearts.

Now, therefore, you may plainly see the reason and necessity of singing of psalms; it is because outward actions are necessary to support inward tempers; and therefore the outward act of joy is necessary to raise and support the inward joy of the mind. If any people were to leave off prayer, because they seldom find the motions of their hearts answering the words which they speak, you would charge them with great absurdity. You would think it very reasonable that they should

continue their prayers, and be strict in observing all times of prayer, as the most likely means of removing the dullness and undevotion of their hearts.

Now this is very much the case as to singing of psalms; people often sing, without finding any inward joy suitable to the words which they speak; therefore they are careless of it, or wholly neglect it; not considering that they act as absurdly as he that should neglect prayer, because his heart was not enough affected with it. For it is certain that this singing is as much the natural means of raising emotions of joy in the mind, as prayer is the natural means of raising devotion. I have been the longer upon this head, because of its great importance to true religion. For there is no state of mind so holy, so excellent, and so truly perfect, as that of thankfulness to God; and consequently nothing is of more importance in religion than that which exercises and improves this habit of mind. A dull, uneasy, complaining spirit, which is sometimes the spirit of those that seem mindful of religion, is yet, of all tempers, the most contrary to religion; for it disowns that God whom it pretends to adore. For he sufficiently disowns God, who does not adore Him as a Being of infinite goodness. If a man does not believe that all the world is as God's family, where nothing happens by chance, but all is guided and directed by the care and providence of a Being that is all love and goodness to all His creatures; if a man does not believe this from his heart, he cannot be said truly to believe in God. And yet he that has this faith, has faith enough to overcome the world, and always be thankful to God. For he that believes that everything happens to him for the best, cannot possibly complain for the lack of something that is better. If, therefore, you live in murmurings and complaints, accusing all the accidents of life, it is not because you are a weak, infirm creature, but it is because you lack the first principle of religion; a right belief in God. For as thankfulness is an express acknowledgment of the goodness of God towards you, so repinings and complaints are as plain accusations of God's lack of goodness towards you. On the other hand, would you know who is the greatest saint in the world? It is not he who prays most or fasts most; it is not he who gives most alms, or is most eminent for temperance, chastity, or justice; but it is he who is always thankful to God, who wills everything that God wills, who receives everything as an instance of God's goodness, and has a heart always ready to praise God for it. All prayer and devotion, fastings and repentance, meditation and retirement, all Sacraments and ordinances, are but so many means to render the soul thus Divine, and conformable to the will of God, and to fill it with thankfulness and praise for everything that comes from God. This is the perfection of all virtues; and all virtues that do not tend to it, or proceed from it, are but so many false ornaments of a soul not converted unto God.

You need not, therefore, now wonder that I lay so much stress upon singing a psalm at all your devotions, since you see it is to form your spirit to such joy and thankfulness to God as is the highest perfection of a Divine and holy life. If any one would tell you the shortest, surest way to all happiness, and all perfection, he must tell you to make a rule to yourself, to thank and praise God for everything that happens to you. For it is certain that whatever apparent calamity happens to you, if you thank and praise God for it, you turn it into a blessing. Could you therefore work miracles, you could not do more for yourself than by this thankful spirit; for it heals with a word speaking, and turns all that it touches into happiness. If therefore you would be so true to your eternal interest, as to propose this thankfulness as the end of all your religion; if you would but settle it in your mind that this was the state that you were to aim at by all your devotions; you would then have something plain and visible to walk by in all your actions; you would then easily see the

effect of your virtues, and might safely judge of your improvement in piety. For so far as you renounce all selfish tempers, and motions of your own will, and seek for no other happiness but in the thankful reception of everything that happens to you, so far you may be safely reckoned to have advanced in piety. And although this be the highest temper that you can aim at, though it be the noblest sacrifice that the greatest saint can offer unto God, yet is it not tied to any time, or place, or great occasion, but is always in your power, and may be the exercise of every day. For the common events of every day are sufficient to discover and exercise this temper, and may plainly show you how far you are governed in all your actions by this thankful spirit. And for this reason I exhort you to this method in your devotion, that every day may be made a day of thanksgiving, and that the spirit of murmur and discontent may be unable to enter into the heart which is so often employed in singing the praises of God.

It may, perhaps, after all, be objected, that although the great benefit and excellent effects of this practice are very apparent, yet it seems not altogether so fit for private devotions; since it can hardly be performed without making our devotions public to other people, and seems also liable to the charge of sounding a trumpet at our prayers. It is therefore answered--first, That great numbers of people have it in their power to be as private as they please; such people therefore are excluded from this excuse, which, however it may be so to others, is none to them. Therefore let us take the benefit of this excellent devotion.

Secondly, Numbers of people are, by the necessity of their state, as servants, apprentices, prisoners, and families in small houses, forced to be continually in the presence or sight of somebody or other. Now, are such people to neglect their prayers, because they cannot pray without being seen? Are they not rather obliged to be more exact in them, that others may not be witnesses of their neglect, and so corrupted by their example? Now what is here said of devotion, may surely be said of this chanting a psalm, which is only a part of devotion. The rule is this; do not pray that you may be seen of men; but if your confinement obliges you to be always in the sight of others, be more afraid of being seen to neglect, than of being seen to have recourse to prayer.

Thirdly, The short of the matter is this; either people can use such privacy in this practice as to have no hearers, or they cannot. If they can, then this objection vanishes as to them--and if they cannot, they should consider their confinement, and the necessities of their state, as the confinement of a prison; and then they have an excellent pattern to follow; they may imitate Paul and Silas, who sang praises to God in prison, though we are expressly told, that the prisoners heard them. They therefore did not refrain from this kind of devotion for fear of being heard by others. If therefore any one is in the same necessity, either in prison, or out of prison, what can he do better than follow this example?

I cannot pass by this place of Scripture, without desiring the pious reader to observe how strongly we are here called upon to this use of psalms, and what a mighty recommendation of it the practice of these two great saints is. In this their great distress, in prison, in chains, under the soreness of stripes, in the horror of night, the Divinest, holiest thing they could do, was to sing praises unto God. And shall we, after this, need any exhortation to this holy practice? Shall we let the day pass without such thanksgiving as they would not neglect in the night? Shall a prison, chains, and darkness furnish them with songs of praise, and shall we have no singings in our

closets?

Farther, let it also be observed, that while these two holy men were thus employed in the most exalted part of devotion, doing that on earth, which Angels do in Heaven, the foundations of the prison were shaken, all the doors were opened, and every one's chains were loosed. And shall we now ask for motives to this Divine exercise, when, instead of arguments, we have here such miracles to convince us of its mighty power with God? Could God by a voice from Heaven more expressly call us to these songs of praise, than by thus showing us how He hears, delivers, and rewards, those that use them? But this a digression.

I now return to the objection in hand; and answer fourthly, That the privacy of our prayers is not destroyed by our having, but by our seeking, witnesses of them. If therefore nobody hears you but those you cannot separate yourself from, you are as much in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will as truly reward your secrecy, as if you were seen by Him only.

Fifthly, Private prayer, as it is opposed to prayer in public, does not suppose that no one is to have any witness of it. For husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children, masters and servants, tutors and pupils, are to be witnesses to one another of such devotion, as may truly and properly be called private. It is far from being a duty to conceal such devotion from such near relations. In all these cases, therefore, where such relations sometimes pray together in private, and sometimes apart by themselves, the chanting of a psalm can have nothing objected against it. Our blessed Lord commands us, when we fast, to anoint our heads, and wash our faces, that we appear not unto men to fast, but unto our Father which is in secret. But this only means, that we must not make public ostentation to the world of our fasting. For if no one was to fast in private, or could be said to fast in private, but he that had no witnesses of it, no one could keep a private fast, but he that lived by himself — for every family must know those in it, who fast. Therefore the privacy of fasting does not suppose such a privacy as excludes everybody from knowing it, but such a privacy as does not seek to be known abroad.

Cornelius, the devout Centurion, of whom the Scripture says that he gave much, and prayed to God always, says unto Peter, "Four days ago I was fasting until this hour." Now that this fasting was sufficiently private and acceptable to God, appears from the vision of an Angel, with which the holy man was blessed at that time. But that it was not so private as to be entirely unknown to others, appears, as from the relation of it here, so from what is said in another place, that he "called two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of those who waited upon him continually." So that Cornelius' fasting was so far from being unknown to his family, that the soldiers and they of his household were made devout themselves, by continually waiting upon him, that is, by seeing and partaking of his good works. The whole of the matter is this--a great part of the world can be as private as they please, therefore, let them use this excellent devotion between God and themselves. As therefore the privacy or excellency of fasting is not destroyed by being known to some particular people, neither would the privacy or excellency of your devotions be hurt, though by chanting a psalm you should be heard by some of your family. Another great part of the world must and ought to have witnesses of several of their devotions--let them therefore not neglect the use of a psalm at such times, as it ought to be known to those with whom they live that they do not neglect their prayers. For surely there can be no harm in being known to be singing a psalm at such times as it ought to be known that you are at your prayers. And if, at other

times, you desire to be in such secrecy at your devotions, as to have nobody suspect it, and for that reason forbear your psalm; I have nothing to object against it; provided that at the known hours of prayer, you never omit this practice. For who would not be often doing that in the day, which Paul and Silas would not neglect in the middle of the night? And if, when you are thus singing, it should come into your head, how the prison shook, and the doors opened, when Paul sang, it would do your devotion no harm.

Lastly, seeing our imaginations have great power over our hearts, and can mightily affect us with their representations, it would be of great use to you, if, at the beginning of your devotions, you were to imagine to yourself some such representations as might heat and warm your heart into a temper suitable to those prayers that you are then about to offer unto God. As thus; before you begin your psalm of praise and rejoicing in God, make this use of your imagination. Be still, and imagine to yourself that you saw the heavens open, and the glorious choirs of cherubim and seraphim about the throne of God. Imagine that you hear the music of those angelic voices, that cease not day and night to sing the glories of Him that is, and was, and is to come. Help your imagination with such passages of Scripture as these- "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a mighty shout, "Salvation comes from our God on the throne and from the Lamb!" And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living beings. And they fell face down before the throne and worshiped God. They said, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and strength belong to our God forever and forever. Amen!" Revelation 7:9-12

Think upon this until your imagination has carried you above the clouds; until it has placed you among those heavenly beings, and made you long to bear a part in their eternal music. If you will but accustom yourself to this method, and let your imagination dwell upon such representations as these, you will soon find it to be an excellent means of raising the spirit of devotion within you. Always therefore begin your psalm, or song of praise, with these imaginations; and at every verse of it imagine yourself among those heavenly companions, that your voice is added to theirs, and that angels join with you, and you with them; and that you with a poor and lowly voice are singing that on earth which they are singing in Heaven.

Again; sometimes imagine that you had been one of those that joined with our blessed Savior when He sang a hymn. Strive to imagine to yourself, with what majesty He looked; fancy that you had stood close by Him surrounded with His glory. Think how your heart would have been inflamed, what ecstasies of joy you would have then felt, when singing with the Son of God. Think again and again, with what joy and devotion you would then have sung, had this been really your happy state, and what a punishment you would have thought it, to have been then silent; and let this teach you how to be affected with psalms and hymns of thanksgiving.

Again; sometimes imagine to yourself that you saw holy David with his hands upon his harp, and his eyes fixed upon heaven, calling in transport upon all the creation, sun and moon, light and darkness, day and night, men and angels, to join with his rapturous soul in praising the Lord of Heaven. Dwell upon this imagination until you do you think are singing with this Divine musician; and let such a companion teach you to exalt your heart unto God in the following psalm; which you

may use constantly, first in the morning- Psalms 145:1-21 "I will magnify You, O God my King--and I will praise Your Name forever and ever," etc. These following psalms, as the 34th, 96th, 103rd, 111th, 146th, 147th, are such as wonderfully set forth the glory of God; and therefore you may keep to any one of them, at any particular hour, as you like--or you may take the finest parts of any psalms, and so adding them together, may make them fitter for your own devotion.

02.16. Chapter 16

Recommending devotions at nine o'clock in the morning, called in Scripture the third hour of the day. The subject of these prayers is HUMILITY.

I am now come to another hour of prayer, which in Scripture is called the third hour of the day; but, according to our way of numbering the hours, it is called the ninth hour of the morning. The devout Christian must at this time look upon himself as called upon by God to renew his acts of prayer, and address himself again to the throne of grace. There is indeed no express command in Scripture to repeat our devotions at this hour. But then it is to be considered also, that neither is there any express command to begin and end the day with prayer. So that if that be looked upon as a reason for neglecting devotion at this hour, it may as well be urged as a reason for neglecting devotion both at the beginning and end of the day. But if the practice of the saints in all ages of the world, if the customs of the pious Jews and primitive Christians, be of any force with us, we have authority enough to persuade us to make this hour a constant season of devotion. The Scriptures show us how this hour was consecrated to devotion both by Jews and Christians--so that if we desire to number ourselves among those whose hearts were devoted unto God, we must not let this hour pass, without presenting us to Him in some solemnities of devotion. And besides this authority for this practice, the reasonableness of it is sufficient to invite us to the observance of it. For if you were up at a good time in the morning, your first devotions will have been at a proper distance from this hour; you will have been long enough at other business, to make it proper for you to return to this greatest of all business — the raising your soul and affections unto God. But if you have risen so late, as to be hardly able to begin your first devotions at this hour, which is proper for your second, you may thence learn that the indulging yourself in the morning sleep is no small matter; since it sets you so far back in your devotions, and robs you of those graces and blessings which are obtained by frequent prayers. For if prayer has power with God, if it looses the bands of sin, if it purifies the soul, reforms our hearts, and draws down the aids of Divine grace; how can that be reckoned a small matter, which robs us of an hour of prayer?

Imagine yourself somewhere placed in the air, as a spectator of all that passes in the world, and that you saw, in one view, the devotions which all Christian people offer unto God every day--imagine that you saw some piously dividing the day and night, as the primitive Christians did, and constant at all hours of devotion, singing psalms, and calling upon God, at all those times that saints and martyrs received their gifts and graces from God--imagine that you saw others living without any rules, as to times and frequency of prayer, and only at their devotions sooner or later, as sleep and laziness happen to permit them. Now if you were to see this, as God sees it, how do you suppose you would be affected with this sight? What judgment do you imagine you should pass upon these different sorts of people? Could you think that those who were thus exact in their rules of devotion, got nothing by their exactness? Could you think that their prayers were received just in the same manner, and procured them no more blessings, than theirs do, who prefer laziness and indulgence to times and rules of devotion? Could you take the one to be as true servants of God as the other? Could you imagine that those who were thus different in their lives,

would find no difference in their states, after death? Could you think it a matter of indifference to which of these people you were most like?

If not, let it be now your care to join yourself to that number of devout people, to that society of saints, among whom you desire to be found when you leave the world. And although the bare number and repetition of our prayers is of little value, yet since prayer, rightly and attentively performed, is the most natural means of amending and purifying our hearts; since importunity and frequency in prayer is as much pressed upon us by Scripture, as prayer itself--we may be sure, that when we are frequent and importunate in our prayers, we are taking the best means of obtaining the highest benefits of a devout life. We are taking the best means of obtaining the highest benefits of a devout life.

And, on the other hand, they who through negligence, laziness, or any other indulgence, render themselves either unable, or uninclined, to observe rules and hours of devotion, we may be sure that they deprive themselves of those graces and blessings, which an exact and fervent devotion procures from God. Now as this frequency of prayer is founded on the doctrines of Scripture, and recommended to us by the practice of the true worshipers of God; so we ought not to think ourselves excused from it, but where we can show that we are spending our time in such business, as is more acceptable to God than these returns of prayer. Least of all must we imagine that dullness, negligence, indulgence, or diversions, can be any pardonable excuses for our not observing an exact and frequent method of devotion. If you are of a devout spirit, you will rejoice at these returns of prayer which keep your soul in a holy enjoyment of God; which change your passions into Divine love, and fill your heart with stronger joys and consolations than you can possibly meet with in anything else. And if you are not of a devout spirit, then you are moreover obliged to this frequency of prayer, to train and exercise your heart into a true sense and feeling of devotion.

Now seeing the Holy Spirit of the Christian religion, and the example of the saints of all ages, call upon you thus to divide the day into hours of prayer; so it will be highly beneficial to you to make a right choice of those matters which are to be the subject of your prayers, and to keep every hour of prayer appropriated to some particular subject, which you may alter or enlarge, according as the state you are in requires. By this means you will have an opportunity of being large and particular in all the parts of any virtue or grace, which you then make the subject of your prayers. And by asking for it in all its parts, and making it the substance of a whole prayer once every day, you will soon find a mighty change in your heart; and that you cannot thus constantly pray for all the parts of any virtue every day of your life, and yet live the rest of the day contrary to it.

If a worldly-minded man was to pray every day against all the instances of a worldly temper; if he should make a large description of the temptations of covetousness, and desire God to assist him to reject them all, and to disappoint him in all his covetous designs; he would find his conscience so much awakened, that he would be forced either to forsake such prayers, or to forsake a worldly life. The same will hold true in any other instance. And if we ask, and have not, it is because we ask amiss. Because we ask in cold and general forms, such as only name the virtues, without describing their particular parts, such as are not enough particular to our condition, and therefore make no change in our hearts.

Whereas, when a man enumerates all the parts of any virtue in his prayers, his conscience is thereby awakened, and he is frighted at seeing how far short he is of it. And this stirs him up to an ardor in devotion, when he sees how much he lacks of that virtue which he is praying for. I have, in the last chapter, laid before you the excellency of praise and thanksgiving, and recommended that as the subject of your first devotions in the morning. And because a humble state of soul is the very heart of religion, because HUMILITY is the life and soul of piety, the foundation and support of every virtue and good work, the best guard and security of all holy affections; I shall recommend humility to you, as highly proper to be made the constant subject of your devotions, at this third hour of the day; earnestly desiring you to think no day safe, or likely to end well, in which you have not thus early put yourself in this posture of humility, and called upon God to carry you through the day, in the exercise of a meek and lowly spirit. This virtue is so essential to the right state of our souls, that there is no pretending to a reasonable or pious life without it. We may as well think to see without eyes, or live without breath, as to live in the spirit of religion without the spirit of humility. And although it is thus the soul and essence of all religious duties, yet is it, generally speaking, the least understood, the least regarded, the least intended, the least desired and sought after, of all other virtues, among all sorts of Christians. No people have more occasion to be afraid of the approaches of pride, than those, who have made some advances in a pious life--for pride can grow as well upon our virtues as our vices, and steals upon us on all occasions. Every good thought that we have, every good action that we do, lays us open to pride, and exposes us to the assaults of vanity and self-satisfaction. It is not only the beauty of our persons, the gifts of fortune, our natural talents, and the distinctions of life; but even our devotions and alms, our fastings and humiliations, expose us to fresh and strong temptations of this evil spirit. And it is for this reason that I so earnestly advise every devout person to begin every day in this exercise of humility, that he may go on in safety under the protection of this good guide, and not fall a sacrifice to his own progress in those virtues which are to save mankind from destruction.

Humility does not consist in having a worse opinion of ourselves than we deserve, or in abasing ourselves lower than we really are; but as all virtue is founded in truth, so humility is founded in a true and just sense of our weakness, misery, and sin. He that rightly feels and lives in this sense of his condition, lives in humility. The WEAKNESS of our state appears from our inability to do anything as of ourselves. In our natural state we are entirely without any power; we are indeed active beings, but can only act by a power that is every moment lent us from God. We have no more power of our own to move a hand, or stir a foot, than to move the sun, or stop the clouds. When we speak a word, we feel no more power in ourselves to do it, than we feel ourselves able to raise the dead. For we act no more within our own power, or by our own strength, when we speak a word, or make a sound, than the Apostles acted within their own power, or by their own strength, when a word from their mouth cast out devils, and cured diseases. As it was solely the power of God that enabled them to speak to such purposes, so it is solely the power of God that enables us to speak at all.

We indeed find that we can speak, as we find that we are alive; but the actual exercise of speaking is no more in our own power, than the actual enjoyment of life. This is the dependent, helpless poverty of our state; which is a great reason for humility. For, since we neither are, nor can do anything of ourselves, to be proud of anything that we are, or of anything that we can do, and to ascribe glory to ourselves for these things, as our own ornaments, has the guilt both of stealing

and lying. It has the guilt of stealing, as it gives to ourselves those things which only belong to God; it has the guilt of lying, as it is the denying the truth of our state, and pretending to be something that we are not.

Secondly, Another argument for humility is founded in the MISERY of our condition. Now the misery of our condition appears in this, that we use these borrowed powers of our nature to the torment and vexation of ourselves, and our fellow creatures. God Almighty has entrusted us with the use of reason, and we use it to the disorder and corruption of our nature. We reason ourselves into all kinds of folly and misery, and make our lives the sport of foolish and extravagant passions; seeking after imaginary happiness in all kinds of shapes, creating to ourselves a thousand needs, amusing our hearts with false hopes and fears, using the world worse than irrational animals, envying, vexing, and tormenting one another with restless passions, and unreasonable contentions.

Let any man but look back upon his own life, and see what use he has made of his reason, how little he has consulted it, and how less he has followed it. What foolish passions, what vain thoughts, what needless labors, what extravagant projects, have taken up the greatest part of his life! How foolish he has been in his words and conversation; how seldom he has done well with judgment, and how often he has been kept from doing ill by accident; how seldom he has been able to please himself, and how often he has displeased others; how often he has changed his counsels, hated what he loved, and loved what he hated; how often he has been enraged and elated at trifles, pleased and displeased with the very same things, and constantly changing from one vanity to another! Let a man but take this view of his own life, and he will see reason enough to confess, that pride was not made for man.

Let him but consider, that if the world knew all that of him, which he knows of himself; if they saw what vanity and passions govern his inside, and what secret tempers sully and corrupt his best actions; he would have no more pretense to be honored and admired for his goodness and wisdom, than a rotten and distempered body to be loved and admired for its beauty and loveliness. This is so true, and so known to the hearts of almost all people, that nothing would appear more dreadful to them, than to have their hearts thus fully discovered to the eyes of all beholders. And perhaps there are very few people in the world who would not rather choose to die, than to have all their secret follies, the errors of their judgments, the vanity of their minds, the falseness of their pretenses, the frequency of their vain and disorderly passions, their uneasiness, hatred, envies, and vexations, made known unto the world. And shall pride be entertained in a heart thus conscious of its own miserable behavior? Shall a creature in such a condition, that he could not support himself under the shame of being known to the world in his real state; shall such a creature, because his shame is only known to God, to holy angels, and his own conscience; shall he, in the sight of God and holy angels, dare to be vain and proud of himself?

Thirdly, If to this we add the SHAME AND GUILT OF SIN, we shall find a still greater reason for humility. No creature that had lived in innocence, would have thereby got any pretense for self-honor and esteem; because, as a creature, all that it is, or has, or does, is from God, and therefore the honor of all that belongs to it is only due to God. But if a creature that is a sinner, and under the displeasure of the great Governor of all the world, and deserving nothing from Him but pains and punishments for the shameful abuse of his powers; if such a creature pretends to

self-glory for anything that he is or does, he can only be said to glory in his shame.

Now how monstrous and shameful the nature of sin is, is sufficiently apparent from that great Atonement, that is necessary to cleanse us from the guilt of it. Nothing less has been required to take away the guilt of our sins, than the sufferings and death of the Son of God. Had He not taken our nature upon Him, our nature had been forever separated from God, and incapable of ever appearing before Him. And is there any room for pride, or self-glory, while we are partakers of such a nature as this? Have our sins rendered us so abominable and odious to Him that made us, that He could not so much as receive our prayers, or admit our repentance, until the Son of God made Himself man, and became a suffering Advocate for our whole race; and can we, in this state, pretend to high thoughts of ourselves? Shall we presume to take delight in our own worth, who are not worthy so much as to ask pardon for our sins, without the mediation and intercession of the Son of God?

Thus deep is the foundation of humility laid in these deplorable circumstances of our condition; which show that it is as great an offense against truth, and the reason of things, for a man, in this state of things, to lay claim to any degrees of glory, as to pretend to the honor of creating himself. If man will boast of anything as his own, he must boast of his misery and sin; for there is nothing else but this that is his own property.

Turn your eyes towards Heaven, and imagine that you saw what is going on there; that you saw cherubim and seraphim, and all the glorious inhabitants of that place, all united in one work; not seeking glory from one another, not laboring for their own advancement, not contemplating their own perfections, not singing their own praises, not valuing themselves, and despising others, but all employed in one and the same work, all happy in one and the same joy; "casting down their crowns before the throne of God"; giving glory, and honor, and power to Him alone. Then turn your eyes to the fallen world, and consider how unreasonable and odious it must be, for such poor worms, such miserable sinners, to take delight in their own fancied glories, while the highest and most glorious sons of Heaven seek for no other greatness and honor, but that of ascribing all honor, and greatness, and glory, to God alone?

Pride is only the disorder of the fallen world, it has no place among other beings; it can only subsist where ignorance and sensuality, lies and falsehood, lusts and impurity reign. Let a man, when he is most delighted with his own figure, look upon a crucifix, and contemplate our Blessed Lord stretched out, and nailed upon a Cross; and then let him consider how absurd it must be, for a heart full of pride and vanity to pray to God, through the sufferings of such a meek and crucified Savior! These are the reflections that you are often to meditate upon, that you may thereby be disposed to walk before God and man, in such a spirit of humility as becomes the weak, miserable, sinful state of all that are descended from fallen Adam. When you have by such general reflections as these convinced your mind of the reasonableness of humility, you must not content yourself with this, as if you were therefore humble, because your mind acknowledges the reasonableness of humility, and declares against pride. But you must immediately enter yourself into the practice of this virtue, like a young beginner, that has all of it to learn, that can learn but little at a time, and with great difficulty. You must consider that you have not only this virtue to learn, but that you must be content to proceed as a learner in it all your time, endeavoring after greater degrees of it, and practicing every day acts of humility, as you every day practice acts of

devotion.

You would not imagine yourself to be devout, because in your judgment you approved of prayers, and often declared your mind in favor of devotion. Yet how many people imagine themselves humble enough for no other reason, but because they often commend humility, and make vehement declarations against pride!

COECUS is a rich man, of good breeding, and very fine parts. He is fond of dress, curious in the smallest matters that can add any ornament to his person. He is haughty and imperious to all his inferiors, is very full of everything that he says, or does, and never imagines it possible for such a judgment as his to be mistaken. He can bear no contradiction, and discovers the weakness of your reasoning as soon as ever you oppose him. He changes everything in his house, his habit, and his equipage, as often as anything more elegant comes in his way. Coecus would have been very religious, but that he always thought he was so. There is nothing so odious to Coecus as a proud man; and the misfortune is, that in this he is so very quick-sighted, that he discovers in almost everybody some strokes of vanity. On the other hand, he is exceeding fond of humble and modest people. Humility, says he, is so amiable a quality, that it forces our esteem wherever we meet with it. There is no possibility of despising the lowest person that has it, or of esteeming the greatest man that lacks it.

Coecus no more suspects himself to be proud, than he suspects his lack of sense. And the reason of it is, because he always finds himself so in love with humility, and so enraged at pride. It is very true, Coecus, you speak sincerely, when you say you love humility, and abhor pride. You are no hypocrite, you speak the true sentiments of your mind--but then take this along with you, Coecus, that you only love humility, and hate pride, in other people. You never once in your life thought of any other humility, or of any other pride, than that which you have seen in other people. The case of Coecus is a common case; many people live in all the instances of pride, and indulge every vanity that can enter into their minds, and yet never suspect themselves to be governed by pride and vanity, because they know how much they dislike proud people, and how mightily they are pleased with humility and modesty, wherever they find them. All their speeches in favor of humility, and all their railings against pride, are looked upon as so many true exercises and effects of their own humble spirit. Whereas, in truth, these are so far from being proper acts or proofs of humility, that they are great arguments of the lack of it. For the fuller of pride anyone is himself, the more impatient will he be at the smallest instances of it in other people. And the less humility any one has in his own mind, the more will he demand and be delighted with it in other people. You must therefore act by a quite contrary measure, and reckon yourself only so far humble, as you impose every instance of humility upon yourself, and never call for it in other people, so far an enemy to pride, as you never spare it in yourself, nor ever censure it in other people.

Now, in order to do this, you need only consider that pride and humility signify nothing to you, but so far as they are your own; that they do you neither good nor harm, but as they are the tempers of your own heart. The loving, therefore, of humility, is of no benefit or advantage to you, but so far as you love to see all your own thoughts, words, and actions, governed by it. And the hating of pride does you no good, is no perfection in you, but so far as you hate to harbor any degree of it in your own heart.

Now in order to begin, and set out well, in the practice of humility, you must take it for granted that you are proud, that you have all your life been more or less infected with this unreasonable temper. You should believe also, that it is your greatest weakness, that your heart is most subject to it, that it is so constantly stealing upon you, that you have reason to watch and suspect its approaches in all your actions. For this is what most people, especially new beginners in a pious life, may with great truth think of themselves. For there is no one vice that is more deeply rooted in our nature, or that receives such constant nourishment from almost everything that we think or do--there being hardly anything in the world that we want or use, or any action or duty of life, but pride finds some means or other to take hold of it. So that at what time soever we begin to offer ourselves to God, we can hardly be surer of anything, than that we have a great deal of pride to repent of.

If, therefore, you find it disagreeable to your mind to entertain this opinion of yourself, and that you cannot put yourself among those that need to be cured of pride, you may be as sure as if an angel from heaven had told you, that you have not only much, but all your humility to seek. For you can have no greater sign of a more confirmed pride, than when you think that you are humble enough. He that thinks he loves God enough, shows himself to be an entire stranger to that holy passion; so he that thinks he has humility enough, shows that he is not so much as a beginner in the practice of true humility.

02.17. Chapter 17

SHOWING HOW DIFFICULT THE PRACTICE OF HUMILITY IS MADE, BY THE GENERAL SPIRIT AND TEMPER OF THE WORLD. HOW CHRISTIANITY REQUIRES US TO LIVE CONTRARY TO THE WORLD.

Every person, when he first applies himself to the exercise of this virtue of humility, must, as I said before, consider himself as a learner, that is to learn something that is contrary to former tempers and habits of mind, and which can only be gotten by daily and constant practice. He has not only as much to do as he that has some new art or science to learn, but he has also a great deal to unlearn--he is to forget and lay aside his own spirit, which has been a long while fixing and forming itself; he must forget and depart from abundance of passions and opinions, which the fashion, and vogue, and spirit of the world, has made natural to him. He must lay aside his own spirit; because as we are born in sin, so in pride, which is as natural to us as self-love, and continually springs from it. And this is one reason why Christianity is so often represented as a new birth, and a new spirit. He must lay aside the opinions and passions which he has received from the world; because the vogue and fashion of the world, by which we have been carried away as in a torrent, before we could pass right judgments of the value of things, is, in many respects, contrary to humility; so that we must unlearn what the spirit of the world has taught us, before we can be governed by the spirit of humility. The devil is called in Scripture the prince of this world, because he has great power in it, because many of its rules and principles are invented by this evil spirit, the father of all lies and falsehoods, to separate us from God, and prevent our return to happiness. Now, according to the spirit and vogue of this world, whose corrupt air we have all breathed, there are many things that pass for great and honorable, and most desirable, which yet are so far from being so, that the true greatness and honor of our nature consists in the not desiring them. To abound in wealth, to have fine houses, and rich clothes, to be attended with splendor and equipage, to be beautiful in our persons, to have titles of dignity, to be above our fellow-creatures, to command the bows and obeisance of other people, to be looked on with admiration, to overcome our enemies with power, to subdue all that oppose us, to set out ourselves in as much splendor as we can, to live highly and magnificently, to eat, and drink, and delight ourselves in the most costly manner, these are the great, the honorable, the desirable things, to which the spirit of the world turns the eyes of all people. And many a Christian is afraid of standing still, and not engaging in the pursuit of these things, lest the same world should take him for a fool. The history of the Gospel is chiefly the history of Christ's conquest over the spirit of the world. And the number of true Christians is only the number of those who, following the Spirit of Christ, have lived contrary to this spirit of the world. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." Again, "Whatever is born of God, overcomes the world." "Set your affection on things above, and not on things on the earth; for you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." This is the language of the whole New Testament--this is the mark of Christianity--you are to be dead, that is, dead to the spirit and temper of the world, and live a new life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. But notwithstanding the clearness and plainness of these Scriptures which thus renounce the world, yet a great part of

professing Christians live and die slaves to the customs and temper of the world. How many people swell with pride and vanity, for such things as they would not know how to value at all, but that they are admired in the world! Would a man take ten years more drudgery in business to add two horses more to his coach, but that he knows that the world most of all admires a coach and six? How fearful are many people of having their houses poorly furnished, or themselves poorly clothed, for this only reason, lest the world should make no account of them, and place them among low and poor people!

How often would a man have yielded to the haughtiness and ill-nature of others, and shown a submissive temper, but that he dares not pass for such a poor-spirited man in the opinion of the world! Many a man would often drop a resentment, and forgive an affront, but that he is afraid if he would, the world would not forgive him. How many would practice Christian temperance and sobriety, in its utmost perfection, were it not for the censure which the world passes upon such a life! Others have frequent intentions of living up to the rules of Christian perfection, which they are frightened from by considering what the world would say of them.

Thus do the impressions which we have received from living in the world enslave our minds, that we dare not attempt to be eminent in the sight of God and holy angels, for fear of being little in the eyes of the world. From this quarter arises the greatest difficulty of humility, because it cannot subsist in any mind, but so far as it is dead to the world, and has parted with all desires of enjoying its greatness and honors. So that in order to be truly humble, you must unlearn all those notions which you have been all your life learning from this corrupt spirit of the world. You can make no stand against the assaults of pride, the meek affections of humility can have no place in your soul, until you stop the power of the world over you, and resolve against a blind obedience to its laws. And when you are once advanced thus far, as to be able to stand still in the torrent of worldly fashions and opinions, and examine the worth and value of things which are most admired and valued in the world, you have gone a great way in the gaining of your freedom, and have laid a good foundation for the amendment of your heart. For as great as the power of the world is, it is all built upon a blind obedience; and we need only open our eyes to get escape of its power.

Ask whom you will, learned or unlearned, every one seems to know and confess, that the general temper and spirit of the world, is nothing else but pleasure, folly and extravagance. Who will not own, that the wisdom of philosophy, the piety of religion, was always confined to a small number? and is not this expressly owning and confessing, that the common spirit and temper of the world is neither according to the wisdom of philosophy nor the piety of religion? The world, therefore, seems enough condemned even by itself, to make it very easy for a thinking man to be of the same judgment. And, therefore, I hope you will not think it a hard saying, that in order to be humble, you must withdraw your obedience from that vulgar spirit, which gives laws to fops and triflers, and form your judgments according to the wisdom of philosophy, and the piety of religion. Who would be afraid of making such a change as this?

Again--to lessen your fear and regard to the opinion of the world, think how soon the world will disregard you, and have no more thought or concern about you, than about the poorest animal that died in a ditch. Your friends, if they can, may bury you with some distinction, and set up a monument, to let posterity see that your dust lies under such a stone; and when that is done, all is done. Your place is filled up by another, the world is just in the same state if was, you are blotted

out of its sight, and as much forgotten by the world as if you had never belonged to it. Think upon the rich, the great, and the learned people, that have made great figures, and been high in the esteem of the world; many of them died in your time, and yet they are sunk, and lost, and gone, and as much disregarded by the world, as if they had been only so many bubbles of water.

Think, again, how many poor souls see heaven lost, and lie now expecting a miserable eternity, for their service and homage to a world that thinks itself every whit as well without them, and is just as merry as it was when they were in it. Is it therefore worth your while to lose the smallest degree of virtue, for the sake of pleasing so bad a master, and so false a friend, as the world is? Is it worth your while to bow the knee to such an idol as this, that so soon will have neither eyes, nor ears, nor a heart, to regard you, instead of serving that great, and holy, and mighty God, that will make all His servants partakers of His own eternity? Will you let the fear of a false world, that has no love for you, keep you from the fear of that God, who has only created you that He may love and bless you to all eternity?

Lastly, You must consider what behavior the profession of Christianity requires of you with regard to the world. Now this is plainly delivered in these words--"Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world." Christianity therefore implies a deliverance from this world, and he that professes it, professes to live contrary to everything, and every temper, that is peculiar to this evil world. John declares this opposition to the world in this manner--"They are of the world--therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God." This is the description of the followers of Christ; and it is proof enough, that no people are to be reckoned Christians in reality, who in their hearts and tempers belong to this world. "We know," says the same Apostle, "that we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness."

Christians, therefore, can no farther know that they are of God, than so far as they know they are not of the world; that is, that they do not live according to the ways, and the spirit of the world. For all the ways, and maxims, and politics, and tempers of the world, lie in wickedness. And he is only of God, or born of God in Christ Jesus, who has overcome this world, that is, who has chosen to live by faith, and govern his actions by the principles of a wisdom revealed from God by Christ Jesus.

Paul takes it for a certainty, so well known to Christians, that they are no longer to be considered as living in this world, that he thus argues from it as from an undeniable principle, concerning the abolishing the rites of the Jewish law--"Wherefore if you have died with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are you subject to ordinances?" Here could be no argument in this but in 206 the Apostle's taking it for undeniable, that Christians knew that their profession required them to have done with all the tempers and passions of the world, to live as citizens of the new Jerusalem, and to have their conversation in Heaven. Our Blessed Lord Himself has fully determined this point in these words--"They are not of this world, as I am not of this world." (John 17:16) This is the state of Christianity with regard to this world. If you are not thus out of, and contrary to the world, you lack the distinguishing mark of Christianity; you do not belong to Christ, but by being out of the world as He was out of it.

We may deceive ourselves, if we please, with vain and softening comments upon these words; but they are, and will be, understood in their first simplicity and plainness by every one that reads them in the same spirit that our Blessed Lord spoke them. And to understand them in any lower, less

significant meaning, is to let carnal wisdom explain away that doctrine by which itself was to be destroyed. The Christian's great conquest over the world is all contained in the mystery of Christ upon the Cross. It was there, and from thence, that He taught all Christians how they were to come out of, and conquer the world, and what they were to do in order to be His disciples. And all the doctrines, Sacraments, and institutions of the Gospel are only so many explications of the meaning, and applications of the benefit, of this great mystery. And the state of Christianity implies nothing else, but an entire, absolute conformity to that spirit which Christ showed in the mysterious Sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross. Every man therefore is only so far a Christian, as he partakes of this Spirit of Christ. It was this that made Paul so passionately express himself, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ"--but why does he glory? Is it because Christ had suffered in his stead, and had excused him from suffering? No, by no means. But it was because his Christian profession had called him to the honor of suffering with Christ, and of dying to the world under reproach and contempt, as He had done upon the Cross. For he immediately adds, "by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

This, you see, was the reason of his glory in the Cross of Christ, because it had called him to a like state of death and crucifixion to the world. Thus was the Cross of Christ, in Paul's days, the glory of Christians; not as it signified their not being ashamed to own a Master that was crucified, but as it signified their glorying in a religion which was nothing else but a doctrine of the Cross, that called them to the same suffering spirit, the same sacrifice of themselves, the same renunciation of the world, the same humility and meekness, the same patient bearing of injuries, reproaches, and contempts, and the same dying to all the greatness, honors, and happiness of this world, which Christ showed upon the Cross. To have a true idea of Christianity, we must not consider our Blessed Lord as suffering in our stead, but as our Representative, acting in our name, and with such particular merit, as to make our joining with Him acceptable unto God. He suffered, and was a Sacrifice, to make our sufferings and sacrifice of ourselves fit to be received by God. And we are to suffer, to be crucified, to die, and rise with Christ; or else His Crucifixion, Death, and Resurrection, will profit us nothing. The necessity of this conformity to all that Christ did and suffered upon our account is very plain from the whole tenor of Scripture.

First, As to His sufferings--this is the only condition of our being saved by them, "if we suffer" with Him, "we shall also reign with Him."

Secondly, As to His Crucifixion; "knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him." Here you see Christ is not crucified in our stead; but unless our old man be really crucified with Him, the Cross of Christ will profit us nothing.

Thirdly, As to the death of Christ, the condition is this--"If we have died with Christ," we believe that "we shall also live with Him." If therefore Christ be dead alone, if we are not dead with Him, we are as sure, from this Scripture, that we shall not live with Him.

Lastly, as to the Resurrection of Christ, the Scripture shows us how we are to partake of the benefit of it--"If you be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God."

Thus you see how plainly the Scripture sets forth our Blessed Lord as our Representative, acting and suffering in our name, binding and obliging us to conform to all that he did and suffered for us.

It was for this reason that the Holy Jesus said of His disciples, and in them of all true believers, "They are not of this world, as I am not of this world." Because all true believers, conforming to the sufferings, Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of Christ, live no longer after the spirit and temper of this world, but their life is hidden with Christ in God. This is the state of separation from the world, to which all orders of Christians are called. They must so far renounce all worldly tempers, be so far governed by the things of another life, as to show that they are truly and really crucified, dead, and risen, with Christ. And it is as necessary for all Christians to conform to this great change of spirit, to be thus in Christ new creatures, as it was necessary that Christ should suffer, die, and rise again, for our salvation.

How high the Christian life is placed above the ways of this world, is wonderfully described by Paul, in these words--"Therefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh--yes, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature--old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." He that feels the force and spirit of these words, can hardly bear any human interpretation of them. Henceforth, says he, that is, since the Death and Resurrection of Christ, the state of Christianity has become so glorious a state, that we do not even consider Christ Himself as in the flesh upon earth, but as a God of glory in Heaven; we know and consider ourselves not as men in the flesh, but as fellow-members of a new society, that are to have all our hearts, our tempers, and conversation, in Heaven.

Thus is it that Christianity has placed us out of and above the world; and we fall from our calling, as soon as we fall into the tempers of the world. Now as it was the spirit of the world that nailed our Blessed Lord to the Cross; so every man that has the Spirit of Christ, that opposes the world as He did, will certainly be crucified by the world, some way or other. For Christianity still lives in the same world that Christ did; and these two will be utter enemies, until the kingdom of darkness is entirely at an end. Had you lived with our Savior as His true disciple, you would have then been hated as He was; and if you now live in His Spirit, the world will be the same enemy to you now, that it was to Him then. "If you were of the world," says our Blessed Lord, "the world would love its own--but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."

We are apt to lose the true meaning of these words, by considering them only as a historical description of something that was the state of our Savior and His disciples at that time. But this is reading the Scripture as a dead letter; for they as exactly describe the state of true Christians at this, and at all other times, to the end of the world. For as true Christianity is nothing else but the Spirit of Christ, so whether that Spirit appears in the person of Christ Himself, or His Apostles, or followers in any age, it is the same thing; whoever has His Spirit will be hated, despised, and condemned by the world, as He was. For the world will always love its own, and none but its own--this is as certain and unchangeable, as the contrariety between light and darkness. When the Holy Jesus says, "If the world hates you," He does not add by way of consolation, that it may some time or other cease its hatred, or that it will not always hate them; but He only gives this as a reason for their bearing it, "you know that it hated me, before it hated you"; signifying, that it was He, that is, His Spirit, that, by reason of its contrariety to the world, was then, and always would be, hated by it. You will perhaps say, that the world has now become Christian, at least that part of it where we live; and therefore the world is not now to be considered in that state of opposition to

Christianity, as when it was heathen. It is granted, the world now professes Christianity. But will any one say that this 'Christian world' is of the Spirit of Christ? Are its general tempers the tempers of Christ? Are the passions of sensuality, self-love, pride, covetousness, ambition, and vain-glory, less contrary to the spirit of the Gospel now they are among Christians, than when they were among heathens? Or will you say that the tempers and passions of the heathen world are lost and gone?

Consider, secondly, what you are to mean by the world. Now this is fully described to our hands by John. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." This is an exact and full description of the world. Now will you say that this world is become Christian? But if all this still exists, then the same world is now in being, and the same enemy to Christianity, that it was in John's days. It was this world that John condemned, as being not of the Father--whether therefore it outwardly professes, or openly persecutes Christianity, it is still in the same state of contrariety to the true spirit and holiness of the Gospel. And indeed the world, by professing Christianity, is so far from being a less dangerous enemy than it was before, that it has by its FAVORS destroyed more Christians than ever it did by the most violent PERSECUTION.

We must, therefore, be so far from considering the world as in a state of less enmity and opposition to Christianity than it was in the first times of the Gospel, that we must guard against it as a greater and more dangerous enemy now, than it was in those times. It is a greater enemy, because it has greater power over Christians by its favors, riches, honors, rewards, and protection, than it had by the fire and fury of its persecutions. It is a more dangerous enemy, by having lost its appearance of enmity. Its outward profession of Christianity makes it no longer considered as an enemy, and therefore the generality of people are easily persuaded to resign themselves up to be governed and directed by it. How many consciences are kept at quiet, upon no other foundation, but because they sin under the authority of the Christian world! How many directions of the Gospel lie by unregarded, and how unconcernedly do particular people read them, for no other reason but because they seem unregarded by the Christian world! How many compliances do people make to the Christian world, without any hesitation or remorse; which, if they had been required of them only by heathens, would have been refused, as contrary to the holiness of Christianity! Who could be content with seeing how contrary his life is to the Gospel, but because he sees that he lives as the 'Christian world' does? Who, that reads the Gospel, would need to be persuaded of the necessity of great self-denial, humility, and poverty of spirit, but that the authority of the world has banished this doctrine of the Cross? There is nothing, therefore, that a good Christian ought to be more suspicious of, or more constantly guard against, than the authority of the 'Christian world'. And all the passages of Scripture which represent the world as contrary to Christianity, which require our separation from it, as from a Mammon of unrighteousness, a monster of iniquity, are all to be taken in the same strict sense, in relation to the present world. For the change that the world has undergone has only altered its methods, but not lessened its power, of destroying religion. Christians had nothing to fear from the heathen world but the loss of their lives; but the world become a friend, makes it difficult for them to save their religion. While pride, sensuality, covetousness, and ambition, had only the authority of the heathen world, Christians were thereby made more intent upon the contrary virtues. But when pride, sensuality, covetousness, and ambition, have the authority of the 'Christian world', then private Christians are in the utmost danger, not only of being ashamed out of the practice, but of losing the very notion, of the piety of

the Gospel.

There is, therefore, hardly any possibility of saving yourself from the present world, but by considering it as the same wicked enemy to all true holiness, as it is represented in the Scriptures; and by assuring yourself, that it is as dangerous to conform to its tempers and passions now it is Christian, as when it was heathen. For only ask yourself--Is the piety, the humility, the sobriety of the Christian world; the piety, the humility, and sobriety of the Christian spirit? If not, how can you be more undone by any world, than by conforming to that which is Christian? Need a man do more to make his soul unfit for the mercy of God, than by being greedy and ambitious of honor? Yet how can a man renounce this temper, without renouncing the spirit and temper of the world, in which you now live? How can a man be made more incapable of the Spirit of Christ, than by a wrong value for money? and yet, how can he be more wrong in his value of it, than by following the authority of the Christian world?

No, in every order and station of life, whether of learning or business, either in Church or State, you cannot act up to the spirit of religion, without renouncing the most general temper and behavior of those who are of the same order and business as yourself. And though human prudence seems to talk mighty wisely about the necessity of avoiding particularities, yet he that dares not be so weak as to be particular, will be often obliged to avoid the most substantial duties of Christian piety. These reflections will, I hope, help you to break through those difficulties, and resist those temptations, which the authority and fashion of the world has raised against the practice of Christian humility.

02.18. Chapter 18

Showing how the education which men generally receive in their youth makes the doctrines of humility difficult to be practiced. The spirit of a better education represented in the character of Paternus.

Another difficulty in the practice of humility arises from our EDUCATION. We are all of us, for the most part, corruptly educated, and then committed to take our course in a corrupt world; so that it is no wonder if examples of great piety are so seldom seen. Great parts of the world are undone by being born and bred in families that have no religion--where they are made vicious and irregular, by being like those with whom they first lived. But this is not the thing I now mean; the education that I here intend, is such as children generally receive from virtuous and sober parents, and learned tutors and governors. Had we continued perfect, as God created the first man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a sufficient self-instruction for every one. But as sickness and diseases have created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the change and disorder of our rational nature have introduced the necessity of education and tutors. And as the only end of the physician is to restore nature to its own state, so the only end of education is to restore our rational nature to its proper state. Education, therefore, is to be considered as a reason borrowed at second-hand, which is, as far as it can, to supply the loss of original perfection. And as physic may justly be called the art of restoring health, so education should be considered in no other light, than as the art of recovering to man the use of his reason.

Now as the instruction of every art or science is founded upon the discoveries, the wisdom, experience, and maxims, of the several great men that have labored in it; so human wisdom, or right use of our reason, which young people should be called to by their education, is nothing else but the best experience, and finest reasonings, of men that have devoted themselves to the study of wisdom, and the improvement of human nature. All, therefore, that great saints, and dying men, when the fullest of light and conviction, and after the highest improvement of their reason, all that they have said of the necessity of piety, of the excellency of virtue, of their duty to God, of the emptiness of riches, of the vanity of the world; all the sentences, judgments, reasonings, and maxims, of the wisest of philosophers, when in their highest state of wisdom, should constitute the common lessons of instruction for youthful minds. This is the only way to make the young and ignorant part of the world the better for the wisdom and knowledge of the wise and ancient. An education which is not wholly intent upon this, is as much beside the point, as an art of physic that had little or no regard to the restoration of health. The youths that attended upon Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, and Epictetus, were thus educated. Their everyday lessons and instructions were so many lectures upon the nature of man, his true end and the right use of his faculties; upon the immortality of the soul, its relation to God, the beauty of virtue, and its agreeableness to the Divine Nature; upon the dignity of reason, the necessity of temperance, fortitude, and generosity, and the shame and folly of indulging our passions.

Now as Christianity has, as it were, new created the moral and religious world, and set everything that is reasonable, wise, holy, and desirable, in its true point of light; so one would expect, that the education of youth should be as much bettered and amended by Christianity, as the faith and doctrines of religion are amended by it. As it has introduced such a new state of things, and so fully informed us of the nature of man, the ends of his creation, the state of his condition; as it has fixed all our goods and evils, taught us the means of purifying our souls, pleasing God, and becoming eternally happy; one might naturally suppose, that every Christian country abounded with schools for the teaching, not only a few questions and answers of a Catechism, but for the forming, training, and educating youth in such an outward course of life, as the highest precepts, the strictest rules, and the most sublime doctrines of Christianity require. An education under Pythagoras, or Socrates, had no other end, but to teach you to think, judge, act, and follow such rules of life as Pythagoras and Socrates used. And is it not as reasonable to suppose, that a Christian education should have no other end, but to teach youth how to think, and judge, and act, and live, according to the strictest laws of Christianity? At least, one would suppose, that, in all Christian schools, the teaching youth to begin their lives in the spirit of Christianity, in such strictness of behavior, such abstinence, sobriety, humility, and devotion, as Christianity requires, should not only be more, but a hundred times more regarded, than any, or all things else. For our education should imitate our guardian Angels; suggest nothing to our minds but what is wise and holy; help us to discover and subdue every vain passion of our hearts, and every false judgment of our minds. And it is as sober and as reasonable to expect and require all this benefit of a Christian education, as to require that physic should strengthen all that is right in our nature, and remove that which is sickly and diseased.

But, alas, our modern education is not of this kind. The first temper that we try to awaken in children is pride; as dangerous a passion as that of lust. We stir them up to vain thoughts of themselves, and do everything we can to puff up their minds with a sense of their own abilities. Whatever way of life we intend them for, we apply to the vanity of their minds, and exhort them to everything, from corrupt motives. We stir them up to action from principles of strife and ambition, from glory, envy, and a desire of distinction, that they may excel others, and shine in the eyes of the world. We repeat and inculcate these motives upon them, until they think it a part of their duty to be proud, envious, and vain-glorious of their own accomplishments. And when we have taught them to scorn to be outdone by any, to bear no rival, to thirst after every instance of applause, to be content with nothing but the highest distinctions, then we begin to take comfort in them, and promise the world some mighty things from youths of such a glorious spirit. If children are intended for holy orders, we set before them some eminent orator, whose fine preaching has made him the admiration of the age, and carried him through all the dignities and preferments of the Church. We encourage them to have these honors in their eye, and to expect the reward of their studies from them. If the youth is intended for a trade, we bid him look at all the rich men of the same trade, and consider how many now are carried about in their stately coaches, who began in the same low degree as he now does. We awaken his ambition, and endeavor to give his mind a right turn, by often telling him how very rich such and such a tradesman died. If he is to be a lawyer, then we set great counselors, lords, judges, and chancellors, before his eyes. We tell him what great fees, and great applause, attend fine pleading. We exhort him to have enthusiasm at these things, to raise a spirit of emulation in himself, and to be content with nothing less than the highest honors of the long robe. That this is the nature of our best education, is too plain to need any proof; and I believe

there are few parents, but would be glad to see these instructions daily given to their children. And after all this, we complain of the effects of pride; we wonder to see grown men actuated and governed by ambition, envy, scorn, and a desire of glory; not considering that they were all the time of their youth called upon to all their action and industry, upon the same principles. You teach a child to scorn to be outdone, to thirst for distinction and applause; and is it any wonder that he continues to act all his life in the same manner?

Now if a youth is ever to be so far a Christian, as to govern his heart by the doctrines of humility, I would gladly know at what time he is to begin it--or, if he is ever to begin it at all, why we train him up in tempers quite contrary to it? How dry and poor must the doctrine of humility sound to a youth, that has been spurred up to all his industry by ambition, envy, emulation, and a desire of glory and distinction! And if he is not to act by these principles when he is a man, why do we call him to act by them in his youth?

Envy is acknowledged by all people to be the most ungenerous, base, and wicked passion that can enter into the heart of man. And is this a temper to be instilled, nourished, and established, in the minds of young people? I know it is said, that it is not envy, but emulation, that is intended to be awakened in the minds of young men. But this is vainly said. For when children are taught to bear no rival, and to scorn to be outdone by any of their age, they are plainly and directly taught to be envious. For it is impossible for anyone to have this scorn of being outdone, and this contention with rivals, without burning with envy against all those that seem to excel him, or get any distinction from him. So that what children are taught is rank envy, and only covered with a name of a less odious sound.

Secondly, If envy is thus confessedly bad, and it be only emulation that is endeavored to be awakened in children, surely there ought to be great care taken, that children may know the one from the other- that they may abominate the one as a great crime, while they give the other admission into their minds. But if this were to be attempted, the fineness of the distinction between envy and emulation would show that it was easier to divide them in words, than to separate them in action. For emulation, when it is defined in its best manner, is nothing else but a refinement upon envy, or rather the most plausible part of that black and venomous passion. And though it is easy to separate them in the notion, yet the most acute philosopher, that understands the art of distinguishing ever so well, if he gives himself up to emulation, will certainly find himself deep in envy. For envy is not an original temper, but the natural, necessary, and unavoidable effect of emulation, or a desire of glory. So that he who establishes the one in the minds of people, necessarily fixes the other there. And there is no other possible way of destroying envy, but by destroying emulation, or a desire of glory. For the one always rises and falls in proportion to the other.

I know it is said in defense of this method of education, that ambition, and a desire of glory, are necessary to excite young people to industry; and that if we were to press upon them the doctrines of humility, we would deject their minds, and sink them into dullness and idleness. But those people who say this, do not consider, that this reason, if it has any strength, is fully as strong against pressing the doctrines of humility upon grown men, lest we should deject their minds, and sink them into dullness and idleness. For who does not see, that middle-aged men need as much the assistance of pride, ambition, and vainglory, to spur them up to action and industry, as children

do? And it is very certain, that the precepts of humility are more contrary to the designs of such men, and more grievous to their minds when they are pressed upon them, than they are to the minds of young people. This reason, therefore, that is given, why children should not be trained up in the principles of true humility, is as good a reason why the same humility should never be required of grown men.

Thirdly, Let those people who think that children would be spoiled, if they were not thus educated, consider this- Could they think, that, if any children had been educated by our Blessed Lord, or His Holy Apostles, their minds would have been sunk into dullness and idleness? Or could they think, that such children would not have been trained up in the profoundest principles of a strict and true humility? Can they say that our Blessed Lord, who was the meekest and humblest man that ever was on earth, was hindered by His humility from being the greatest example of worthy and glorious actions, that ever were done by man? Can they say that His Apostles, who lived in the humble spirit of their Master, did therefore cease to be laborious and active instruments of doing good to all the world? A few such reflections as these are sufficient to expose all the poor pretenses for an education in pride and ambition.

PATERNUS lived about two hundred years ago; he had but one son, whom he educated himself in his own house. As they were sitting together in the garden, when the child was ten years old, Paternus thus began to instruct him--The little time that you have been in the world, my child, you have spent wholly with me; and my love and tenderness to you has made you look upon me as your only friend and benefactor, and the cause of all the comfort and pleasure that you enjoy; your heart, I know, would be ready to break with grief, if you thought this was the last day that I would live with you. But, my child, though you now think yourself mighty happy, because you have hold of my hand, you are now in the hands, and under the tender care of a much greater Father and Friend than I am, whose love to you is far greater than mine, and from whom you receive such blessings as no mortal can give. That God whom you have seen me daily worship, whom I daily call upon to bless both you and me, and all mankind, whose wondrous acts are recorded in those Scriptures which you constantly read; that God who created the heavens and the earth, who brought a flood upon the whole world, who saved Noah in the ark, who was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom Job blessed and praised in the greatest afflictions, who delivered the Israelites out of the hands of the Egyptians, who was the Protector of righteous Joseph, Moses, Joshua, and holy Daniel, who sent so many Prophets into the world, who sent His Son Jesus Christ to redeem mankind; this God, who has done all these great things, who has created so many millions of men who lived and died before you were born, with whom the spirits of good men that are departed this life now live, whom infinite numbers of Angels now worship in Heaven; this great God, who is the Creator of worlds, of Angels, and men, is your loving Father and Friend, your good Creator and Nourisher, from whom, and not from me, you received your being ten years ago, at the time that I planted that little tender elm which you there see.

I myself am not half the age of this shady oak, under which we sit; many of our fathers have sat under its boughs, we have all of us called it ours in our turn, though it stands, and drops its leaves. You see, my son, this wide and large sky over our heads, where the sun and moon, and all the stars appear in their turns. If you were to be carried up to any of these bodies at this vast distance from us, you would still discover others as much above you, as the stars that you see here are above the earth. Were you to go up or down, east or west, north or south, you would find the same

height without any top, and the same depth without any bottom. And yet, my child, so great is God, that all these bodies added together are but as a grain of sand in His sight. And yet you are as much the care of this great God and Father of all worlds and all spirits, as if He had no son but you, or there was no creature for Him to love and protect but you alone. He numbers the hairs of your head, watches over you, sleeping and waking, and has preserved you from a thousand dangers, which neither you, nor I, know anything of.

How poor my power is, and how little I am able to do for you, you have often seen. Your late sickness has shown you how little I could do for you in that state; and the frequent pains of your head are plain proofs that I have no power to remove them. I can bring you food and medicines, but have no power to turn them into your relief and nourishment. It is God alone that can do this for you. Therefore, my child, fear, and worship, and love God. Your eyes, indeed, cannot yet see Him. But all things that you see are so many marks of His power and presence, and He is nearer to you than anything that you can see. Take Him for your Lord, and Father, and Friend, look up unto Him as the fountain and cause of all the good that you have received through my hands; and reverence me only as the bearer and minister of God's good things unto you. And He that blessed my father before I was born, will bless you when I am dead. Your youth and little mind is only yet acquainted with my family, and therefore you think there is no happiness out of it. But, my child, you belong to a greater family than mine; you are a young member of the family of this Almighty Father of all nations, who has created infinite orders of Angels, and numberless generations of men, to be fellow-members of one and the same society in Heaven. You do well to reverence and obey my authority because God has given me power over you, to bring you up in His fear, and to do for you as the holy fathers recorded in Scripture did for their children, who are now in rest and peace with God.

I shall in a short time die, and leave you to God and yourself; and, if God forgives my sins, I shall go to His Son Jesus Christ, and live among patriarchs and prophets, saints and martyrs, where I shall pray for you, and hope for your safe arrival at the same place.

Therefore, my child, meditate on these great things; and your soul will soon grow great and noble by so meditating upon them. Let your thoughts often leave these gardens, these fields and farms, to contemplate God and Heaven, to consider upon the Angels, and the spirits of good men living in light and glory. As you have been used to look to me in all your actions, and have been afraid to do anything, unless you first knew my will, so let it now be a rule of your life, to look up to God in all your actions, to do everything in His fear, and to abstain from everything that is not according to His will. Bear Him always in your mind, teach your thoughts to reverence Him in every place, for there is no place where He is not. God keeps a book of life, wherein all the actions of all men are written; your name is there, my child; and when you die, this book will be laid open before men and Angels, and, according as your actions are there found, you will either be received to the happiness of those holy men who have died before you, or be turned away among wicked spirits, that are never to see God any more. Never forget this book, my son, for it is written, it must be opened, you must see it, and you must be tried by it. Strive, therefore, to fill it with your good deeds, that the handwriting of God may not appear against you.

God, my child, is all love, and wisdom, and goodness; and everything that He has made, and every action that He does, is the effect of them all. Therefore you cannot please God, but so far as

you strive to walk in love, wisdom, and goodness. As all wisdom, love, and goodness, proceed from God, so nothing but love, wisdom, and goodness, can lead to God. When you love that which God loves, you act with Him, you join yourself to Him; and when you love what He dislikes, then you oppose Him, and separate yourself from Him. This is the true and the right way--think what God loves, and do you love it with all your heart.

First of all, my child, worship and adore God, think of Him magnificently, speak of Him reverently, magnify His providence, adore His power, frequent His service, and pray unto Him frequently and constantly.

Next to this, love your neighbor, which is all mankind, with such tenderness and affection as you love yourself. Think how God loves all mankind, how merciful He is to them, how tender He is of them, how carefully He preserves them; and then strive to love the world, as God loves it. God would have all men to be happy; therefore do you will and desire the same. All men are great instances of Divine Love; therefore let all men be instances of your love. But above all, my son, mark this; never do anything through strife, or envy, or emulation, or vain-glory. Never do anything in order to excel other people, but in order to please God, and because it is His will that you should do everything in the best manner that you can. For if it is once a pleasure to you to excel other people, it will by degrees be a pleasure to you to see other people not so good as yourself. Banish therefore every thought of self-pride, and self-distinction, and accustom yourself to rejoice in all the excellencies and perfections of your fellow-creatures, and be as glad to see any of their good actions as your own. For as God is as well pleased with their well-doings, as with yours; so you ought to desire, that everything that is wise, and holy, and good, may be performed in as high a manner by other people, as by yourself.

Let this therefore be your only motive and spur to all good actions, honest industry, and business, to do everything in as perfect and excellent a manner as you can, for this only reason--because it is pleasing to God, who desires your perfection, and writes all your actions in a book. When I am dead, my son, you will be master of all my estate, which will be a great deal more than the necessities of one family require. Therefore, as you are to be charitable to the souls of men, and wish them the same happiness with you in Heaven, so be charitable to their bodies, and endeavor to make them as happy as you upon earth. As God has created all things for the common good of all men, so let that part of those who has fallen to your share be employed, as God would have all employed, for the common good of all. Do good, my son, first of all to those that most deserve it; but remember to do good to all. The greatest sinners receive daily instances of God's goodness towards them; He nourishes and preserves them, that they may repent, and return to Him--you therefore, imitate God, and think no one too bad to receive your relief and kindness, when you see that he needs it.

I am teaching you Latin and Greek, not that you should desire to be a great critic, a fine poet, or an eloquent orator; I would not have your heart feel any of these desires; for the desire of these accomplishments is a vanity of the mind, and the masters of them are generally vain men. For the desire of anything that is not a real good, lessens the application of the mind after that which is so. But I teach you these languages, that at proper times you may look into the history of past ages, and learn the methods of God's providence over the world--that, reading the writings of the ancient Sages, you may see how wisdom and virtue have been the praise of great men of all ages, and

fortify your mind by their wise sayings.

Let truth and plainness therefore be the only ornament of your language, and study nothing but how to think of all things as they deserve, to choose everything that is best, to live according to reason and order, and to act in every part of your life in conformity to the will of God. Study how to fill your heart full of the love of God, and the love of your neighbor, and then be content to be no deeper a scholar, no finer a gentleman, than these tempers will make you. As true religion is nothing else but simple nature governed by right reason, so it loves and requires great plainness and simplicity of life. Therefore avoid all superfluous shows of finery and equipage, and let your house be plainly furnished with moderate conveniences. Do not consider what your estate can afford, but what right reason requires. Let your dress be sober, clean, and modest, not to set out the beauty of your person, but to declare the sobriety of your mind, that your outward garb may resemble the inward plainness and simplicity of your heart. For it is highly reasonable that you should be one man, all of a piece, and appear outwardly such as you are inwardly. As to your food and drink, in them observe the highest rules of Christian temperance and sobriety; consider your body only as the servant and minister of your soul; and only so nourish it, as it may best perform a humble and obedient service to it.

But, my son, observe this as a most principal thing, which I shall remind you of as long as I live with you- Hate and despise all human glory, for it is nothing else but human folly. It is the greatest snare, and the greatest betrayer, that you can possibly admit into your heart. Love humility in all its instances; practice it in all its parts, for it is the noblest state of the soul of man; it will set your heart and affections right towards God, and fill you with every temper that is tender and affectionate towards men.

Let every day, therefore, be a day of humility; condescend to all the weaknesses and infirmities of your fellow-creatures, cover their frailties, love their excellencies, encourage their virtues, relieve their needs, rejoice in their prosperities, compassionate their distress, receive their friendship, overlook their unkindness, forgive their malice, be a servant of servants, and condescend to do the lowest offices to the lowest of mankind.

Aspire after nothing but your own purity and perfection, and have no ambition, but to do everything in so reasonable and religious a manner, that you may be glad that God is everywhere present, and sees and observes all your actions. The greatest trial of humility is a humble behavior towards your equals in age, estate, and condition of life. Therefore be careful of all the motions of your heart towards these people. Let all your behavior towards them be governed by sincere love. Have no desire to put any of your equals below you, nor any anger at those that would put themselves above you. If they are proud, they are ill of a very bad distemper; let them, therefore, have your tender pity; and perhaps your meekness may prove an occasion of their cure. But if your humility should do them no good, it will, however, be the greatest good that you can do to yourself.

Remember that there is but one man in the world, with whom you are to have perpetual contention, and be always striving to exceed him, and that is yourself. The time of practicing these precepts, my child, will soon be over with you, the world will soon slip through your hands, or rather you will soon slip through it; it seems but the other day since I received these same instructions from my dear father, that I am now leaving with you. And the God that gave me ears to hear, and a heart to receive, what my father said unto me, will, I hope, give you grace to love and

follow the same instructions.

Thus did Paternus educate his son. Can any one now think that such an education as this would weaken and deject the minds of young people, and deprive the world of any worthy and reasonable labors? It is so far from that, that there is nothing so likely to ennoble and exalt the mind, and prepare it for the most heroical exercise of all virtues. For who will say, that a love of God, a desire of pleasing Him, a love of our neighbor, a love of truth of reason, and virtue, a contemplation of eternity, and the rewards of piety, are not stronger motives to great and good actions, than a little uncertain popular praise? On the other hand, there is nothing in reality that more weakens the mind, and reduces it to lowliness and slavery, nothing that makes it less master of its own actions, or less capable of following reason, than a love of praise and honor. For, as praise and honor are often given to things and people, where they are not due, as that is generally most praised and honored, that most gratifies the pleasures, fashions, and vicious tempers of the world; so he that acts upon the desire of praise and applause, must part with every other principle; he must say black is white, put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter, and do the lowest, basest things, in order to be applauded. For in a corrupt world, as this is, worthy actions are only to be supported by their own worth, where, instead of being praised and honored, they are most often reproached and persecuted. So that to educate children upon a motive of emulation, or a desire of glory, in a world where glory itself is false, and most commonly given wrongly, is to destroy the natural integrity and fortitude of their minds, and give them a bias, which will oftener carry them to base and despicable, than to great and worthy actions.

02.19. Chapter 19

Showing how the method of educating daughters makes it difficult for them to enter into the spirit of Christian humility. How miserably they are injured and abused by such an education. The spirit of a better education, represented in the character of Eusebia. That turn of mind which is taught and encouraged in the education of daughters, makes it exceeding difficult for them to enter into such a sense and practice of humility, as the spirit of Christianity requires. The right education of this sex is of the utmost importance to human life. There is nothing that is more desirable for the common good of all the world. For though women do not carry on the trade and business of the world, yet as they are mothers, and mistresses of families, that have for some time the care on the education of their children of both sorts, they are entrusted with that which is of the greatest consequence to human life. For this reason, good or bad women are likely to do as much good or harm in the world, as good or bad men in the greatest business of life. For, as the health and strength, or weakness of our bodies, is very much owing to their methods of treating us when we were young; so the soundness or folly of our minds are not less owing to those first tempers and ways of thinking, which we eagerly receive from the love, tenderness, authority, and constant dialogue of our mothers. As we call our first language our mother-tongue, so we may as justly call our first tempers our mother-tempers; and perhaps it may be found more easy to forget the language, than to part entirely with those tempers, which we learned in the nursery. It is, therefore, much to be lamented, that this sex, on whom so much depends, who have the first forming both of our bodies and our minds, are not only educated in pride, but in the silliest and most contemptible part of it. They are not indeed allowed to dispute with us the proud prizes of arts and sciences, of learning and eloquence, in which I have much suspicion they would often prove our superiors; but we turn them over to the study of beauty and dress, and the whole world conspires to make them think of nothing else. Fathers and mothers, friends and relations, seem to have no other wish towards the little girl, but that she may have a fair skin, a fine shape, dress well, and dance to admiration.

Now if a fondness for our bodies, a desire of beauty, a love of dress, be a part of pride (as surely it is a most contemptible part of it), the first step towards a woman's humility, seems to require a repentance of her education. For it must be owned that, generally speaking, good parents are never more fond of their daughters, than when they see them too fond of themselves, and dressed in such a manner, as is a great reproach to the gravity and sobriety of the Christian life. And what makes this matter still more to be lamented is this, that women are not only spoiled by this education, but we spoil that part of the world, which would otherwise furnish most instances of an eminent and exalted piety. For I believe it may be affirmed, that for the most part there is a finer sense, a clearer mind, a readier apprehension, and gentler dispositions in that sex than in the other. All which tempers, if they were truly improved by proper studies and sober methods of education, would in all probability carry them to greater heights of piety, than are to be found among the generality of men. For this reason, I speak to this matter with so much openness and plainness, because it is much to be lamented, that people so naturally qualified to be great

examples of piety, should, by an erroneous education, be made poor and gaudy spectacles of the greatest vanity. The Church has formerly had eminent saints in that sex, and it may reasonably be thought, that it is purely owing to their poor and vain education, that this honor of their sex is for the most part confined to former ages. The corruption of the world indulges them in great vanity, and men seem to consider them in no other view than as so many "painted idols", that are to allure and gratify their passions; so that if many women are vain, light, gewgaw creatures, they have this to excuse themselves, that they are not only such as their education has made them, but such as the generality of the world allows them to be. But then women should consider, that the friends to their vanity are no friends of theirs; they should consider that they are to live for themselves; that they have as great a share in the rational nature as men have; that they have as much reason to pretend to, and as much necessity to aspire after, the highest accomplishments of a Christian and solid virtue, as the gravest and wisest among Christian philosophers. They should consider that they are abused, and injured, and betrayed from their only perfection, whenever they are taught that anything is an ornament in them, that is not an ornament in the wisest among mankind.

It is generally said, that women are naturally of little and vain minds; but this I look upon to be as false and unreasonable, as to say that butchers are naturally cruel; for, as their cruelty is not owing to their nature, but to their way of life, which has changed their nature; so whatever littleness and vanity is to be observed in the minds of women, it is like the cruelty of butchers, a temper that is wrought into them by that life which they are taught and accustomed to lead. At least thus much must be said, that we cannot charge anything upon their nature, until we take care that it is not perverted by their education. And, on the other hand, if it were true that they were thus naturally vain and light, then how much more blamable is that education, which seems contrived to strengthen and increase this folly and weakness of their minds! For if it were a virtue in a woman to be proud and vain in herself, we could hardly take better means to raise this passion in her, than those that are now used in her education.

MATILDA is a fine woman, of good breeding, great sense, and much religion. She has three daughters that are educated by herself. She will not trust them with any one else, or at any school, for fear they should learn anything ill. She stays with the dancing-master all the time he is with them, because she will hear everything that is said to them. She has heard them read the Scriptures so often, that they can repeat great part of it by memory--and there is scarcely a good book of devotion, but you may find it in their closets. Had Matilda lived in the first ages of Christianity, when it was practiced in the fullness and plainness of its doctrines, she had in all probability been one of its greatest saints. But as she was born in corrupt times, where she lacks examples of Christian perfection, and hardly ever saw a piety higher than her own; so she has many defects, and communicates them all to her daughters. Matilda never was lowly dressed in her life; and nothing pleases her in dress, but that which is very rich and beautiful to the eye. Her daughters see her great zeal for religion, but then they see an equal earnestness for all sorts of finery. They see she is not negligent of her devotion, but then they see her more careful to preserve her complexion, and to prevent those changes which time and age threaten her with. They are afraid to meet her, if they have missed the church; but then they are more afraid to see her, if they are not laced as strait as they can possibly be. She often shows them her own picture, which was taken when their father fell in love with her. She tells them how engrossed he was with passion at the first sight of her, and that she had never had so fine a complexion, but for the

diligence of her good mother, who took exceeding care of it.

Matilda is so intent upon all the arts of improving their dress, that she has some new fancy almost every day, and leaves no ornament untried, from the richest jewel to the poorest flower. She is so nice and critical in her judgment, so sensible of the smallest error, that the maid is often forced to dress and undress her daughters three or four times in a day, before she can be satisfied with it. As to the patching (make-up), she reserves that to herself, for, she says, if they are not stuck on with judgment, they are rather a tarnish than an advantage to the face. The children see so plainly the temper of their mother, that they even affect to be more pleased with dress, and to be more fond of every little ornament than they really are, merely to gain her favor. They saw their eldest sister once brought to tears, and her perverseness severely reprimanded for presuming to say, that she thought it was better to cover the neck, than to go so far naked as the modern dress requires.

Matilda stints them in their meals, and is very scrupulous of what they eat and drink, and tells them how many fine shapes she has seen spoiled in her time, for lack of such care. If a pimple rises in their faces, she is in a great fright, and they themselves are as afraid to see her reactions, as if they had committed some great sin. Whenever they begin to look too flushed, she calls in the assistance of the doctor; and if medicines, or remedies, will keep the complexion from inclining to coarse or ruddy, she thinks them well employed. By this means they are poor, pale, sickly, infirm creatures, vaped through lack of spirits, crying at the smallest accidents, swooning away at anything that frightens them, and hardly able to bear the weight of their best clothes. The eldest daughter lived as long as she could under this discipline, and died in the twentieth year of her age. When her body was opened it appeared that her ribs had grown into her liver, and that her other entrails were much hurt by being crushed together with her stays, which her mother had ordered to be twitched so strait, that it often brought tears into her eyes while the maid was dressing her. Her youngest daughter has run away with a gamester, a man of great beauty, who in dressing and dancing has no superior. Matilda says, she should die with grief at this misfortune, but that her conscience tells her, she has contributed nothing to it herself. She appeals to their closets, to their books of devotion, to testify what care she has taken to establish her children in a life of solid piety and devotion.

Now, though I do not intend to say, that no daughters are brought up in a better way than this, for I hope there are many that are; yet thus much I believe may be said, that the much greater part of them are not brought up so well, or accustomed to so much religion, as in the present instance. Their minds are turned as much to the care of their beauty and dress, and the indulgence of vain desires, as in the present case, without having such rules of devotion to stand against it. So that if solid piety, humility, and a sober sense of themselves, is much lacking in that sex, it is the plain and natural consequence of a vain and corrupt education. And if they are often too ready to receive the first fops, beaux (men who gives exaggerated attention to personal appearance), and fine dancers, for their husbands, it is no wonder they should like that in men, which they have been taught to admire in themselves. And if they are often seen to lose that little religion they were taught in their youth, it is no more to be wondered at than to see a little flower choked and killed among rank weeds. For personal pride and affectation, a delight in beauty and fondness of finery, are tempers that must either kill all religion in the soul, or be themselves killed by it; they can no more thrive together than health and sickness.

Some people that judge hastily will perhaps here say, that I am exercising too great a severity against the sex. But more reasonable people will easily observe, that I entirely spare the sex, and only arraign their education; that I not only spare them, but plead their interest, assert their honor, set forth their perfections, commend their natural tempers, and only condemn that education which is so injurious to their interests, so debases their honor, and deprives them of the benefit of their excellent natures and tempers. Their education, I profess, I cannot spare; but the only reason is, because it is their greatest enemy; because it deprives the world of so many blessings, and the Church of so many saints, as might reasonably be expected from people so formed by their natural tempers to all goodness and tenderness, and so fitted by the clearness and brightness of their minds to contemplate, love, and admire everything that is holy, virtuous, and Divine.

If it should here be said, that I even charge too high upon their education, and that they are not so much hurt by it as I imagine--It may be answered, that though I do not pretend to state the exact degree of mischief that is done by it, yet its plain and natural tendency to do harm is sufficient to justify the most absolute condemnation of it. But if any one would know how generally women are hurt by this education; if he imagines there may be no personal pride or vain fondness of themselves, in those that are patched and dressed out with so much glitter of art and ornament; let him only make the following experiment wherever he pleases. Let him only acquaint any such woman with his opinion of her--I do not mean that he should tell her to her face, or do it in any crude public manner; but let him contrive the most civil, secret, friendly way that he can think of, only to let her know his opinion, that he thinks she is neither attractive, nor dresses well, nor becomes her finery; and I daresay he will find there are but very few finely dressed women that will like him never the worse for his bare opinion, though known to none but themselves; and that he will not be long without seeing the effects of their resentment. But if such an experiment would show him that there are but few such women that could bear with his friendship, after they knew he had such an opinion of them, surely it is time to complain of, and accuse that education, which so generally corrupts their hearts. For, though it is hard to judge of the hearts of people, yet where they declare their resentment and uneasiness at anything, there they pass the judgment upon themselves. If a woman cannot forgive a man who thinks she has no beauty, nor any ornament from her dress, there she infallibly discovers the state of her own heart, and is condemned by her own, and not another's judgment. For we never are angry at others, but when their opinions of us are contrary to that which we have of ourselves. A man that makes no pretenses to scholarship, is never angry at those that do not take him to be a scholar--so if a woman had no opinion of her own person and dress, she should never be angry at those who are of the same opinion with herself. So that the general bad effects of this education are too much known to admit of any reasonable doubt. But how possible it is to bring up daughters in the more excellent way, let the following character declare.

EUSEBIA is a pious widow, well born, and well bred, and has a good estate for five daughters, whom she brings up as one entrusted by God to fit five virgins for the kingdom of Heaven. Her family has the same regulation as a religious house, and all its orders tend to the support of a constant regular devotion. She, her daughters, and her maids, meet together at all the hours of prayer in the day, and chant psalms and other devotions, and spend the rest of their time in such good works and innocent diversions as render them fit to return to their psalms and prayers. She loves them as her spiritual children, and they reverence her as their spiritual mother, with an

affection far above that of the fondest friends. She has divided part of her estate among them, that every one may be charitable out of her own stock, and each of them takes it in her turn to provide for the poor and sick of the parish. Eusebia brings them up to all kinds of labor that are proper for women, as sewing, knitting, spinning, and all other parts of housewifery; not for their amusement, but that they may be serviceable to themselves and others, and be saved from those temptations which attend an idle life. She tells them, she had rather see them reduced to the necessity of maintaining themselves by their own work, than to have riches to excuse themselves from labor. For though, says she, you may be able to assist the poor without your labor, yet by your labor you will be able to assist them more.

If Eusebia has lived as free from sin as it is possible for human nature, it is because she is always watching and guarding against all instances of pride. And if her virtues are stronger and higher than other people's, it is because they are all founded in a deep humility. "My children", says she, "When your father died I was much pitied by my friends as having all the care of a family, and the management of an estate fallen upon me. But my own grief was founded upon another principle; I was grieved to see myself deprived of so faithful a friend, and that such an eminent example of Christian virtues should be taken from the eyes of his children, before they were of an age to love and follow it. But as to worldly cares, which my friends thought so heavy upon me, they are most of them of our own making, and fall away as soon as we know ourselves. If a person in a dream is disturbed with strange appearances, his trouble is over as soon as he is awake, and sees that it was the folly of a dream. Now, when a right knowledge of ourselves enters into our minds, it makes as great change in all our thoughts and apprehensions, as when we awake from the wanderings of a dream. We acknowledge a man to be mad or melancholy who fancies himself to be a glass, and so is afraid of stirring; or, taking himself to be wax, dare not let the sun shine upon him. But, my children, there are things in the world which pass for wisdom, politeness, grandeur, happiness, and fine breeding, which show as great ignorance of ourselves, and might as justly pass for thorough madness, as when a man fancies himself to be glass or ice. A woman that dares not appear in the world without fine clothes, that thinks it a happiness to have a face finely colored, to have a skin delicately fair, that had rather die than be reduced to poverty and be forced to work for a poor maintenance, is as ignorant of herself, to the full, as he that fancies himself to be glass. For this reason, all my discourse with you, has been to acquaint you with yourselves, and to accustom you to such books and devotions, as may best instruct you in this greatest of all knowledge. You would think it hard not to know the family into which you were born, what ancestors you were descended from, and what estate was to come to you. But, my children, you may know all this with exactness, and yet be as ignorant of yourselves, as he that takes himself to be wax. For though you were all of you born of my body, and bear your father's name, yet you are all of you pure spirits. I do not mean that you have not bodies that need food and drink, and sleep and clothing, but that all that deserves to be called you, is nothing else but spirit; a being spiritual and rational in its nature, that is as contrary to all fleshly or corporeal beings as life is contrary to death; that is made in the image of God, to live forever, never to cease any more, but to enjoy life, and reason, and knowledge, and happiness in the presence of God, and the society of Angels, and glorious spirits to all eternity. Everything that you call yours, besides this spirit, is but like your clothing; something that is only to be used for a while, and then to end, and die, and wear away, and to signify no more to you, than the clothing and bodies of other people.

But, my children, you are not only in this manner spirits, but you are fallen spirits, that began your life in a state of corruption and disorder, full of tempers and passions that blind and darken the reason of your mind, and incline you to that which is hurtful. Your bodies are not only poor and perishing like your clothes, but they are like infected clothes, that fill you with ill diseases and distempers, which oppress the soul with sickly appetites, and vain cravings. So that all of us are like two beings, that have, as it were, two hearts within us; with the one we see, and taste, and admire reason, purity, and holiness--with the other we incline to pride, and vanity, and sensual delights. This internal war we always feel within us more or less--and if you would know the one thing necessary to all the world, it is this; to preserve and perfect all that is rational, holy, and Divine in our nature, and to mortify, remove, and destroy all that vanity, pride, and sensuality, which springs from the corruption of our state. Could you think, my children, when you look at the world, and see what customs, and fashions, and pleasures, and troubles, and projects, and tempers, employ the hearts and time of mankind, that things were thus, as I have told you? But do not you be affected at these things; the world is in a great dream, and but few people are awake in it. We fancy that we fall into darkness when we die; but, alas, we are most of us in the dark until then; and the eyes of our souls only then begin to see, when our bodily eyes are closing.

You see then your state, my children; you are to honor, improve, and perfect the spirit that is within you; you are to prepare it for the kingdom of Heaven, to nourish it with the love of God and of virtue, to adorn it with good works, and to make it as holy and heavenly as you can. You are to preserve it from the errors and vanities of the world; to save it from the corruptions of the body, from those false delights and sensual tempers which the body tempts it with. You are to nourish your spirits with pious readings and holy meditations, with watchings, fastings, and prayers, that you may taste, and relish, and desire that eternal state, which is to begin when this life ends. As to your BODIES, you are to consider them as poor, perishing things, that are sickly and corrupt at present, and will soon drop into common dust. You are to watch over them as enemies that are always trying to tempt and betray you, and so never follow their advice and counsel; you are to consider them as the place and habitation of your souls, and so keep them pure, and clean, and decent; you are to consider them as the servants and instruments of action, and so give them food, and rest, and clothing, that they may be strong and healthful to do the duties of a charitable, useful, pious life.

While you live thus, you live like yourselves; and whenever you have less regard to your souls, or more regard to your bodies, than this comes to; whenever you are more intent upon adorning your bodies, than upon the perfecting of your souls, you are much more beside yourselves than he that had rather have a laced coat than a healthful body. For this reason, my children, I have taught you nothing that was dangerous for you to learn; I have kept you from everything that might betray you into weakness, and folly; or make you think anything fine, but a fine mind; anything happy, but the favor of God; or anything desirable, but to do all the good you possibly can.

Instead of the vain, immodest entertainment of plays and operas, I have taught you to delight in visiting the sick and poor. What music, and dancing, and diversions are to many in the world, that prayers and devotions, and psalms, are to you. Your hands have not been employed in plaiting the hair, and adorning your bodies; but in making clothes for the naked. You have not wasted your fortunes upon yourselves, but have added your labor to them, to do more good to other people. Instead of forced shapes, patched faces, genteel airs, and affected motions, I have taught you to

conceal your bodies with modest garments, and let the world have nothing to view of you, but the plainness, the sincerity, and humility of all your behavior.

You know, my children, the high perfection and the great rewards of remaining unmarried; you know how it frees from worldly cares and troubles, and furnishes means and opportunities of higher advancements in a Divine life; therefore, love, and esteem, and honor your state of being unmarried--bless God for all that glorious company of holy virgins, that from the beginning of Christianity have, in the several ages of the Church, renounced the cares and pleasures of matrimony, to be perpetual examples of solitude, contemplation, and prayer. But as every one has his proper gift from God, as I look upon you all to be so many great blessings of a married state; so I leave it to your choice, either to do as I have done, or to aspire after higher degrees of perfection in an unmarried state of life. I desire nothing, I press nothing upon you, but to make the most of human life, and to aspire after perfection; whatever state of life you choose.

Never, therefore, consider yourselves as people that are to be seen, admired, and courted by men; but as poor sinners, that are to save yourselves from the vanities and follies of a miserable world, by humility, devotion, and self-denial. Learn to live for your own sakes and the service of God; and let nothing in the world be of any value with you, but that which you can turn into a service to God, and a means of your future happiness. Consider often how powerfully you are called to a virtuous life, and what great and glorious things God has done for you, to make you in love with everything that can promote His glory. Think upon the vanity and shortness of human life, and let death and eternity be often in your minds; for these thoughts will strengthen and exalt your minds, make you wise and judicious, and truly sensible of the littleness of all earthly things. Think of the happiness of Prophets and Apostles, saints and martyrs, who are now rejoicing in the presence of God, and see themselves possessors of eternal glory. And then think how desirable a thing it is to watch, and pray, and do good, as they did, that when you die you may have your lot among them.

Whether married, therefore, or unmarried, consider yourselves as mothers and sisters, as friends and relations, to all that need your assistance; and never allow yourselves to be idle, while others are in need of anything that your hands can make for them. This useful, charitable, humble employment of yourselves, is what I recommend to you with great earnestness, as being a substantial part of a wise and pious life. And besides the good you will thereby do to other people, every virtue of your own heart will be very much improved by it. For next to reading, meditation, and prayer, there is nothing that so secures our hearts from foolish passions, nothing that preserves so holy and wise a frame of mind, as some useful, humble employment of ourselves.

Never, therefore, consider your labor as an amusement that is to get rid of your time, and so may be as trifling as you please; but consider it as something that is to be serviceable to yourselves and others, that is to serve some sober ends of life, to save and redeem your time, and make it turn to your account when the works of all people shall be tried by fire. When you were little, I left you to little amusements, to please yourselves in any things that were free from harm; but as you are now grown up to a knowledge of God and yourselves; as your minds are now acquainted with the worth and value of virtue, and exalted with the great doctrines of religion, you are now to do nothing as children, but despise everything that is ignoble, or vain, or impertinent; you are now to make the labors of your hands suitable to the piety of your hearts, and employ themselves for the

same ends, and with the same spirit, as you watch and pray. For if there is any good to be done by your labor, if you can possibly employ yourselves usefully to other people; how silly is it, how contrary to the wisdom of religion, to make that a mere amusement, which might as easily be made an exercise of the greatest charity!

What would you think of the wisdom of him that would employ his time in distilling of waters, and making beverages which nobody could use, merely to amuse himself with the variety of their color and clearness, when with less labor and expense he might satisfy the needs of those who have nothing to drink? Yet he would be as wisely employed as those that are amusing themselves with such tedious works as they neither need, nor hardly know how to use when they are finished; when with less labor and expense they might be doing as much good as he that is clothing the naked, or visiting the sick. Be glad therefore to know the needs of the poorest people, and let your hands be employed in making such mean and ordinary things for them, as their necessities require. By thus making your labor a gift and service to the poor, your ordinary work will be changed into a holy service, and made as acceptable to God as your devotions. And as charity is the greatest of all virtues, as it always was the chief temper of the greatest saints; so nothing can make your own charity more amiable in the sight of God, than this method of adding your labor to it. The humility also of this employment will be as beneficial to you as the charity of it. It will keep you from all vain and proud thoughts of your own state and distinction in life, and from treating the poor as creatures of a different species. By accustoming yourselves to this labor and service for the poor, as the representatives of Jesus Christ, you will soon find your heart softened into the greatest meekness and lowliness towards them. You will reverence their state and condition, think it an honor to serve them, and never be so pleased with yourself as when you are most humbly employed in their service. This will make you true disciples of your meek Lord and Master, who came into the world not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and though He was Lord of all, and among the creatures of His own making, yet was among them as one that serves.

Christianity has then had its most glorious effects upon your hearts, when it has thus changed your spirit, removed all the pride of life from you, and made you delight in humbling yourselves beneath the lowest of all your fellow-creatures. Live, therefore, my children, as you have begun your lives, in humble labor for the good of others; and let 'polite visits' and vain acquaintances have as little of your time as you possibly can. Contract no foolish friendships, or vain fondnesses for particular people; but love them most that most turn your love towards God, and your compassion towards all the world. But, above all, avoid the conversation of fine-bred fops and beaux, and hate nothing more than the idle discourse, the flattery and compliments of that sort of men; for they are the shame of their own sex, and ought to be the abhorrence of ours. When you go abroad among others, let humility, modesty, and a decent carriage, be all the state that you take upon you; and let tenderness, compassion, and good nature, be all the fine breeding that you show in any place. If evil-speaking, scandal, or back-biting, be the conversation where you happen to be, keep your heart and your tongue to yourself--be as much grieved as if you were among cursing and swearing, and retire as soon as you can. Though you intend to marry, yet let the time never come, until you find a man that has those perfections which you have been laboring after yourselves; who is likely to be a friend to all your virtues, and with whom it is better to live, than to lack the benefit of his example. Love poverty, and reverence poor people; as for many reasons, so particularly for this, because our Blessed Savior was one of the number, and because you may make them all so

many friends and advocates with God for you. Visit and converse with them frequently; you will often find simplicity, innocence, patience, fortitude, and great piety among them; and where they are not so, your good example may amend them.

Rejoice at every opportunity of doing a humble action, and exercising the meekness of your minds, whether it be, as the Scripture expresses it, in washing the saints' feet, that is, in waiting upon, and serving those that are below you; or in bearing with the haughtiness and ill-manners of those that are your equals, or above you. For there is no greater quality than HUMILITY; it is the fruitful soil of all virtues; and everything that is kind and good naturally grows from it. Therefore, my children, pray for, and practice humility, and reject everything in dress, or attitude, or speech, that has any appearance of pride. Strive to do everything that is praiseworthy, but do nothing in order to be praised; nor think of any reward for all your labors of love and virtues, until Christ comes with all His Holy Angels. And above all, my children, dread vain and proud thoughts of your own virtues. For as soon as ever people live different from the common way of the world, and despise its vanities, the devil represents to their minds the height of their own perfections; and is content they should excel in good works, provided that he can but make them proud of them. Therefore watch over your virtues with a jealous eye, and reject every vain thought, as you would reject the most wicked imagination; and think what a loss it would be to you to have the fruit of all your good works devoured by the vanity of your own minds.

Never, therefore, allow yourselves to despise those who do not follow your rules of life--but force your hearts to love them, and pray to God for them; and let humility be always whispering it into your ears, that you yourselves would fall from those rules tomorrow, if God should leave you to your own strength and wisdom. When, therefore, you have spent days and weeks well, do not allow your hearts to contemplate anything as your own, but give all the glory to the goodness of God, who has carried you through such rules of holy living, as you were not able to observe by your own strength; and take care to begin the next day, not as proficient in virtue, that can do great matters, but as poor beginners, that need the daily assistance of God to save you from the grossest sins. Your dear father was a humble, watchful, pious, wise man. When his sickness would allow him to talk with me, his discourse was chiefly about your education. He knew the benefits of humility, he saw the ruins which pride made in our sex; and therefore he implored me, with the tenderest expressions, to renounce the fashionable ways of educating daughters in pride and softness, in the care of their beauty, and dress; and to bring you all up in the plainest, simplest instances of a humble, holy, and industrious life. He taught me an admirable rule of humility, which he practiced all the days of his life, which was this--to let no morning pass without thinking upon some frailty and infirmity of our own, that may humble us, make us blush inwardly, and entertain a lowly opinion of ourselves. Think, therefore, my children, that the soul of your good father, who is now with God, speaks to you through my mouth; and let the double desire of your father, who is gone, and of me, who am with you, prevail upon you to love God, to study your own perfection, to practice humility, and with innocent labor and charity to do all the good that you can to all your fellow-creatures, until God calls you to another life."

Thus did the pious widow educate her daughters. The spirit of this education speaks so plainly for itself, that I hope I need say nothing in its justification. If we could see it in life, as well as read of it in books, the world would soon find the happy effects of it. A daughter thus educated, would be a blessing to any family that she came into; a fit companion for a wise man, and make him happy in

the government of his family, and the education of his children. And she that either was not inclined, or could not dispose of herself well in marriage, would know how to live to great and excellent ends in a state of singleness. A very basic knowledge of the spirit of Christianity seems to be enough to convince us, that no education can be of true advantage to young women, but that which trains them up in humble industry, in great plainness of life, in proper modesty of dress, manners, and carriage, and in strict devotion. For what should a Christian woman be, but a plain, unostentatious, modest, humble creature, averse to everything in her dress and carriage that can draw the eyes of beholders, or gratify the passions of lewd and amorous people?

How great a stranger must he be to the Gospel who does not know, that it requires this to be the spirit of a pious woman! Our blessed Savior says, "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her, has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28) Need an education, which turns women's minds to the arts and ornaments of dress and beauty, be more strongly condemned, than by these words? For surely, if the eye is so easily and dangerously betrayed, every art and ornament is sufficiently condemned, that naturally tends to betray it. And how can a woman of piety more justly abhor and avoid anything, than that which makes her person more a snare and temptation to other people? If lust and wanton eyes are the death of the soul, can any women think themselves innocent, who with naked breasts, patched faces, and every ornament of dress, invite the eye to offend? And as there is no pretense for innocence in such a behavior, so neither can they tell how to set any bounds to their guilt. For as they can never know how much or how often they have occasioned sin in other people, so they can never know how much guilt will be placed to their own account. This, one would think, should sufficiently deter every pious woman from everything that might render her the occasion of loose passions in other people.

Paul, speaking of a thing entirely innocent, reasons after this manner--"But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to those that are weak--And through your knowledge your weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. But when you sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world stands, lest I make my brother to offend." (1 Corinthians 8:11-13) Now if this is the spirit of Christianity; if it requires us to abstain from things thus lawful, innocent, and useful, when there is any danger of betraying our weak brethren into any error thereby--surely it cannot be reckoned too nice or needless a point of conscience for women to avoid such things as are neither innocent nor useful, but naturally tend to corrupt their own hearts, and raise sinful passions in other people. Surely every woman of Christian piety ought to say, in the spirit of the Apostle, If patching and paint, or any vain adorning of my person, be a natural means of making weak, unwary eyes to offend, I will renounce all these arts as long as I live, lest I should make my fellow-creatures to offend.

I shall now leave this subject of humility, having said enough, as I hope, to recommend the necessity of making it the constant, chief subject of your devotion, at this hour of prayer. I have considered the nature and necessity of humility, and its great importance to a religious life. I have shown you how many difficulties are formed against it from our natural tempers, the spirit of the world, and the common education of both sexes. These considerations will, I hope, instruct you how to form your prayers for it to the best advantage, and teach you the necessity of letting no day pass, without a serious, earnest application to God, for the whole spirit of humility--ferently beseeching Him to fill every part of your soul with it, to make it the ruling, constant habit of your

mind, that you may not only feel it, but feel all your other tempers arising from it; that you may have no thoughts, no desires, no designs, but such as are the true fruits of a humble, meek, and lowly heart. That you may always appear poor, and little, and lowly in your own eyes, and fully content that others should have the same opinion of you. That the whole course of your life, your expense, your house, your dress, your manner of eating, drinking, conversing, and doing everything, may be so many continual proofs of the true, sincere humility of your heart. That you may look for nothing, claim nothing, resent nothing; that you may go through all the actions and circumstances of life, calmly and quietly, as in the presence of God, looking wholly unto Him, acting wholly for Him--neither seeking vain applause, nor resenting neglect or affronts, but doing and receiving everything in the gentle and humble spirit of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

02.20. Chapter 20

Recommending devotion at twelve o'clock, called in Scripture the sixth hour of the day. This frequency of devotion equally desirable by all orders of people. UNIVERSAL LOVE is here recommended to be the subject of prayer at this hour. Of intercession, as an act of universal love.

It will perhaps be thought by some people, that these hours of prayer come too thick; that they can only be observed by people of great leisure, and ought not to be pressed upon the generality of men, who have the cares of families, trades, and employments; nor upon the gentry, whose state and figure in the world cannot admit of this frequency of devotion. And that it is only fit for monasteries and nunneries, or such people as have no more to do in the world than they have. To this it is answered, First, That this method of devotion is not pressed upon any sort of people, as absolutely necessary, but recommended to all people, as the best, the happiest, and most perfect way of life. And if a great and exemplary devotion is as much the greatest happiness and perfection of a merchant, a soldier, or a man of quality, as it is the greatest happiness and perfection of the most retired contemplative life, then it is as proper to recommend it without any abatements to one order of men, as to another--because happiness and perfection are of the same worth and value to all people. The gentleman and tradesman may, and must, spend much of their time differently from the pious monk in the cloister, or the contemplative hermit in the desert; but then, as the monk and hermit lose the ends of retirement unless they make it all serviceable to devotion; so the gentleman and merchant fail of the greatest ends of a social life, and live to their loss in the world, unless devotion be their chief and governing temper. It is certainly very honest and creditable for people to engage in trades and employments; it is reasonable for gentlemen to manage well their estates and families, and take such recreations as are proper to their state. But then every gentleman and tradesman loses the greatest happiness of his creation, is robbed of something that is greater than all employments, distinctions, and pleasures of the world, if he does not live more to piety and devotion than to anything else in the world.

Here are therefore no excuses made for men of business and figure in the world. First, Because it would be to excuse them from that which is the greatest end of living; and be only finding so many reasons for making them less beneficial to themselves and less serviceable to God and the world. Secondly, Because most men of business and figure engage too far in worldly matters; much farther than the reasons of human life, or the necessities of the world require. Merchants and tradesmen, for instance, are generally ten times farther engaged in business than they need; which is so far from being a reasonable excuse for their lack of time for devotion, that it is their crime, and must be censured as a blamable instance of covetousness and ambition. The gentry and people of figure either give themselves up to state employments, or to the gratifications of their passions, in a life of gaiety and debauchery; and if these things might be admitted as allowable avocations from devotion, devotion must be reckoned a poor circumstance of life. Unless gentlemen can show that they have another God than the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; another nature than that which is derived from Adam; another religion than the Christian; it is in vain to plead their state, and dignity, and pleasures, as reasons for not preparing their souls for

God, by a strict and regular devotion. For since piety and devotion are the common unchangeable means of saving all the souls in the world that shall be saved, there is nothing left for the gentleman, the soldier, and the tradesman, but to take care that their several states be, by care and watchfulness, by meditation and prayer, made states of an exact and solid piety. If a merchant, having forborne from too great business, that he might quietly attend on the service of God, should therefore die worth twenty instead of fifty thousand pounds, could anyone say that he had mistaken his calling, or gone a loser out of the world? If a gentleman should have killed fewer foxes, been less frequent at balls, gaming, and merry meetings, because stated parts of his time had been given to retirement, and meditation, and devotion, could it be thought, that when he left the world, he would regret the loss of those hours that he had given to the care and improvement of his soul? If a tradesman, by aspiring after Christian perfection, and retiring himself often from his business, should, instead of leaving his children fortunes to spend in luxury and idleness, leave them to live by their own honest labor, could it be said that he had made a wrong use of the world, because he had shown his children that he had more regard to that which is eternal, than to this which is so soon to be at an end?

Since, therefore, devotion is not only the best and most desirable practice in a cloister, but the best and most desirable practice of men, as men, and in every state of life; those who desire to be excused from it, because they are men of figure, and estates, and business, are no wiser than those that should desire to be excused from health and happiness, because they were men of figure and estates. I cannot see why every gentleman, merchant, or soldier, should not put those questions seriously to himself--What is the best thing for me to intend and drive at in all my actions? How shall I do to make the most of human life? What ways shall I wish that I had taken, when I am leaving the world?

Now to be thus wise, and to make thus much use of our reason, seems to be but a small and necessary piece of wisdom. For how can we pretend to sense and judgment, if we dare not seriously consider, and answer, and govern our lives by that which such questions require of us? Shall a nobleman think his birth too high a dignity to condescend to such questions as these? Or a tradesman think his business too great, to take any care about himself? Now here is desired no more devotion in anyone's life, than the answering these few questions requires. Any devotion that is not to the greater advantage of him that uses it than anything that he can do instead of it; any devotion that does not procure an infinitely greater good than can be got by neglecting it, is freely yielded up; here is no demand of it. But if people will live in so much ignorance, as never to put these questions to themselves, but push on a blind life at all chances, in quest of they know not what, nor why; without ever considering the worth, or value, or tendency of their actions, without considering what God, reason, eternity, and their own happiness require of them; it is for the honor of devotion, that none can neglect it, but those who are thus inconsiderate, who dare not inquire after that which is the best, and most worthy of their choice.

It is true, CLAUDIUS, you are a man of figure and estate, and are to act the part of such a station in human life; you are not called, as Elijah was, to be a prophet, or as Paul, to be an Apostle. But will you therefore not love yourself? Will you not seek and study your own happiness, because you are not called to preach up the same things to other people? You would think it very absurd, for a man not to value his own health, because he was not a physician; nor the preservation of his limbs because he was not a bone-setter. Yet it is more absurd for you, Claudius, to neglect the

improvement of your soul in piety, because you are not an Apostle, or a bishop. Consider this text of Scripture--"If you live after the flesh, you shall die; but if you through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Romans 8:13-14) Do you think that this Scripture does not equally relate to all mankind? Can you find any exception here for men of figure and estates? Is not a spiritual and devout life here made the common condition on which all men are to become sons of God? Will you leave hours of prayer, and rules of devotion to particular states of life, when nothing but the same spirit of devotion can save you, or any man, from eternal death?

Consider again this text--"For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad." (2 Corinthians 5:10) Now if your estate would excuse you from appearing before this judgment-seat, if your money could protect you from receiving according to your works, there would be some pretense for your leaving devotion to other people. But if you, who are now thus distinguished, must then appear naked among common souls, without any other distinction from others but such as your virtues or sins give you; does it not as much concern you, as any prophet or Apostle, to make the best provision for the best rewards at that great day?

Again, consider this doctrine of the Apostle--"For none of us," that is, of us Christians, "lives to himself, and no man dies to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living." (Romans 14:7-9) Now are you, Claudius, excepted out of the doctrine of this text? Will you, because of your condition, leave it to any particular sort of people, to live and die unto Christ? If so, you must leave it to them, to be redeemed by the Death and Resurrection of Christ. For it is the express doctrine of the text, that for this end Christ died and rose again, that none of us should live to himself. It is not that priests, or Apostles, or monks, or hermits, should live no longer to themselves; but that none of us, that is, no Christian of what state soever, should live unto himself. If, therefore, there be any instances of piety, any rules of devotion, which you can neglect, and yet live as truly unto Christ as if you observed them, this text calls you to no such devotion. But if you forsake such devotion, as you yourself know is expected from some particular sorts of people; such devotion as you know becomes people that live wholly unto Christ, that aspire after great piety; if you neglect such devotion for any worldly consideration, that you may live more to your own temper and taste, more to the fashions and ways of the world, you forsake the terms on which all Christians are to receive the benefit of Christ's Death and Resurrection.

Observe, farther, how the same doctrine is taught by Peter--"As He which has called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation." (1 Peter 1:15) If, therefore, Claudius, you are one of those that are here called, you see what it is that you are called to. It is not to have so much religion as suits with your temper, your business, or your pleasures; it is not to a particular sort of piety, that may be sufficient for gentlemen of figure and estates; but it is, first, to be holy, as He which has called you is holy; secondly, it is to be thus holy in all manner of life; that is, to carry this spirit and degree of holiness into every part, and through the whole form of your life. And the reason the Apostle immediately gives, why this spirit of holiness must be the common spirit of Christians, as such, is very affecting, and such as equally calls upon all sorts of Christians. "Forasmuch as you know," says he, "that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver

and gold, from your vain conversation ... but with the precious blood of Christ," (1 Peter 1:18-19) As if he had said, Forasmuch as you know you were made capable of this state of holiness, entered into a society with Christ, and made heirs of His glory, not by any human means, but by such a mysterious instance of love, as infinitely exceeds everything that can be thought of in this world--since God has redeemed you to Himself, and your own happiness, at so great a price; how base and shameful must it be, if you do not henceforth devote yourselves wholly to the glory of God, and become holy, as He who has called you is holy!

If, therefore, Claudius, you consider your figure and estate; or if, in the words of the text, you consider your gold and silver, and the corruptible things of this life, as any reason why you may live to your own pleasure and fancy, why you may neglect a life of strict piety and great devotion; if you think anything in the world can be an excuse for your not imitating the holiness of Christ in the whole course and form of your life; you make yourself as guilty as if you should neglect the holiness of Christianity, for the sake of picking straws. For the greatness of this new state of life, to which we are called in Christ Jesus, to be forever as the Angels of God in Heaven, and the greatness of the price by which we are made capable of this state of glory, has turned everything that is worldly, temporal, and corruptible, into an equal littleness; and made it as great baseness and folly, as great a contempt of the Blood of Christ, to neglect any degrees of holiness, because you are a man of some estate and quality, as it would be to neglect it because you had a fancy to pick straws.

Again; the same Apostle says, "Know you not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, and you are not your own? For you are bought with price; therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) How poorly, therefore, Claudius, have you read the scripture, how little do you know of Christianity if you can yet talk of your estate and condition, as a pretense or a freer kind of life. Are you any more your own, than he that has no state or dignity in the world? Must poor and little people preserve their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit by watching, fasting, and prayer; but may you indulge yours in idleness, in lusts, and sensuality, because you have so much money, or such a title of distinction? How poor and ignorant are such thoughts as these! And yet you must either think thus, or else acknowledge, that the holiness of saints, Prophets, and Apostles, is the holiness that you are to labor after, with all the diligence and care that you can. And if you leave it to others to live in such piety and devotion, in such self-denial, humility, and temperance, as may render them able to glorify God in their body, and in their spirit; you must leave it to them also, to have the benefit of the Blood of Christ.

Again; the Apostle says, "You know how we exhorted, comforted, and charged every one of you, that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto His kingdom and glory." (1 Thessalonians 2:11-12) You perhaps, Claudius, have often heard these words, without ever thinking how much they require of you. And yet you cannot consider them, without perceiving to what an imminent state of holiness they call you. For how can the holiness of the Christian life be set before you in higher terms, than when it is represented to you as walking worthy of God? Can you think of any abatements of virtue, any neglects of devotion, that are well consistent with a life that is to be made worthy of God? Can you suppose that any man walks in this manner, but he that watches over all his steps, and considers how everything he does may be done in the spirit of holiness? and yet as high as these expressions carry this holiness, it is here plainly made the necessary holiness of all Christians. For the Apostle does not here exhort his fellow Apostles to

this holiness, but he commands all Christians to endeavor after it. "We charged," says he, "everyone of you, that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you unto His kingdom and glory."

Again; Peter says, "If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability that God gives; that God in all things may be glorified in Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 4:11) Do you not here, Claudius, plainly perceive your high calling? Is he that speaks to have such regard to his words, that he appear to speak as by the direction of God? Is he that gives to take care that he so gives, that what he disposeth of may appear to be a gift that he has of God? And is all this to be done, that God may be glorified in all things? Must it not then be said, Has any man nobility, dignity of state, or figure in the world? Let him so use his nobility, or figure of life, that it may appear he uses these as the gifts of God, for the greater setting forth of His glory. Is there now, Claudius, anything forced, or far-fetched in this conclusion? Is it not the plain sense of the words, that everything in life is to be made a matter of holiness unto God? If so, then your estate and dignity is so far from excusing you from great piety and holiness of life, that it lays you under a greater necessity of living more to the glory of God, because you have more of His gifts that may be made serviceable to it. For people, therefore, of figure, or business, or dignity in the world, to leave great piety and eminent devotion to any particular orders of men, or such as they think have little else to do in the world, is to leave the kingdom of God to them. For it is the very end of Christianity to redeem all orders of men into one holy society, that rich and poor, high and low, masters and servants, may in one and the same spirit of piety become "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that are to show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness, into His marvelous light." (1 Peter 2:9)

Thus much being said to show that great devotion and holiness is not to be left to any particular sort of people, but to be the common spirit of all that desire to live up to the terms of common Christianity; I now proceed to consider the NATURE AND NECESSITY OF UNIVERSAL LOVE, which is here recommended to be the subject of your devotion at this hour. You are here also called to intercession for others, as the most proper exercise to raise and preserve that love. By intercession is meant a praying to God, and interceding with Him for our fellow-creatures. Our Blessed Lord has recommended His love to us, as the pattern and example of our love to one another. As, therefore, He is continually making intercession for us all, so ought we to intercede and pray for one another. "A new commandment," says He, "I give unto you, That you love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:34-35) The newness of this precept did not consist in this, that men were commanded to love one another; for this was an old precept, both of the law of Moses, and of nature. But it was new in this respect, that it was to imitate a new, and until then unheard-of example of love; it was to love one another, as Christ had loved us. And if men are to know that we are disciples of Christ, by thus loving one another, according to His new example of love, then it is certain, that if we are void of this love, we make it as plainly known unto men, that we are none of His disciples. There is no principle of the heart that is more acceptable to God, than an universal fervent love to all mankind, wishing and praying for their happiness; because there is no principle of the heart that makes us more like God, who is love and goodness itself, and created all beings for their enjoyment of happiness. The greatest idea that we can frame of God, is when we conceive Him to be a Being of infinite love and goodness; using an infinite wisdom and power, for

the common good and happiness of all His creatures. The highest notion, therefore, that we can form of man is when we conceive him as like to God, in this respect, as he can be; using all his infinite faculties, whether of wisdom, power, or prayers, for the common good of all his fellow-creatures; heartily desiring they may have all the happiness they are capable of, and as many benefits and assistances from him, as his state and condition in the world will permit him to give them. And on the other hand, what a baseness and iniquity is there in all instances of hatred, envy, spite, and ill-will; if we consider that every instance of them is so far acting in opposition to God, and intending mischief and harm to those creatures which God favors, and protects, and preserves, in order to their happiness! An ill-natured man, among God's creatures, is the most perverse creature in the world, acting contrary to that love by which himself exists, and which alone gives subsistence to all that variety of beings, that enjoy life in any part of the creation. "Whatever you would that men should do unto you, even so do unto them." (Matthew 7:12)

Now, though this is a doctrine of strict justice, yet it is only a universal love that can comply with it. For as love is the measure of our acting towards ourselves, so we can never act in the same manner towards other people, until we look upon them with that love, with which we look upon ourselves. As we have no degrees of spite, or envy, or ill-will, to ourselves, so we cannot be disposed towards others as we are towards ourselves, until we universally renounce all instances of spite, and envy, and ill-will, even in the smallest degrees.

If we had any imperfection in our eyes, that made us see any one thing wrong, for the same reason they would show us a hundred things wrong. So, if we have any temper of our hearts, that makes us envious, or spiteful, or ill-natured towards any one man, the same temper will make us envious, and spiteful, and ill-natured towards a great many more. If, therefore, we desire this Divine virtue of love we must exercise and practice our hearts in the love of all because it is not Christian love, until it is the love of all. If a man could keep this whole law of love, and yet offend in one point, he would be guilty of all. For as one allowed instance of injustice destroys the justice of all our other actions, so one allowed instance of envy, spite, and ill-will, renders all our other acts of benevolence and affection nothing worth.

Acts of love, that proceed not from a principle of universal love, are but like acts of justice, that proceed from a heart not disposed to universal justice. A love which is not universal, may indeed have tenderness and affection, but it has nothing of righteousness or piety in it--it is but pleasure, and temper, or interest, or such a love as the heathen practice. All particular envies and spites are as plain departures from the spirit of Christianity, as any particular acts of injustice. For it is as much a law of Christ to treat everybody as your neighbor, and to love your neighbor as yourself, as it is a law of Christianity to abstain from theft.

Now the noblest motive to this universal tenderness and affection is founded in this doctrine--"God is love, and he that dwells in love, dwells in God." (1 John 4:16) Who, therefore, whose heart has any tendency towards God, would not aspire after this Divine temper, which so changes and exalts our nature into an union with Him? How should we rejoice in the exercise and practice of this love, which, so often as we feel it, is so often an assurance to us, that God is in us, that we act according to His Spirit, who is Love itself! But we must observe then, that love only has this mighty power of uniting us to God, when it is so pure and universal as to imitate that love which God bears to all His creatures. God wills the happiness of all beings, though it is no increase in

happiness to Himself. Therefore we must desire the happiness of all beings, though no happiness comes to us from it. God equally delights in the perfections of all His creatures--therefore we should rejoice in those perfections, wherever we see them, and be as glad to have other people perfect as ourselves. As God forgives all, and gives grace to all, so we should forgive all those injuries and affronts which we receive from others, and do all the good that we can to them.

God Almighty, besides His own great example of love, which ought to draw all His creatures after it, has so provided for us, and made our happiness so common to us all, that we have no occasion to envy or hate one another. For we cannot stand in one another's way, or by enjoying any particular good, keep another from his full share of it. As we cannot be happy but in the enjoyment of God, so we cannot rival or rob one another of this happiness. And as to other things, the enjoyments and prosperities of this life, they are so little in themselves, so foreign to our happiness, and, generally speaking, so contrary to that which they appear to be, that they are no foundation for envy, or spite, or hatred.

How silly would it be to envy a man who was drinking poison out of a golden cup! And yet who can say that he is acting wiser than thus, when he is envying any instance of worldly greatness? How many saints has adversity sent to Heaven! And how many woeful sinners has prosperity plunged into everlasting misery! A man seems then to be in the most glorious state, when he has conquered, disgraced, and humbled his enemy; though it may be, that same conquest has saved his adversary and undone himself. This man had perhaps never been debauched, but for his fortune and advancement; that man had never been pious, but through his poverty and disgrace. She who is envied for her beauty, may perhaps owe all her misery to it; and another may be forever happy, for having had no admirers of her person. One man succeeds in everything, and so loses all; another meets with nothing but crosses and disappointments, and thereby gains more than all the world is worth. This clergyman may be undone by his being made a bishop; and another man may save both himself and others, by being fixed to his first poor vicarage.

How envied was Alexander, when, conquering the world, he built towns, set up his statues, and left marks of his glory in so many kingdoms! And how despised was the poor preacher Paul, when he was beaten with rods! And yet how strangely was the world mistaken in their judgment! How much to be envied was Paul! How much to be pitied was Alexander!

These few reflections sufficiently show us, that the different conditions of this life have nothing in them to excite our uneasy passions, nothing that can reasonably interrupt our love and affection to one another. To proceed now to another motive to this universal love. Our power of doing external acts of love and goodness is often very narrow and restrained. There are, it may be, but few people to whom we can contribute any worldly relief. But though our outward means of doing good are often thus limited, yet, if our hearts are but full of love and goodness, we get, as it were, an infinite power; because God will attribute to us those good works, those acts of love, and tender charities, which we sincerely desired, and would gladly have performed, had it been in our power.

You cannot heal all the sick, relieve all the poor; you cannot comfort all in distress, nor be a father to all the fatherless; you cannot, it may be, deliver many from their misfortunes, or teach them to find comfort in God. But if there is a love and tenderness in your heart, that delights in these good works, and excites you to do all that you can--if your love has no bounds, but continually wishes and prays for the relief and happiness of all that are in distress; you will be received by God as a

benefactor to those, who have had nothing from you but your good will, and tender affections. You cannot build hospitals for the incurable; you cannot erect monasteries for the education of people in holy solitude, continual prayer, and mortification; but if you join in your heart with those that do, and thank God for their pious designs; if you are a friend to these great friends to mankind, and rejoice in their eminent virtues; you will be received by God as a sharer of such good works as, though they had none of your hands, yet had all your heart. This consideration surely is sufficient to make us look to, and watch over our hearts with all diligence; to study the improvement of our inward tempers, and aspire after every height and perfection of a loving, charitable, and benevolent mind. And on the other hand, we may hence learn the great evil and mischief of all wrong turns of mind, of envy, spite, hatred, and ill-will. For if the goodness of our hearts will entitle us to the reward of good actions, which we never performed; it is certain that the badness of our hearts, our envy, ill-nature, and hatred, will bring us under the guilt of actions that we have never committed. As he that lusts after a woman shall be reckoned an adulterer, though he has only committed the crime in his heart; so the malicious, spiteful, ill-natured man, that only secretly rejoices at evil, shall be reckoned a murderer, though he has shed no blood. Since, therefore, our hearts, which are always naked and open to the eyes of God, give such an exceeding extent and increase, either to our virtues or vices, it is our best and greatest business to govern the motions of our hearts, to watch, correct, and improve the inward state and temper of our souls.

Now there is nothing that so much exalts our souls, as this heavenly love--it cleanses and purifies like a holy fire, and all ill tempers fall away before it. It makes room for all virtues, and carries them to their greatest height. Everything that is good and holy grows out of it, and it becomes a continual source of all holy desires and pious practices. By LOVE, I do not mean any natural tenderness, which is more or less in people, according to their constitutions; but I mean a larger principle of the soul, founded in reason and piety, which makes us tender, kind, and benevolent to all our fellow-creatures, as creatures of God, and for His sake. It is this love, that loves all things in God, as His creatures, as the images of His power, as the creatures of His goodness, as parts of His family, as members of His society, that becomes a holy principle of all great and good actions. The love, therefore, of our neighbor, is only a branch of our love to God. For when we love God with all our hearts, and with all our souls, and with all our strength, we shall necessarily love those beings that are so nearly related to God, that have everything from Him, and are created by Him to be objects of His own eternal love.

If I hate or despise any one man in the world, I hate something that God cannot hate, and despise that which He loves. And can I think that I love God with all my heart while I hate that which belongs only to God, which has no other master but Him, which bears His image, is part of His family, and exists only by the continuance of His love towards it? It was the impossibility of this that made John say, that "If any man says he loves God, and hates his brother, he is a liar." (1 John 4:20) These reasons sufficiently show us, that no love is holy or religious, until it becomes universal. For if religion requires me to love all people, as God's creatures, that belong to Him, that bear His image, enjoy His protection, and make up parts of His family and household; if these are the great and necessary reasons why I should live in love and friendship with any one man in the world; they are the same great and necessary reasons why I should live in love and friendship with every man in the world; and, consequently, I offend against all these reasons, and break through all these ties and obligations, whenever I lack love towards any one man. The sin, therefore, of

hating, or despising any one man, is like the sin of hating all God's creation; and the necessity of loving any one man, is the same necessity of loving every man in the world. And though many people may appear to us ever so sinful, odious, or extravagant in their conduct, we must never look upon that as the least motive for any contempt or disregard of them; but look upon them with the greater compassion, as being in the most pitiable condition that can be. As it was the sins of the world that made the Son of God become a compassionate suffering Advocate for all mankind, so no one is of the Spirit of Christ, but he that has the utmost compassion for sinners. Nor is there any greater sign of your own perfection, than when you find yourself all love and compassion towards those who are very weak and defective. And on the other hand, you have never less reason to be pleased with yourself, than when you find yourself most angry and offended at the behavior of others. All sin is certainly to be hated and abhorred, wherever it is; but then we must set ourselves against sin, as we do against sickness and diseases, by showing ourselves tender and compassionate to the sick and diseased. All other hatred of sin, which does not fill the heart with the softest, tenderest affections towards people miserable in it, is the servant of sin, at the same time that it seems to be hating it. And there is no temper which even good men ought more carefully to watch and guard against, than this. For it is a temper that lurks and hides itself under the mover of many virtues, and by being unsuspected, does the more mischief. A man naturally fancies, that it is his own exceeding love of virtue that makes him not able to bear with those that lack it. And when he abhors one man, despises another, and cannot bear the name of a third, he supposes it all to be a proof of his own high sense of virtue, and just hatred of sin. And yet, one would think, that a man needed no other cure for this temper, than this one reflection--That if this had been the spirit of the Son of God, if He had hated sin in this manner, there had been no redemption of the world; that if God had hated sinners in this manner, day and night, the world itself had ceased long ago. This, therefore, we may take for a certain rule, that the more we partake of the Divine nature, the more improved we are ourselves; and the higher our sense of virtue is, the more we shall pity and compassionate those that lack it. The sight of such people will then, instead of raising in us a haughty contempt, or peevish indignation towards them, fill us with such affections of compassion, as when we see the miseries of an hospital. That the follies, therefore, crimes, and ill-behavior of our fellow-creatures, may not lessen that love and tenderness which we are to have for all mankind, we should often consider the reasons on which the duty of love is founded. Now we are to love our neighbor, that is, all mankind, not because they are wise, holy, virtuous, or well-behaved; for all mankind neither ever was, nor ever will be so; therefore it is certain, that the reason of our being obliged to love them cannot be founded in their virtue.

Again; if their virtue or goodness were the reason of our being obliged to love people, we would have no rule to proceed by; because though some people's virtues or vices are very notorious, yet, generally speaking, we are but very poor judges of the virtue and merit of other people.

Thirdly, We are sure that the virtue or merit of people is not the reason of our being obliged to love them, because we are commanded to pay the highest instances of love to our worst enemies--we are to love, and bless, and pray for those that most injuriously treat us. This therefore is demonstration, that the merit of people is not the reason on which our obligation to love them is founded. Let us farther consider, what that love is which we owe to our neighbor. It is to love him as ourselves, that is, to have all those sentiments towards him which we have towards ourselves; to wish him everything that we may lawfully wish to ourselves; to be glad of every good, and sorry

for every evil, that happens to him; and to be ready to do him all such acts of kindness, as we are always ready to do to ourselves. This love, therefore, you see, is nothing else but a love of benevolence; it requires nothing of us but such good wishes, tender affections, and such acts of kindness, as we show to ourselves. This is all the love that we owe to the best of men; and we are never to lack any degree of this love to the worst or most unreasonable man in the world.

Now what is the reason why we are to love every man in this manner? It is answered that our obligation to love all men in this manner is founded upon many reasons. First, Upon a reason of equity; for if it is just to love ourselves in this manner, it must be unjust to deny any degree of this love to others, because every man is so exactly of the same nature, and in the same condition as ourselves. If, therefore, your own crimes and follies do not lessen your obligation to seek your own good, and wish well to yourself; neither do the follies and crimes of your neighbor lessen your obligation to wish and seek the good of your neighbor.

Another reason for this love is founded in the authority of God, who has commanded us to love every man as our self.

Thirdly, We are obliged to this love in imitation of God's goodness, that we may be children of our Father who is in Heaven, who wills the happiness of all His creatures, and makes His sun to rise on the evil, and on the good.

Fourthly, Our redemption by Jesus Christ calls us to the exercise of this love, who came from Heaven and laid down His life, out of love to the whole sinful world.

Fifthly, By the command of our Lord and Savior, who has required us to love one another, as he has loved us.

These are the great, perpetual reasons, on which our obligation to love all mankind as ourselves is founded. These reasons never vary or change, they always continue in the full force; and therefore equally oblige at all times, and in regard to all people. God loves us, not because we are wise, and good, and holy, but in pity to us, because we need this happiness--He loves us, in order to make us good. Our love, therefore, must take this course; not looking for, or requiring the merit of our brethren, but pitying their disorders, and wishing them all the good that they lack and are capable of receiving. It appears now plainly, from what has been said, that the love which we owe to our brethren, is only a love of benevolence.

Secondly, That this duty of benevolence is founded upon such reasons as never vary or change, such as have no dependence upon the qualities of people. From whence it follows that it is the same great sin, to lack this love to a bad man, as to lack it to a good man. Because he that denies any of this benevolence to a bad man, offends against all the same reasons of love, as he does that denies any benevolence to a good man; and consequently it is the same sin. When, therefore, you let loose any ill-natured passion, either of hatred or contempt, towards (as you suppose) an ill man, consider what you would think of another that was doing the same towards a good man, and be assured that you are committing the same sin.

You will perhaps say, How is it possible to love a good and a bad man in the same degree? Just as it is possible to be as just and faithful to a good man, as to an evil man. Now are you in any difficulty about performing justice and faithfulness to a bad man? Are you in any doubts, whether

you need be so just and faithful to him, as you need be to a good man? Now why is it that you are in no doubt about it? It is because you know that justice and faithfulness are founded upon reasons that never vary or change, that have no dependence upon the merits of men, but are founded in the nature of things, in the laws of God, and therefore are to be observed with an equal exactness towards good and bad men.

Now do but think thus justly of charity or love to your neighbor; that it is founded upon reasons that vary not, that have no dependence upon the merits of men, and then you will find it as possible to perform the same exact charity, as the same exact justice, to all men, whether good or bad.

You will, perhaps, farther ask if you are not to have a particular esteem, veneration, and reverence for good men? It is answered, Yes. But then this high esteem and veneration is a thing very different from that love of benevolence which we owe to our neighbor. The high esteem and veneration which you have for a man of eminent piety, is no act of charity to him--it is not out of pity and compassion that you so reverence him, but it is rather an act of charity to yourself, that such esteem and veneration may excite you to follow his example. You may, and ought to love, like, and approve the life which the good man leads; but then this is only the loving of virtue, wherever we see it. And we do not love virtue, with the love of benevolence, as anything that needs our good wishes, but as something that is our proper good. The whole of the matter is this. The actions which you are to love, esteem, and admire, are the actions of good and pious men; but the people to whom you are to do all the good you can, in all sorts of kindness and compassion, are all people, whether good or bad. This distinction between love of BENEVOLENCE, and love of ESTEEM, is very plain and obvious. And you may, perhaps, still better see the plainness and necessity of it, by this following instance. No man is to have a high esteem or honor for his own accomplishments, or behavior; yet every man is to love himself, that is, to wish well to himself; therefore this distinction between love and esteem is not only plain, but very necessary to be observed.

Again, if you think it hardly possible to dislike the actions of unreasonable men, and yet have a true love for them--consider this with relation to yourself. It is very possible, I hope, for you not only to dislike, but to detest and abhor a great many of your own past actions, and to accuse yourself of great folly for them. But do you then lose any of those tender sentiments towards yourself, which you used to have? Do you then cease to wish well to yourself? Is not the love of yourself as strong then, as at any other time?

Now what is thus possible with relation to ourselves, is in the same manner possible with relation to others. We may have the highest good wishes towards them, desiring for them every good that we desire for ourselves, and yet, at the same time, dislike their way of life. To proceed--all that love which we may justly have for ourselves, we are, in strict justice, obliged to exercise towards all other men; and we offend against the great law of our nature, and the greatest laws of God, when our tempers towards others are different from those which we have towards ourselves. Now that self-love which is just and reasonable, keeps us constantly tender, compassionate, and well-affected towards ourselves--if, therefore, you do not feel these kind dispositions towards all other people, you may be assured, that you are not in that state of charity, which is the very life and soul of Christian piety.

You know how it hurts you to be made the jest and ridicule of other people; how it grieves you to be robbed of your reputation, and deprived of the favorable opinion of your neighbors; if, therefore, you expose others to scorn and contempt in any degree; if it pleases you to see or hear of their frailties and infirmities; or if you are hesitant to conceal their faults; you are so far from loving such people as yourself, that you may be justly supposed to have as much hatred for them, as you have love for yourself. For such tempers are as truly the proper fruits of hatred, as the contrary tempers are the proper fruits of love. And as it is a certain sign that you love yourself because you are tender of everything that concerns you; so it is as certain a sign that you hate your neighbor, when you are pleased with anything that hurts him. But now, if the lack of a true and exact charity be so great a lack, that, as Paul says, it renders our greatest virtues but empty sounds and tinkling cymbals, how highly does it concern us to study every art, and practice every method of raising our souls to this state of charity! It is for this reason that you are here desired not to let this hour of prayer pass, without a full and solemn supplication to God, for all the instances of an universal love and benevolence to all mankind; such daily constant devotion being the only likely means of preserving you in such a state of love as is necessary to prove you to be a true follower of Jesus Christ.

02.21. Chapter 21

Of the necessity and benefit of INTERCESSION, considered as an exercise of universal love. How all orders of men are to pray and intercede with God for one another. How naturally such intercession amends and reforms the hearts of those that use it. That intercession is a great and necessary part of Christian devotion, is very evident from Scripture. The first followers of Christ seem to support all their love, and to maintain all their communion and correspondence, by mutual prayers for one another. Paul, whether he writes to churches or particular people, shows his intercession to be perpetual for them, that they are the constant subject of his prayers. Thus to the Philippians, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." (Php 1:3-4) Here we see, not only a continual intercession, but performed with so much gladness, as shows that it was an exercise of love in which he highly rejoiced. His devotion had also the same care for particular people, as appears by the following passages--"I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers, with a pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day." (2 Timothy 1:3)

How holy an acquaintance and friendship was this, how worthy of people that were raised above the world, and related to one another, as new members of a kingdom of Heaven! Apostles and great saints did not only thus benefit and bless particular churches, and private people; but they themselves also received graces from God by the prayers of others. Thus says Paul to the Corinthians--"You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many people, thanks may be given by many on our behalf." (2 Corinthians 1:11) This was the ancient friendship of Christians, uniting and cementing their hearts, not by worldly considerations, or human passions, but by the mutual communication of spiritual blessings, by prayers and thanksgivings to God for one another. It was this holy intercession that raised Christians to such a state of mutual love, as far exceeded all that had been praised and admired in human friendship. And when the same spirit of intercession is again in the world, when Christianity has the same power over the hearts of people that it then had, this holy friendship will be again in fashion, and Christians will be again the wonder of the world, for that exceeding love which they bear to one another. For a frequent intercession with God, earnestly beseeching him to forgive the sins of all mankind, to bless them with His providence, enlighten them with His Spirit, and bring them to everlasting happiness, is the divinest exercise that the heart of man can be engaged in. Be daily, therefore, on your knees, in a solemn deliberate performance of this devotion, praying for others in such forms, with such length, importunity, and earnestness, as you use for yourself; and you will find all little, ill-natured passions die away, your heart grow great and generous, delighting in the common happiness of others, as you used only to delight in your own. For he that daily prays to God, that all men may be happy in Heaven, takes the likeliest way to make him wish for, and delight in their happiness on earth. And it is hardly possible for you to beseech and entreat God to make any one happy in the highest enjoyments of his glory to all eternity, and yet be troubled to see him enjoy the much smaller gifts of God in this short and low state of human life. For how strange and unnatural would it be, to pray to God to grant health and a longer life to a sick

man, and at the same time to envy him the poor pleasure of agreeable medicines! Yet this would be no more strange or unnatural than to pray to God that your neighbor may enjoy the highest degrees of His mercy and favor, and yet at the same time envy him the little credit and figure he has among his fellow-creatures. When therefore you have once habituated your heart to a serious performance of this holy intercession, you have done a great deal to render it incapable of spite and envy, and to make it naturally delight in the happiness of all mankind. This is the natural effect of a general intercession for all mankind. But the greatest benefits of it are then received, when it descends to such particular instances as our state and condition in life more particularly require of us. Though we are to treat all mankind as neighbors and brethren, as any occasion offers; yet as we can only live in the actual society of a few, and are by our state and condition more particularly related to some than others; so when our intercession is made an exercise of love and care for those among whom our lot is fallen, or who belong to us in a nearer relation, it then becomes the greatest benefit to ourselves, and produces its best effects in our own hearts.

If therefore you should always change and alter your intercessions, according as the needs and necessities of your neighbors or acquaintance seem to require; beseeching God to deliver them from such or such particular evils, or to grant them this or that particular gift, or blessing; such intercessions, besides the great charity of them, would have a mighty effect upon your own heart, as disposing you to every other good office, and to the exercise of every other virtue towards such people, as have so often a place in your prayers. This would make it pleasant to you to be courteous, civil, and condescending to all about you; and make you unable to say or do a crude or hard thing to those, for whom you had used yourself to be so kind and compassionate in your prayers. For there is nothing that makes us love a man so much as praying for him; and when you can once do this sincerely for any man, you have fitted your soul for the performance of everything that is kind and civil towards him. This will fill your heart with a generosity and tenderness, that will give you a better and sweeter behavior than anything that is called fine breeding and good manners. By considering yourself as an advocate with God for your neighbors and acquaintance, you would never find it hard to be at peace with them yourself. It would be easy to you to bear with and forgive those, for whom you particularly implored the Divine mercy and forgiveness. Such prayers as these among neighbors and acquaintances, would unite them to one another in the strongest bonds of love and tenderness. It would exalt and ennoble their souls, and teach them to consider one another in a higher state, as members of a spiritual society, that are created for the enjoyment of the common blessings of God, and fellow-heirs of the same future glory. And by being thus desirous that every one should have his full share of the favors of God, they would not only be content, but glad to see one another happy in the little enjoyments of this transitory life. These would be the natural effects of such an intercession, among people of the same town or neighborhood, or that were acquainted with one another's state and condition.

OURANIUS is a holy priest, full of the spirit of the Gospel, watching, laboring, and praying for a poor country village. Every soul in it is as dear to him as himself; and he loves them all, as he loves himself, because he prays for them all, as often as he prays for himself. If his whole life is one continual exercise of great zeal and labor, hardly ever satisfied with any degrees of care and watchfulness, it is because he has learned the great value of souls, by so often appearing before God as an intercessor for them. He never thinks he can love, or do enough for his flock; because he never considers them in any other view than as so many people, that by receiving the gifts and

graces of God, are to become his hope, his joy, and his crown of rejoicing. He goes about his parish, and visits everybody in it; but visits in the same spirit of piety that he preaches to them--he visits them to encourage their virtues, to assist them with his advice and counsel, to discover their manner of life, and to know the state of their souls, that he may intercede with God for them, according to their particular necessities. When Ouranius first entered into holy orders, he had a haughtiness in his temper, a great contempt and disregard for all foolish and unreasonable people; but he has prayed away this spirit, and has now the greatest tenderness for the most obstinate sinners; because he is always hoping, that God will, sooner or later, hear those prayers that he makes for their repentance. The rudeness, ill-nature, or perverse behavior of any of his flock at first, used to betray him into impatience; but it now raises no other passion in him, than a desire of being upon his knees in prayer to God for them. Thus have his prayers for others altered and amended the state of his own heart. It would strangely delight you to see with what spirit he converses, with what tenderness he reproveth, with what affection he exhorts, and with what vigor he preaches; and it is all owing to this, because he reproveth, exhorts, and preaches to those for whom he first prays to God. This devotion softens his heart, enlightens his mind, sweetens his temper, and makes everything that comes from him, instructive, amiable, and affecting. At his first coming to his little village, it was as disagreeable to him as a prison, and every day seemed too tedious to be endured in so retired a place. He thought his parish was too full of poor and vulgar people, that were none of them fit for the conversation of a gentleman. This put him upon a close application to his studies. He kept much at home, wrote notes upon Homer and Plautus, and sometimes thought it hard to be called to pray by any poor person, when he was just in the midst of one of Homer's battles. This was his polite, or I may rather say, poor, ignorant turn of mind, before devotion had got the government of his heart. But now his days are so far from being tedious, or his parish too great a retirement, that he now only needs more time to do that variety of good, which his soul thirsts after. The solitude of his little parish is become matter of great comfort to him, because he hopes that God has placed him and his flock there, to make it their way to Heaven. He can now not only converse with, but gladly attend and wait upon the poorest kind of people. He is now daily watching over the weak and infirm, humbling himself to perverse, crude, ignorant people, wherever he can find them; and is so far from desiring to be considered as a gentleman, that he desires to be used as the servant of all; and in the spirit of his Lord and Master girds himself, and is glad to kneel down and wash any of their feet.

He now thinks the poorest creature in his parish good enough, and great enough, to deserve the humblest attentions, the kindest friendships, the tenderest offices, he can possibly show them. He is so far now from lacking agreeable company, that he thinks there is no better conversation in the world, than to be talking with poor and base people about the kingdom of Heaven. All these noble thoughts and Divine sentiments are the effects of his great devotion; he presents every one so often before God in his prayers, that he never thinks he can esteem, reverence, or serve those enough, for whom he implores so many mercies from God.

Ouranius is mightily affected with this passage of holy Scripture, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (James 5:16) This makes him practice all the arts of holy living, and aspire after every instance of piety and righteousness, that his prayers for his flock may have their full force, and avail much with God. For this reason, he has sold a small estate that he had, and has erected a charitable retirement for elderly poor people, to live in prayer and piety, that his

prayers, being assisted by such good works, may pierce the clouds, and bring down blessings upon those souls committed to his care.

Ouranius reads how God Himself said unto Abimelech, concerning Abraham--"He is a prophet; he shall pray for you, and you shall live." (Genesis 20:7) And again, how he said of Job, "And my servant Job shall pray for you--for him will I accept." (Job 42:8) From these passages Ouranius justly concludes, that the prayers of men eminent for holiness of life have an extraordinary power with God; that He grants to other people such pardons, reliefs, and blessings, through their prayers, as would not be granted to men of less piety and perfection. This makes Ouranius exceeding studious of Christian perfection, searching after every grace and holy temper, purifying his heart all manner of ways, fearful of every error and defect in his life, lest his prayers for his flock should be less availing with God, through his own defects in holiness. This makes him careful of every temper of his heart, give alms of all that he has, watch, and fast, and mortify, and live according to the strictest rules of temperance, meekness, and humility, that he may be in some degree like an Abraham or a Job in his parish, and make such prayers for them, as God will hear and accept.

These are the happy effects which a devout intercession has produced in the life of Ouranius. And if other people, in their several stations, were to imitate this example, in such a manner as suited their particular state of life, they would certainly find the same happy effects from it.

If MASTERS, for instance, were thus to remember their servants in their prayers, beseeching God to bless them, and suiting their petitions to the particular needs and necessities of their servants; letting no day pass without a full performance of this part of devotion, the benefit would be as great to themselves, as to their servants. No way so likely as this, to inspire them with a true sense of that power which they have in their hands, to make them delight in doing good, and becoming exemplary in all the parts of a wise and good master. The presenting their servants so often before God, as equally related to God, and entitled to the same expectations of Heaven as themselves, would naturally incline them to treat them not only with such humanity as became fellow-creatures, but with such tenderness, care, and generosity, as became fellow-heirs of the same glory. This devotion would make masters inclined to everything that was good towards their servants; be watchful of their behavior, and as ready to require of them an exact observance of the duties of Christianity, as of the duties of their service. This would teach them to consider their servants as God's servants, to desire their perfection, to do nothing before those who might corrupt their minds, to impose no business upon those who should lessen their sense of religion, or hinder them from their full share of devotion, both public and private. This praying for them would make them as glad to see their servants eminent in piety as themselves, and contrive that they should have all the opportunities and encouragements, both to know and perform all the duties of the Christian life.

How natural would it be for such a master to perform every part of family devotion; to have constant prayers; to excuse no one's absence from them; to have the Scriptures and books of piety often read among his servants; to take all opportunities of instructing them, of raising their minds to God, and teaching them to do all their business as a service to God and upon the hopes and expectations of another life! How natural would it be for such an one to pity their weakness and ignorance, to bear with the dullness of their understandings, or the perverseness of their

tempers, to reprove them with tenderness, exhort them with affection, as hoping that God would hear his prayers for them! How impossible would it be for a master, that thus interceded with God for his servants, to use any unkind threatenings towards them, to damn and curse them as dogs and scoundrels, and treat them only as the dregs of the creation! This devotion would give them another spirit, and make them consider how to make proper returns of care, kindness, and protection to those who had spent their strength and time in service and attendance upon them.

Now if gentlemen think it too low an employment for their state and dignity, to exercise such a devotion as this for their servants, let them consider how far they are from the Spirit of Christ, who made Himself not only an Intercessor, but a Sacrifice for the whole race of sinful mankind. Let them consider how miserable their greatness would be, if the Son of God should think it as much below Him to pray for them, as they do to pray for their fellow-creatures. Let them consider how far they are from that spirit, which prays for its most unjust enemies, if they have not kindness enough to pray for those by whose labors and service they live in ease themselves.

Again; if PARENTS should thus make themselves advocates and intercessors with God for their children, constantly applying to Heaven in behalf of them, nothing would be more likely not only to bless their children, but also to form and dispose their own minds to the performance of everything that was excellent and praiseworthy. I do not suppose, but that the generality of parents remember their children in their prayers, and call upon God to bless them. But the thing here intended is not a general remembrance of them, but a regular method of recommending all their particular needs and necessities unto God; and of praying for every such particular grace and virtue for them, as their state and condition of life shall seem to require. The state of parents is a holy state, in some degree like that of the priesthood, and calls upon them to bless their children with their prayers and sacrifices to God. Thus it was that holy Job watched over and blessed his children, he sanctified them, "he rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all." (Job 1:5)

If parents, therefore, considering themselves in this light, should be daily calling upon God in a solemn, deliberate manner, altering and extending their intercessions, as the state and growth of their children required, such devotion would have a mighty influence upon the rest of their lives; it would make them very circumspect in the government of themselves; prudent and careful of everything they said or did, lest their example should hinder that which they so constantly desired in their prayers. If a father were daily making particular prayers to God, that He would please to inspire his children with true piety, great humility, and strict temperance, what could be more likely to make the father himself become exemplary in these virtues? How naturally would he grow ashamed of lacking such virtues, as he thought necessary for his children! So that his prayers for their piety would be a certain means of exalting his own to its greatest height.

If a father thus considered himself as an intercessor with God for his children, to bless them with his prayers, what more likely means to make him aspire after every degree of holiness, that he might thereby be fitter to obtain blessings from Heaven for them? How would such thoughts make him avoid everything that was sinful and displeasing to God, lest when he prayed for his children, God should reject his prayers! How tenderly, how religiously would such a father converse with his children, whom he considered as his little spiritual flock, whose virtues he was to form by his example, encourage by his authority, nourish by his counsel, and prosper by his prayers to God for

them. How fearful would he be of all greedy and unjust ways of raising their fortune, of bringing them up in pride and indulgence, or of making them too fond of the world, lest he should thereby render them incapable of those graces which he was so often beseeching God to grant them.

These being the plain, natural, happy effects of this intercession, all parents, I hope, who have the real welfare of their children at heart, who desire to be their true friends and benefactors, and to live among them, in the spirit of wisdom and piety, will not neglect so great a means, both of raising their own virtue, and doing an eternal good to those, who are so near and dear to them by the strongest ties of nature.

Lastly, If all people, when they feel the first approaches of resentment, envy, or contempt, towards others; or if in all little disagreements and misunderstandings whatever, they should, instead of indulging their minds with little low reflections, have recourse, at such times, to a more particular and extraordinary intercession with God, for such people as had raised their envy, resentment, or discontent; this would be a certain way to prevent the growth of all uncharitable tempers. If you were also to form your prayer or intercession at that time, to the greatest degree of contrariety to that temper which you were then in, it would be an excellent means of raising your heart to the greatest state of perfection. As for instance, when at any time you find in your heart motions of envy towards any person, whether on account of his riches, power, reputation, learning, or advancement, if you should immediately betake yourself at that time to your prayers, and pray to God to bless and prosper him in that very thing which raised your envy; if you should express and repeat your petitions in the strongest terms, beseeching God to grant him all the happiness from the enjoyment of it, that can possibly be received; you would soon find it to be the best antidote in the world, to expel the venom of that poisonous passion. This would be such a triumph over yourself, would so humble and reduce your heart into obedience and order, that the devil would even be afraid of tempting you again in the same manner, when he saw the temptation turned into so great a means of amending and reforming the state of your heart.

Again; if in any little difference, or misunderstandings that you happened to have at any time, with a relation, a neighbor, or any one else, you should then pray for them in a more extraordinary manner than you ever did before; beseeching God to give them every grace, and blessing, and happiness, you can think of; you would have taken the speediest method that can be, of reconciling all differences, and clearing up all misunderstandings. You would then think nothing too great to be forgiven; need no apologies, and need no mediation of a third person, but be glad to testify your love and goodwill to him who had so high a place in your secret prayers. This would be the mighty power of such Christian devotion--it would remove all peevish passions, soften your heart into the most tender condescensions, and be the best arbitrator of all differences that happened between you and any of your acquaintance. The greatest resentments among friends and neighbors, most often arise from small irritations, and little mistakes in conduct. A certain sign that their friendship is merely human, not founded upon religious considerations, or supported by such a course of mutual prayer for one another as the first Christians used. For such devotion must necessarily either destroy such tempers, or be itself destroyed by them--you cannot possibly have any ill temper, or show any unkind behavior to a man, for whose welfare you are so much concerned, as to be his advocate with God in private.

Hence we may also learn the odious nature and exceeding guilt of all spite, hatred, contempt, and angry passions; they are not to be considered as defects in good nature, and sweetness of temper, not as failings in civility of manners, or good breeding, but as such sinful tempers as are entirely inconsistent with the charity of intercession. You think it a small matter to be peevish or ill-natured to such or such a man; but you should consider whether it be a small matter to do that, which you could not do if you had but so much charity as to be able to recommend him to God in your prayers. You think it a small matter to ridicule one man, and despise another; but you should consider whether it be a small matter to lack that charity toward these people, which Christians are not allowed to lack toward their most inveterate enemies. For be but as charitable to these men, do but bless and pray for them, as you are obliged to bless and pray for your enemies, and then you will find that you have charity enough, to make it impossible for you to treat them with any degree of scorn or contempt. For you cannot possibly despise and ridicule that man, whom your private prayers recommend to the love and favor of God. When you despise and ridicule a man, it is with no other end but to make him ridiculous and contemptible in the eyes of other men, and in order to prevent their esteem of him. How, therefore, can it be possible for you sincerely to beseech God to bless that man with the honor of His love and favor, whom you desire men to treat as worthy of their contempt? Could you, out of love to a neighbor, desire your Prince to honor him with every mark of his esteem and favor, and yet, at the same time, expose him to the scorn and derision of your own servants? Yet this is as possible as to expose that man to the scorn and contempt of your fellow-creatures whom you recommend to the favor of God in your secret prayers. From these considerations we may plainly discover the reasonableness and justice of this doctrine of the Gospel, "Whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whoever shall say, You fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire." (Matthew 5:22) We are not, I suppose, to believe that every hasty word, or unreasonable expression that slips from us by chance or surprise, and is contrary to our intention and tempers, is the great sin here signified. But he that says "Raca," or "You fool," must chiefly mean him that allows himself in deliberate, designed acts of scorn and contempt towards his brother, and in that temper speak to him, and of him, in reproachful language. Now since it appears that these tempers are at the bottom the most rank uncharitableness; since no one can be guilty of them, but because he has not charity enough to pray to God for his brother; it cannot be thought hard or rigorous justice, that such tempers should endanger the salvation of Christians. For who would think it hard, that a Christian cannot obtain the favor of God for himself, unless he reverence and esteem his brother Christian, as one that bears the image of God, as one for whom Christ died, as a member of Christ's body, as a member of that holy society on earth, which is in union with that triumphant Church in Heaven? Yet all these considerations must be forgot, all these glorious privileges disregarded, before a man can treat him that has them, as an object of scorn and contempt. So that to scorn, or despise a brother, or, as our blessed Lord says, to call him Raca or fool, must be looked upon as among the most odious, unjust, and guilty tempers, that can be supported in the heart of a Christian, and justly excluding him from all his hopes in the salvation of Jesus Christ. For to despise one for whom Christ died, is to be as contrary to Christ, as he that despises anything that Christ has said or done.

If a Christian that had lived with the holy Virgin Mary, should, after the death of our Lord, have taken any occasion to treat her with contempt, you would certainly say, that he had lost his piety towards our Blessed Lord. For a true reverence for Christ must have forced him to treat her with

respect who was so nearly related to Him. I dare appeal to any man's mind, whether it does not tell him, that this relation of the Virgin Mary to our Blessed Lord, must have obliged all those that lived and conversed with her, to treat her with great respect and esteem. Might not a man have justly dreaded the vengeance of God upon him, for any scorn or contempt that he had shown to her?

Now if this be plain and obvious reasoning, if a contempt offered to the Virgin Mary must have been interpreted a contempt of Christ, because of her near relation to Him, then let the same reasoning show you the great impiety of despising any brother. You cannot despise a brother, without despising him that stands in a high relation to God, to His Son Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Trinity. You would certainly think it a mighty impiety to treat a writing with great contempt that had been written by the finger of God; and can you think it a less impiety to contemn and vilify a brother, who is not only the workmanship but the image of God? You would justly think it great profaneness, to contemn and trample upon an altar, because it was appropriated to holy uses, and had the body of Christ so often placed upon it; and can you suppose it to be less profaneness to scorn and trample upon a brother, who so belongs to God, that his very body is to be considered as the temple of the Holy Spirit? (1 Corinthians 6:19) Had you despised and ill-treated the Virgin Mary, you had been chargeable with the impiety of despising her of whom Christ was born. And if you scorn and despise a brother, you are chargeable with the impiety of despising him for whom Christ laid down His life. And now, if this scornful temper is founded upon a disregard of all these relations which every Christian bears to God, and Christ, and the Holy Trinity, can you wonder, or think it hard, that a Christian who thus allows himself to despise a brother, should be in danger of hell-fire?

Secondly, It must here be observed, that though in these words, "Whoever shall say, You fool," etc., the great sin there condemned is an allowed temper of despising a brother; yet we are also to believe, that all hasty expressions, and words of contempt, though spoken by surprise or accident, are by this text condemned as great sins, and notorious breaches of Christian charity. They proceed from great deficit of Christian love and meekness, and call for great repentance. They are only little sins, when compared with habits and settled tempers of treating a brother spitefully, and fall as directly under the condemnation of this text as the grossest habits of uncharitableness. And the reason why we are always to apprehend great guilt, and call ourselves to a strict repentance for these hasty expressions of anger and contempt, is this; because they seldom are what they seem to be, that is, mere starts of temper that were occasioned purely by surprise or accident, but are much more our own proper acts than we generally imagine. A man says a great many bitter things; he presently forgives himself, because he supposes it was only the suddenness of the occasion, or something accidental that carried him so far beyond himself. But he should consider, that perhaps the accident, or surprise, was not the occasion of his angry expressions but might only be the occasion of his angry temper showing itself.

Now as this is, generally speaking, the case, as all haughty, angry language generally proceeds from some secret habits of pride in the heart; so people that are subject to it, though only now and then as accidents happen, have great reason to repent of more than their present behavior, to charge themselves with greater guilt than accidental passion, and to bring themselves to such penitance and mortification, as is proper to destroy habits of a haughty spirit. And this may be the reason why the text looks no farther than the outward language; why it only says "Whoever shall say, You fool!"; because few can proceed so far as to the accidental use of haughty, disdainful

language, but they whose hearts are more or less possessed with habits and settled tempers of pride and haughtiness. But to return--intercession is not only the best arbitrator of all differences, the best promoter of true friendship, the best cure and preservative against all unkind tempers, all angry and haughty passions, but is also of great use to discover to us the true state of our own hearts. There are many tempers which we think lawful and innocent, which we never suspect of any harm; which, if they were to be tried by this devotion, would soon show us how we have deceived ourselves.

SUSURRUS is a pious, temperate, good man, remarkable for abundance of excellent qualities. No one more constant at the service of the Church, or whose heart is more affected with it. His charity is so great, that he almost starves himself, to be able to give greater alms to the poor. Yet Susurrus had a prodigious failing along with these great virtues. He had a mighty inclination to hear and discover all the defects and infirmities of all about him. You were welcome to tell him anything of anybody, provided that you did not do it in the style of an enemy. He never disliked an evil-speaker, except when his language was rough and passionate. If you would but whisper anything gently, though it were ever so bad in itself, Susurrus was ready to receive it. When he visits, you generally hear him relating how sorry he is for the defects and failings of such a neighbor. He is always letting you know how tender he is of the reputation of his neighbor; how reluctant to say that which he is forced to say; and how gladly he would conceal it, if it could be concealed. Susurrus had such a tender, compassionate manner of relating the most detrimental things to his neighbor, that he even seemed, both to himself and others, to be exercising a Christian charity, at the same time that he was indulging a whispering, evil-speaking temper.

Susurrus once whispered to a particular friend in great secrecy, something too bad to be spoken of publicly. He ended with saying, how glad he was that it had not yet taken wind, and that he had some hopes it might not be true, though the suspicions were very strong. His friend made him this reply--You say, Susurrus, that you are glad it has not yet taken wind--and that you may have some hopes it may not prove true. Go home, therefore, to your closet, and pray to God for this man, in such a manner, and with such earnestness, as you would pray for yourself on the like occasion. Beseech God to interpose in his favor, to save him from false accusers, and bring all those to shame who, by uncharitable whispers and secret stories, wound him, like those that stab in the dark. And when you have made this prayer, then you may, if you please, go tell the same secret to some other friend, that you have told to me.

Susurrus was exceedingly affected with this rebuke, and felt the force of it upon his conscience in as lively a manner, as if he had seen the books opened at the day of judgment. All other arguments might have been resisted; but it was impossible for Susurrus either to reject, or to follow this advice, without being equally self-condemned in the highest degree. From that time to this, he has constantly used himself to this method of intercession; and his heart is so entirely changed by it, that he can now no more privately whisper anything to the prejudice of another than he can openly pray to God to do people harm. Whisperings and evil-speakings now hurt his ears like oaths and curses--and he has appointed one day in the week to be a day of penance as long as he lives, to humble himself before God, in the sorrowful confession of his former guilt.

It may well be wondered, how a man of so much piety as Susurrus could be so long deceived in himself, as to live in such a state of scandal and evil-speaking, without suspecting himself to be

guilty of it. But it was the tenderness and seeming compassion with which he heard and related everything that deceived both himself and others. This was a falseness of heart, which was only to be fully discovered by the true charity of intercession. And if people of virtue, who think as little harm of themselves as Susurrus did, were often to try their spirit by such an intercession, they would often find themselves to be such as they least of all suspected.

I have laid before you the many and great advantages of intercession. You have seen- 1. what a Divine friendship it must needs beget among Christians;

2. how dear it would render all relations and neighbors to one another;

3. how it tends to make clergymen, masters, and parents, exemplary and perfect in all the duties of their station;

4. how certainly it destroys all envy, spite, and ill-natured passions;

5. how speedily it reconciles all differences; and with what a piercing light it discovers to a man the true state of his heart.

These considerations will, I hope, persuade you to make such intercession as is proper for your state, the constant, chief matter of your devotion, at this hour of prayer.

02.22. Chapter 22

Recommending devotion at three o'clock, called in Scripture the ninth hour of the day. The subject of prayer at this hour is RESIGNATION TO THE DIVINE PLEASURE. The nature and duty of conformity to the will of God, in all our actions and designs.

I have recommended certain subjects to be made the fixed and chief matter of your devotions, at all the hours of prayer that have been already considered- 1. Thanksgiving and offering of yourself to God, at your first prayers in the morning.

2. At nine, the great virtue of Christian humility is to be the chief part of your petitions.

3. At twelve, you are called upon to pray for all the graces of universal love, and to raise it in your heart by such general and particular intercessions as your own state and relation to other people seem more particularly to require of you.

4. At this hour of the afternoon, you are desired to consider the necessity of resignation and conformity to the will of God, and to make this great virtue the principal matter of your prayers.

There is nothing wise, or holy, or just, but the great will of God. This is as strictly true, in the most rigid sense, as to say, that nothing is infinite and eternal but God. No beings, therefore, whether in Heaven, or on earth, can be wise, or holy, or just, but so far as they conform to this will of God. It is conformity to this will that gives virtue and perfection to the highest services of the angels in heaven; and it is conformity to the same will that makes the ordinary actions of men on earth become an acceptable service unto God. The whole nature of virtue consists in conforming to, and the whole nature of vice in declining from, the will of God. All God's creatures are created to fulfill His will; the sun and moon obey His will, by the necessity of their nature; angels conform to His will, by the perfection of their nature; if, therefore, you would show yourself not to be a rebel and apostate from the order of the creation, you must act like beings both above and below you; it must be the great desire of your soul, that God's will may be done by you on earth, as it is done in Heaven.

It must be the settled purpose and intention of your heart, to will nothing, design nothing, do nothing, but so far as you have reason to believe that it is the will of God that you should so desire, design, and do. It is as just and necessary to live in this state of heart, to think thus of God and yourself, as to think that you have any dependence upon Him. And it is as great a rebellion against God, to think that your will may ever differ from His, as to think that you have not received the power of willing for Him. You are therefore to consider yourself as a being that has no other business in the world, but to be that which God requires you to be; to have no tempers, no rules of your own, to seek no self-designs or self-ends, but to fill some place, and act some part, in strict conformity and thankful resignation to the Divine pleasure. To think that you are your own, or at your own disposal, is as absurd as to think that you created and can preserve yourself. It is as plain and necessary a first principle, to believe you are thus God's, that you thus belong to Him, and are to act and suffer all in a thankful resignation to His pleasure, as to believe that in Him you

"live, and move, and have your being." (Acts 17:28) Resignation to the Divine will signifies a cheerful approval, and thankful acceptance of everything that comes from God. It is not enough patiently to submit, but we must thankfully receive, and fully approve of everything, that by the order of God's providence happens to us. For there is no reason why we should be patient, but what is as good and strong a reason why we should be thankful. If we were under the hands of a wise and good physician, that could not mistake, nor do anything to us, but what certainly tended to our benefit; it would not be enough to be patient, and abstain from murmurings against such a physician; but it would be as great a breach of duty and gratitude to him not to be pleased and thankful for what he did, as it would be to murmur at him.

Now this is our true state with relation to God; we cannot be said so much as to believe in Him, unless we believe Him to be of infinite wisdom. Every argument, therefore, for patience under His disposal of us, is as strong an argument for approbation and thankfulness for everything that He does to us. And there needs no more to dispose us to this gratitude towards God, than a full belief in Him, that He is this Being of infinite wisdom, love, and goodness. Do but assent to this truth, in the same manner as you assent to things of which you have no doubt, and then you will cheerfully approve of everything that God has already approved for you. For as you cannot possibly be pleased with the behavior of any person towards you, but because it is for your good, is wise in itself, and the effect of his love and goodness towards you; so when you are satisfied that God does not only do that which is wise, and good, and kind, but that which is the effect of an infinite wisdom and love in the care of you; it will be as necessary, while you have this faith, to be thankful and pleased with everything which God chooses for you, as to wish your own happiness.

Whenever, therefore, you find yourself disposed to uneasiness, or murmuring at anything that is the effect of God's providence over us, you must look upon yourself as denying either the wisdom or goodness of God. For every complaint necessarily supposes this. You would never complain of your neighbor, but that you suppose you can show either his unwise, unjust, or unkind behavior towards you. Now every murmuring, impatient reflection, under the providence of God, is the same accusation of God. A complaint always supposes ill-usage. Hence also you may see the great necessity and piety of this thankful state of heart, because the lack of it implies an accusation of God's deficiency either of wisdom, or goodness, in His disposal of us.

It is not, therefore, any high degree of perfection, founded in any uncommon nicety of thinking, or refined notions, but a plain principle, founded in this plain belief, that God is a Being of infinite wisdom and goodness. Now this resignation to the Divine will may be considered in two respects; First, as it signifies a thankful approval of GOD'S GENERAL PROVIDENCE OVER THE WORLD; Secondly, as it signifies a thankful acceptance of His particular providence over us.

First, Every man is, by the law of his creation, by the first article of his creed, obliged to consent to, and acknowledge the wisdom and goodness of God in His general providence over the whole world. He is to believe, that it is the effect of God's great wisdom and goodness, that the world itself was formed at such a particular time, and in such a manner; that the general order of nature, the whole frame of things, is contrived and formed in the best manner. He is to believe that God's providence over states and kingdoms, times and seasons, is all for the best--that the revolutions of state and changes of empire, the rise and fall of monarchies, persecutions, wars, famines, and plagues, are all permitted and conducted by God's providence to the general good of man in this

state of trial. A good man is to believe all this, with the same fullness of assent as he believes that God is in every place, though he neither sees, nor can comprehend the manner of His presence. This is a noble magnificence of thought, a true religious greatness of mind, to be thus affected with God's general providence, admiring and magnifying His wisdom in all things; never murmuring at the course of the world, or the state of things, but looking upon all around, at heaven and earth, as a pleased spectator, and adoring that invisible hand, which gives laws to all motions, and overrules all events to ends suitable to the highest wisdom and goodness.

It is very common for people to allow themselves great liberty in finding fault with such things as have only God for their cause. Every one thinks he may justly say, what a wretched abominable climate he lives in. This man is frequently telling you, what a dismal cursed day it is, and what intolerable seasons we have. Another thinks he has very little to thank God for, that it is hardly worth his while to live in a world so full of changes and revolutions. But these are tempers of great impiety, and show that religion has not yet its seat in the heart of those that have them. It sounds indeed much better to murmur at the course of the world, or the state of things, than to murmur at Providence; to complain of the seasons and weather than to complain of God; but if these have no other cause but God and His providence, it is a poor distinction to say, that you are only angry at the things, but not at the Cause and Director of them.

How sacred the whole frame of the world is, how all things are to be considered as God's, and referred to Him, is fully taught by our Blessed Lord in the case of oaths--"But I say unto you, Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King; neither shall you swear by your head, because you can not make one hair white or black"; (Matthew 5:34-36) that is, because the whiteness or blackness of your hair is not yours, but God's. Here you see all things in the whole order of nature, from the highest heavens to the smallest hair, are always to be considered, not separately as they are in themselves, but as in some relation to God. And if this be good reasoning, you shall not swear by the earth, a city, or your hair, because these things are God's, and in a certain manner belong to Him; is it not exactly the same reasoning to say, You shall not murmur at the seasons of the earth, the states of cities, and the change of times, because all these things are in the hands of God, have Him for their Author, are directed and governed by Him to such ends as are most suitable to His wise providence?

If you do you think can murmur at the state of things without murmuring at Providence, or complain of seasons without complaining of God, hear what our Blessed Lord says further upon oaths--"Whoever shall swear by the altar, swears by it, and by all things thereon; and whoever shall swear by the temple, swears by Him that dwells therein; and he that shall swear by heaven, swears by the throne of God, and by Him that sits thereon." Matthew 23:20-22) Now does not this Scripture plainly oblige us to reason after this manner? Whoever murmurs at the course of the world murmurs at God that governs the course of the world. Whoever complains of seasons and weather, and speaks impatiently of times and events; repines and speaks impatiently of God, who is the sole Lord and Governor of times, seasons, and events. As therefore when we think of God Himself we are to have no sentiments but of praise and thanksgiving; so when we look at those things which are under the direction of God, and governed by His providence, we are to receive them with the same tempers of praise and gratitude. And though we are not to think all things right, and just, and lawful, which the providence of God permits; for then nothing could be unjust,

because nothing is without His permission; yet we must adore God in the greatest public calamities, the most grievous persecutions, as things that are allowed by God, like plagues and famines, for ends suitable to His wisdom and glory in the government of the world.

There is nothing more suitable to the piety of a reasonable creature, or to the spirit of a Christian, than thus to approve, admire, and glorify God in all the acts of His general providence; considering the whole world as His particular family, and all events as directed by His wisdom.

Everyone seems to consent to this, as an undeniable truth, that all things must be as God pleases; and is not this enough to make every man pleased with them himself? And how can a man be a peevish complainer of anything that is the effect of Providence, but by showing that his own self-will and self-wisdom is of more weight with him than the will and wisdom of God? And what can religion be said to have done for a man whose heart is in this state? For if he cannot thank and praise God, as well in calamities and sufferings as in prosperity and happiness, he is as far from the piety of a Christian as the heathen, who only loves those who love him, is from the charity of a Christian. For to thank God only for such things as you like, is no more a proper act of piety, than to believe only what you see is an act of faith.

Resignation and thanksgiving to God are only acts of piety, when they are acts of faith, trust, and confidence in the Divine goodness. The faith of Abraham was an act of true piety, because it stopped at no difficulties, was not altered or lessened by any human appearances. It first of all carried him, against all show of happiness, from his own kindred and country, into a strange land, not knowing where he went. It afterwards made him, against all appearances of nature, when his body was dead, when he was about an hundred years old, depend upon the promise of God, being fully persuaded that what God had promised, He was able to perform. It was this same faith, that, against so many pleas of nature, so many appearances of reason, prevailed upon him to offer up Isaac, "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." (Hebrews 11:17, Hebrews 11:19)

Now this faith is the true pattern of Christian resignation to the Divine pleasure; you are to thank and praise God, not only for things agreeable to you, that have the appearance of happiness and comfort; but when you are, like Abraham, called from all appearances of comfort to be a pilgrim in a strange land, to part with an only son; being as fully persuaded of the Divine goodness in all things that happen to you, as Abraham was of the Divine promise when there was the least appearance of its being performed. This is true Christian resignation to God, which requires no more to the support of it, than such a plain assurance of the goodness of God, as Abraham had of His veracity. And if you ask yourself, what greater reason Abraham had to depend upon the Divine veracity, than you have to depend upon the Divine goodness, you will find that none can be given. You cannot therefore look upon this as an unnecessary high pitch of perfection, since the lack of it implies the deficiency, not of any high notions, but of a plain and ordinary faith in the most certain doctrines both of natural and revealed religion.

Thus much concerning resignation to the Divine will, as it signifies a thankful approbation of God's general providence--it is now to be considered as it signifies a thankful acceptance of GOD'S PARTICULAR PROVIDENCE OVER US. Every Christian man is to consider himself as a particular object of God's providence; under the same care and protection of God as if the world had been made for him alone. It is not by chance that any man is born at such a time, of such

parents, and in such a place and condition. It is as certain that every soul comes into the body at such a time, and in such circumstances, by the express design of God, according to some purposes of His will, and for some particular ends; this is as certain as that it is by the express design of God that some beings are Angels, and others are men.

It is as much by the counsel and eternal purpose of God that you should be born in your particular state, and that Isaac should be the son of Abraham, as that Gabriel should be an Angel, and Isaac a man. The Scriptures assure us, that it was by Divine appointment that our blessed Savior was born at Bethlehem, and at such a time. Now although it was owing to the dignity of His person, and the great importance of His birth, that thus much of the Divine counsel was declared to the world, concerning the time and manner of it; yet we are as sure, from the same Scriptures, that the time and manner of every man's coming into the world is according to some eternal purposes and direction of Divine providence, and in such time, and place, and circumstances, as are directed and governed by God for particular ends of His wisdom and goodness. This we are as certain of, from plain revelation, as we can be of anything. For if we are told, that not a sparrow falls to the ground without our Heavenly Father; can anything more strongly teach us, that much greater beings, such as human souls, come not into the world without the care and direction of our Heavenly Father? If it is said, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered"--is it not to teach us, that nothing, not the smallest things imaginable, happen to us by chance? But if the smallest things we can conceive are declared to be under the Divine direction, need we, or can we, be more plainly taught, that the greatest things of life, such as the manner of our coming into the world, our parents, the time, and other circumstances of our birth and condition, are all according to the eternal purposes, direction, and appointment of Divine providence? When the disciples put this question to our blessed Lord concerning the blind man, saying, "Master, who sinned, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" He that was the eternal Wisdom of God, made this answer, "Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John 9:2-3) Plainly declaring, that the particular circumstances of every man's birth, the body that he receives, and the condition and state of life into which he is born, are appointed by a secret Providence, which directs all things to their particular times and seasons, and manner of existence, that the wisdom and works of God may be made manifest in them all. As therefore it is thus certain, that we are what we are, as to birth, time, and condition of entering into the world; since all that is particular in our state is the effect of God's particular providence over us, and intended for some particular ends both of His glory and our own happiness; we are, by the greatest obligations of gratitude, called upon to conform and resign our will to the will of God in all these respects; thankfully approving and accepting everything that is particular in our state; praising and glorifying His Name for our birth of such parents, and in such circumstances of state and condition; being fully assured, that it was for some reasons of infinite wisdom and goodness, that we were so born into such particular states of life.

If the man above mentioned was born blind, that the works of God might be manifested in him, had he not great reason to praise God for appointing him, in such a particular manner, to be the instrument of His glory? And if one person is born here, and another there; if one falls among riches, and another into poverty; if one receives his flesh and blood from these parents, and another from those, for as particular ends as the man was born blind; have not all people the greatest reason to bless God, and to be thankful for their particular state and condition, because

all that is particular in it, is as directly intended for the glory of God, and their own good, as the particular blindness of that man who was so born, that the works of God might be manifested in him?

How noble an idea does this give us of the Divine omniscience presiding over the whole world, and governing such a long chain and combination of seeming accidents and chances, to the common and particular advantage of all beings! So that all people, in such a wonderful variety of causes, accidents, and events, should all fall into such particular states as were foreseen and foreordained to their best advantage and so as to be most serviceable to the wise and glorious ends of God's government of all the world. Had you been anything else than what you are, you had, all things considered, been less wisely provided for than you are now--you would have lacked some circumstances and conditions that are best fitted to make you happy yourself, and serviceable to the glory of God. Could you see all that that God sees, all that happy chain of causes and motives which are to move and invite you to a right course of life, you would see something to make you like that state you are in, as fitter for you than any other. But as you cannot see this, so it is here that your Christian faith and trust in God is to exercise itself, and render you as grateful and thankful for the happiness of your state, as if you saw everything that contributes to it with your own eyes. But now if this is the case of every man in the world, thus blessed with some particular state that is most convenient for him, how reasonable is it for every man to will that which God has already willed for him! And by a pious faith and trust in the Divine goodness; thankfully to adore and magnify that wise providence, which he is sure has made the best choice for him of those things which he could not choose for himself!

Every uneasiness at our own state is founded upon comparing it with that of other people; which is fully as unreasonable as if a man in an illness should be angry at those that prescribe different things to him from those which are prescribed to people in health. For all the different states of life are like the different states of diseases; what is a remedy to one man in his state, may be poison to another. So that to murmur because you are not as some others are, is as if a man in one disease should murmur that he is not treated like him that is in another. Whereas, if he was to have his will, he would be killed by that which will prove the cure of another.

It is just thus in the various conditions of life; if you give yourself up to uneasiness, or complain at anything in your state, you may, for anything you know, be so ungrateful to God, as to murmur at that very thing which is to prove the cause of your salvation. Had you it in your power to get that which you think it is so grievous to lack, it might perhaps be that very thing which, of all others, would most expose you to eternal damnation. So that whether we consider the infinite goodness of God, that cannot choose amiss for us, or our own great ignorance of what is most advantageous to us, there can be nothing so reasonable and pious, as to have no will but that of God's, and to desire nothing for ourselves, in our persons, our state, and condition, but that which the good providence of God appoints us.

Farther, as the good providence of God thus introduces us into the world, into such states and conditions of life as are most convenient for us, so the same unerring wisdom orders all events and changes in the whole course of our lives, in such a manner, as to render them the fittest means to exercise and improve our virtue.

Nothing hurts us, nothing destroys us, but the ill use of that liberty with which God has entrusted us. We are as sure that nothing happens to us by chance, as that the world itself was not made by chance; we are as certain that all things happen, and work together for our good, as that God is goodness itself. So that a man has as much reason to will everything that happens to him, because God wills it, as to think that is wisest which is directed by infinite wisdom. This is not cheating or soothing ourselves into any false contentment, or imaginary happiness; but is a satisfaction grounded upon as great a certainty as the being and attributes of God. For if we are right in believing God to act over us with infinite wisdom and goodness, we cannot carry our notions of conformity and resignation to the Divine will too high; nor can we ever be deceived, by thinking that to be best for us, which God has brought upon us. For the providence of God is not more concerned in the government of night and day, and the variety of seasons, than in the common course of events that seem most to depend upon the mere wills of men. So that it is as strictly right to look upon all worldly accidents and changes, all the various turns and alternations in your own life, to be as truly the effects of Divine providence, as the rising and setting of the sun, or the alternations of the seasons of the year. As you are, therefore, always to adore the wisdom of God in the direction of these things; so it is the same reasonable duty always to magnify God, as an equal Director of everything that happens to you in the course of your own life. This holy resignation and conformity of your will to the will of God being so much the true state of piety, I hope you will think it proper to make this hour of prayer a constant season of applying to God for so great a gift; that by thus constantly praying for it, your heart may be habitually disposed towards it, and always in a state of readiness to look at everything as God's, and to consider Him in everything; that so everything that befalls you may be received in the spirit of piety, and made a means of exercising some virtue.

There is nothing that so powerfully governs the heart, that so strongly excites us to wise and reasonable actions, as a true sense of God's presence. But as we cannot see, or apprehend the essence of God, so nothing will so constantly keep us under a lively sense of the presence of God, as this holy resignation which attributes everything to Him, and receives everything as from Him. Could we see a miracle from God, how would our thoughts be affected with an holy awe and veneration of His presence! But if we consider everything as God's doing, either by order or permission, we shall then be affected with common things, as they would be who saw a miracle. For as there is nothing to affect you in a miracle, but as it is the action of God, and bespeaks His presence; so when you consider God as acting in all things, and all events, then all things will become venerable to you, like miracles, and fill you with the same tremendous sentiments of the Divine presence.

Now you must not reserve the exercise of this pious temper to any particular times or occasions, or fancy how resigned you will be to God, if such or such trials should happen. For this is amusing yourself with the notion or idea of resignation, instead of the virtue itself. Do not therefore please yourself with thinking how piously you would act and submit to God in a plague, or famine, or persecution, but be intent upon the perfection of the present day; and be assured, that the best way of showing a true zeal is to make little things the occasions of great piety.

Begin therefore in the smallest matters, and most ordinary occasions, and accustom your mind to the daily exercise of this pious temper, in the lowest occurrences of life. And when a contempt, an affront, a little injury, loss, or disappointment, or the smallest events of every day, continually raise

your mind to God in proper acts of resignation, then you may justly hope that you shall be numbered among those that are resigned and thankful to God in the greatest trials and afflictions.

02.23. Chapter 23

Of evening prayer. Of the nature and necessity of examination. How we are to be particular in the CONFESSION of all our sins. How we are to fill our minds with a just horror and dread of all sin.

I am now come to six o'clock in the evening, which, according to the Scripture account, is called the twelfth, or last hour of the day. This is a time so proper for devotion, that I suppose nothing need be said to recommend it as a season of prayer to all people that profess any regard to piety. As the labor and action of every state of life is generally over at this hour, so this is the proper time for everyone to call himself to account and review all his behavior from the first action of the day. The necessity of this examination is founded upon the necessity of repentance. For if it be necessary to repent of all our sins, if the guilt of unrepented sins still continue upon us, then it is necessary, not only that all our sins, but the particular circumstances and aggravations of them, be known, and recollected, and brought to repentance. The Scripture says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (John 1:9) Which is as much as to say, that then only our sins are forgiven, and we cleansed from the guilt and unrighteousness of them, when they are thus confessed and repented of.

There seems therefore to be the greatest necessity, that all our daily actions be constantly observed and brought to account, lest by a negligence we load ourselves with the guilt of unrepented sins. This examination therefore of ourselves every evening is not only to be considered as a commendable rule, and fit for a wise man to observe, but as something that is as necessary as a daily confession and repentance of our sins; because this daily repentance is very little significancy, and loses all its chief benefit, unless it be a particular confession and repentance of the sins of that day. This examination is necessary to repentance, in the same manner as time is necessary; you cannot repent or express your sorrow, unless you allow some time for it; nor can you repent, but so far as you know what it is that you are repenting of. So that when it is said, that it is necessary to examine and call your actions to account; it is only saying, that it is necessary to know what, and how many things you are to repent of.

You perhaps have hitherto only accustomed yourself to confess yourself a sinner in general, and ask forgiveness in the gross, without any particular remembrance, or contrition for the particular sins of that day. And by this practice you are brought to believe, that the same short general form of confession of 'sin in general', is a sufficient repentance for every day. Suppose another person should hold, that a confession of our sins in general once at the end of every week was sufficient; and that it was as well to confess the sins of seven days altogether, as to have a particular repentance at the end of every day--I know you sufficiently see the unreasonableness and impiety of this opinion, and that you think it is easy enough to show the danger and folly of it. Yet you cannot bring one argument against such an opinion, but what will be as good an argument against such a daily repentance as does not call the particular sins of that day to a strict account. For as you can bring no express text of Scripture against such an opinion, but must take all your arguments from the nature of repentance, and the necessity of a particular repentance for

particular sins, so every argument of that kind must as fully prove the necessity of being very particular in our repentance of the sins of every day; since nothing can be justly said against leaving the sins of the whole week to be repented for in the gross, but what may as justly be said against a daily repentance which considers the sins of that day only in the gross. Would you tell such a man, that a daily confession was necessary to keep up an abhorrence of sin, that the mind would grow hardened and senseless of the guilt of sin without it? And is not this as good a reason for requiring that your daily repentance be very express and particular for your daily sins? For if confession is to raise an abhorrence of sin, surely that confession which considers and lays open your particular sins, that brings them to light with all their circumstances and aggravations, that requires a particular sorrowful acknowledgment of every sin, must, in a much greater degree, fill the mind with an abhorrence of sin, than that which only, in one and the same form of words, confesses you only to be a sinner in general. For as this is nothing but what the greatest saint may justly say of himself, so the daily repeating of only such a confession has nothing in it to make you truly ashamed of your own way of life.

Again--must you not tell such a man, that by leaving himself to such a weekly general confession, he would be in great danger of forgetting a great many of his sins? But is there any sense or force in this argument, unless you suppose that our sins are all to be remembered, and brought to a particular repentance? And is it not necessary that our particular sins be not forgotten, but particularly remembered in our daily repentances, as in a repentance at any other time? So that every argument for a daily confession and repentance, is the same argument for the confession and repentance of the particular sins of every day. Because daily confession has no other reason nor necessity but our daily sins; and therefore is nothing of what it should be, but so far as it is a repentance and sorrowful acknowledgment of the sins of the day.

You would, I suppose, think yourself chargeable with great impiety, if you were to go to bed without confessing yourself to be a sinner and asking pardon of God; you would not think it sufficient that you did so yesterday. And yet if, without any regard to the present day, you only repeat the same form of words that you used yesterday, the sins of the present day may justly be looked upon to have had no repentance. For if the sins of the present day require a new confession, it must be such a new confession as is proper to itself. For it is the state and condition of every day that is to determine the state and manner of your repentance in the evening; otherwise the same general form of words is rather an empty formality that has the appearance of a duty, than such a true performance of it as is necessary to make it truly useful to you.

Let it be supposed, that on a certain day you have been guilty of these sins; that you have told a vain lie upon yourself, ascribing something falsely to yourself, through pride; that you have been guilty of slander, and indulged yourself in some degree of intemperance. Let it be supposed, that on the next day you have lived in a contrary manner; that you have neglected no duty of devotion, and been the rest of the day innocently employed in your proper business. Let it be supposed, that on the evening of both these days you only use the same confession in general, considering it rather as a duty that is to be performed every night, than as a repentance that is to be suited to the particular state of the day. Can it with any reason be said, that each day has had its proper repentance? Is it not as good sense to say, there is no difference in the guilt of these days, as to say that there need be no different repentance at the end of them? Or how can each of them have its proper repentance, but by its having a repentance as large, and extensive, and particular as the

guilt of each day?

Again--let it be supposed, that in that day, when you had been guilty of the three notorious sins above mentioned, that in your evening repentance, you had only called one of them to mind. Is it not plain, that the other two are unrepented of, and that, therefore, their guilt still abides upon you? So that you are then in the state of him who commits himself to the night without the repentance for such a day as had betrayed him into two such great sins.

Now these are not needless particulars, or such scrupulous niceties, as a man need not trouble himself about; but are such plain truths, as essentially concern the very life of piety. For if repentance is necessary, it is fully as necessary that it be rightly performed, and in due manner. And I have entered into all these particulars, only to show you, in the plainest manner, that examination and a careful review of all the actions of the day, is not only to be looked upon as a good rule, but as something as necessary as repentance itself.

If a man is to account for his expenses at night, can it be thought a needless exactness in him, to take notice of every particular expense in the day? And if a man is to repent of his sins at night, can it be thought too great a piece of scrupulosity in him, to know and call to mind what sins he is to repent of.

Farther; though it should be granted that a confession in general may be a sufficient repentance for the end of such days as have only the unavoidable frailties of our nature to lament; yet even this folly proves the absolute necessity of this self-examination--for without this examination, who can know that he has gone through any day in this manner?

Again--an evening repentance, which thus brings all the actions of the day to account, is not only necessary to wipe off the guilt of sin, but is also the most certain way to amend and perfect our lives. For it is only such a repentance as this that touches the heart, awakens the conscience, and leaves the horror and detestation of sin upon the mind. For instance--if it should happen, that upon any particular evening, all that you could charge yourself with should be this, namely, a hasty, negligent performance of your devotions, or too much time spent in an impertinent conversation--if the unreasonableness of these things were fully reflected upon and acknowledged; if you were then to condemn yourself before God for them, and implore His pardon and assisting grace; what could be so likely a means to prevent your falling into the same faults the next day? Or if you should fall into them again the next day, yet if they were again brought to the same examination and condemnation in the presence of God, their happening again would be such a proof to you of your own folly and weakness, would cause such a pain and remorse in your mind, and fill you with such shame and confusion at yourself, as would, in all probability, make you exceedingly desirous of greater perfection.

Now in the case of repeated sins, this would be the certain benefit that we should receive from this examination and confession; the mind would thereby be made humble, full of sorrow and deep compunction, and, by degrees, forced into amendment. Whereas a formal, general confession, that is only considered as an evening duty, that overlooks the particular mistakes of the day, and is the same, whether the day be spent ill or well, has little or no effect upon the mind; a man may use such a daily confession, and yet go on sinning and confessing all his life, without any remorse of mind, or true desire of amendment. For if your own particular sins are left out of your confession,

your confessing of sin in general has no more effect upon your mind than if you had only confessed that all men in general are sinners. And there is nothing in any confession to show that it is yours, but so far as it is a self-accusation, not of sin in general, or such as is common to all others, but of such particular sins as are your own proper shame and reproach. No other confession but such as thus discovers and accuses your own particular guilt can be an act of true sorrow, or real concern at your own condition. And a confession that is without this sorrow and compunction of heart, has nothing in it, either to atone for past sins, or to produce in us any true reformation and amendment of life. To proceed--In order to make this examination still farther beneficial, every man should oblige himself to a certain method in it. As every man has something particular in his nature, stronger inclinations to some vices than others, some infirmities that stick closer to him, and are harder to be conquered than others; and as it is as easy for every man to know this of himself, as to know whom he likes or dislikes; so it is highly necessary, that these particularities of our natures and tempers should never escape a severe examination at our evening repentance. I say, a severe examination, because nothing but a rigorous severity against these natural tempers is sufficient to conquer them. They are the right eyes that are not to be spared; but to be plucked out and cast from us. For as they are the infirmities of nature, so they have the strength of nature, and must be treated with great opposition, or they will soon be too strong for us.

He, therefore, who knows himself most of all subject to ANGER and passion, must be very exact and constant in his examination of this temper every evening. He must find out every slip that he has made of that kind, whether in thought, or word, or action; he must shame, and reproach, and accuse himself before God, for everything that he has said or done in obedience to his passion. He must no more allow himself to forget the examination of this temper than to forget his whole prayers.

Again--If you find that VANITY is your prevailing temper, that is always putting you upon the adornment of your person, and catching after everything that compliments or flatters your abilities, never spare nor forget this temper in your evening examination; but confess to God every vanity of thought, or word, or action, that you have been guilty of, and put yourself to all the shame and confusion for it that you can. In this manner should all people act with regard to their chief frailty, to which their nature most inclines them. And though it should not immediately do all that they would wish, yet, by a constant practice, it would certainly in a short time produce its desired effect.

Farther--As all states and employments of life have their particular dangers and temptations, and expose people more to some sins than others, so every man that wishes his own improvement, should make it a necessary part of his evening examination, to consider how he has avoided, or fallen into such sins, as are most common to his state of life. For as our business and condition of life has great power over us, so nothing but such watchfulness as this can secure us from those temptations to which it daily exposes us. The POOR man, from his condition of life, is always in danger of repining and uneasiness; the RICH man is most exposed to sensuality and indulgence; the TRADESMAN to lying and unreasonable gains; the SCHOLAR to pride and vanity--so that in every state of life, a man should always, in his examination of himself, have a strict eye upon those faults to which his state of life most of all exposes him.

Again--As it is reasonable to suppose that every good man has entered into, or at least proposed to himself, some METHOD OF HOLY LIVING, and set himself some such rules to observe, as are not common to other people, and only known to himself--so it should be a constant part of his nightly recollection, to examine how, and in what degree, he has observed them, and to reproach himself before God for every neglect of them. By rules, I here mean such rules as relate to the well ordering of our time, and the business of our common life; such rules as prescribe a certain order to all that we are to do, our business, devotion, mortifications, readings, retirements, conversation, meals, refreshments, sleep, and the like.

Now, as good rules relating to all these things are certain means of great improvement, and such as all serious Christians must needs propose to themselves, so they will hardly ever be observed to any purpose, unless they are made the constant subject of our evening examination.

Lastly, You are not to content yourself with a hasty general review of the day, but you must enter upon it with deliberation; begin with the first action of the day, and proceed, step by step, through every particular matter that you have been concerned in, and so let no time, place, or action be overlooked. An examination thus managed, will in a little time make you as different from yourself, as a wise man is different from an imbecile. It will give you such a newness of mind, such a spirit of wisdom, and desire of perfection, as you were an entire stranger to before. Thus much concerning the evening examination.

I proceed now to lay before you such considerations as may fill your mind with a just DREAD AND HORROR OF ALL SIN, and help you to confess your own, in the most passionate contrition and sorrow of heart.

Consider first, how odious all sin is to God, what a mighty degradation it is, and how abominable it renders sinners in the sight of God. That it is sin alone that makes the great difference between an Angel and the devil; and that every sinner is, so far as he sins, a friend of the devil's, and carrying on his work against God. That sin is a greater blemish and defilement of the soul, than any filth or disease is a defilement of the body. And to be content to live in sin is a much greater degradation, than to desire to wallow in the mire, or love any bodily putrefaction.

Consider how you must abhor a creature that delighted in nothing but filth and nastiness, that hated everything that was decent and clean--and let this teach you to apprehend, how odious that soul that delights in nothing but the impurity of sin, must appear unto God. For all sins, whether of sensuality, pride, or falseness, or any other irregular passion, are nothing else but the filth and impure diseases of the rational soul. And all righteousness is nothing else but the purity, the decency, the beauty, and perfection of that spirit which is made in the image of God.

Again--Learn what horror you ought to have for the guilt of sin, from the greatness of that Atonement which has been made for it. God made the world by the breath of His mouth, by a word speaking, but the redemption of the world has been a work of longer labor. How easily God can create beings, we learn from the first chapter of Genesis; but how difficult it is for infinite mercy to forgive sins, we learn from that costly Atonement, those bloody sacrifices, those pains and penances, those sicknesses and deaths, which all must be undergone, before the guilty sinner is fit to appear in the presence of God.

Ponder these great truths--that the Son of God was forced to become man, to be partaker of all our infirmities, to undergo a poor, painful, miserable, and contemptible life, to be persecuted, hated, and at last nailed to a cross, that, by such sufferings, He might render God propitious to that nature in which He suffered. That all the bloody sacrifices and atonements of the Jewish law were to represent the necessity of this great Sacrifice, and the great displeasure God bore to sinners. That the world is still under the curse of sin, and certain marks of God's displeasure at it; such as famines, plagues, tempests, sickness, diseases, and death. Consider that all the sons of Adam are to go through a painful, sickly life, denying and mortifying their natural appetites, and crucifying the lusts of the flesh, in order to have a share in the Atonement of our Savior's death. That all their penances and self-denials, all their tears and repentance, are only made available by that great intercession which is still making for them at the right hand of God. Consider these great truths; that this mysterious redemption, all these sacrifices and sufferings, both of God and man, are only to remove the guilt of sin; and then let this teach you, with what tears and contrition you ought to purge yourself from it.

After this general consideration of the guilt of sin, which has done so much mischief to your nature, and exposed it to so great punishment, and made it so odious to God, that nothing less than so great an Atonement of the Son of God, and so great repentance of our own, can restore us to the Divine favor--Consider next your own particular share in the guilt of sin. And if you would know with what zeal you ought to repent yourself, consider how you would exhort another sinner to repentance--and what repentance and amendment you would expect from him whom you judged to be the greatest sinner in the world. Now this case every man may justly reckon to be his own. And you may truly look upon yourself to be the greatest sinner that you know in the world. For though you may know abundance of people to be guilty of some gross sins, with which you cannot charge yourself, yet you may justly condemn yourself as the greatest sinner that you know. And that for these following reasons--First, Because you know more of the folly of your own heart, than you do of other people's; and can charge yourself with various sins, that you only know of yourself, and cannot be sure that other sinners are guilty of them. So that as you know more of the folly, the degradation, the pride, the deceitfulness and negligence of your own heart, than you do of any one's else, so you have just reason to consider yourself as the greatest sinner that you know--because you know more of the greatness of your own sins, than you do of other people's.

Secondly, The greatness of our guilt arises chiefly from the greatness of God's goodness towards us, from the particular graces and blessings, the favors, the lights and instructions that we have received from Him. Now as these graces and blessings, and the multitude of God's favors towards us, are the great aggravations of our sins against God, so they are only known to ourselves. And therefore every sinner knows more of the aggravations of his own guilt, than he does of other people's; and consequently may justly look upon himself to be the greatest sinner that he knows.

How good God has been to other sinners, what light and instruction He has given to them; what blessings and graces they have received from Him; how often He has touched their hearts with holy inspirations, you cannot tell. But all this you know of yourself--therefore you know greater aggravations of your own guilt, and are able to charge yourself with greater ingratitude, than you can charge upon other people. And this is the reason, why the greatest saints have in all ages condemned themselves as the greatest sinners, because they knew some aggravations of their own sins, which they could not know of other people's. The right way, therefore, to fill your heart

with true contrition, and a deep sense of your own sins, is this--You are not to consider, or compare the outward form, or course of your life, with that of other people's, and then think yourself to be less sinful than they, because the outward course of your life is less sinful than theirs. But in order to know your own guilt, you must consider your own particular circumstances, your health, your sickness, your youth or age, your particular calling, the happiness of your education, the degrees of light and instruction that you have received, the good men that you have conversed with, the admonitions that you have had, the good books that you have read, the numberless multitude of Divine blessings, graces, and favors that you have received, the good motions of grace that you have resisted, the resolutions of amendment that you have often broken, and the checks of conscience that you have disregarded. For it is from these circumstances that every one is to state the measure and greatness of his own guilt. And as you know only these circumstances of your own sins, so you must necessarily know how to charge yourself with higher degrees of guilt, than you can charge upon other people.

God Almighty knows greater sinners, it may be, than you are; because He sees and knows the circumstances of all men's sins, but your own heart, if it is faithful to you, can discover no guilt so great as your own--because it can only see in you those circumstances, on which great part of the guilt of sin is founded. You may see sins in other people that you cannot charge upon yourself; but then you know a number of circumstances of your own guilt that you cannot lay to their charge. And perhaps that person that appears at such a distance from your virtue, and so odious in your eyes, would have been much better than you are, had he been altogether in your circumstances, and received all the same favors and graces from God that you have. This is a very humbling reflection, and very proper for those people to make, who measure their virtue, by comparing the outward course of their lives with that of other people's. For to look at whom you will, however different from you in his way of life, yet you can never know that he has resisted so much Divine grace as you have, or that in all your circumstances, he would not have been much truer to his duty than you are.

Now this is the reason why I desired you to consider how you would exhort that man to confess and bewail his sins whom you looked upon to be one of the greatest sinners. Because if you will deal justly, you must fix the charge at home, and look no farther than yourself. For God has given no one any power of knowing the true greatness of any sins but his own; and therefore the greatest sinner that every one knows is himself.

You may easily see, how such a one in the outward course of his life breaks the laws of God; but then you can never say, that had you been exactly in all his circumstances, that you would not have broken them more than he has done. A serious and frequent reflection upon these things will mightily tend to humble us in our own eyes, make us very apprehensive of the greatness of our own guilt, and very tender in censuring and condemning other people. For who would dare to be severe against other people, when, for anything he can tell, the severity of God may be more due to him, than to them? Who would exclaim against the guilt of others, when he considers that he knows more of the greatness of his own guilt, than he does of theirs? How often you have resisted God's Holy Spirit; how many motives to goodness you have disregarded--how many particular blessings you have sinned against; how many good resolutions you have broken; how many checks and admonitions of conscience you have stifled, you very well know; but how often this has been the case of other sinners, you know not. And therefore the greatest sinner that you know,

must be yourself.

Whenever, therefore, you are angry at sin or sinners, whenever you read or think of God's indignation and wrath at wicked men, let this teach you to be the most severe in your censure, and most humble and contrite in the acknowledgment and confession of your own sins, because you know of no sinner equal to yourself.

Lastly, to conclude this chapter--Having thus examined and confessed your sins at this hour of the evening, you must afterwards look upon yourself as still obliged to betake yourself to prayer again, just before you go to bed. The subject that is most proper for your prayers at that time is DEATH. Let your prayers, therefore, then be wholly upon it, reckoning upon all the dangers, uncertainties, and terrors of death; let them contain everything that can affect and awaken your mind into just apprehensions of it. Let your petitions be all for right sentiments of the approach and importance of death; and beg of God, that your mind may be possessed with such a sense of its nearness, that you may have it always in your thoughts, do everything as in sight of it, and make every day a day of preparation for it.

Represent to your imagination, that your bed is your grave; that all things are ready for your interment; that you are to have no more to do with this world; and that it will be owing to God's great mercy, if you ever see the light of the sun again, or have another day to add to your works of piety. And then commit yourself to sleep, as into the hands of God; as one that is to have no more opportunities of doing good; but is to awake among spirits that are separate from the body, and waiting for the judgment of the last great day.

Such a solemn resignation of yourself into the hands of God every evening, and parting with all the world, as if you were never to see it any more, and all this in the silence and darkness of the night, is a practice that will soon have excellent effects upon your spirit. For this time of the night is exceeding proper for such prayers and meditations; and the likeness which sleep and darkness have to death, will contribute very much to make your thoughts about it the more deep and affecting. So that I hope, you will not let a time so proper for such prayers, be ever passed over without them.

02.24. Chapter 24

The Conclusion.

Of the excellency and greatness of a devout spirit.

I have now finished what I intended in this treatise. I have explained the nature of devotion, both as it signifies a life devoted to God, and as it signifies a regular method of daily prayer. I have now only to add a word or two, in recommendation of a life governed by this spirit of devotion. For though it is as reasonable to suppose it the desire of all Christians to arrive at Christian perfection, as to suppose that all sick men desire to be restored to perfect health; yet experience shows us, that nothing needs more to be pressed, repeated, and forced upon our minds, than the plainest rules of Christianity. Voluntary poverty, virginity, and devout retirement, have been here 'recommended' as things not necessary, yet highly beneficial to those that would make the way to perfection the most easy and certain. But Christian perfection itself is tied to no particular form of life; but is to be attained, though not with the same ease, in every state of life. This has been fully asserted in another place, where it has been shown, that Christian perfection calls no one (necessarily) to a cloister, but to the full performance of those duties, which are necessary for all Christians, and common to all states of life. So that the whole of the matter is plainly this--Virginity, voluntary poverty, and such other restraints of lawful things, are not necessary to Christian perfection; but are much to be commended in those who choose them as helps and means of a more safe and speedy arrival at it. It is only in this manner, and in this sense, that I would recommend any particularity of life; not as if perfection consisted in it, but because of its great tendency to produce and support the true spirit of Christian perfection. But the thing which is here pressed upon all, is a life of a great and strict devotion--which, I think, has been sufficiently shown to be equally the duty and happiness of all orders of men. Neither is there anything in any particular state of life, that can be justly pleaded as a reason for any abatements of a devout spirit. But because in this polite age of ours, we have so passed away from the spirit of devotion, that many seem afraid even to be suspected of it, imagining great devotion to be great bigotry--that it is founded in ignorance and baseness of spirit; and that little, weak, and dejected minds, are generally the greatest proficient in it--It shall here be fully shown, that great devotion is the noblest temper of the greatest and noblest souls; and that they who think it receives any advantage from ignorance and baseness of spirit, are themselves not a little, but entirely ignorant of the nature of devotion, the nature of God, and the nature of themselves.

People of fine parts and learning, or of great knowledge in worldly matters, may perhaps think it hard to have their deficiency of devotion charged upon their ignorance. But if they will be content to be tried by reason and Scripture, it may soon be made appear, that a lack of devotion, wherever it is, either among the learned or unlearned, is founded in gross ignorance, and the greatest blindness and insensibility that can happen to a rational creature; and that devotion is so far from being the effect of a little and dejected mind, that it must and will be always highest in the most perfect natures. And first, who reckons it a sign of a poor, little mind, for a man to be full of

reverence and duty to his parents, to have the truest love and honor for his friend, or to excel in the highest instances of gratitude to his benefactor? Are not these tempers in the highest degree, in the most exalted and perfect minds? And yet what is high devotion, but the highest exercise of these tempers, of duty, reverence, love, honor, and gratitude to the amiable, glorious Parent, Friend, and Benefactor of all mankind? Is it a true greatness of mind, to reverence the authority of your parents, to fear the displeasure of your friend, to dread the reproaches of your benefactor? And must not this fear, and dread, and reverence, be much more just, and reasonable, and honorable, when they are in the highest degree towards God? Now as the higher these tempers are, the more are they esteemed among men, and are allowed to be so much the greater proofs of a true greatness of mind--so the higher and greater these same tempers are towards God, so much the more do they prove the nobility, excellence, and greatness of the mind. So that so long as duty to parents, love to friends, and gratitude to benefactors, are thought great and honorable tempers; devotion, which is nothing else but duty, love, and gratitude to God, must have the highest place among our highest virtues.

If a prince, out of his mere goodness, should send you a pardon by one of his slaves, would you think it a part of your duty to receive the slave with marks of love, esteem, and gratitude for his great kindness, in bringing you so great a gift--and at the same time think it a lowliness and baseness of spirit, to show love, esteem, and gratitude to the prince, who, of his own goodness, freely sent you the pardon? And yet this would be as reasonable as to suppose that love, esteem, honor, and gratitude, are noble tempers, and instances of a great soul, when they are paid to our fellow-creatures; but the effects of a base, ignorant, dejected mind, when they are paid to God.

Farther; that part of devotion which expresses itself in sorrowful confessions, and penitential tears of a broken and a contrite heart, is very far from being any sign of a little and ignorant mind. For who does not acknowledge it an instance of an ingenuous, generous, and brave mind, to acknowledge a fault, and ask pardon for any offense? And are not the finest and most improved minds, the most remarkable for this excellent temper? Is it not also allowed, that the ingenuity and excellence of a man's spirit is much shown, when his sorrow and indignation at himself rises in proportion to the folly of his crime, and the goodness and greatness of the person he has offended?

Now if things are thus, then the greater any man's mind is, the more he knows of God and himself, the more will he be disposed to prostrate himself before God, in all the humblest acts and expressions of repentance. And the greater the ingenuity, the generosity, judgment, and penetration of his mind is, the more will he exercise and indulge a passionate, tender sense of God's just displeasure; and the more he knows of the greatness, the goodness, and perfection of the Divine nature, the fuller of shame and confusion will he be at his own sins and ingratitude. And on the other hand, the more dull and ignorant any soul is, the more base and ungenerous it naturally is, the more senseless it is of the goodness and purity of God; so much the more averse will it be to all acts of humble confession and repentance. Devotion, therefore, is so far from being best suited to little ignorant minds, that a true elevation of soul, a lively sense of honor, and great knowledge of God and ourselves, are the greatest natural helps that our devotion has. And on the other hand, it shall here be made appear by variety of arguments, that a lack of devotion is founded on the most excessive ignorance. And first, our blessed Lord, and His Apostles, were eminent instances of great and frequent devotion. Now if we will grant (as all Christians must

grant) that their great devotion was founded in a true knowledge of the nature of devotion, the nature of God, and the nature of man; then it is plain, that all those that are insensible of the duty of devotion, are in this excessive state of ignorance, they neither know God, nor themselves, nor devotion. For if a right knowledge in these three respects produces great devotion, as in the case of our Savior and His Apostles, then a neglect of devotion must be chargeable upon ignorance.

Again; how is it that most people have recourse to devotion, when they are in sickness, distress, or fear of death? Is it not because this state shows them more of the need of God, and their own weakness, than they perceive at other times? Is it not because their infirmities, their approaching end, convince them of something, which they did not half perceive before? Now if devotion at these seasons is the effect of a better knowledge of God and ourselves, then the neglect of devotion, at other times, is always owing to great ignorance of God and ourselves.

Farther; as a lack of devotion is ignorance, so it is the most shameful ignorance, and such as is to be charged with the greatest folly. This will fully appear to any one that considers by what rules we are to judge of the excellency of any knowledge, or the shamefulness of any ignorance. Now knowledge itself would be no excellence, nor ignorance any reproach to us, but that we are rational creatures. But if this be true, then it follows plainly, that knowledge which is most suitable to our rational nature, and which most concerns us, as such, to know, is our highest, finest knowledge; and that ignorance which relates to things that are most essential to us as rational creatures, and which we are most concerned to know, is, of all others, the most gross and shameful ignorance. If therefore there be any things that concern us more than others, if there be any truths that are more to us than all others, he that has the fullest knowledge of these things, that sees these truths in the clearest, strongest light, has, of all others, as a rational creature, the clearest understanding, and the strongest parts.

If therefore our relation to God be our greatest relation, if our advancement in His favor be our highest advancement, he that has the highest notions of the excellence of this relation, he that most strongly perceives the highest worth, and great value of holiness and virtue, that judges everything little, when compared with it, proves himself to be master of the best and most excellent knowledge.

If a judge has fine skill in painting, architecture, and music, but at the same time has gross and confused notions of equity, and a poor, dull apprehension of the value of justice, who would scruple to reckon him a poor ignorant judge? If a bishop should be a man of great address and skill in the arts of business, and understanding how to raise and enrich his family in the world, but should have no taste nor sense of the maxims and principles of the saints and fathers of the Church; if he did not conceive the holy nature and great obligations of his calling, and judge it better to be crucified to the world, than to live idly in pomp and splendor; who would scruple to charge such a bishop with lack of understanding? If we do not judge and pronounce after this manner, our reason and judgment are but empty sounds. But now, if a judge is to be reckoned ignorant, if he does not feel and perceive the value and worth of justice; if a bishop is to be looked upon as void of understanding, if he is more experienced in worldly things than in the exalted virtues of his apostolical calling; then all common Christians are to be looked upon as more or less knowing--accordingly as they know more or less of those great things which are the common and greatest concern of all Christians.

If a gentleman should fancy that the moon is no bigger than it appears to the eye, that it shines with its own light, that all the stars are only so many tiny spots of light; if, after reading books of astronomy, he should still continue in the same opinion, most people would think he had but a poor understanding of what he read. But if the same person should think it better to provide for a short life here, than to prepare for a glorious eternity hereafter; that it was better to be rich, than to be eminent in piety, his ignorance and dullness would be too great to be compared to anything else.

There is no knowledge that deserves so much as the name of it, but that which we call judgment. And that is the most clear and improved understanding, which judges best of the value and worth of things. All the rest is but the capacity of an animal, it is but mere seeing and hearing. And there is no excellence of any knowledge in us, until we exercise our judgment, and judge well of the value and worth of things.

If a man had eyes that could see beyond the stars, or pierce into the heart of the earth, but could not see the things that were before him, or discern anything that was serviceable to him, we should reckon that he had but a very bad sight. If another had ears that received sounds from the world in the moon, but could hear nothing that was said or done upon earth, we should look upon him to be as bad as deaf. In like manner, if a man has a memory that can retain a great many things; if he has a wit that is sharp and acute in arts and sciences, or an imagination that can wander agreeably in fictions, but has a dull, poor apprehension of his duty and relation to God, of the value of piety, or the worth of moral virtue, he may very justly be reckoned to have a bad understanding. He is but like the man, that can only see and hear such things as are of no benefit to him. As certain therefore as piety, virtue, and eternal happiness are of the most concern to man; as certain as the immortality of our nature and relation to God, are the most glorious circumstances of our nature; so certain is it, that he who dwells most in contemplation of them, whose heart is most affected with them, who sees farthest into them, who best comprehends the value and excellency of them, who judges all worldly attainments to be mere bubbles and shadows in comparison of them, proves himself to have, of all others, the finest understanding, and the strongest judgment. And if we do not reason after this manner, or allow this method of reasoning, we have no arguments to prove that there is any such thing as a wise man, or a imbecile. For a man is proved to be a imbecile, not because he lacks any of his senses, or is incapable of everything, but because he has no judgment, and is entirely ignorant of the worth and value of things. He will perhaps choose a fine coat rather than a large estate. And as the essence of stupidity consists in the entire lack of judgment, in an ignorance of the value of things, so, on the other hand, the essence of wisdom and knowledge must consist in the excellency of our judgment, or in the knowledge of the worth and value of things. This therefore is an undeniable proof, that he who knows most of the value of the best things, who judges most rightly of the things which are of most concern to him, who had rather have his soul in a state of Christian perfection, than the greatest share of worldly happiness, has the highest wisdom, and is at the farthest distance from men that are fools, that any knowledge can place him. On the other hand, he that can talk the learned languages, and repeat a great deal of history, but prefers the indulgence of his body to the purity and perfection of his soul, who is more concerned to get a name or an estate here, than to live in eternal glory hereafter, is in the nearest state to that imbecile, who chooses a painted coat, rather than a large estate. He is not called an imbecile by men, but he must appear to God and

heavenly beings, as in a more excessive state of stupidity, and will sooner or later certainly appear so to himself. But now if this be undeniably plain, that we cannot prove a man to be a imbecile, but by showing that he has no knowledge of things that are good and evil to himself; then it is undeniably plain, that we cannot prove a man to be wise, but by showing that he has the fullest knowledge of things, that are his greatest good, and his greatest evil. If, therefore, God be our greatest good; if there can be no good but in His favor, nor any evil but in departing from Him, then it is plain, that he who judges it the best thing he can do to please God to the utmost of his power, who worships and adores Him with all his heart and soul, who would rather have a pious mind than all the dignities and honors in the world, shows himself to be in the highest state of human wisdom. To proceed--We know how our blessed Lord acted in a human body; it was His food and drink, to do the will of His Father who is in Heaven. And if any number of heavenly spirits were to leave their habitations in the presence of God, and be for a while united to human bodies, they would certainly tend towards God in all their actions, and be as heavenly as they could, in a state of flesh and blood. They would certainly act in this manner, because they would know that God was the only good of all spirits; and that whether they were in the body, or out of the body, in Heaven, or on earth, they must have every degree of their greatness and happiness from God alone.

All human beings, therefore, the more exalted they are, the more they know their Divine original, the nearer they come to heavenly spirits; by so much the more will they live to God in all their actions, and make their whole life a state of devotion. Devotion therefore is the greatest sign of a great and noble genius; it supposes a soul in its highest state of knowledge; and none but little and blinded minds, that are sunk into ignorance and vanity, are destitute of it.

If a man should imagine some mighty prince to be greater than God, we would take him for a poor, ignorant creature; all people would acknowledge such an imagination to be the height of stupidity. But if this same man should think it better to be devoted to some mighty prince, than to be devoted to God, would not this still be a greater proof of a poor, ignorant, and blinded nature? Yet this is what all people do, who think anything better, greater, or wiser, than a devout life. So that which whatever way we consider this matter, it plainly appears, that devotion is an instance of great judgment, of an elevated nature; and the lack of devotion is a certain proof of the deficiency of understanding.

Again--To see the dignity and greatness of a devout spirit, we need only compare it with other tempers, that are chosen in the room of it. John tells us, that all in the world (that is, all the tempers of a worldly life) is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Let us therefore consider, what wisdom or excellency of mind there is required to qualify a man for these delights.

Let us suppose a man given up to the PLEASURES OF THE BODY; surely this can be no sign of a fine mind, or an excellent spirit--for if he has but the temper of an animal, he is great enough for these enjoyments.

Let us suppose him to be devoted to HONORS AND SPLENDORS, to be fond of glitter and equipage--now if this temper required any great virtues, or fine understanding, to make a man capable of it, it would prove the world to abound with great wits.

Let us suppose him to be in love with RICHES, and to be so eager in the pursuit of them, as never to think he has enough--now this passion is so far from supposing any excellent sense, or great understanding, that blindness and folly are the best supports that it has.

Let us lastly suppose him in another light, not singly devoted to any of these passions, but, as it mostly happens, governed by ALL of them in their turns; does this show a more exalted nature, than to spend his days in the service of any one of them? For to have a taste for these things, and to be devoted to them, is so far from arguing any tolerable virtues or understandings, that they are suited to the dullest, weakest minds, and require only a great deal of pride and folly to be greatly admired. But now let libertines bring any such charge as this, if they can, against devotion. They may as well endeavor to charge light with everything that belongs to darkness. Let them but grant that there is a God and providence, and then they have granted enough to justify the wisdom, and support the honor of devotion. For if there is an infinitely wise and good Creator, in whom we live, move, and have our being, whose providence governs all things in all places, surely it must be the highest act of our understanding to conceive rightly of Him; it must be the noblest instance of judgment, the most exalted temper of our nature, to worship and adore this universal providence, to conform to its laws, to study its wisdom, and to live and act everywhere, as in the presence of this infinitely good and wise Creator.

Now he that lives thus, lives in the spirit of devotion. And what can show such great virtues, and so fine an understanding, as to live in this temper? For if God is wisdom, surely he must be the wisest man in the world, who most conforms to the wisdom of God, who best obeys His providence, who enters farthest into His designs, and does all he can, that God's will may be done on earth, as it is done in Heaven. A devout man makes a true use of his reason--he sees through the vanity of the world, discovers the corruption of his nature, and the blindness of his passions. He lives by a law which is not visible to vulgar eyes; he enters into the world of spirits; he compares the greatest things, sets eternity against time; and chooses rather to be forever great in the presence of God, when he dies, than to have the greatest share of worldly pleasure while he lives. He that is devout, is full of these great thoughts; he lives upon these noble reflections, and conducts himself by rules and principles, which can only be apprehended, admired, and loved by reason.

There is nothing therefore that shows so great a genius, nothing that so raises us above vulgar spirits, nothing that so plainly declares an heroic greatness of mind, as great devotion. When you suppose a man to be a saint, or all devotion, you have raised him as much above all other conditions of life, as a philosopher is above a brute animal.

Lastly; courage and bravery are words of a great sound, and seem to signify an heroic spirit; but yet humility, which seems to be the basest, lowest part of devotion, is a more certain argument of a noble and courageous mind. For humility contends with greater enemies, is more constantly engaged, more violently assaulted, bears more, suffers more, and requires greater courage to support itself, than any instances of worldly bravery. A man that dares be poor and contemptible in the eyes of the world, to approve himself to God; that resists and rejects all human glory, that opposes the clamor of his passions, that meekly puts up with all injuries and wrongs, and dares stay for his reward until the invisible hand of God gives to every one their proper places, endures a much greater trial, and exerts a nobler fortitude, than he that is bold and daring in the fire of battle. For the boldness of a soldier, if he is a stranger to the spirit of devotion, is rather weakness than

fortitude; it is at best but foolish passion, and heated spirits, and has no more true valor in it than the fury of a tiger. For as we cannot lift up a hand, or stir a foot, but by a power that is lent us from God; so bold actions that are not directed by the laws of God, as so many executions of His will, are no more true bravery, than malice is Christian patience.

Reason is our universal law, that obliges us in all places, and at all times; and no actions have any honor, but so far as they are instances of our obedience to reason. And it is as base and cowardly, to be bold and daring against the principle of reason and justice, as to be bold and daring in lying and perjury. Would we therefore exercise a true fortitude, we must do all in the spirit of devotion, be valiant against the corruptions of the world, and the lusts of the flesh, and the temptations of the devil; for to be daring and courageous against these enemies, is the noblest bravery that an human mind is capable of.

I have made this digression, for the sake of those who think a great devotion to be bigotry and poorness of spirit; that by these considerations they may see, how poor and base all other tempers are, if compared to it; that they may see, that all worldly attainments, whether of greatness, wisdom, or bravery, are but empty sounds; and there is nothing wise, or great, or noble, in a human spirit, but rightly to know and heartily worship and adore the great God, that is the support and life of all spirits, whether in Heaven or on earth.

03.00 AN APPEAL To all that Doubt

AN APPEAL To all that Doubt, or Disbelieve The Truths of the Gospel,

WHETHER They be DEISTS, ARIANS, SOCINIANS, Or Nominal Christians. IN WHICH The true Grounds and Reasons of the whole Christian FAITH and LIFE are plainly and fully demonstrated by William Law An ADVERTISEMENT to the READER.

Chapter I.

03.000 An ADVERTISEMENT to the READER. Next »

An ADVERTISEMENT to the READER.

I Have Nothing to say by way of Preface or Introduction. I only ask this Favor of the Reader, that he would not pass any Censure upon this Book, from only dipping into this, or that particular Part of it, but give it one fair Perusal in the Order it is written, and then I shall have neither Right, nor Inclination to complain of any Judgment he shall think fit to pass upon it.

03.01 Chapter 1

Of Creation in general. Of the Origin of the Soul. Whence Will and Thought are in the Creature. Why the Will is free. The Origin of Evil solely from the Creature. This World not a first, immediate Creation of God. How the World comes to be in its present State. The first Perfection of Man. All Things prove a Trinity in God. Man hath the triune Nature of God in Him. Arianism and Deism confuted by Nature. That Life is uniform through all Creatures. That there is but one kind of Death to be found in all Nature. The fallen Soul hath the Nature of Hell in it. Regeneration is a real Birth of a Divine Life in the Soul. That there is but one Salvation possible in Nature. This Salvation only to be had from Jesus Christ. All the Deist's Faith and Hope proved to be false.

It has been an opinion commonly received, though without any foundation in the light of nature, or scripture, that God created this whole visible world, and all things in it, out of nothing. Nay, that the souls of men, and the highest orders of beings, were created in the same manner. The scripture is very decisive against this original of the souls of men. For Moses saith, "God breathed into man (Spiraculum Vitarum) the breath of lives, and man became a living soul." Here the notion of a soul created out of nothing, is in the plainest, strongest manner rejected, by the first written Word of God; and no Jew or Christian can have the least excuse for falling into such an error; here the highest and most divine original is not darkly, but openly, absolutely, and in the strongest form of expression ascribed to the soul; it came forth as a breath of life, or lives, out from the mouth of God, and therefore did not come out of the womb of nothing, but is what it is, and has what it has in itself, from, and out of the first and highest of all beings. For to say that God breathed forth into man the breath of lives, by which he became a living soul, is directly saying, that that which was life, light, and Spirit in the living God, was breathed forth from him to become the life, light and spirit of a creature. The soul therefore being declared to be an effluence from God, a breath of God, must have the nature and likeness of God in it, and is, and can be nothing else, but something, or so much of the divine nature, become creaturely existing, or breathed forth from God, to stand before him in the form of a creature. When the animals of this world were to be created, it was only said, Let the earth, the air, the water bring forth creatures after their kinds; but when man was to be brought forth, it was said, "Let us make man in our own image and likeness." Is not this directly saying, Let man have his beginning and being out of us, that he may be so related to us in his soul and spirit, as the animals of this world are related to the elements from which they are produced. Let him so come forth from us, be so breathed out of us, that our triune, divine nature may be manifested in him, that he may stand before us as a creaturely image, likeness, and representative of that which we are in ourselves.

Now, from this original doctrine of the creation of man, known to all the first inhabitants of the world, and published in the front of the first written Word of God; these great truths have been more or less declared to all the nations of the world. First, that all mankind are the created offspring of the one God. Secondly, that in all men there is a spirit or breath of lives, that did not begin to be out of nothing, or was created out of nothing; but came from the true God into man, as his own breath of life breathed into him. Thirdly, that therefore there is in all men, wherever

dispersed over the earth, a divine, immortal, never-ending spirit, that can have nothing of death in it, but must live for ever, because it is the breath of the everliving God. Fourthly, that by this immortal breath, or Spirit of God in man, all mankind stand in the same nearness of relation to God, are all equally his children, are all under the same necessity of paying the same homage of love and obedience to him, all fitted to receive the same blessing and happiness from him, all created for the same eternal enjoyment of his love and presence with them, all equally called to worship and adore him in spirit and truth, all equally capable of seeking and finding him, of having a blessed union and communion with him.

These great truths, the first pillars of all true and spiritual religion, on which the holy and divine lives of the ancient patriarchs was supported, by which they worshipped God in a true and right faith; these truths, I say, were most eminently and plainly declared in the express letter of the Mosaic writings, here quoted. And no writer, whether Jewish or Christian, has so plainly, so fully, so deeply laid open the true ground, and necessity of an eternal, never- ceasing relation between God, and all the human nature; no one has so incontestably asserted the immortality of the soul, or spirit of man; or so deeply laid open, and proved the necessity of one religion, common to all human nature, as the legislator of the Jewish theocracy had done. Life and immortality are indeed justly said to be brought to light by the gospel; not only because they there stand in a new degree of light, largely explained, and much appealed to, and absolutely promised by the Son of God himself, but chiefly because the precious means and mysteries of obtaining a blessed life, and a blessed immortality, were only revealed, or brought to light by the gospel. But the incontestable ground and reason of an immortal life, and eternal relation between God, and the whole human nature, and which lays all mankind under the same obligations to the same true worship of God, is most fully set forth by Moses, who alone tells us the true fact; how, and why man is immortal in his nature, viz., because the beginning of his life was a breath, breathed into him from God; and for this end, that he might be a living image and likeness of God, created to partake of the nature and immortality of God. This is the great doctrine of the Jewish legislator, and which justly places him amongst the greatest preachers of true religion. St. Paul used a very powerful argument to persuade the Athenians to own the true God, and the true religion, when he told them, "that God made the world and all things therein; that he giveth life and breath and all things; that he hath made of one blood, all nations of men to dwell on the earth; that they should all seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after, and find him, seeing he is not far from any of us, because in him we live, move, and have our being." {Acts 17:24} And yet this doctrine, which St. Paul preaches to the Athenians, is nothing else, but that same divine and heavenly instruction, which he had learnt from Moses, which Moses openly and plainly taught all the Jews. The Jewish theocracy therefore was by no means an intimation to that people, that they had no concern with the true God, but as children of this world, under his temporal protection or punishment; for their lawgiver left them no room for such a thought, because he had as plainly taught them their eternal nature and eternal relation, which they had to God in common with all mankind; as St. Paul did to the Athenians, who only set before them that very doctrine that Moses taught all the Jews. The great end of the Jewish theocracy was to show, both to Jew and gentile, the absolute, uncontrollable power of the one God, by such a covenanted interposition of his providence, that all the world might know, that the one God, from whom both Jew and gentile were fallen away, by departing from the faith and religion of their first fathers, was the only God, from whom all mankind could receive either blessing or cursing. This was the great thing intended to be proclaimed to all the world by this

theocracy, viz., that only the God of Israel had power to save or destroy, to punish or reward, according to his pleasure; and that therefore all the gods of the heathens, were mere vanity. If therefore any Jews, by reason of those extraordinary temporal blessings and cursings which they received under their theocracy, grew grossly ignorant, or dully senseless of their eternal nature, and eternal relation to God, and of that one true religion, which by nature they were obliged to observe in common with all mankind; if they took God only to be their local or tutelary deity, and themselves to be only animals of this world; such a grossness of belief was no more to be charged upon their great lawgiver, Moses, than if they had believed, that a golden calf was their true god. But to return to the creation.

2. It is the same impossibility for a thing to be created out of nothing, as to be created by nothing. {See Spirit of Prayer, Part II, page 58,. Way to Divine Knowledge, page 247,.} It is no more a part, or prerogative of God's omnipotence to create a being out of nothing, than to make a thing to be, without any one quality of being in it; or to make, that there should be three, where there is neither two, nor one. Every creature is nothing else, but nature put into a certain form of existence; and therefore a creature not formed out of nature, is a contradiction. A circle, or a square cannot be made out of nothing, nor could any power bring them into existence, but because there is an extension in nature, that can be put into the form of a circle, or a square: but if dead figures cannot by any power be made out of nothing, who sees not the impossibility of making living creatures, angels, and the souls of men out of nothing?

3. Thinking and willing are eternal, they never began to be. Nothing can think, or will now, in which there was not will and thought from all eternity. For it is as possible for thought in general to begin to be, as for that which thinks in a particular creature to begin to be of a thinking nature: therefore the soul, which is a thinking, willing being is come forth, or created out of that which hath willed and thought in God, from all eternity. The created soul is a creature of time, and had its beginning on the sixth day of the creation; but the essences of the soul, which were then formed into a creature, and into a state of distinction from God, had been in God from all eternity, or they could not have been breathed forth from God into the form of a living creature. And herein lies the true ground and depth of the uncontrollable freedom of our will and thoughts: they must have a self-motion, and self-direction, because they came out of the self-existent God. They are eternal, divine powers, that never began to be, and therefore cannot begin to be in subjection to any thing. That which thinks and wills in the soul, is that very same unbeginning breath which thought and willed in God, before it was breathed into the form of an human soul; and therefore it is, that will and thought cannot be bounded or constrained.

Herein also appears the high dignity, and never-ceasing perpetuity of our nature. The essences of our souls can never cease to be, because they never began to be: and nothing can live eternally, but that which hath lived from all eternity. The essences of our soul were a breath in God before they became a living soul, they lived in God before they lived in the created soul, and therefore the soul is a partaker of the eternity of God, and can never cease to be. Here, O man, behold the great original, and the high state of thy birth; here let all that is within thee praise thy God, who has brought thee into so high a state of being, who has given thee powers as eternal and boundless as his own attributes, that there might be no end or limits of thy happiness in him. Thou begannest as time began, but as time was in eternity before it became days and years, so thou wast in God before thou wast brought into the creation: and as time is neither a part of eternity, nor broken off

from it, yet come out of it; so thou art not a part of God, nor broken off from him, yet born out of him. Thou shouldst only will that which God willeth, only love that which he loveth, cooperate, and unite with him in the whole form of thy life; because all that thou art, all that thou hast, is only a spark of his own life and Spirit derived into thee. If thou desirest, and turn towards the sun, all the blessings of the Deity will spring up in thee; Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will make their abode with thee. If thou turnest in towards thyself, to live to thyself, to be happy in the workings of an own will, to be rich in the sharpness and acuteness of thy own reason, thou chooseth to be a weed, and canst only have such a life, spirit and blessing from God, as a thistle has from the sun. But to return.

4. To suppose a willing, understanding being, created out of nothing, is a great absurdity. For as thinking and willing must have always been from all eternity, or they could never have been either in eternity, or time; so, wherever they are found in any particular, finite beings, they must of all necessity, be direct communications, or propagations of that thinking and willing, which never could begin to be. The creation therefore of a soul, is not the creation of thinking and willing, or the making that to be, and to think, which before had nothing of being, or thought; but it is the bringing the powers of thinking and willing out of their eternal state in the one God, into a beginning state of a self-conscious life, distinct from God. And this is God's omnipotent, creating ability, that he can make the powers of his own nature become creatural, living, personal images of what he is in himself, in a state of distinct personality from him: so that the creature is one, in its finite, limited state, as God is one, and yet hath nothing in it, but that which was in God before it came into it: for the creature, be it what it will, high or low, can be nothing else, but a limited participation of the nature of the creator. Nothing can be in the creature, but what came from the creator, and the creator can give nothing to the creature, but that which it hath in itself to give. And if beings could be created out of nothing, the whole creation could be no more a proof of the being of God, than if it had sprung up of itself out of nothing: for if they are brought into being out of nothing, then they can have nothing of God in them; and so can bear no testimony of God; but are as good a proof, that there is no God, as that there is one. But if they have anything of God in them, then they cannot be said to be created out of nothing.

5. That the souls of men were not created out of nothing, but are born out of an eternal original, is plain from hence; from that delight in, and desire of eternal existence, which is so strong and natural to the soul of man. For nothing can delight in, or desire eternity, or so much as form a notion of it, or think upon it, or any way reach after it, but that alone which is generated from it, and come out of it. For it is a self-evident truth, that nothing can look higher, or further back, than into its own original; and therefore, nothing can look or reach back into eternity, but that which came out of it. This is as certain, as that a line reaches, and can reach no further back, than to that point from whence it arose. Our bodily eyes are born out of the firmamental light of this world, and therefore they can look no further than the firmament: but our thoughts know no bounds; therefore they are come out of that which is boundless. The eyes of our minds can look as easily backwards into that eternity which always hath been, as into that which ever shall be; and therefore it is plain, that that which thinks and wills in us, which so easily, so delightfully, so naturally penetrates into all eternity, has always had an eternal existence, and is only a ray or spark of the divine nature, brought out into the form of a creature, or a limited, personal existence, by the creating power of God.

6. Again. Every soul shrinks back, and is frightened at the very thought of falling into nothing. Now this undeniably proves, that the soul was not created out of nothing. For it is an eternal truth, spoken by all nature, that everything strongly aspires after, and cannot be easy, till it finds and enjoys that original out of which it arose. If the soul therefore was brought forth out of nothing, all its being would be a burden to it; it would want to be dissolved, and to be delivered from every kind and degree of sensibility; and nothing could be so sweet and agreeable to it, as to think of falling back into that nothingness, out of which it was called forth by its creation. Thus is the eternal, immortal, divine nature of the soul, which the schools prove with so much difficulty one of the most obvious, self-evident truths in all nature. For nothing but that which is eternal in its own nature, can have the least thought about eternity.

If a beast had not the nature of the earth in it, nothing that is on the earth, or springs out of it, could be in the least degree agreeable to it, or desired by it. If the soul had not the nature of eternity in it, nothing that is eternal could give it the smallest pleasure, or be able to make any kind of impression upon it. For as nothing can taste, or relish, or enter into the agreeable sensations of this world, but that which hath the nature of this world in it; so nothing can taste, or relish, or look into eternity with any kind of pleasure, but that which hath the nature of eternity in it.

7. If the soul was not born, or created out of God, it could have no happiness in God, no desire, nor any possibility of enjoying him. If it had nothing of God in it, it must stand in the utmost distance of contrariety to him, and be utterly incapable of living, moving, and having its being in God: for everything must have the nature of that, out of which it was created, and must live, and have its being in that root or ground from whence it sprung. If therefore there was nothing of God in the soul, nothing that is in God could do the soul any good, or have any kind of communication with it; but the gulf of separation between God and the soul, would be even greater than that which is between heaven and hell.

8. But let us rejoice, that our soul is a thinking, willing being, full of thoughts, cares, longings, and desires of eternity; for this is our full proof, that our descent is from God himself, that we are born out of him, breathed forth from him; that our soul is of an eternal nature, made a thinking, willing, understanding creature out of that which hath willed and thought in God from all eternity; and therefore must, for ever and ever, be a partaker of the eternity of God. And here you may behold the sure ground of the absolute impossibility of the annihilation of the soul. Its essences never began to be, and therefore can never cease to be; they had an eternal reality before they were in, or became a distinct soul, and therefore they must have the same eternal reality in it. It was the eternal breath of God before it came into man, and therefore the eternity of God must be inseparable from it. It is no more a property of the divine omnipotence to be able to annihilate a soul, than to be able to make an eternal truth become a fiction of yesterday: and to think it a lessening of the power of God, to say, that he cannot annihilate the soul, is as absurd, as to say, that it is a lessening of the light of the sun, if it cannot destroy, or darken its own rays of light.

O, dear reader, stay a while in this important place, and learn to know thyself: all thy senses make thee to know and feel, that thou standest in the vanity of time; but every motion, stirring, imagination, and thought of thy mind, whether in fancying, fearing, or loving everlasting life, is the same infallible proof, that thou standest in the midst of eternity, art an offspring and inhabitant of it, and must be for ever inseparable from it. Ask when the first thought sprung up, find out the

birth-day of truth, and then thou wilt have found out, when the essences of thy soul first began to be. Were not the essences of thy soul as old, as unbeginning, as unchangeable, as everlasting as truth itself, truth would be at the same distance from thee, as absolutely unfit for thee, as utterly unable to have any communion with thee, as to be the food of a worm. The ox could not feed upon the grass, or receive any delight or nourishment from it, unless grass and the ox had one and the same earthly nature and original; thy mind could receive no truth, feel no delight and satisfaction in the certainty, beauty, and harmony of it, unless truth and the mind stood both in the same place, had one and the same unchangeable nature, unbeginning original. If there will come a time, when thought itself shall cease, when all the relations and connections of truth shall be untied; then, but not till then, shall the knot, or band of thy soul's life be unloosed. It is a spark of the Deity, and therefore has the unbeginning, unending life of God in it. It knows nothing of youth, or age, because it is born eternal. It is a life that must burn for ever, either as a flame of light and love in the glory of the divine majesty, or as a miserable firebrand in that god, which is a consuming fire.

9. It is impossible, that this world, in the state and condition it is now in, should have been an immediate and original creation of God: this is as impossible, as that God should create evil, either natural or moral. That this world hath evil in all its parts; that its matter is in a corrupt, disordered state, full of grossness, disease, impurity, wrath, death and darkness, is as evident, as that there is light, beauty, order and harmony everywhere to be found in it. Therefore it is as impossible, that this outward state and condition of things, should be a first and immediate work of God, as that there should be good and evil in God himself. All storms and tempests, every fierceness of heat, every wrath of cold proves with the same certainty, that outward nature is not a first work of God, as the selfishness, envy, pride, wrath, and malice of devils, and men proves, that they are not in the first state of their creation. As no kind or degree of moral evil could possibly have its cause in, or from God, so there cannot be the least shadow of imperfection and disorder in outward nature, but what must have sprung up in the same manner, and from the same causes, as sickness and corrupt flesh is come into the human body, namely, from the sin of the creature. Storms, tempests, gravel, stone, sour and dead earth are the same things, the same diseases, the same effects of sin, produced in the same manner in the outward body of nature, as corrupt flesh, fevers, dropsies, plagues, gravel, stone, and gout, are produced in the outward body of man. For that, and that only which produces stone in the body of man, did produce stone in the outward nature, as shall plainly appear by and by. For nature within, and without man, is one and the same, and has but one and the same way of working; a stone in the body, and a stone out of the body of man, proceeds from one and the same disorder of nature. When therefore you see a diseased, gouty, leprous, asthmatical, scorbutic man, you can with the utmost certainty say, this is not that human body which God first created in paradise; so, when you see the disorders of heat and cold, the poisonous earth, unfruitful seasons, and malignant qualities of outward nature, you can with the same certainty affirm, this state of nature is not a first creation of God, but that same must have happened to it, which has happened to the body of man. For dark, sour, hard, dead earth, can no more be a first, immediate creation of God, than a wrathful devil, as such, can be created by him. For dark, sour, dead earth is as disordered in its kind, as the devils are, and has as certainly lost its first heavenly condition and nature, as the devils have lost theirs. But now, as in man, the little world, there is excellency and perfection enough to prove, that human nature is the work of an all-perfect being, yet, so much impurity and disease of corrupt flesh and blood, as undeniably shows, that sin has almost quite spoiled the work of God. So, in the great world, the footsteps of

an infinite wisdom in the order and harmony of the whole, sufficiently appears; yet, the disorders, tumults, and evils of nature, plainly demonstrate, that the present condition of this world is only the remains or ruins, first, of a heaven spoiled by the fall of angels, and then of a paradise lost by the sin of man. So that man, and the world in which he lives, lie both in the same state of disorder and impurity, have both the same marks of life and death in them, both bring forth the same sort of evils, both want a redeemer, and have need of the same kind of death and resurrection, before they can come to their first state of purity and perfection.

10. That this outward world was not created out of nothing, is plainly taught by St. Paul, who declares, Romans 1:20, that the creation of the world is out of the invisible things of God; so that the outward condition and frame of invisible nature, is a plain manifestation of that spiritual world from whence it is descended. For as every outside necessarily supposes an inside, and as temporal light and darkness must be the product of eternal light and darkness, so this outward, visible state of things necessarily supposes some inward, invisible state, from whence it is come into this degree of outwardness. Thus all that is on earth is only a change or alteration of something that was in heaven: and heaven itself is nothing else but the first glorious out-birth, the majestic manifestation, the beatific visibility of the one God in Trinity. And thus we find out, how this temporal nature is related to God; it is only a gross out-birth of that which is an eternal nature, or a blessed heaven, and stands only in such a degree of distance from it, as water does to air; and this is the reason why the last fire will, and must turn this gross, temporal nature into its first, heavenly state. But to suppose the gross matter of this world to be made out of nothing, or compacted nothing, is more absurd, than to suppose ice that has congealed nothing, a yard that is not made up of inches, or a pound that is not the product of ounces.

11. And indeed to suppose this, or any other material world to be made out of nothing, has all the same absurdities in it, as the supposing angels and spirits, to be created out of nothing.

All the qualities of all beings are eternal; no real quality or power can appear in any creature, but what has its eternal root, or generating cause in the creator. If a quality could begin to be in a creature, which did not always exist in the creator, it would be no absurdity to say, that a thing might begin to be, without any cause either of its beginning, or being. All qualities, properties, or whatever can be affirmed of God, are self-existent, and necessary existent. Self and necessary existence is not a particular attribute of God, but is the general nature of everything that can be affirmed of God. All qualities and properties are self-existent in God: now, they cannot change their nature when they are derived, or formed into creatures, but must have the same self-birth, and necessary existence in the creature, which they had in the creator. The creature begins to be, when, and as it pleased God; but the qualities which are become creaturely, and which constitute the creature, are self-existent, just as the same qualities are in God. Thus, thinking, willing, and desire can have no outward maker, their maker is in themselves, they are self-existent powers wherever they are, whether in God, or in the creature, and as they form themselves in God, so they form themselves in the creature. But now, if no quality can begin to be, if all the qualities and powers of creatures must be eternal and necessary existent in God, before they can have any existence in any creature; then it undeniably follows, that every created thing must have its whole nature from, and out of the divine nature.

All qualities are not only good, but infinitely perfect, as they are in God; and it is absolutely impossible, that they should have any evil or defect in them, as they are in the one God, who is the great and universal all. Because, where all properties are, there must necessarily be an all possible perfection: and that which must always have all in itself, must, by an absolute necessity, be always all perfect. But the same qualities, thus infinitely good and perfect in God, may become imperfect and evil in the creature; because in the creature, being limited and finite, they may be divided and separated from one another by the creature itself. Thus strength and fire in the divine nature, are nothing else but the strength and flame of love, and never can be anything else; but in the creature, strength and fire may be separated from love, and then they are become an evil, they are wrath and darkness, and all mischief: and thus that same strength and quality, which in creatures making a right use of their own will, or self-motion, becomes their goodness and perfection, doth in creatures making a wrong use of their will, become their evil and mischievous nature; and it is a truth that deserves well to be considered, that there is no goodness in any creature, from the highest to the lowest, but in its continuing to be such an union of qualities and powers, as God has brought together in its creation. In the highest order of created beings, this is their standing in their first perfection, this is their fulfilling of the whole will or law of God, this is their piety, their song of praise, their eternal adoration of their great creator. On the other hand, there is no evil, no guilt, no deformity in any creature, but in its dividing and separating itself from something which God had given to be in union with it. This, and this alone, is the whole nature of all good, and all evil in the creature, both in the moral and natural world, in spiritual and material things. For instance, dark, fiery wrath in the soul, is not only very like, but it is the self-same thing in the soul which a wrathful poison is in the flesh. Now, the qualities of poison are in themselves, all of them good qualities, and necessary to every life; but they are become a poisonous evil, because they are separated from some other qualities. Thus also the qualities of fire and strength that constitute an evil wrath in the soul, are in themselves very good qualities, and necessary to every good life; but they are become an evil wrath, because separated from some other qualities with which they should be united. The qualities of the devil and all fallen angels, are good qualities; they are the very same which they received from their infinitely perfect creator, the very same which are, and must be in all heavenly angels; but they are an hellish, abominable malignity in them now, because they have, by their own self-motion, separated them from the light and love which should have kept them glorious angels. And here may be seen at once, in the clearest light, the true origin of all evil in the creation, without the least imputation upon the creator. God could not possibly create a creature to be an infinite all, like himself: God could not bring any creature into existence, but by deriving into it the self-existent, self-generating, self-moving qualities of his own nature: for the qualities must be in the creature, that which they were in the creator, only in a state of limitation; and therefore, every creature must be finite, and must have a self-motion, and so must be capable of moving right and wrong, of uniting or dividing from what it will, or of falling from that state in which it ought to stand: but as every quality, in every creature, both within and without itself is equally good, and equally necessary to the perfection of the creature, since there is nothing that is evil in it, nor can become evil to the creature, but from itself, by its separating that from itself, with which it can, and ought to be united, it plainly follows, that evil can no more be charged upon God, than darkness can be charged upon the sun; because every quality is equally good, every quality of fire is as good as every quality of light, and only becomes an evil to that creature, who, by his own self-motion, has separated fire from the light in his own nature.

12. If a delicious, fragrant fruit had a power of separating itself from that rich spirit, fine taste, smell, and color which it receives from the virtue of the sun, and the spirit of the air; or if it could in the beginning of its growth, turn away from the sun, and receive no virtue from it, then it would stand in its own first birth of wrath, sourness, bitterness, and astringency, just as the devils do, who have turned back into their own dark root, and rejected the Light and Spirit of God: so that the hellish nature of a devil is nothing else, but its own first forms of life, withdrawn, or separated from the heavenly light and love; just as the sourness, astringency, and bitterness of a fruit, are nothing else but the first forms of its own vegetable life before it has reached the virtue of the sun, and the spirit of the air. And as a fruit, if it had a sensibility of itself, would be full of torment, as soon as it was shut up in the first forms of its life, in its own astringency, sourness, and stinging bitterness: so the angels, when they had turned back into these very same first forms of their own life, and broken off from the heavenly light and love of God, they became their own hell. No hell was made for them, no new qualities came into them, no vengeance or pains from the God of love fell upon them; they only stood in that state of division and separation from the Son, and Holy Spirit of God, which, by their own motion, they had made for themselves. They had nothing in them, but what they had from God, the first forms of an heavenly life, nothing but what the most heavenly beings have, and must have, to all eternity; but they had them in a state of self-torment, because they had separated them from that birth of light and love, which alone could make them glorious sons, and blessed images of the Holy Trinity. The same strong desire, fiery wrath, and stinging motion is in holy angels, that is in devils, just as the same sourness, astringency, and biting bitterness is in a full ripened fruit, which was there before it received the riches of the light and spirit of the air. In a ripened fruit, its first sourness, astringency, and bitterness is not lost, nor destroyed, but becomes the real cause of all its rich spirit, fine taste, fragrant smell, and beautiful color; take away the working, contending nature of these first qualities, and you annihilate the spirit, taste, smell, and virtue of the fruit, and there would be nothing left for the sun and the spirit of the air to enrich.

Just in the same manner, that which in a devil is an evil selfishness, a wrathful fire, a stinging motion, is in an holy angel, the everlasting kindling of a divine life, the strong birth of an heavenly love, it is a real cause of an everlasting, ever-triumphing joyfulness, an ever-increasing sensibility of bliss.

Take away the working, contending nature of these first qualities, which in a devil, are only a serpentine selfishness, wrath, fire, and stinging motion; take away these, I say, from holy angels, and you leave them neither light, nor love, nor heavenly glory, nothing for the birth of the Son, Holy Spirit of God to rise up in. So that here you may see this glorious truth, that the love and goodness of God is as plain and undeniable in having given to the fallen angels, those very qualities and powers which are now their hell, as in giving the first sourness, astringency and bitterness to fruits, which alone makes them capable of their delicious spirit, taste, color, and smell.

13. And thus you see the uniform life of all the creatures of God; how they are all raised, enriched, and blessed by the same life of God, derived into different kingdoms of creatures. For the beginnings and progress of a perfect life in fruits, and the beginnings and progress of a perfect life in angels, are not only like to one another, but are the very same thing, or the workings of the very same qualities, only in different kingdoms. Astringency in a fruit, is the very same quality, and does the same work in a fruit, that attracting desire does in a spiritual being; it is the same beginner, former, and supporter of a creaturely life in the one, as in the other. No creature in heaven, or

earth, can begin to be, but by this astringency, or desire, being made the ground of it: and yet this astringency kept from the virtue of the sun, can only produce a poisonous fruit, and this astringent desire in an angel, turned from the light of God, can only make a devil. The biting, stinging bitterness of a fruit, if you could add thought to it, would be the very gnawing envy of the devil: and the envious motion in the devil's nature, would be nothing else but that stinging bitterness which is in a fruit, if you could take thought from the devil's motion.

14. From this attraction, astringency, or desire, which is one and the same quality in every individual thing, which is the first form of being and life, the very ground of every creature, from the highest angel to the lowest vegetable, we are led by an unerring thread to the first desire, or that desire which is in the divine nature. For as this attraction, or astringent desire is in spiritual and corporeal things, one and the same quality, working in the same manner, so is it one and the same quality with that first, unbeginning desire, which is in the divine nature. That there is an attracting desire in the divine nature, is undeniable, because attraction is essential to all bodies; and desire, which is the same quality, is absolutely inseparable from all intelligible beings; therefore, that which is necessarily existent in the creature, upon the supposition of its creation, must necessarily be in the creator; because no inherent, operative quality can be in the creature, unless the same kind of quality had always been in the creator: therefore, attraction or desire, which are inseparable from every created being and life, are only various participations of the divine nature; or emanations from it, formed into different kingdoms of creatures, and working in all of them according to their respective natures. In vegetables, it is that attraction, or desire, which brings every growing thing to its highest perfection: in angels, it is that blessed hunger, by which they are filled with the divine nature: in devils, it is turned into that serpentine selfishness, or crooked desire, which makes them a hell and torment to themselves.

15. On the other hand, as we thus prove a posteriori, from a view of the creature, that there must be an attracting desire in the divine nature; so we can prove a priori also, from a consideration of God, that there must be an attracting desire in everything that ever was, or can be created by God: for nothing can come into being, but because God wills and desires it; therefore the desire of God is the creator, the original of everything. The creating will, or desire of God, is not a distant, or separate thing, as when a man wills or desires something to be done, or removed at a distance from him; but it is an omnipresent, working will and desire, which is itself, the beginning and forming of the thing desired. Our own will, and desirous imagination, when they work and create in us a settled aversion, or fixed love of anything, resemble in some degree, the creating power of God, which makes things out of itself, or its own working desire. And our will, and working imagination could not have the power that it has now even after the fall, but because it is a product, or spark of that first divine will or desire which is omnipotent.

16. Here therefore we have plainly found the true original, or first source of all things. The desire of God is the first former, generator, and creator of all things; they are all the births of this omnipotent, working desire; for everything that comes into being, must have the nature of that power that formed it, and therefore the nature of every creature must stand in an attractive desire, that is, everything must be a created, attractive power; because it is the birth, or product of a desire, or attractive power, and could neither come into, nor continue in being, but because it was generated not only by, but out of an attracting desire. And herein lies the band, or knot of all created being and life.

17. Will or desire in the Deity, is justly considered as God the Father, who from eternity to eternity, wills or generates only the Son, from which eternal generating, the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds: and this is the infinite perfection or fullness of beatitude of the life of the Triune God.

Now, as the unbeginning, eternal desire is in God, so is the created desire in the creature; it stands in the same tendency, hath the nature of the divine desire, because it is a branch out of it, or created from it. In the Deity, the eternal will or desire, is a desiring, or generating the Son, whence the Holy Spirit proceeds; the desire that is come out of God in the form of a creature, has the same tendency, it is a desire of the Son and Holy Spirit. And every created thing in heaven and earth attains its perfection, by its gaining in some degree, the birth of the Son and Holy Spirit of God in it: for all attraction and desire in the creature, generates in them as it did in God; and so the birth of the Son and Holy Spirit of God arises in some degree, or other, in all creatures that are in their proper state of perfection.

18. And here lies the ground of that plain, and most fundamental doctrine of scripture, that the Father is the creator, the Son the regenerator, and the Holy Spirit the sanctifier. For what is this but saying in the plainest manner, that as there are three in God, so there must be three in the creature, that as the three stand related to one another in God, so must they stand in the same relation in the creature. For if a threefold life of God must have distinct shares in the creation, blessing, and perfection of man, is it not a demonstration, that the life of man must stand in the same threefold state, and have such a Trinity in it, as has its true likeness to that Trinity which is in God? That which generates in God, must generate in the creature; and that which is generated in God, must be generated in the creature; and that which proceeds from this generation in the Deity, must proceed from this generation in the creature: and therefore, the same threefold life must be in the creature in the same manner as it is in God. For a creature that can only exist, and be blessed by the distinct operation of a Triune God upon it, must have the same Triune nature that is answerable to it. And herein lies our true, and easy, and sound, and edifying knowledge and belief of the mystery of a Trinity in Unity: and this is all that the scripture teaches us concerning it. It is not a doctrine that requires learned or nice speculations, in order to be rightly apprehended by us. But when with the scriptures, we believe the Father to be our creator, the Son our regenerator, and the Holy Spirit our sanctifier; then we are learned enough in this mystery, and begin to know the Triune God in the same manner in time, that we shall know him in eternity. And the reason why this great mystery of a Trinity in the Deity is thus revealed to us, and the necessity of a baptism in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, laid upon us, is this; it is to show us, that the divine, Triune life of God is lost in us, and that nothing less than a birth from the Son and Holy Spirit of God in us, can restore us to our first likeness to that Triune God, who at first created us. This I have fully shown in the little treatise upon regeneration.

19. When man was created in his original perfection, the Holy Trinity was his creator; the breath of lives, which became a living soul, was the breath of the Triune God: but when man began to will, and desire, that is, to generate contrary to the Deity, then the life of the Triune God extinguished in him. The desire of man being turned from God, lost the birth of the Son, and the proceeding of the Holy Spirit; and so fell into, or under the light and spirit of this world: that is, of a paradisaical man, enjoying union and communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and living on earth in such enjoyment of God, as the angels live in heaven, he became an earthly creature, subject to the dominion of this outward world, capable of all its evil influences, subject to its vanity and mortality;

and as to his outward life, stood only in the highest rank of animals. This and this alone, is the true nature and degree of the fall of man; it was neither more nor less than this. It was a falling out of one world, or kingdom, into another, it was changing the life, Light and Spirit of God, for the light and spirit of this world. Thus it was that Adam died the very day of his transgression, he died to all the influences and operations of the kingdom of God upon him, as we die to the influences of this world, when the soul leaves the body; and, on the other hand, all the influences, operations and powers of the elements of this life became opened in him, as they are in every animal at its birth into this world.

All other accounts of that fall, which only suppose the loss of some moral perfection, or natural acuteness of his rational powers, are not only senseless fictions, but are an express denial of the Old and New Testament account of it; for the Old Testament expressly says, that Adam was to die the day of his transgression, and therefore it is certain, that he then did die, and that the fall was his losing his first life: and to say that he did not die to that first life in which he was created, is the same denial of scripture, as to say, that he did not eat of the forbidden tree.

Again, the same scripture assures us, that after the fall, his eyes were opened; I suppose this is a proof, that before the fall, they were shut. And what is this, but saying in the plainest manner, that before the fall, the life, light and spirit of this world, were shut out of him? and that the opening of his eyes, was only another way of saying, that the life and light of this world were opened in him?

If an angel, or any inhabitant of heaven, was to be sent of a message into this world, it must be supposed, that neither the darkness, nor light of this world, could act according to their nature upon him; and therefore, though he was here, he must be said not to have the opened eyes of this world: but if this heavenly messenger should be taken with our manner of life, should be in doubts about returning to heaven, and long to have such flesh and blood as ours is, as earnestly as Adam longed to eat of the earthly tree; and if by this longing, he should actually obtain that which he desired; must it not then be said of him, when he had got this new nature, his eyes were opened, to see light and darkness; and that only for this reason, because the heavenly life was departed from him, and the earthly life of this world was opened in him? And thus it was that Adam died, and thus his eyes were opened.

Again, when his eyes were thus opened, or the light and life of this world thus opened in him, he was immediately ashamed and shocked at the sight of his own body, and wanted to hide it from himself, and from the sight of the sun. Now, how could this have happened to him, if his body had not undergone some very extraordinary change, from a state of glory and perfection, to a lamentable degree of vileness and impurity?

All the terror at his fallen state, seems to arise from the sad condition, in which he saw and felt his outward body. This made him ashamed of himself; this made him tremble, at hearing the voice of God; this made him creep behind the trees, and endeavor to hide and cover his body with leaves. And is not this the same thing, as if Adam had said, "All my sin, my guilt, my misery, and shame, is published before heaven and earth, by this sad state and condition in which my body now appears." But now, what was this sad state and condition of his body? What did Adam see in the manner and form of it that filled him with such confusion? Why, he only saw that he was fallen from his paradisaical glory, to have the same gross flesh and blood as the beasts and animals of this world have; which was, to bring forth an offspring in the same earthly manner, as they did. He

could see, and be ashamed of no other deformity in his body, but that which he had in common with the animals of this world; and therefore there was nothing else in his outward form that he could be ashamed of; and yet it was his outward form that filled him with confusion. And is not this the greatest of all proofs, that before his fall, his body had not this nature and condition of the beasts in it? Is it not the same thing, as if he had said, "this body which now makes me ashamed, and which I want to hide, though it be only with thin leaves, because it brings me down amongst the animals of this world, is not that first body of glory into which God at first breathed the breath of lives, and in which I became a living soul."

Again, if Adam's body had been of the same kind of flesh and blood as ours is now, only in a better state of health and vigor, how could he have been created immortal? If he was not created immortal, how can it be said, that sin alone brought mortality, or death into human nature? But if he had immortality in his first created state, then he must have such a body as none of the elements, or elementary things of this world could act upon; for there is no death in any creature of this world, but what is brought upon it by that strife and destruction which the four elements bring upon one another. But if sin alone gave the elements, and all elementary things their first power of acting upon the body of Adam; then it is plain, that before his sin, he had not, could not have a body of such flesh and blood as we now have, but that he stood, as to the state, nature, and condition of his outward body, at as great a distance and difference from the animals of this world, as heaven does from earth, and was created with flesh and blood as much exalted above, and superior to the nature and power of all the elements, as the beasts of this world are under them. And herein plainly appears the true sense of that saying, "God made not death," that is, he made not that which is mortal, or dying in the human nature, but sin alone formed and produced that in man, which could, and must die like the bodies of beasts. Death, and the grave, and the resurrection, are all standing proofs, that the body of bestial flesh and blood, which we now have, at the sight of which Adam was ashamed, which must die, which can rot in the grave, which must not be seen after the resurrection, was not that first body, in which Adam appeared before God in paradise: for it is an undeniable truth of scripture, that this flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of God; it must be a truth of the same certainty, that this flesh and blood could not by God himself be brought into paradise; but that it must have the same original with every other polluted thing that is an abomination in his sight, or incapable of entering into the kingdom of God.

20. That the gospel also plainly shows, that man was created in the dignity and glorious enjoyment of the Triune life of God, and that his fall, was a falling into the earthly life of the light and spirit of this world, I have sufficiently proved from the greatest articles of the Christian faith, concerning the necessity, nature, and manner of our redemption, in the book of Christian Regeneration. I have there shown, that baptism in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, signifies nothing but our being born again into this Triune life of God. That the necessity of being born again of the Word or Son of God, of being born of the Spirit, or receiving him as a sanctifier of our newly raised nature, plainly proves that what we lost by the fall, was this Triune life of God: he that denies this, denies the whole of the Christian redemption. {See Spirit of Prayer, Part II, page 63., page 91. Way to Divine Knowledge, pages 39-53.}

21. It has been already observed, that when man was created in his original perfection, the Holy Trinity was his creator; but when man was fallen, or had lost his first divine life, then there began a new language of a redeeming religion. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were now to be considered,

not as creating every man as they created the first, but as differently concerned in raising the fallen race of mankind, to that first likeness of the Holy Trinity in which their first father was created: hence it is, that the scriptures speak of the Father, as drawing, and calling men; because the desire which is from the Father's nature, must be the first mover, stirrer, and beginner. This desire must be moved and brought into an anguishing state, and have the agitation of a fire that is kindling; and then men are truly drawn by the Father. The Son of God is now considered as the regenerator or raiser of a new birth in us; because he enters a second time into the life of the soul, that his own nature and likeness may be again generated in it, and that he may be that to the soul in its state, which he is to the Father in the Deity. The Holy Ghost is represented as the sanctifier, or finisher of the divine life restored in us; because as in the Deity, the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son, as the amiable, blessed finisher of the Triune life of God; so the fallen nature of man cannot be raised out of its unholy state, cannot be blessed and sanctified with its true degree of the divine life, till the Holy Spirit arises up in it.

Since then the Triune God, or the three persons in the one God, must have this difference of shares, must reach out this different help to the raising up of fallen man, it is undeniable, that the first created man stood in the image and real likeness of the one God, not only representing, but really having in his birth and life, the birth and life of the Holy Trinity. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost had such a Unity in Trinity in man, as they had in the Deity itself: how else could man be the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity, if it was not such a birth in man, as it was in itself? Or, how could the Holy Trinity dwell and operate in man, each person according to its respective nature, unless there was the same threefold life in man as there is in God? How could the Holy Trinity be an object of man's worship and adoration, if the Holy Trinity had not produced itself in man? The creature is only to own and worship its creator; therefore Father, Son, and Holy Ghost must have each of them their creaturely offspring, or product in man, if man is to worship Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. If therefore you deny angels, and the souls of perfect men to have the triune nature, of life of God in them: if you deny that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, have such union and relation in the soul, as they have out of it, you are guilty of as great heresy and apostasy from the gospel, as if you denied the Father to be the creator or him that calleth and draweth, the Son to be the redeemer, or him that regenerateth, and the Holy Spirit to be him that sanctifieth human nature.

22. Again: consider this great truth, which will much illustrate this matter; you can be an inhabitant of no world, or a partaker of its life, but by its being inwardly the birth of your own life, or by having the nature and condition of that world born in you. As thus, hell must be inwardly born in the soul, it must arise up within it, as it does without it, before the soul can become an inhabitant of it.

Again: that which is the life of this outward world, viz., its fire, and light, and air, must have such a state and birth within you, as they have without you, before you can be an inhabitant or partaker of the life of this world; that is, fire must be in you, must be the same fire, have the same place and nature within you, have the same relation to the light and air that is within you, as it has without you, or else the fire of the outward world, cannot keep up, or have any communion with your own life. The light of this world can signify nothing to you, cannot reach or enrich you with its powers and virtues, if the same light is not arisen in the same manner in the kindling of your own life, as it arises in the outward world. The air also of this world can do you no good, can be no blower up and preserver of your life, but because it has the same birth in you, that it has in outward nature.

And therefore it must be a truth of the greatest certainty, that so it must of all necessity be with respect to the kingdom of God, or that life which is to be had in the beatific presence of God; it must, by an absolute necessity, have the same birth within you, as it has without you, before you can enter into it, or become an inhabitant of it: if you are to live, and be eternally blessed in the triune life, or beatific presence of God, that triune life, must, of the utmost necessity, first make itself creaturely in you; it must be and arise in you, as it does without you, before you can possibly enter into any communion with it.

Now is there anything more plain and scriptural, more easy to be conceived, more pious to be believed, and more impossible to be denied, than all this? And yet this is all that I have said, in two propositions in the treatise upon Christian Regeneration: it is there said, "Man was created by God after his own image, and in his own likeness, a living mirror of the divine nature; where Father, Son, and Holy Ghost each brought forth their own nature in a creaturely manner." Now, what is this, but saying, that the Holy Trinity brought forth a creature in its own likeness, standing in a creaturely birth of the divine, triune life? If it did not stand thus, how could it have its form or creation from the Holy Trinity? Or how could it without this triune life in itself, enter into, or be a partaker of the triune life or presence of God? In the next proposition it is said; "In it, that is, in this created image of the Holy Trinity, the Father's nature generated the divine Word, or Son of God, and the Holy Ghost proceeded from them both as an amiable, moving life of both. This was the likeness or image of God, in which the first man was created, a true offspring of God, in whom the divine birth sprung up as in the Deity, where Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, saw themselves in a creaturely manner."

Now, what is this, but saying in the plainest manner, only thus much, that the triune, creaturely life stood in the same birth and generation of its threefold life, as the Deity doth, whose image, likeness, and offspring it is? And can it possibly be otherwise; for if the creature cometh from the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as their created image and likeness, must not that which it hath from the Father, be of the nature of the Father, that which it hath from the Son, be of the nature of the Son, and that which it hath from the Holy Ghost, be of the nature of the Holy Ghost? And must they not therefore stand in the creature in such relation to one another, as they do in the creator? If it is the nature of the Father to generate, if it is the nature of the Son to be generated, if it is the nature of the Holy Ghost to proceed from both, must not that which you have from the Father generate in you, that which you have from the Son be generated in you, and that which you have from the Holy Ghost, proceed from both in you? All which is only saying this plain and obvious truth, that that being, or created life, which you have from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, must stand in such a triune relation within you as it does without you; that having this threefold likeness of God, you may be capable of entering into an enjoyment of his triune, beatific life or presence.

For, consider again this instance, with regard to the life of this world. The fire, and light, and air, of outward nature, must become creaturely in you; that is, you must have a fire that is your own creaturely fire, you must have a light that is generated by, or from your own fire, a breath that proceeds from your own fire and light, as the air of outward nature proceeds from its fire and light: you must have all this nature and birth of fire, and light, and air in your own creaturely being, or you cannot possibly live in, or have a life from the fire, and light, and air of outward nature: no omnipotence can make you a partaker of the life of this outward world, without having the life of this outward world born in your own creaturely being. And therefore, no omnipotence can make

you a partaker of the beatific life or presence of the Holy Trinity, unless that life stands in the same triune state within you, as it does without you. The nature of this world must become creatural in you, before you can live, or have a share in the life of this world; the triune nature of God must breathe forth itself to stand creaturely in you, before you can live, or have a share in the beatific life or presence of the triune God.

Now, is not all this strictly according to the very outward letter, and inward truth of the most important articles of the Christian religion? For what else can be meant by the necessity of our being born again of the Word, or Son of God, being born of the Spirit of God, in order to our entrance into the kingdom of heaven? Is not this saying, that the triune life of God must first have its birth in us, before we can enter into the triune, beatific life, or presence of God? What else is taught us by that new birth sought for by a baptism, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Does it not plainly tell us, that the triune nature of the Deity is that which wants to be born in us, and that our redemption consists in nothing else but in the bringing forth this new birth in us, and that, being thus born again in the likeness of the Holy Trinity, we may be capable of its threefold blessing and happiness? The New Testament tells us of the impossibility of our being made holy, but by the Holy Spirit of God: now, how could we want any distinct thing particularly from the Son of God, any distinct thing, particularly from the Holy Ghost, in order to raise and repair our fallen nature, how could this particularity be thus absolutely necessary, but because the holy threefold life of the Deity must stand within us, in the birth of our own life, as it does without us, that so we may be capable of living in God, and God in us.

Search to eternity, why no devil, or beast can possibly be a partaker of the kingdom of heaven, and there can only this one reason be assigned for it, because neither of them have the triune, holy life of God in them: for every created thing does, and must, and can only want, seek, unite with, and enjoy that outwardly, which is of the same nature with itself. Remove a devil where you will, he is still in hell, and always at the same distance from heaven; he can touch, or taste, or reach nothing but what is in hell. Carry a beast where you please, either to court, or to church, he is yet at the same infinite distance from the joys and fears either of church, or court, as the beasts that never saw anything else but their own kind: and all this is grounded solely on this eternal truth; namely, that no being can rise higher than its own life reaches. The circle of the birth of life in every creature is its necessary circumference, and it cannot possibly reach any further; and therefore it is a joyful truth, that beings created to worship and adore the Holy Trinity, and to enter into the beatific life and presence of the triune God, must, of all necessity, have the same triune life in their own creaturely being. And now, what can be so glorious, so edifying, so ravishing, as this knowledge of God and ourselves? The very thought of our standing in this likeness and relation to the infinite creator and being of all beings, is enough to kindle the divine life within us, and melt us into a continual love and adoration: for how can we enough love and adore that Holy Trinity which has created us in its own likeness, that we might live in an eternal union and communion with it? Will anyone call this an irreverent familiarity, or bold looking into the Holy Trinity, which is nothing else but a thankful adoration of it, as our glorious Father and creator? It is our best and only acknowledgement of the greatest truths of the holy scriptures; it is the scripture doctrine of the Trinity kept in its own simplicity, separated from scholastic speculations, where the three in God, are only distinguished by that threefold share that they have in the creation and redemption of man. When we thus know the Trinity in ourselves, and adore its high original in the Deity, we are

possessed of a truth of the greatest moment, that enlightens the mind with the most solid and edifying knowledge, and opens to us the fullest understanding of all that concerns the creation, fall, and redemption of man.

Without this knowledge, all the scripture will be used as a dead letter, and formed only into a figurative, historical system of things, that has no ground in nature; and learned divines can only be learned in the explication of phrases, and verbal distinctions. The first chapters of Genesis will be a knot that cannot be untied; the mysteries of the gospel will only be called federal rites, and their inward ground reproached as enthusiastic dreams; but when it is known, that the triune nature of God was brought forth in the creation of man, that it was lost in his fall, that it is restored in his redemption, a never-failing light arises in all scripture, from Genesis to the Revelation. Everything that is said of God, as Father, regenerator, or sanctifier of man; everything that is said of Jesus Christ, as redeeming, forming, dwelling in, and quickening; and of the Holy Spirit, as moving and sanctifying us: everything that is said of the holy sacraments, or promised in and by them, has its deep and inward ground fully discovered; and the whole Christian religion is built upon a rock, and that rock is nature, and God will appear to be doing every good to us, that the God of all nature can possibly do. The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is wholly practical; it is revealed to us, to discover our high original, and the greatness of our fall, to show us the deep and profound operation of the triune God in the recovery of the divine life in our souls; that by the means of this mystery thus discovered, our piety may be rightly directed, our faith and prayer have their proper objects, that the workings and aspirings of our own hearts may cooperate, and correspond with that triune life in the Deity, which is always desiring to manifest itself in us; for as everything that is in us, whether it be heaven, or hell, rises up in us by a birth, and is generated in us by the will-spirit of our souls, which kindles itself either in heaven, or hell; so this mystery of a triune Deity manifesting itself, as a Father creating, as a Son, or Word, regenerating, as a Holy Spirit sanctifying us, is not to entertain our speculation with dry, metaphysical distinctions of the Deity, but to show us from what a height and depth we are fallen, and to excite such a prayer and faith, such a hungering and thirsting after this triune fountain of all good, as may help to generate and bring forth in us that first image of the Holy Trinity in which we were created, and which must be born in us before we can enter into the state of the blessed: here we may see the reason, why the learned world has had so many fruitless disputes about this mystery, and why it has been so often a stone of stumbling to philosophers and critics; it is because they began to reason about that, which never was proposed to their reason, and which no more belongs to human learning and philosophy, than light belongs to our ears, or sounds to our eyes. No person has any fitness, nor any pretense, nor any ground from scripture, to think, or say anything of the Trinity, till such time as he stands in the state of the penitent returning prodigal, weary of his own sinful, shameful nature; and desiring to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, and then is he first permitted to be baptized into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: this is the first time the gospel teaches, or calls anyone to the acknowledgement of the Holy Trinity. Now, as this knowledge is first given in baptism, and there only as a signification of a triune life of the Deity, which must be regenerated in the soul; so the scriptures say nothing afterwards to this baptized penitent concerning the Trinity, but only with regard to regeneration, everywhere only showing him how Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, all equally divine, must draw, awaken, quicken, enlighten, move, guide, cleanse, and sanctify the new-born Christian: is it not therefore undeniably plain, that all abstract speculations of this mystery, how it is in itself, how it is to be ideally conceived, or

scholastically expressed by us, are a wandering from that true light, in which the Trinity of God is set before us, which is only revealed as a key, or direction to the true depths of that regeneration, which is to be sought for from the triune Deity? But to go on in a further account of the creation.

23. Now, as all creatures, whether intellectual, animate, or inanimate, are products, or emanations of the divine desire, created out of the Father, who from eternity to eternity generates the Son, whence the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds; so every intelligent, created being, not fallen from its state, stands in the same birth, or generating desire, it generates in its degree, as God the Father generates eternally the Son, and is blessed and perfected in the divine life, by having the Holy Spirit arise up in it.

Hence it is, that those angels which stood, and continued in the same will and desire in which they came out from God, willing and desiring as God from all eternity had willed and desired, were by the rising up of the Holy Spirit in them, confirmed and established in the divine life, and so became eternally and inseparably united with the ever-blessed triune Deity. On the other hand, those angels which did not keep their will and desire in its first created tendency, but raised up an own will and desire, which own will and desire was their direct, full choosing and desiring to be, and do something which they could not be, and do in God, and is therefore properly called their aspiring to be above God, or to be without any dependence upon him; these angels, by thus going backwards with their will and desire out of, or from God and the divine truth, could only find, or generate that which had the utmost contrariety to God and the divine birth, and so became under a necessity of finding themselves in an eternal state, spirit and life that was directly contrary to all that is good, holy, amiable, blessed and divine.

Now, the will and desire in every creature is generating, and efficacious, strictly according to the state and nature of that creature; {See Way to Divine Knowledge, pages 139-160.} therefore, eternal beings in an eternal state, must have an eternal power and efficacy in the working of their wills and desires: when therefore those angels, with all the strength of their eternal desires, turned away from, and contrary to God and the divine birth, they could become nothing else, but beings eternally separated and broken off from all that was God and goodness: for eternal beings that stood only in an eternal state, acting with all their vigor, not doubting, but strongly willing, could not do anything that had only a temporal nature and effect, because they stood not in such a nature or such a world, and therefore what they willed and generated with all their nature, (which was a contrariety to God) that became the eternal state of their nature. And this is the birth and origin of hellish beings.

God had done all to them and for them, that he had done to and for the angels that stood; he had given them the same holy beginning of their lives, had brought them forth out of himself in the same tendency, that which was the nature of other angels, was theirs; he could not make any established, fixed, and unchangeable angels, because the life of everything must be a birth, and willing beings must have a birth of their wills; he could not make them fixed, because everything that comes from God, must so come from him, as it was in him, a self-existent and self-moving power, and therefore no goodness of God could hinder their having a self-motion, because they were, and could be nothing else but creatures brought forth by, and out of his own self-existent and self-moving nature.

God is all good, and everything that comes out from him, as his creature, product, or offspring, must come forth in that state of goodness, which it had in him; and every creature, however high in its birth from God, must in the beginning of its life, have a power of joining with or departing from God, because the beginning of its life is nothing else but the beginning of its own self-motion as a creature; and therefore no creature can have its state or condition fixed, till it gives itself up either wholly unto God, or turns wholly from him; for if it is an intelligent creature, it can only be so, by having the intelligent will of God derived into it, or made creaturely in it; but the intelligent will brought into a creaturely form, must be that which it was in the creator, and therefore must be the same self-existent and self-moving power that it was before it became creaturely in any angel or spirit. And thus the cause and origin of evil, wherever it is, is absolutely and eternally separated from God.

24. Again: as all intelligent beings can no way attain their happiness and perfection, but by standing with their will and desire united to God, in the same tendency in which the Father eternally generateth the Son, from whence the Holy Spirit proceedeth as the finisher of the triune, beatific life, so the same thing is manifestly proved to us by the lowest kind of beings that are in this visible world; for all vegetables, by their attraction or astringency, which is their desire, and is an outbirth of the divine desire, reach their utmost perfection by the same progress, that is, by getting a birth of the light and spirit of this outward world into them, and so become infallible, though remote proofs that no life can be brought to its proper perfection in the creature, till the image of the triune life of God, is, according to the state and capacity of the creature, formed in it: look where you will, everything proclaims and proves this great truth. The Christian doctrine of the salvation of mankind by a birth of the Son, and Holy Spirit of God in them, is not only written in scripture, but in the whole state and frame of nature, and of every life in this world; for every perfect fruit openly declares, that it can have no goodness in it, till the light and spirit of this world has done that to it and in it, which the Light and Spirit of God must do to the soul of man, and therefore is a full proof, that it is absolutely necessary for every human creature to desire, believe, and receive the birth of the Son and Holy Spirit of God to save it from its own wrath and darkness, as it is necessary for every fruit of the earth to be raised and regenerated from its own bitterness and sourness, by receiving the light and spirit of this world into it.

25. Some learned men, willing to discover the image of the Holy Trinity in the creation, have observed three properties both in body and spirit, which they supposed to be a proper likeness of the Trinity. But all this is nothing to the matter. For as the Holy Trinity is a threefold life in God, so the image of the Trinity is only found in a threefold life in the creature; for it is the whole birth, or generation of the thing itself, whether it be corporeal or spiritual, that stands in such a threefold state as the Holy Trinity doth, that is the proper likeness or image of the Trinity. As there is one infinitely perfect Deity, because this one Deity is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, so every creature that is an original production of the Deity, or in its proper state of perfection, stands in its whole being, or generating as the Deity doth, and neither hath, nor ever can have any perfection, but because the triune nature of God is manifested and brought forth in it; for perfection of life is God, and a perfection of life derived from God, must stand in the same threefold state, and that which is a life from the Deity, must have a life of the Trinity in it.

26. Take away attraction, or desire from the creature of this world, and you annihilate the creature; for where there is no attraction or desire, there can be no nature or being; and therefore attraction

or desire shows the work of the creator in everything, or what is meant by the divine fiat, or creating power. Now, what is it which this attraction or desire wants, hungers, draws and reaches after? Nothing else but the light and spirit of this world. What is the true, deep, and infallible ground of this? Why does this desire thus work in every life of this world? It is because the eternal will in the Deity, is a desiring or generating the Son, from whence the Holy Spirit of God proceeds: and therefore attraction, which is an outbirth of the divine desire, stands in a perpetual desiring of the light and spirit of this world, because they are the two outbirths of the Light and Holy Spirit of God. What rational mind can help being charmed with this wonderful harmony and relation betwixt God, nature, and creature?

27. And now, my dear reader, if you are either Arian, or Deist, be so no longer: the ground is dug up from under you, and neither opinion has anything left to stand upon; you may wrangle and wrest the doctrine of scripture, because it is only taught in words; but the veil is now taken off from nature, and every plant and fruit will teach you with the clearness of a noonday sun, these two great truths; first, that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one being, one life, one God: secondly, that the soul, which is dead to the paradisaical life, must be made alive again by the birth of the Son and Holy Spirit of God in it, in the same manner as a dead seed is, and only can be brought to life in this world, by the light and spirit of this world.

If you are an Arian, don't content yourself with the numbers that are with you, or with a learned name or two that are on your side: Arianism has never yet been recommended by the genius and learning of a Baronius, or Bellarmine; and nothing but a poor, groping, purblind philosophy, that is not able to look either at God, nature, or creature, hath ever led any man into it: for it is a truth proclaimed by all nature and creature, that there is a threefold life in God, and everything that is, whether it be happy, or miserable, perfect or imperfect, is only so, because it has, or has not the triune nature of God in it. A beginning fruit is like a poison; a seed, for a while, is shut up in a hard death. Why are they both at first in this state? It is because each of them stands as yet only in that first birth of nature, which is but a beginning manifestation of the Deity. Let the light of the sun, and the spirit of this world be born in them, and then the sour, astringent fruit, and the dead seed becomes a perfect, vegetable life, and is in its kind perfect, for this one only reason, because the triune life of the Deity is truly manifested in it.

28. If you are a Deist, made so, either by the disorderly state of your own heart, or by prejudices taken from the corruptions and divisions of Christians, or from a dislike of the language of scripture, or from an opinion of the sufficiency of a religion of human reason, or from whatever else it may be, look well to yourself, Christianity is no fiction of enthusiasm, or invention of priests.

If you can show, that the gospel proposes to bring men into the kingdom of heaven by any other method, than that, which nature requires to make any creature a living member of this world, then I will acknowledge the gospel not to be founded in nature. But if what the gospel saith of the absolute necessity, that the fallen soul be born again of the Son and Holy Spirit of God, is the very same which all temporal nature saith of everything that is to enter into the life of this world, viz., that it cannot partake of the life of this world, till the light and spirit of this world is born in it; then does not all nature in this world, and every life in it, declare, that the Christian method of salvation is as necessary to raise fallen man, as the sun and spirit of this world is, to bring a creature alive into it?

Now, as there is but one God, so there is but one nature, as unalterable as that God from whom it arises, and whose manifestation it is; so also there is but one religion founded in nature, and but one salvation possible in nature. Revealed religion is nothing else but a revelation of the mysteries of nature, for God cannot reveal, or require anything by a spoken or written word, but that which he reveals and requires by nature; for nature is his great book of revelation, and he that can only read its capital letters, will have found so many demonstrations of the truth of the written revelation of God. {Spirit of Love, Part II, pages 134-149.} But to show, that there is but one salvation possible in nature, and that possibility solely contained in the Christian method: look from the top to the bottom of all creatures, from the highest to the lowest beings, and you will find, that death has but one nature in all worlds, and in all creatures: look at life in an angel, and life in a vegetable, and you will find, that life has but one and the same form, one and the same ground in the whole scale of beings: no omnipotence of God can make that to be life, which is not life, or that to be death, which is not death, according to nature; and the reason is, because nature is nothing else but God's own outward manifestation of what he inwardly is, and can do; and therefore no revelation from God can teach, or require anything but that which is taught and required by God in, and through nature. The mysteries of religion therefore, are no higher, nor deeper than the mysteries of nature, and all the rites, laws, ceremonies, types, institutions and ordinances given by God from Adam to the apostles, are only typical of something that is to be done, or instrumental to the doing of that, which the unchangeable working of nature requires to be done. As sure therefore as there is but one and the same thing that is death, and one and the same thing that is life throughout all nature, whether temporal or eternal, so sure is it, that there is but one way to life or salvation for fallen man. And this way, let it be what it will, must and can be only that, which has its reason and foundation in that one universal nature, which is the one unchangeable manifestation of the Deity. For if there is but one thing that is life, and one thing that is death throughout all nature, from the highest angel to the hardest flint upon earth, then it must be plain, that the life which is to be raised or restored by religion, must, and can only be restored according to nature: and therefore, true religion can only be the religion of nature, and divine revelation can do nothing else, but reveal and manifest the demands and workings of nature.

29. Now, the one great doctrine of the Christian religion and which includes all the rest, is this, that Adam, by his sin, died to the kingdom of heaven, or that the divine life extinguished within him; that he cannot be redeemed, or restored to this first divine life, but by having it kindled or regenerated in him by the Son and Holy Spirit of God: now, that which is here called death, his losing the Light and Spirit of the kingdom of heaven, and that which is here made necessary to make him alive again to the kingdom of heaven, is that very same which is called, and is death and life throughout all nature, both temporal and eternal: and therefore, the Christian religion requiring this method of raising man to a divine life, has its infallible proof from all nature. {Spirit of Love, Part II, page 117,.} Consider death, or the deadness that is in a hard flint, and you will see what is the eternal death of a fallen angel: the flint is dead, or in a state of death, because its fire is bound, compacted, shut up, and imprisoned; this is its chains and bands of death: a steel struck against a flint will show you, that every particle of the flint consists of this compacted fire.

Now, a fallen angel is in no other state of death, knows no other death than this: it is in its whole spiritual, intelligent being, nothing else, but that very same which the flint is, in its insensible materiality, viz., an imprisoned compacted, darkened fire-spirit, shut up, and tied in its own chains

of darkness, as the fire of the flint; and you shall see by and by, that the flint is changed from its first state into its present hardness of death, in the same manner, and by the same means, as the heavenly angel is become a fiery serpent in the state of eternal death.

Now, look at every death that can be found betwixt that of a fallen angel, and that of a hard flint, and you will find that death enters nowhere, into no kind of vegetable, plant, or animal, but as it has entered into the angel, and the flint, and stands in the same manner in everything wherever it is.

Now, that a fallen angel, is nothing else but a fire-spirit imprisoned in the same manner as a flint is an imprisoned fire, is plain from the scripture account of them; not only because all the wrathful properties of a fire without light, are ascribed to them as their essential qualities, but because the place of their habitation, or the state of their life, is a fire of hell. For how could it be possible, that a hellish fire should be the eternal state of their life, unless their nature was such a fire? Must not their painful condition arise from their nature, and their misery be only a sensibility of themselves, of that which they have made themselves to be? Therefore, if fire shut up in darkness, is the nature of hell, it can only be so, because such a darkened fire is the very nature of a fallen angel. Or how again could the human soul, which has withstood its salvation in this life, be said to fall into eternal death, or the fire of hell, if the soul itself did not become that fire of hell? For when you say the soul enters into hell, you say neither more nor less, than if you had said, that hell enters into the soul; therefore, the state of hell, and the state of the soul in hell, is one and the same thing. If therefore hell is a state of fire shut up, and imprisoned from all communion with light, then the same dark, imprisoned fire must be the nature of the fallen angel and lost soul; and thus, what your eyes see to be the death or deadness of a flint, is that same thing, or that same state of the thing, which the scripture assures you, to be the eternal death of a fallen angel, and a lost soul. Here also you may see a plain proof of what I have elsewhere declared in it, or the in-spoken Word of life given to Adam at his fall, it is in itself, as a fallen soul, the same dark, fiery spirit, as the devils are; and that the reason why men wholly given up to wickedness, and who have suppressed the redeeming power of God in their souls, do not become fully sensible of this state of their souls, is this, because the soul, while it is in this flesh and blood, is capable of being softened, assuaged, and comforted in some degree or other, by the influences of the sun and spirit of this world, as all other creatures and beings are. And if it was not thus, how could it be a plain, constant doctrine of scripture, that when the unredeemed soul departs this life, it is incapable of anything but hell? Is not this directly saying, that hell, or the sensibility of hell was only hid and suppressed in such a soul, by the life and light of this world shining upon it.

Now what I have said of the sad condition of the soul at the fall, that it lost the divine life, or the birth of the Son and Holy Spirit of God in it, and so became the same dark, fiery nature, as the devils, is not possible to be denied, without denying the most universally received doctrine of scripture. Is it not a fundamental doctrine of scripture, that Adam and all his posterity had been left in a state of eternal death, or damnation, unless Jesus Christ had become their redeemer, and taken them out of their natural state? But how can you believe, or own they had been left in this state, without believing and owning that they were in it? Or, how can you with the scripture believe, that by the fall they became heirs of eternal death and damnation with the devils, unless you believe and affirm, that by the fall they became of a hellish, diabolical nature? Or how can you hold, that by the fall they wanted to be delivered from the state of the devils, and yet not allow, that

by the fall, they got the nature of the devils? Can anything be more absurd and inconsistent? Is it not the same thing as saying, that God made them heirs of eternal death and hell, before they were by nature fit for it, or before they had extinguished in themselves the divine life which was at first brought forth in them.

Again: it is a scripture doctrine of the utmost certainty and importance, that those souls which have totally resisted and withstood all that God has done in them and for them by his Son Jesus Christ, will, at their departure from the body, be incapable of anything but eternal death, or a hellish condition. Now, how can you possibly hold this doctrine of scripture, without holding at the same time, that the soul was in that state by the fall, before it had received its redeemer, as it is then in, when it has refused to receive him; for all that you can say of a lost soul is only this, that it has lost its redeemer, and therefore is only in the condition of that soul which has not received him: and therefore, if a lost soul is only an unredeemed soul, it must be plain, that the soul, before it had received its redeemer, was in the miserable condition, and had the miserable nature of a lost soul; and therefore, the only difference between the fallen soul, and the lost soul is this, they are both in the same need of a savior, both have the same miserable nature, because they have him not; but the one has the offer of him, and the other has refused to accept of him: but this final refusal of him, has only left him in possession of that fallen state of a hellish condition, which it had before a savior was given to it; and therefore, it is a truth of the utmost certainty, that Adam, by his fall, died to the divine life, and that by this death, his soul became of the same nature and condition with the fallen angels; and that therefore that new birth or regeneration, which he is to obtain by his redeemer Jesus Christ, is nothing else but the bringing back his soul into the kingdom of heaven, by a birth of the Son and the Holy Spirit of God brought forth in it, that so the life of the triune God may be in him again, as it was at his creation, when his soul was first breathed forth from the triune God. Is there anything more great, more glorious, or more consistent than these truths? Or is there any possibility of denying any part of them, without giving up the whole? Or is there any reason, why a Christian should be loath to believe this, and this alone, to be the true state of that regeneration which is so absolutely required by the gospel? Is it an unreasonable or uncomfortable thing to be told, that our regeneration is a true and real regaining that heavenly, divine, immortal life which at first came forth from God, and which alone can enter into the kingdom of heaven?

Say that Adam did not die a real death at his transgression, that he did not lose a divine, immortal life, light and spirit, that he did not then first become a mere earthly, mortal, diabolical animal in the true and proper sense of the words, but that these things could only be affirmed of him in a figurative form of speech; say this, and then tell me what reality you have left in any article of our salvation? But if all these things must be said of fallen man according to the strictest truth of the expression, then the gospel regeneration, by a birth of the Son and Holy Spirit of God, arising a second time, in the soul of man, must mean such a real birth of a new heavenly life, as the proper sense of the words denote.

30. But to return now to my argumentation with the Deist.

I have plainly shown you, that there is, and can be but one kind of death through all nature, whether temporal or eternal; and this I have done, by showing that eternal death in an angel, is the same thing, and has the same nature, as the hard death that is in a senseless flint. But if it be a

certain truth, that death has but one way of entering into, or possessing any being from the highest of spiritual to the lowest of material creatures, then, though nothing else could be offered, it must be an infallible consequence, that life has but one way of being kindled throughout all nature, and that therefore there can be but one true religion, and that only can be it, which hath the one only way of kindling the heavenly life in the soul.

Now, look where you will, the birth or kindling of life through all nature shows you, that the way of gospel regeneration, or raising the divine life again in the fallen soul, is that one and the same way, by which every kind of life is, and must be raised, wherever it is found. The gospel saith, unless the fallen soul be born again from above, be born again of the Word, or Son, and the Spirit of God, it cannot see, or enter into the kingdom of heaven: now here it says a truth, as much confirmed and ratified by all nature, as when it is said, except a creature hath the light and spirit of this world born in it, it cannot become a living animal or this world: or, except a seed have the light and spirit of this world incorporated in it, it cannot become a vegetable of this world, either as plant, fruit, or flower. Ask now wherein lies the absolute impossibility, that the fallen soul should be raised to its divine life, without a birth of the Son and Holy Spirit of God in it, and the true ground of this impossibility is only this, because a seed shut up in its own cold hardness, cannot possibly be raised into its highest vegetable life, but by a birth of the light and spirit of this world rising up in it. On the other hand, ask why a seed cannot possibly become a vegetable life, till the light and spirit of this world has been incorporated, or generated in it; and the only true ground of it is, because a fallen soul can only be raised to a divine life, or become a plant of the kingdom of heaven, by receiving the birth of the Light and Spirit of God into it. For the true reason, why life is in such a form, and rises in such a manner in the lowest creature living, is because it does, and must arise in the same manner, and stand in the same form in the highest of living creatures: for nature does, and must always act and generate in one and the same unchangeable manner, because it is nothing else but the manifestation of one unchangeable God.

It is one and the same operation of light and spirit, that turns fire into every degree and kind of life that can be found either in temporal or eternal nature: it is one and the same operation of light and spirit, that upon one state of fire, raises an animal life, upon another state of fire, raises an intellectual and angelical life.

There is no state or form of death in any creature, but where some kind of fire is shut up from light and spirit, nor is there any kind of life but what is kindled by the same operation of light and spirit upon some sort of fire. A fruit must first stand in a poisonous, sour, astringent, bitter, and fiery agitation of all its parts, before the light and spirit of this world can be generated in it. And thus light and spirit operate upon one sort of fire in the production of a vegetable life. An animal must be conceived in the same manner, it must begin in the same poison, and when nature is in its fiery strife, the light and spirit of this world kindles up the true animal life.

Thus also there is but one kind, or state of death that can fall upon any creature, which is nothing else, but its losing the birth of light and spirit in itself, by which it becomes an imprisoned, dark fire. In an animal, vegetable, or mere matter, it is a senseless state of imprisoned fire; in an angel, or intellectual being, as the soul of man, it is a self-tormenting, self-generating, fiery worm, that cannot lose its sensibility, but is in a state of eternal death, because it is separated eternally from that light and spirit, which alone can raise a divine life in any intellectual creature. And thus it is

plain, beyond all possibility of doubt, that there is neither life nor death to be found in any part of the creation but what sets its infallible seal to this gospel truth, that fallen man cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven any other way, than by being born again of the Son and Holy Spirit of God.

31. And here, my friend, you may with certainty see what a poor, groundless fiction, your religion of human reason is; its insignificancy and emptiness is shown you by everything you can look upon.

Salvation is a birth of life, but reason can no more bring forth this birth, than it can kindle life in a plant, or animal: you might as well write the word "flame," upon the outside of a flint, and then expect that its imprisoned fire should be kindled by it, as to imagine, that any images, or ideal speculations of reason painted in your brain, should raise your soul out of its state of death, and kindle the divine life in it. No: would you have fire from a flint; its house of death must be shaken, and its chains of darkness broken off by the strokes of a steel upon it. This must of all necessity be done to your soul, its imprisoned fire must be awakened by the sharp strokes of steel, or no true light of life can arise in it: all nature and creature tells you, that the heavenly life must begin in you from the same causes, and the same operation as every earthly life, whether vegetable, or animal, does in this world. {Way to Divine Knowledge, page 162..}

Now, look where you will, all life must be generated in this manner: first, an attraction, or an astringing desire, must work itself into an anguishing agitation, or painful strife; this attraction become restless, and highly agitated, is that first poison, or strife of the properties of nature, which is and must be the beginning of every vegetable or animal life; it is by this strife, or inward agitation, that it reaches and gets a birth of the light and spirit of this world into it, and so becomes a living member, either of the animal or vegetable world.

Now, this must be your process, a desire brought into an anguishing state; or the bitter sorrows and fiery agitations of repentance, must be the beginning of a divine life in your soul; 'tis by this awakened fire, or inward agitation, that it becomes capable of being regenerated, or turned into an heavenly life, by the Light and Holy Spirit of God.

Nothing is, or can possibly be salvation, but this regenerated life of the soul: how vain and absurd would it be, to talk of a creature's being made a member of a vegetable or animal kingdom, through an outward grace or favor? or by any outward thing of any kind? For does not sense, reason, and all nature force you to confess, that it is absolutely impossible for anything to become a living member of the animal or vegetable kingdom, but by having the animal or vegetable life raised or brought forth in it? Therefore, does not sense and reason, and all nature join with the gospel in affirming, that no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven, till the heavenly life, or that which is the life in heaven, be born in him? The gospel says to the fallen, earthly man, that he must be born again from above, before he can see, enter into, or become a living member of the kingdom that is above.

Now, he that understands this to be a figurative saying, that requires no real birth of a real life that is only above, but that an earthly man may enter into the life of heaven, by only carrying this figurative saying along with him, is as absurd, as ignorant, and offends as much against sense, reason, and all nature, as he who holds, that it is a figurative expression, when we say that nothing can enter into the vegetable kingdom, till it has the vegetable life in it, or be a member of the

animal kingdom, till it hath the animal life born in it. {Way to Divine Knowledge, page 159.} And if some learned men will say, that it is religious enthusiasm to place our salvation, or capacity for the kingdom of heaven in the inward life or birth of heaven derived into our souls, they are only as learned as those who should call it philosophical enthusiasm to place the true nature of a vegetable, or animal, in its getting the inward, real birth of a vegetable and animal life. But to return to the Deist.

You act as if God was a being that had an arbitrary, discretionary will, or wisdom, like that of a great prince over his subjects, who will reward mankind according as their services appeared to him. And so you fancy, that your religion of reason may appear as valuable as a religion that consists of forms, and modes, ordinances, and doctrines of revelation; but your idea of the last judgment is a fiction of reason that knows nothing rightly of God. God's last rewarding, is only his last separating everything into its own eternal place; it is only putting an end to all temporary nature, to the mixture of good and evil that is in time and leaving everything to be that in eternity, which it has made itself to be in time. Thus it is that our works follow us, and thus God rewards every man according to his deeds. {Way to Divine Knowledge, pages 169-183.}

During the time of this world, God may be considered as the good husbandman; he sows the seed, the end of the world is the harvest, the angels are the reapers; if you are wheat, you are to be gathered into the barn, if you are tares, it signifies nothing, whence, or how, or by what means you are become so; tares are to be rejected, because they are tares, and wheat is to be gathered by the angels, because it is wheat: this is the mercy, and goodness, and discretionary justice of God that you are to expect at the last day. If you are not wheat, that is, if the heavenly life, or the kingdom of God, is not grown up in you it signifies nothing what you have chosen in the stead of it, or why you have chosen it, you are not that, which alone can help you to a place in the divine granary.

God wants no services of men to reward, he only wants to have such a life quickened and raised up in you, as may make it possible for you to enter into, and live in heaven.

He has created you out of his own eternal nature, and therefore you must have either an eternal life, or eternal death according to it. If eternal nature standeth in you, as it doth without you, then you are born again to the kingdom of heaven; but if nature works contrary in you to what it does in heaven, then you are in eternal death: and here lies the necessity of our being born again of the Word and Spirit of God, in order to the kingdom of heaven. It is because we are created out of that eternal nature which is the kingdom of heaven; 'tis because we are fallen out of it into a life of temporal nature, and therefore must have the life of eternal nature re-kindled in us, before we can possibly enter into the kingdom of heaven: therefore, look where you will, or at what you will, there is only one thing to be done, we want nothing else, but to have the light world, or the life of eternal nature kindled again in our souls, that life, and light, and spirit may be that in our souls, which they are in eternal nature, out of which our souls were created; that so we may be heavenly plants growing up to the kingdom of heaven. {Way to Divine Knowledge, pages 186-195.}

You deceive yourself with fancied notions of the goodness of God; you imagine, that so perfect a being cannot damn you for so small a matter, as choosing a religion according to your own notions, or for not joining yourself with this, or that religious society. But all this is great ignorance of God, and nature, and religion. God has appointed a religion, by which salvation is to be had

according to the possibility of nature, where no creature will be saved, or lost, but as it works with, or contrary to nature. For as the God of nature cannot himself act contrary to nature, because nature is the manifestation of himself, so every creature having its life in, and from nature, can have only such a life, or such a death as is according to the possibility of nature: and therefore, no creature will be saved, by an arbitrary goodness of God, but because of its conformity to nature, nor any creature lost by a want of compassion in God, but because of its salvation being impossible, according to the whole state of nature.

It is not for notional, or speculative mistakes, that man will be rejected by God at the last day, or for any crimes that God could overlook, if he was so pleased; but because man has continued in his unregenerate state, and has resisted and suppressed that birth of life, by which alone he could become a member of the kingdom of heaven. The goodness and love of God have no limits or bounds, but such as his omnipotence hath: and everything that hath a possibility of partaking of the kingdom of heaven, will infallibly find a place in it.

God comes not to judgment to display any wrath of his own, or to inflict any punishment as from himself upon man: he only comes to declare, that all temporary nature is at an end, and that therefore, all things must be, and stand in their own places in eternal nature: his sentence of condemnation, is only a leaving them that are lost, in such a misery of their own nature, as has finally rejected all that was possible to relieve it.

You fancy that God will not reject you at the last day, for having not received this, or that mode, or kind of religion: but here all is mistake again. You might as well imagine, that no particular kind of element was necessary to extinguish fire, or that water can supply the place of air in kindling it, as suppose that no particular kind of religion is absolutely necessary to raise up such a divine life in the soul as can only be its salvation; for nature is the ground of all creatures, it is God's manifestation of himself, it is his instrument in, and by which he acts in the production and government of every life; and therefore a life that is to belong to this world, must be raised according to temporal nature, and a life that is to live in the next world, must be raised according to eternal nature.

Therefore, all the particular doctrines, institutions, mysteries, and ordinances of a revealed religion that comes from the God of nature, must have their reason, foundation, and necessity in nature; and then your renouncing such a revealed religion, is renouncing all that the God of nature can do to save you. When I speak of nature as the true ground and foundation of religion, I mean nothing like that which you call the religion of human reason, or nature; for I speak here of eternal nature, which is the nature of the kingdom of heaven, or that eternal state, where all redeemed souls must have their eternal life, and live in eternal nature by a life derived from it, as men and animals live in temporal nature, by a life derived from it; for, seeing man stands with his soul in eternal nature, as certainly as he lives outwardly in temporal nature, and seeing man can have nothing in this world, neither happiness, nor misery from it, but what is according to the eternal nature of that world; and therefore, it is an infallible truth, that that particular religion can alone do us any good, or help us to the happiness of the next world, which works with, and according to eternal nature, and is able to generate that eternal life in us. But your notion of a goodness of God that may be expected at the last day, is as groundless, as if you imagined, that God would then stand over his creatures in a compassionate kind of weighing or considering who should be saved, and who damned, because

a good-natured prince might do so towards variety of offenders. But hear how the God of nature himself speaks of this matter: Behold, I have set before thee, life and death, fire and water. choose whither thou wilt. Here lies the whole of the divine mercy; 'tis all on this side the day of judgment: till the end of time, God is compassionate and long-suffering, and continues to every creature a power of choosing life or death, water or fire; but when the end of time is come, there is an end of choice, and the last judgment is only a putting everyone into the full and sole possession of that which he has chosen. But your notion of a goodness of God at the last day supposes, that if a man has erroneously chosen death instead of life, fire instead of water, that God will not suffer such a creature to be deprived of salvation through a mistaken choice; but that in such a creature, he will make death to be life, and fire to be water. But you might as well expect that God should make a thing to be, and not to be at the same time; for this is as possible as to make hell to be heaven, or death to be life: for darkness can no more be light, death can no more be life, fire can no more be water in any being through a compassion of God towards it, than a circle could be a square, a falsehood a truth, or two to be more than three, by God's looking upon them.

32. Our salvation is an entrance into the kingdom of heaven: now, the life, Light and Spirit of heaven must as necessarily be in a creature before it can live in heaven, as the life, light and spirit of this world must be in a creature before it can live in this world: therefore the one only religion that can save any one son of fallen Adam, must be that which can raise, or regenerate the life, Light and Spirit of heaven in his soul, that when the light and spirit of this world leaves him, he may not find himself in eternal death and darkness.

Now if this Light and Spirit of heaven is generated in your soul as it is generated in heaven, if it arises up in your nature within you, as it does in eternal nature without you, (which is the Christian new birth, or regeneration) then you are become capable of the kingdom of heaven, and nothing can keep you out of it; but if you die without this birth of the eternal Light and Spirit of God, then your soul stands in the same distance from, and contrariety to the kingdom of heaven, as hell does: if you die in this unregenerate state, it signifies nothing how you have lived, or what religion you have owned, all is left undone that was to have saved you: it matters not what form of life you have appeared in, what a number of decent, engaging or glorious exploits you have done either as a scholar, a statesman, or a philosopher; if they have proceeded only from the light and spirit of this world, they must die with it, and leave your soul in that eternal darkness, which it must have, so long as the Light and Spirit of eternity is not generated in it. And this is the true ground and reason, why an outward morality, a decency and beauty of life and conduct with respect to this world, arising only from a worldly spirit, has nothing of salvation in it: he that has his virtue only from this world, is only a trader of this world, and can only have a worldly benefit from it. For it is an undoubted truth, that everything is necessarily bounded by, or kept within the sphere of its own activity; and therefore, to expect heavenly effects from a worldly spirit, is nonsense: as water cannot rise higher in its streams, than the spring from whence it cometh, so no actions can ascend further in their efficacy, or rise higher in their value, than the spirit from whence they proceed. The spirit that comes from heaven is always in heaven, and whatsoever it does, tends to, and reaches heaven: the spirit that arises from this world, is always in it; it is as worldly when it give alms, or prays in the church, as when it makes bargains in the market. When therefore the gospel saith, he that gives alms to be seen of men, hath his reward; it is grounded on this general truth, that everything, every shape, or kind or degree of virtue that arises from the spirit of this world, has

nothing to expect but that which it can receive from this world: for every action must have its nature, and efficacy according to the spirit from whence it proceeds. He that loves to see a crucifix, a worthless image, solely from this principle, because from his heart he embraces Christ as his suffering Lord and pattern, does an action poor, and needless in itself, which yet by the spirit from whence it proceeds, reaches heaven, and helps to kindle the heavenly life in the soul. On the other hand, he that from a selfish heart, a worldly spirit, a love of esteem, distinguishes himself by the most rational virtues of an exemplary life, has only a piety that may be reckoned amongst the perishable things of this world.

33. You (the Deist) think it a partiality unworthy of God, when you hear that the salvation of mankind is attributed and appropriated to faith and prayer in the Name of Jesus Christ. It must be answered, first, that there is no partiality of any kind in God; everything is accepted by him according to its own nature, and receives all the good from him that it can possibly receive: secondly, that a morality of life, not arising from the power and Spirit of Jesus Christ, but brought forth by the spirit of this world, is the same thing, has the same nature and efficacy in a heathen, as a Christian, does only the same worldly good to the one, as it does to the other; therefore, there is not the least partiality in God, with respect to the moral works of mankind, considered as arising from, and directed by the spirit of this world.

Now, were these the only works that man could do, could he only act from the spirit of this world, no flesh could be saved, that is, no earthly creature, such as man is, could possibly begin to be of a heavenly nature, or have a heavenly life brought forth in him; so it is only a Spirit from heaven derived into the fallen nature, that makes any beginning of a heavenly life in it, that can lay the possibility of its having the least ability, tendency, and disposition towards the kingdom of heaven. This Spirit derived from heaven, is the birth of the Son of God, given to the soul as its savior, regenerator, or beginner of its return to heaven; it is that Word of life, or bruiser of the serpent, that was inspoken into the first fallen father of men; 'tis this alone that gives to all the race of Adam their capacity for salvation, their power of being again sons of God; and therefore, faith and prayer in the Name of Jesus Christ, or works done in the Spirit and power of Jesus Christ can alone save the soul, because the soul can have no relation to heaven, no communion with it, no beginning or power of growth in the heavenly life, but solely by the nature and Name of Jesus Christ derived into it. God's redemption of mankind is as universal as the fall: it was the one father of all men that fell, therefore, all his children were born into his fallen state: it was the one father of all men that was redeemed by the inspoken Word of life into him; therefore, all his children are born into his state of redemption, and have as certainly the same bruiser of the serpent in the birth of their life from him, as they have from him a serpentine nature that is to be bruised.

Hence it was, that this bruiser of the serpent, when born of a virgin, and come to die for the world, saith of himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Hence also the apostle saith, "There is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," because he is that same saving Name, or power of salvation which from the beginning was given to Adam, as an inspoken Word of life, or bruiser of the serpent: and therefore, as sure as Adam had any power of salvation derived into him from Jesus Christ, so sure was it, that the apostle must tell both Jews and heathens, that there was no salvation in any other.

Therefore, though Jesus Christ is the one only savior of all that can anywhere, or at any time be saved, yet there is no partiality in God, because, this same Jesus Christ, who came in human flesh to the Jews in a certain age, was that same savior who was given to Adam, when all mankind were in his loins; and who, through all ages, and in all countries, from the first patriarchs to the end of the world, is the common savior, as he is the common light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and that principle of life both in Jews and heathens, by which they had any relation to God, or any power, or right, or ability to call him Father. When therefore you look upon the gospel as narrowing the way of salvation, or limiting it to those, who only know and believe in Jesus Christ, since his appearance in the flesh, you mistake the whole nature of the Christian redemption. And when you reject this savior that then appeared, and died as a sacrifice upon the cross, you don't renounce a particular kind of religion, that was given only at a certain time to one part of the world, but you renounce the one source and foundation of all the grace and mercy that God can bestow upon mankind, you renounce your share of that first covenant which God made with all men in Adam, you go back into his first fallen state, and so put yourself into that condition of eternal death, from which there is no possibility of deliverance, but by that one savior whom you have renounced. And now, my dear friend, beware of prejudice, or hardness of heart: one careless, or one relenting thought upon all that is here laid before you, may either quite shut out, or quite open an entrance for true conviction. I have shown you what is meant by Christian redemption, and the absolute necessity of a new and heavenly birth, in order to obtain your share of a heavenly life in the next world: I have confirmed the truths of the gospel, by proofs taken from what is undeniable in nature: and I readily grant you that nothing can be true in revealed religion, but what has its foundation in nature; because a religion coming from the God of nature, can have no other end but to reform, and set right the failings, transgressions, and violations of nature. When the gospel saith that man fallen from the state of his creation, and become an earthly animal of this temporal world, must be born again of the Son and Holy Spirit of God, in order to be a heavenly creature; 'tis because all nature saith, that an immortal, eternal soul, must have an immortal, eternal Light and Spirit, to make it live in eternal nature, as every animal must have a temporal light and spirit, in order to live in temporary nature. Must you not therefore either deny the immortality of the soul, or acknowledge the necessity of its having an eternal Light and Spirit? When the gospel saith, that nothing can kindle or generate the heavenly life, but the operation of the Light and Spirit of heaven, it is because all nature saith, that no temporal life can be raised but in the same manner in temporary nature. Must you not therefore be forced to confess, that nature and the gospel both preach the same truths.

Light and spirit must be wherever there are living beings: and there must be the same difference betwixt the light and spirit of different worlds, as there is betwixt the worlds themselves. Hell must have its light, or it could have no living inhabitants, but its light is not so refreshing, not so gentle, not so lightful, not so comfortable as flashing points of fire in the thickest darkness of night; and therefore their light is called an eternal darkness, because it can never disperse, but only horribly discover darkness: hell also must have its spirit; but it is only an incessant insensibility of wrathful agitations, of which the thunder and rage of a tempest is but a low, shadowy resemblance, as being only a little outward eruption of that wrath, which is the inward, restless essence of the spirit of hell; and therefore that life, though it be a living spirit, is justly called an eternal death. The Light and Spirit of God admit of no delineation or comparison, they are only so far known to anyone, as they are brought into the soul by a birth of themselves in it.

Now consider, I pray you: the light and spirit of this world can no more be the light and spirit of immortal souls, than grass and hay can be the food of angels; but is as different from the Light and Spirit of heaven, as an angel is different from a beast of the field. When therefore the soul of a man departs from his body, and is eternally cut off from all temporal light and spirit, what is it that can keep such a soul from falling into eternal darkness, unless it have in itself, that Light and Spirit, which is of the same nature with the Light and Spirit of eternity, so that it may be in the light of heaven or eternal nature, as it was in the light of this world in temporary nature.

Light and spirit there must be in everything that lives, but the death of the body takes away the light and spirit of this world; if therefore the Light and Spirit of heaven be not born in the soul when it loses the body, it can only have that light and spirit, which is the very death and darkness of hell. When man lost the Light and Spirit of his creation, he lost it by turning the will and desire of his soul into an earthly life; this was his desire of knowing good and evil in this world. His fall therefore consisted in this, his soul lost its first innate, inbreathed Light and Spirit of heaven, and instead of it, had only the light and spirit of temporary nature, to keep up for a time such a life in him from this world, as the proper creatures of this world have: and this is the reason, why man, the noblest creature that is in this world, has yet various circumstances of necessity, poverty, distress and shame, that are not common to other animals of this world. 'Tis because the creatures of this life are here at home, are the proper inhabitants of this world, and therefore that womb out of which they are born, has provided them with all that they want; but man being only fallen into it, and as a transgressor, must in many respects find himself in such wants as other creatures have not. Transitory time has brought them forth, and therefore they can have no pain, nor concern, nor danger in passing away; because it is the very form of their nature, to begin, and to have an end: and therefore the God of nature has no outward laws, or directions for the creatures of this world. But the soul of man being not born of the light and spirit of this transitory world, but only standing a while as a stranger upon earth, and being under a necessity of having either the nature of an angel, or a devil, when it leaves this world, is met by the mercy and goodness of the God of nature, is inwardly and outwardly called, warned, directed, and assisted how to regain that Light and Spirit of heaven which it lost, when it fell under the temporary light and spirit of this world. And this is the whole ground and end of revealed religion, viz., to kindle such a beginning or birth of the divine Light and Spirit in the soul, that when man must take an eternal leave of the light and spirit of this world, he may not be in a state of eternal death and darkness.

Now, seeing the Light and Spirit of heaven or eternal nature, is as different from the light and spirit of this world, as an angel is from an animal of the field, if you have lived here only to the spirit and temper of this world, governed by its goods and evils, and only wise according to its wisdom, you must die as destitute of the Light and Spirit of heaven, as the beasts that perish. You have now an aversion and dislike, or at least, a disbelief of the doctrines of Christian regeneration, you struggle against this kind of redemption, you would have no salvation from the Light and Spirit of eternity regenerated in your soul; where then must you be, when the light and spirit of this world leaves you? Do you think that the Light and Spirit of God will then seize upon you, shine up in you by an outward force, though they never could be born in you? Or do you think, that the Light and Spirit of God can now be generating themselves in you, and ready to appear, as soon as you have ended a life, that has continually resisted them, and would have no new birth from them? Or that God, by a compassionate goodness, will not suffer you to be in that condition, into which your own will has

brought you? No, my friend, the will that is in you, must do that for you, which the will that was in angels did for those that stood, and for those that fell.

God's goodness or compassion is always in the same infinite state, always flowing forth, in and through all nature in the same infinite manner, and nothing wants it, but that which cannot receive it: whilst the angels stood, they stood encompassed with the infinite source of all goodness and compassion, God was communicated to them in as high a degree as their nature could receive; and they fell, not because he ceased to be an infinite, open fountain of all good to them, but because they had a will which must direct itself. For the will, at its first arising in the creature, can be subject to no outward power, because it has no outward maker; as it stands in a creaturely form, God is its true creator; but as a will, it has no outward maker, but is a ray, or spark, derived from the unbeginning will of the creator, and is of the same nature in the creature, as it was in the creator, self-existent, self-generating, self-moving, and uncontrollable from without; and there could not possibly be a free will in the creature, but by its being directly derived, or propagated from the same will in the creator, for nothing can be free now, but that which always was so. But if the free will of God, which is above and superior to nature, be communicated to the creature, then the creature's free will must have the same power over its one nature, that the will of God has over that eternal nature, which is his own manifestation: and therefore, every free creature must have, and find its own nature in this, or that state, as a birth from the free working of its own will. And here appears the true reason, why no creatures of this world can commit sin; 'tis because they have no will that is superior to nature: their will in every one of them, is only the will of nature; and therefore let them do what they will, they are always doing that which is natural, and consequently, not sinful. But the will of angels and men being an offspring, or ray, derived from the will of God, which is superior to nature, stands chargeable with the state and condition of their nature; and therefore it is, that the nature of the devil, and the nature of fallen man is imputed to both of them, as their sin, which could not be, but because their will was uncontrollable, and gave birth and being to that state and condition of nature, which is called, and is their sin.

Therefore, O man! look well to thyself, and see what birth thou art bringing forth, what nature is growing up in thee, and be assured, that stand thou must, in that state of nature, which the working of thy own will has brought forth in thee, whether it be happy or miserable. Expect no arbitrary goodness, of God towards thee, when thou leavest this world; for that must grow for ever which hath grown here. God hath created thee in nature, his mercy hath shown thee all the laws and necessities of nature, his mercy hath shown thee all the laws and necessities of nature, and how thou mayest rise from thy corruption, according to the possibilities of nature, and he can only save thee by thy conforming to the demands of nature: the greatness of the divine mercy and favor towards all men appears in this, that when all nature had failed, and mankind could from nature have nothing but eternal death, that God brought such a second Adam into the world, as being God and man, could make nature begin its work again, where it failed in the first Adam. The free grace and mercy by which we are said in the scripture to be saved, is not an arbitrary good will in God, which saves whom he pleases; as a prince may forgive some, and not forgive others, merely through his own sovereign grace and favor: nothing of this kind hath any place in God, or in the mystery of our redemption; but the mercy and grace, by which we are saved, is therefore free, because God hath freely, and from his own goodness, put us into a state and possibility of salvation, by freely giving us Jesus Christ, (the divine and human nature united in one person) as

the only means of regenerating that first divine and human life, which the whole race of mankind had lost. In this sense alone it is, that all our salvation is wholly owing to the free grace of God, that is, our state, and possibility, and means of attaining salvation is wholly owing to his free grace in giving us Jesus Christ; but our salvation, considered as a finished thing, is not, cannot be found by any act of God's free grace towards us, but because all that is done, altered, removed, suppressed, quickened, and recovered by us in the state of our nature, which the free grace of God had furnished us with the possibility and means of doing. If nature and creature had no share in working out our salvation; if it was all free grace, effected against, and without the powers of nature, how comes it, that the fallen angels are not to be redeemed as well as man? Must we say that God is less good to them than he is to us? Or if they are not redeemed, can there be any other reason for it, but because it is an impossibility in nature? Must not an infinite good do all the good that is wanted, and is possible to be done? If free grace can do what it pleases, if it wants no concurrence of nature and creature, how can any being, whether man or angel, be eternally miserable, but through an eternal defect in the goodness of God towards it? Shall we call that infinite goodness, which sets bounds and limits to itself, and which could do more good, but will not? The truth of the matter is this, God is as infinite and boundless in love and goodness, as he is in power, but his omnipotence can only do that which is possible, and nothing is possible but that which hath its possibility in nature; because nature is God's first power, his great, universal manifestation of his Deity, in and through, and by which all his infinite attributes break forth, and display themselves: so that to expect, that God should do anything that is above, or contrary to this nature, is as absurd as to expect that God should act above, or contrary to himself: as God can only make a creature to be in, and through, and by nature; so the reason why he cannot make a creature to be, and not to be at the same time, is only this, because it is contrary to nature. Let no man therefore trust to be saved at the last day, by any arbitrary goodness, or free grace of God; for salvation is, and can be nothing else, but the having put off all that is damnable and hellish in our nature, which salvation can be found by no creature but by its own full conforming to, and concurring with those mysterious means, which the free grace of God hath afforded for the recovery of our first, perfect, glorious state in nature.

04.00 A DEMONSTRATION of the Gross and Fundamental Errors

A DEMONSTRATION of the Gross and Fundamental Errors Of a late book, called A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper,

Wherein also the nature and extent of the redemption of all mankind by Jesus Christ is stated and explained; and the pretences of the Deists, for a religion of natural reason instead of it, are examined to the bottom. The whole humbly, earnestly, and affectionately addressed to all orders of men, and more especially to all the younger clergy.

04.01 A DEMONSTRATION of the Gross and Fundament

My design (worthy reader) is not to lay before you all the errors and false reasonings of this author throughout his whole treatise. This would lead you into too much wrangle, and the multiplicity of things disputed, would take your eye from the chief point in question, and so make the matter less edifying to you.

Many therefore of his lesser mistakes I shall pass over, and only endeavor to discover such gross and fundamental errors, as may justly pass for an entire confutation of his whole book. The foundation on which he proceeds, and the principal matters of his discourse, are not only notoriously against the truth of the sacrament, but plainly destructive of the principal doctrines of the Christian religion. And if this key of knowledge, put into your hands by this author, is accepted by you, you will not only lose all the right knowledge of this sacrament, but be rendered a blind, deaf, and even dead reader of all the other doctrines of scripture. For the way he points out to find the truth of the doctrine of the sacrament, is the only way to lose the truth of all the most important parts of the gospel. Who this nameless author is, neither concerns the truth, nor you, nor me, and therefore I leave that matter as he has left it.

He begins with giving us this account of the principles on which he proceeds.

I have endeavored to establish and explain the true nature, end, and effect of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And this in such a manner, that all who are concerned may, I hope, be led into the right way of judging about it. To this I have endeavored to guide them, by directing and confining their attention to all that is said about this duty, by those who alone had any authority to declare the nature of it: Neither on the one hand diminishing, nor on the other augmenting, what is declared by them to belong to it. If therefore the manner in which I have chosen to treat this subject, should appear to some to stand in need of any apology; this is the only one I can persuade myself to make, that I have no authority to add to the words of Christ and his apostles upon this subject; nor to put any meaning or interpretation upon these words, but what is agreeable to the common rules of speaking in like cases, and to the declared design of the institution itself. --All who (in the apostle's phrase) love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, and who desire to be no wiser about his appointments, than he himself was; and are content to expect no more from his institution than he himself put into it, will join with me at least in the one only method of examining into the nature and extent of it.

Here he has given us a short, but full account of the principles upon which he proceeds, which I shall reduce into the following propositions.

First, that the nature, end, and effects of the holy sacrament can only be so far known, and apprehended by us, as the bare words of Christ in the institution of the sacrament, related by the apostles and evangelists, have made them known to us.

Secondly, that no other meaning or interpretation is to be put upon these words, but what is agreeable to the common rules of speaking on the like occasions.

Thirdly, that this examination into the meaning of the words, according to the common rules of speaking on the like occasions, is the one only method of knowing what is meant by them.

Fourthly, that this knowledge thus acquired from such a consideration of the words, is all the knowledge that we can have of the nature, end, and effects of this holy sacrament.

Everyone must see that these propositions are fairly taken from his own words, and that they are the foundation of his whole discourse. He builds upon them as upon so many axioms, or first principles; and all he says from the beginning to the end of his treatise, is founded upon the supposed incontestable truth of them.

Here therefore let me desire you to fix your eye, for here I will place the merits of the cause with him: If this foundation cannot be shaken, I will dispute nothing that he has built upon it. But then let it be observed, that if these propositions are proved to be absolutely false, and most evidently repugnant to the repeated letter, constant spirit, and whole tenor of scripture, then all this whole treatise, from the beginning to the end, so far as he proceeds upon his own avowed principles, is mere fiction and fable, a castle in the air.

I shall therefore in the plainest manner show the falseness of these propositions, and that they are so far from being what he takes them to be, viz., the only means of arriving at the fullness of scripture truths, that whoever entertains them as truths, and abides by them in his search after scripture truths, is, and must be, so long as he continues in that sentiment and practice, stone-blind to all the mysteries of the kingdom of God, as related in scripture. And that, if it were anyone's desire to do exactly what our blessed Lord charges upon the Pharisees and lawyer, "that they shut up the kingdom of heaven, took away the key of knowledge, entered not in themselves, and those that were entering in, they hindered": were this the deepest desire of anyone's heart, the one only effectual way of doing it, must be the way that this author has taken in this treatise. For, it shall also be made appear, that these principles of his are that very veil which the apostle says was upon the hearts of the Jews; and that the scriptures have never been useless to, misunderstood, or rejected by any people of any age, but for this reason, because their hearts were blinded and hardened by this very method of knowing scripture truths, which he proposes to us. All the characters of "stiff-necked, hardened, blind, carnal, and uncircumcised in heart and spirit," which are in the scriptures given to unbelieving Jews, are only so many various ways of describing that state of heart, which these very principles had produced in them. Had they thought of any other method of knowing their messiah, but that of the bare letter of scripture, interpreted according to the common rules of speaking, the greatest occasion of their infidelity had been removed. But to begin in my proposed method. The holy sacrament was instituted in these words: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat, this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it: for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." Matthew 26:28. In St. Luke the words of institution are: "And he took the bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Luke 22:19.

Let us now apply the doctrine contained in the forementioned propositions to these words of the institution of the sacrament. According to the doctrine of those propositions, the one only method

of understanding what is meant by these words of the institution, is to consider and interpret them "according to the common rules of speaking in like cases." But, pray sir, where must a man look for a like case? Does the world afford us any case like it? Have the speaker, or the things spoken, any things in common life that are alike to either of them? How vain it is therefore to refer us to the common rules of speaking on the like cases, when the whole world affords us neither any person like him that spoke, nor any thing, or case, like the things and case here spoken of. The scripture saith, "He spake the word, and they were made; he commanded, and they were created." {Psalms 148:5} Has this way of speaking any parallel in the language of men? Do human things and transactions furnish us with anything like this?

Now the Word which thus speaking created all things, is not more extraordinary, more above the common rules of speaking, or more without human example, than that Word which, in the institution of the sacrament, spake, and it was done; commanded, and it was created. For it is the same omnipotent Word that here speaketh, that spoke the creation into being; and the effects of his speaking in the institution of the sacrament, are as extraordinary, and as much above the effects of human speaking, as when the same Word "spake, and they were made; commanded, and they were created." And it is impossible for anyone to show, that there is less of divine power and greatness, less of mystery and miracle implied in these words spoken by the eternal Word in the institution of the sacrament, than when the same eternal Word said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

All words have a meaning, a significancy and effect, according to the nature of him, whose they are. The words of God are of the nature of God, divine, living and powerful; the words of an angel are, as that angel is in power and perfection; the words of a devil have only his nature and power, and therefore they can only and solely tempt to evil; the words of man are, as men are, weak, vain, earthly, and of a poor and narrow signification. To direct us therefore to the common rules of speaking amongst men, as the only means of truly knowing all that the Son of God spoke, when he spoke of himself, and on such an occasion, and in such circumstances as never did, nor ever can happen or belong to anyone but himself, is surely no small mistake. The common rules of speaking are like other things that are common amongst men, viz., poor, empty, and superficial, hardly touching the outside of the mere human things we talk about. If therefore what the Son of God said of himself in the institution of this holy sacrament, must necessarily be supposed to have no higher meaning or deeper sense, than such as is according to the common rules of speaking amongst men; it must necessarily follow, that he spoke as meanly, as imperfectly, and as superficially in what he said of himself, and the matter he was upon, as when men speak of themselves and human things. For if there were not the same weak, empty, and superficial meaning in his words, as there is in the common discourse of men; then the common rules of speaking amongst men cannot be a proper, much less the only means of understanding all the truth that is contained in them. This author seems to be in the same mistake concerning Jesus Christ and his kingdom, as his disciples were in, before they had received power from on high. They had till then heard him only with their outward ears; conceived what he said, only according to the common rules of speaking amongst men, and so continued perfect strangers to all the mysteries and great truths of the gospel. But after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon them, their understandings were opened, and they saw all things with new eyes, and in a new light; they then fully apprehended what their Lord meant by these remarkable words, "My kingdom is not of this

world." Which is the same thing as if he had said, I speak not as a person of this world, and therefore the things which I say, can neither be understood by a worldly mind, nor according to the common ways of speaking amongst men. And had this author sufficiently attended to the sense of these words, and felt the truth of them in his own heart, it seems next to impossible for him to have fallen into his present way of reasoning. For he that truly and fully believes that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, and that therefore worldly powers and privileges are not a proper part of it, can hardly be so inconsistent with himself, as to affirm, that worldly language, spoken on worldly matters, is the only proper key to the right understanding the truths and doctrines of this kingdom, that is so out of, above, and contrary to this world. And if he has but one just and good argument to prove, that worldly power is not the proper and only power that belongs to this kingdom, the same argument will as fully prove, that worldly language understood according to the common rules of speaking, cannot be the proper and only means of rightly apprehending the truths of this kingdom. To proceed; he refers and confines us to the bare words of the institution, for the right and full understanding of all that is to be understood of the nature, end, and effects of the holy sacrament.

Here he throws an easy deception into the mind of his reader, who because he may justly think he is right in declaring the words of institution to be the only true and full account of the sacrament, as to the outward form and matter of it, suspects him not to be wrong, when he concludes from thence, that the words are also the only true and full account of the nature, end and effects of the holy sacrament. Whereas this is as false, as the other is true; for the nature, and end, and effects of the holy sacrament, neither are, nor possibly can be taught us (as shall be shown hereafter) from the bare words of the institution, considered by themselves.

Let us suppose that one of this author's rational men, of clear ideas, but an absolute stranger to the scriptures, and to our savior's doctrines, had been present only when he spoke the words of the institution; would his knowledge of the meaning of words, according to the common rules of speaking, have directed him to the true sense of all that was implied by this sacrament and the observation of it? To say that such a person thus qualified could have known the true nature, end, and effects of the holy sacrament, is surely too absurd to be imagined. And to say that he could not, is fully giving up this author's whole doctrine, namely, that the bare understanding the words of the institution according to the common rules of speaking, is the only way to understand all that is certain and true as the nature, end, and effects of the sacrament. For if this were so, it would evidently follow, that a perfect stranger to all the other doctrines and institutions both of the Old and New Testament, would be as well qualified to understand all that was implied in the words of the institution, as he that had the fullest knowledge of everything that ever had been revealed or appointed by God, either before or since the birth of Christ. But if some knowledge of what God has revealed both in the Old and New Testament be required, for a right understanding what is implied in the words of the institution, then it is absolutely false, and highly blamable, to say, that the bare words of the institution, considered in themselves only, according to the common rules of speaking, are the only means or method of understanding all that is implied in them.

Either this sacrament has some relation to some other doctrines of the Old and New Testament, or it has not; if it has no relation to them, then it must be said to have no agreement with any other part of scripture: but if it has some relation to other doctrines of scripture, then it demonstratively follows, that this institution must be interpreted, not according to the bare meaning of the words in the common ways of speaking, but according to that relation which it has to some other doctrines

of scripture. This, I think, is incontestable, and entirely overthrows his only method of understanding the nature of the sacrament.

Again, another argument of still greater force against him may be taken from the apostles themselves. He confines us to the bare words of the institution related by the apostles and evangelists, as the only means of knowing all that can be known of the nature, end, and effects of the sacrament; and yet it is certain, beyond all doubt, that the apostles and evangelists neither had, nor could possibly have this design in relating and recording the words of the institution, namely, that we might thereby have the one only means of knowing all that is to be understood by it. For they very well knew, that they had received no such knowledge themselves from the bare words of the institution, and therefore they could not relate them as the only means of instruction in that matter to others. They very well knew, that if they had received no other light, besides that which those words conveyed, they had died in a total ignorance of the whole matter.

They very well knew, that though they had personally conversed with Christ, had heard from his own mouth, mysteries preparatory to their right knowledge of their savior, that notwithstanding all this, when they heard and saw him institute the sacrament in its outward form and matter, as they relate it, by the help of the bare words of the institution, they then neither did, nor could rightly understand the nature, end, and effects of the holy sacrament. And therefore it may be said to be certain beyond all doubt, that they neither did nor could relate and record these words of the institution, as the only means of rightly understanding all that is implied in the sacrament, as to the nature, end, and effects of it. And yet this author takes all this for granted, and supposes that the apostles had all their knowledge of the sacrament from the words of the institution, and that they have recorded the institution for this end, and with this design, that we might know all that they knew, and all that could be known concerning it. That the apostles themselves did not comprehend the nature, end, and effects of the sacrament from the words of the institution, is plain; for they did not then know what person their savior was, or how he was to save them or what their salvation in itself implied. They knew nothing of the nature or merit of his sufferings, but thought all to be lost, when he suffered death. They knew not how to believe in his resurrection, and when they did believe it, they knew nothing of the consequences of it; which is a plain proof that they did not at all see into the meaning of the holy sacrament, for had they known what was implied in it, they must have known their savior, and the nature of their salvation. And yet (what is well to be observed) it is also plain, that in this state of gross ignorance and infidelity, knowing nothing of their salvation, they had all that knowledge of the holy sacrament which this author is recommending to the Christian world, as the only true knowledge of it. For they must have understood the words according to the common rules of speaking, which is all that he allows to be understood by them. For any other sense or meaning, that is not literally expressed in the words taken according to the common rules of speaking, is by him called a being wiser than Christ in his own appointments, an adding to the institution, or a putting something into it, which he has not put in. So that it is evidently plain, that this purity of knowledge concerning the sacrament, which this author has writ so large a volume in recommendation of, is that very knowledge of the sacrament which the apostles had, when they had no faith in Christ as their savior, nor any knowledge of the nature of Christian salvation. Everyone must see that this charge is justly brought against him, and that he cannot possibly avoid it. For if that is the only right knowledge the nature, end, and effects of the holy sacrament, which the bare words of the institution, understood according to the common rules

of speaking, declare; if every other sense and meaning is to be rejected as a criminal adding, or putting something into Christ's institution, and a presuming to be wiser than he was; then it undeniably follows, that that simple and pure knowledge of the sacrament, which he lays so great claim to, and so much contends for, is that very gross ignorance of it which the apostles were in, when they had no light but from the bare words of the institution, and had all the articles of the Christian faith to learn.

Further, as the apostles did not, so they could not possibly know the nature, end, and effects of the holy sacrament, from the bare words of the institution, nor is it possible for anyone since their time to know it by that help alone. The outward matter and form indeed, or that wherein the positive institution consists (as I have already said) is sufficiently plain and intelligible from the bare words of the institution, and is by them made unalterable. This is the only plainness of the institution. But what mysteries or doctrines of Christian faith are to be acknowledged or confessed by the words, the form, and the matter of it, and what are not, cannot be known from the bare words of the institution, but are to be learnt by that light which brought the apostles and the church after them into a true and full knowledge of the fundamental articles of the Christian faith.

Take the words of the institution alone as the apostles first heard them, understood only according to the common rules of speaking, and then there is nothing in them, but that poor conception which they had of them at that time, and such as did them no good; and then also we have that knowledge of this institution, which this author pleads for. But, take the same words of institution, understood and interpreted according to the articles of the Christian faith, and seen in that light in which the apostles afterwards saw them, when they knew their savior; and then everything that is great and adorable in the redemption of mankind, everything that can delight, comfort and support the heart of a Christian, is found to be centered in this holy sacrament. There then wants nothing but the wedding garment to make this holy supper the marriage feast of the Lamb: and it is this holy solemnity, this author is taking so much pains to wrangle us out of, by so many dry subtleties of a superficial logic. But I proceed to show, that neither the apostles, nor any other persons since them, could possibly know the nature, end and effects of the holy sacrament, from the bare words of the institution considered only in themselves, according to the common rules of speaking. And this may be demonstrated from every part of the institution.

I shall begin with these words, which are only a command to observe the institution, "Do this in remembrance of me": that is, let this be done as your confession and acknowledgement of the salvation that is received through me. Does not every common Christian, that has any knowledge of scripture, know, that this is the plain meaning of these words? And that as often as he does this, he does it in remembrance of his savior, in acknowledgement and confession of that salvation which mankind received through him? But now, that which is thus plain and intelligible in the words of the institution to a common Christian, knowing only the chief articles of his salvation, is altogether unintelligible to any man that is left solely to the bare words of the institution; for unless he was instructed in the other parts of scripture, so as to know what he was to understand by the words, they would signify no more to him than they would to a heathen, who had by chance found a bit of paper in the fields with the same words writ upon it.

Now a heathen, ignorant of all divine revelation, if he found such a paper, could not know what it related to, nor what any of the words signified; he could not know when he was nearer, or when he

was further from a right understanding of them; the common rules of speaking amongst men, would be of no use to teach him, whether there was any truth in such a paper, or what kind of truths were declared by it.

Now this is exactly the case of him that renounces all other means of knowing what is contained in the institution, but that of the words themselves, understood only according to the common rules of speaking amongst men. Such a one is only in the state of this heathen, the words of the institution are as unintelligible and useless to him, as if he had found them by chance; they relate to he knows not what, they may be all fiction and invention for aught he knows, they cannot possibly be understood as having any truth or reality in them, till he that reads them, knows more than is related by them, till he knows the chief articles of the Christian salvation. For the bare words of the institution, considered by themselves, do not at all prove, justify, or explain, even that which they literally express; they are all but empty, unmeaning words, till the proof, the justification and explication of them, is learned from some other parts of scripture. They do not at all prove, justify, or explain, either that we want a savior, or why we want him, or that a savior is given us, and how he effects our salvation; and yet all these things are absolutely necessary to a right understanding of this institution; and as soon as these things are proved, justified and explained, as soon as we know that we want a savior, and that one is given to us; as soon as we know who this savior is, how he saves us, and the nature and manner of our salvation, then, and not till then, all these words of the institution become clearly intelligible after a new manner; then all the great articles of our salvation appear to be finely remembered, acknowledged, and set forth by them. The short of the matter is this; to understand these words only by themselves, knowing no more in them or by them, than what the common use of words teaches us, is to understand them only in such a degree as a heathen may understand them, who knows nothing of the scripture besides; and this is the knowledge, or rather the total ignorance of the sacrament, that this author is contending for. But if these words are but a part of the Christian religion, if they are to be understood according to that religion of which they are a part, if the articles of our Christian salvation have any concern in them, and we are to receive them as Christians in such a sense as our Christianity requires of us; then it is undeniably certain, that this author refers us to an absurdity, and impossibility, when he refers and confines us to the bare words of the institution, understood only according to the common rules of speaking, in order to have a Christian knowledge of the holy sacrament.

Again, "Do this in remembrance of me": Now take these words in what sense you please, is it not equally and absolutely necessary for the right understanding of them, to know who and what kind of person this ME is, who is here to be remembered? For if this is to be done in remembrance of him, how can he be remembered, or acknowledged, unless it be known what qualities and characters of him are to be remembered and acknowledged? But this is not done in the words of the institution; the state, nature, and characters of the person to be remembered are not there declared, nor proved, and explained; therefore something of the greatest importance to the words, and that must have the greatest effect upon the sense of them, and that is absolutely necessary to the right understanding of them, is necessarily to be learnt elsewhere; and therefore it is again proved that he refers us to an absurdity and impossibility, when he refers and confines us to the bare words of the institution, to know all that a Christian can rightly know of them. For if all that is done in this sacrament, is to be done for the sake of remembering and acknowledging him as our savior, then surely it requires us to remember, and acknowledge him, according to what he is, with

regard to our salvation, and according to those characters which are so plainly ascribed to him in scripture, and on which our whole religion is founded; and therefore it is also necessary, that we rightly know (what cannot possibly be known from the bare words of the institution) in what respects and on how many accounts he is our savior, before we can rightly make this remembrance and acknowledgement of him as such.

It was the want of this knowledge, that made the institution of the sacrament useless to the apostles when they first heard it; but when they had got this knowledge, and knew all the characters of their savior, and in how many respects he stood as the mediator and redeemer betwixt God and man, then the institution became highly intelligible to them, and every part of it plainly declared the mystery that in a certain sense was both concealed and expressed by it. Now the addition of this knowledge of the nature, condition, and characters of the person to be remembered and acknowledged by the institution, is adding nothing to the institution, but the right use of it; it is bringing nothing to it, but a mind capable of knowing and observing it.

He that is to understand a proposition written in Hebrew, cannot be charged with adding to that proposition, because he holds it necessary to learn the Hebrew language before he pretends to understand a proposition written in Hebrew.

Now a scripture-Christian institution must as necessarily be understood according to scripture and Christian doctrine, as an Hebrew proposition must be understood according to the Hebrew language: and the making use of scripture and Christian doctrine, in order to understand a scripture and Christian institution, is no more an adding of something to the institution, that need not, or ought not to be done, than the interpreting an Hebrew proposition by the Hebrew language, is an adding of something to it, that need not, or ought not to be done.

And, on the other hand, to confine us to the bare words of the institution, as they are in themselves, as they sound only in common language, in order to understand a scripture-Christian institution, is exactly the same thing as to confine us to the bare words of a proposition written in Hebrew, considered only according to the common rules of speaking, and not according to that meaning they have in the Hebrew language to which they belong, and of which they are a part. For a scripture-Christian institution must in the same manner have its dependence upon, foundation in, and interpretation from scripture and Christian doctrine, of which it is a part, and to which it belongs, as an Hebrew proposition hath dependence upon, foundation in, and interpretation from the Hebrew language, to which it belongs, and of which it is a part. This scripture-Christian institution being thus interpreted, according to the scripture and Christian doctrine, of which it is a part, is, when thus interpreted, left and kept in that state, in which Christ left it to be kept. Nay, the institution itself cannot even literally be observed according to the bare words of it, unless it be observed according to this knowledge and acknowledgement of all the characters of Christ. For though the bare words of the institution do not express or teach these characters, yet the bare words or letter of it requires thus much: for since the letter of the institution requires us to do this in remembrance and acknowledgement of Christ, the bare letter requires us in doing this, to acknowledge and remember all the characters of Christ; therefore he that in doing this does not remember and acknowledge all the characters of Christ, must be said not to observe the very letter of the institution. Hence therefore there arises another plain demonstration against his doctrine, viz., that we are to know no more of the nature or right observation of the sacrament,

than what is expressly taught us in the bare words of the institution. For the very letter itself of the institution contradicts this; and if he will not directly refuse what the bare words expressly command, he must seek for something towards the right observation of this sacrament, which is only required, but not taught in the words of the institution. For by the letter of the institution you are commanded to remember and acknowledge a person, whose characters, condition and offices to be acknowledged, are not taught in the institution, but only to be found in other parts of scripture; and therefore the bare letter of the institution is grossly violated, if we look no further than to the words of the institution for a right knowledge and observation of the sacrament.

Again, if the scriptures teach and prove Christ to be the sacrifice, atonement and propitiation for our sins, as expressly as they teach us the institution of the sacrament, does not the remembrance and acknowledgement of him as the sacrifice, atonement and propitiation for sin, become a necessary part of our right observation of the sacrament? For if the sacrament is appointed for the remembrance and acknowledgement of Christ as our savior, and if as our savior he is the atonement, the sacrifice, and propitiation for our sins, is not the remembrance and acknowledgement of him as our sacrifice and atonement, essential to the remembrance of him as our savior? If these characters were mentioned in the institution, I suppose they would be allowed to be an essential part of it. But if the letter of the institution directly points to, and calls for the acknowledgement of these characters, then they are as essential to it, as if they were expressly mentioned in it.

Jesus Christ is not mentioned in the institution as our savior, but I suppose it will not be denied that he is there by way of necessary implication, since the person there to be remembered, is declared by the scripture to be our savior. But if we may be allowed thus to take our savior to be the person that is to be remembered and acknowledged by the sacrament, if this may be done without adding anything to the institution, if it must be done as absolutely essential to it, then the addition of sacrifice, atonement, and propitiation for our sins, may be added without adding anything to the institution, and must be done as absolutely essential to it; because the scriptures teach and prove, that Jesus Christ, as our savior, is the sacrifice, atonement, and propitiation for our sins. Therefore if the remembrance of him as our savior is essential to the sacrament, the remembrance and acknowledgement of him as the sacrifice and atonement, and propitiation for sin, is essential to the sacrament. And therefore it follows again, that the very words of the institution direct us to a further knowledge of the sacrament, than that which is expressly taught by them. To proceed: "Take, eat; this is my body." Now what signifies it what anyone can make of these words, understood according to the common ways of speaking? For the way itself is singular and uncommon, and has no certain meaning according to the common rules of speaking. He may as well read a discourse upon truth, to know whether these words have any truth in them, as consult the common forms of speaking, to know what is meant by them. For if the things mentioned and expressed in these words, were not made significant and important to us by something not mentioned in the sacrament, if they were not asserted and explained in other parts of scripture, it could never be known from the words themselves, that they were of any significance to us, or that there was any truth and reality in them. The short of the matter is this: either these words are only a great impropriety of speech, darkly expressing only a common thing; or they are a figurative form of words, which by the particularity of the expression are to raise the mind to a faith and apprehension of such things, as cannot be plainly and nakedly represented by human language.

Now one of these two must necessarily be true, that is, they must necessarily be either a dark form of words with only a plain common meaning of an ordinary thing at the bottom, or they must be a mysterious form of words signifying something more than human. But now which of these two they are, cannot possibly be known from the words of the institution. For the words in themselves prove nothing at all of this; from aught that appears in the words themselves, they may be mere fiction and impropriety about a trifle, or the greatest and most important of all truths may be taught by them. But this can no other possible way be known, but by other parts of scripture. And if the scriptures were as silent about the truth, nature, and extent of the things barely mentioned in the sacrament, as the institution itself is, it must be the same useless, unintelligible form of words to us, that it was to the apostles when they first heard them, and had no knowledge of their savior.

But, on the other hand, if the things barely mentioned in the words of the institution, are openly asserted, and variously explained in other parts of scripture; if we are often told what the body of Christ is in several respects, of the necessity and possibility of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood; if the scriptures abound with instruction, showing us how we have our life in him and from him, how we must be born again in him and through him, how he must be formed in us, and we new creatures in him; then it follows, that to separate the institution from these scriptures that variously unfold its nature, and to confine us to the bare words of the institution itself, in order to understand it fully, is the same absurdity, the same offense against scripture and reason, as it would be to confine us to the bare words of the first promise of a savior made in the third chapter of Genesis, in order to know fully our Christian savior, and what our Christian salvation is. For as that first promise of a seed of the woman that should bruise the serpent's head, contained the whole character of our savior, and all that related to him as such, and yet contained nothing of it intelligible enough, till further revelations, doctrines and facts explained all that was short and figurative in that first promise, and showed how every part of our salvation was promised by it; so the institution of the sacrament contained everything relating to Christ as our savior, and yet contained nothing of it intelligible enough, till further revelations, new light, doctrines and facts explained all that was short and figurative in it, and plainly showed what it was in its real nature, how it stood in the heart of our religion, fully attesting and representing the chief characters of Christ, as he was our savior and redeemer.

Therefore it is the same gross error to confine the words of the institution to their own literal meaning, and to understand them only according to the common rules of speaking, as it would be to confine that first promise of a savior to the literal meaning of the words in which it was expressed, understood only according to the common rules of speaking. For as it was by the scriptures speaking a language different from the expressions of the first promise of a seed to bruise the serpent's head, and giving further revelations concerning the promised savior in other words, that the words of the first promise itself came rightly to be understood and believed; so it is by the scriptures speaking a language different from that of the sacrament, and by revealing doctrines on which it is founded, that the sacrament itself came rightly to be known and understood. And if the scripture may and must be allowed to explain, confirm, and establish the true meaning of the first promise of a seed to destroy the serpent's head, even where the words of it are not mentioned, or expressly said to be explained; then the scriptures may and must be allowed to explain, confirm, and establish the true nature of the sacrament, even where the words of it are not mentioned, or expressly said to be explained.

Yet this author poorly and vainly supposes, that the nature of the sacrament, and the things meant by it, are nowhere to be looked for in scripture, but where the sacramental words, or the manner of the outward institution is repeated, or expressly said to be explained: which is as just and solid, as if a Jew should from the same skill in words suppose, that the explication of the first promise of a woman's seed to bruise the serpent's head, was nowhere to be looked for in scripture, but in such places as spoke strictly the language of the first promise, and mentioned the express words, "seed," and "bruise," and the "serpent's head." And indeed herein, in this poor literal exactness lay all the infidelity of the Jews, the blindness and hardness of their hearts, and their incapacity to receive their savior. Look at every folly, grossness, and erroneous principle of the scribes and Pharisees; look through the whole of their false religion, and you will find, that they fell into it all, because they had this author's method of finding the truth. They placed all in the letter of scripture, as this author does; they understood that letter only according to the common rules of speaking amongst men, as this author does; they looked upon and understood all the institutions of their religion, as this author looks upon and understands the sacrament; they saw just so far into the Law, as he does into the gospel; they had his degree of knowledge, and he has their degree of ignorance. For take but away from the scribe and Pharisee the letter of scripture, understood according to the common rules of speaking, and you take away all their religion; they see no more of an inward mystery, spirit, or doctrine in it, than this author sees in the sacrament.

Again, leave them but the letter of scripture, understood according to the common rules of speaking, as this author would have the sacrament left, and then you leave them all that they would have; and the religion of the scribes and Pharisees is in its full perfection, and has exactly the perfection of this author's plain account of the sacrament. This made me say above, that it would appear, that this author's method of understanding the scripture doctrine of the sacrament, was that very veil which the apostle said was upon the hearts of the Jews; and that he was laboring to draw skins over our eyes, and to make our ears gross and dull of hearing, that the New Testament might be as useless to us, as the Old Testament was to the unbelieving letter-learned scribes and Pharisees. For his excellent method of understanding the nature of the sacrament, is to a tittle that very method which kept them totally ignorant of the nature of their religion.

Every prophecy of our savior, whether in the Law, or the psalms, or the prophets, served only to keep him more out of their knowledge; because looking only upon it, as this author looks upon the words of the institution, they were under a necessity of understanding it wrong, and so the more prophecies they had of him, the further they were carried from the true knowledge of their promised savior. Circumcision, sacrifices, washings, feasts and fasts, &c., which were intended and appointed as so many school-masters or guides to Christ, were by them turned into dead, carnal, earthly ordinances, that left them in their sins, and incapable of acknowledging their savior, or so much as feeling any want of one; for this very reason, because they saw no further into their sacrifices, than this author sees into the sacrament; but thought that the whole nature and end of a sacrifice was fully observed, when they had slain an ox, and not changed it into the cutting off of a dog's head. This was their great point in sacrifice, just as this author has found out the great point, as he calls it, of the sacrament, which consists in a bare act of the memory, remembering Christ as a teacher of religion at the instant you take the bread or the cup, and not remembering Aristotle or Socinus, &c., as teachers of logic and criticism. When you have by this sole act of your memory thus separated and distinguished what is done in the sacrament, from that which is done for food,

or mirth, or in memory of your friends, then you have secured the great point in the sacrament, and are to look for nothing further as to the peculiar nature, end, and effects of it. Just as the letter-learned Pharisee thought that the whole nature and end of the sacrifice was fully observed when he had slain an ox, and not cut off a dog's head. And if you are for adding anything to the sacrament besides this distinguishing act of the memory, you are as blamable in the sight of this author, as the apostles were in the eyes of the unbelieving Pharisee, when they taught that the blood of slain beasts was, as to its nature and end, a type and application of the atonement of Christ's blood. Thus does this author stand in the very state and place of the unbelieving Pharisee, teaching Christians the gospel, as he taught the Jews the Law, and excluding the true knowledge of Christ from Christian institutions, just as the Pharisee excluded it from the Jewish. And if you ask, or search ever so much into the true reason why the religion of the scribes and Pharisees was so odious in the sight of our blessed savior, why he cast so many reproaches upon it, why he denounced so many woes against it; the one true genuine cause was this, it was because they stood on the outside of the Law, just as this author stands on the outside of the gospel, and were content with such a plain account of their sacrifices and circumcision, as he has given us of the sacrament; it was because they stuck to the bare letter of scripture, only understood according to the common rules of speaking amongst men; it was this fullness of a false, empty, and dead knowledge, that made the scriptures useless to them, that fixed them in a state of blind self-sufficiency, and made it harder for the rational, letter-learned Pharisee, than for a gross sinner to see the kingdom of God, or to acknowledge him that preached it. And here we may see the true and solid meaning of the apostle, when he saith, God had "made them able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." {2 Corinthians 3:6} For the letter of scripture, understood only according to the common rules of speaking, is the letter that killeth, the letter that made the Jews unbelievers in Christ, that makes speculative Christians, idealists, critics and grammarians fall into infidelity; but scripture, interpreted not by lexicons and dictionaries, but by doctrines revealed by God, and by an inward teaching and unction of the Holy Ghost, is that spirit which giveth life. But this author, according to his own principles, is obliged to own himself to be an anti-apostle, and to declare, that not God, but logic, and much attention to human words and ways of reasoning, have made him an able minister of the New Testament, not of the spirit, but of the letter; and has convinced him, that it is the letter alone that giveth life. For he cannot allow the smallest degree of sound doctrine to be in the apostle's words; had he but dropped an expression like it, or made the least acknowledgement of a killing letter of scripture, till the spirit gave life to it, it must have passed for a full recantation of all his Plain Account. But to return to the further consideration of the words of the institution: "This is my body, which is given for you; this is my blood, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins." Who can know what is right or wrong in these expressions, or in what sense they are to be received, if he look only to the sound of the words according to the common rules of speaking? Or supposing he could guess out some tolerable meaning; yet if the scripture has doctrines concerning these things, teaching, asserting, and explaining how, and in what sense his body is given for us, and his blood the atonement for our sins, in a way and manner above all human thought and conception; then it follows, that no meaning of the words can be admitted, but that which is according to the scripture explication of the things mentioned by them.

Nothing therefore can be more unjustifiable and impracticable, than this author's only method of understanding the nature of the sacrament from the words considered in themselves. For as this

cannot be the way of understanding the truth of any doctrines of scripture, so least of all can it be the way of understanding the true meaning of the words of the institution; for these words have a more than ordinary relation to, and dependence upon all the scriptures. For as Christ is in some respect or other represented, and made further known what he is to us, in almost every page of scripture; so the sacrament, which is to be done in remembrance and acknowledgement of what he is to us, must have its relation to, and dependence upon all those places and doctrines of scripture, which teach what he is to us, and what we are to remember and acknowledge him to be. Therefore, all those passages of scripture, which teach and explain the nature, office, and condition of Christ, directly and immediately teach and explain what we are to do, remember and acknowledge in the sacrament, and are in the same degree true and proper comments upon the nature of the sacrament, in which they are true accounts and descriptions of our savior. And that which we are to believe of our savior according to the scriptures, that we are to remember and acknowledge of him in the sacrament; and therefore the scripture explication of the sacrament is not, as this author extravagantly supposes, confined to those texts that mention expressly the sacrament, or the words of the institution, but is as large and extensive as the scripture explication of the nature, office, and condition of Christ as our savior. Wherever we are taught anything concerning him as such, there we are directly taught something of the true nature and end of the sacrament, and what we are to remember and acknowledge of him in the doing it.

"Search the scriptures," saith our blessed savior, "for they are they which testify of me." Is not this in the plainest manner referring us to all the scriptures that speak of him as our savior, to know what we are to remember and acknowledge of him in the sacrament? For since he saith, Search the scriptures, for they are they that testify of me; and in the sacrament, Do this in remembrance or acknowledgement of me; is it not directly as full to the purpose, as if he had said, Search the scriptures, for they are they which testify what you are to remember and acknowledge concerning me in the sacrament? For that which they testify of him, that they must testify of the nature and end of the sacrament, which is to be done in remembrance and acknowledgement of that which is so testified of him. Since therefore every scripture that testifies anything concerning Christ, as our savior, testifies so much of that which is to be acknowledged of him in the sacrament, it plainly follows, that the nature and end of the sacrament can only be so far known, as the nature, character, office and condition of Christ is known; and that all those scriptures which teach us the one, in the same degree teach us the other, and are as necessary to teach us the nature of the sacrament, as the nature of Christ; for this plain reason, because the sacrament is to remember and acknowledge that which is taught us concerning the nature of Christ.

Hence again it appears with how little judgment and less truth this author affirms, that the nature and end of the sacrament is only to be known from the bare words of the institution, understood according to the common rules of speaking.

Again, another argument which will make the absurdity of this same error still further apparent, may be taken from the following passage of scripture. When our savior said in John 6:1-71, that his "flesh was meat indeed, and his blood was drink indeed"; and that unless a "man did eat his flesh, and drink his blood, he had no life in him; his disciples were astonished at his discourse, and said, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" To which, by way of answer, he said, "The words that I say unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." For if our savior had thought at all like this author, and had intended to be understood according to the common rules of speaking, he would

have spoken only common language; and upon their not understanding what he said, he must have directed them to the right way, and have said, Consider my words only according to the common rules of speaking, and then you will know all that is to be known by them.

Least of all could he have said, to help their understanding of them in a common way, "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life"; for surely such a way of speaking could not be directing them to the common rules of speaking amongst men. For if he had intended to show them in the strongest manner, how much what he said was different from, and superior to all the common meaning of human words; how could he have done this in a higher degree, than by saying as he did, "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit and they are life."

Now, the question put by his disciples, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" comes as naturally in the case of the sacrament, where we are to eat his body, and drink his blood, as in the forementioned place of St. John; and as there is the same foundation for the same question, so there is strictly the same foundation for the same answer, viz., "The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life." And it is absolutely impossible for anyone to show, that the words of the institution are not as truly to be looked upon as Spirit and life, as the other words about eating his flesh, and drinking his blood. For surely, he that is obliged to own, that the words in St. John, of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, are Spirit and life, cannot have any proof that the words in the sacrament, of eating his body and drinking his blood, have nothing of that Spirit and life in them. For if it be asked, Why the words in St. John are Spirit and life? The one only reason is this, because they speak of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood, which is such a spiritual, living participation of the nature of Christ, or, in scripture words, such a putting on of Christ, as cannot be understood or obtained by outward and dead words. And yet if the words in the sacrament must be said, not to be Spirit and life, the one only reason must be this, because they only speak of eating Christ's body, and drinking his blood. But surely this is too great an absurdity for anyone to hold; for it is saying, that the drinking his blood, when joined with eating his body, is only an human expression, to be understood according to the common rules of speaking; but that the drinking his blood, when joined with eating his flesh, is so great a mystery, so above our common way of conceiving, that the words expressing it, are said to be Spirit and life. But now if the case be thus, if the words in the sacrament must be allowed to be Spirit and life, for the same reason that the words in St. John are said to be Spirit and life; then there is an end of this author's poor contrivance to enter into the whole truth contained in the sacrament, by only considering the words according to the common rules of speaking. It is a contrivance as unfit for the purpose, as weakly and improperly thought of, as an iron key to open the kingdom of heaven.

Again, if a person hearing the words of our savior, as recorded in St. John, had said to him, There is no more Spirit and life in your words than in the words of anyone else, and they can mean no more than our words according to the common rules of speaking, such a person might have been reckoned amongst those that blasphemed the Son of God.

Now if this author will say the same thing concerning the words of the institution, of eating his body and drinking his blood, that they are no more Spirit and life, than the words of men speaking of human things, and that nothing more is to be understood in them and by them, than according to the common rules of speaking; I desire to know, how this could be a lesser degree of blasphemy, or a smaller offense against the Son of God, than in the former case? Or why it was not as right

and justifiable for a person to say, there was no Spirit and life in the words of our savior, speaking of eating his flesh and drinking his blood, as to say, there is no Spirit and life in his words, speaking in the sacrament of eating his body and drinking his blood?

Lastly, either therefore this author must say with those that blaspheme the Son of God, that the words of the institution are not the words of him, whose words were Spirit and life, or he must give up his only method of understanding the true meaning of them. For if they are Spirit and life, then to seek for the sense of such words in the common forms of speaking, is truly to seek the living amongst the dead. From what has been said of the words of the institution, of their not being understood by the apostles, of the impossibility of their being understood according to the sound of the words in the common ways of speaking; of the impossibility of their being understood, till the great doctrines and articles of the Christian faith were first known, and so became the plain and visible explication of them; from these things we may sufficiently see the falseness of this author's chief propositions concerning the sacrament.

These propositions are printed in a pompous manner, with great show of significancy, as so many pillars of truth. The four first are the chief; if therefore they are removed, the others must go with them.

I shall begin with the fourth proposition, because it is the chief; both those that are before, and those that follow it, depend entirely upon the truth of it; and yet it has already appeared, and shall be made still more apparent, that there is not the least glimpse of truth in it.

Speaking of our savior's instituting the sacrament, he says as follows.

Proposition IV. It cannot be doubted, that he himself sufficiently declared to his first and immediate followers, the whole of what he designed should be understood by it, or implied in it. And yet it has been fully shown to be out of all doubt, by a variety of arguments, that the first followers of Christ, neither did, nor possibly could understand the whole nature of the sacrament from the words of the institution; which is all that our savior himself declared to them about it, and also all that this author appeals to, as a proof of his having sufficiently declared the whole matter to them.

Further, what is asserted in this proposition, is as directly contrary to truth, scripture, fact, and our savior's own declarations; as if it had been asserted, that our savior did that sufficiently himself, which he declared he had not done sufficiently; and also should not be done, till after his leaving the world. For at the time that he was about to depart from them, he expressly says unto them, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot hear them now. Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all truth." From this declaration of our savior, as well as from plain facts recorded in the history of the apostles, it is out of all doubt, that he left the apostles in great ignorance of the Christian religion, and that it was not his intention to deliver them out of this ignorance by his own personal instruction of them; but that they were to continue in this ignorance till further revelations, new light, and certain facts which were about to happen, should open to them a clear and full view of the nature of the Christian religion. For first, here are many things that they were yet to be taught, which they then had not been taught, and of which they were then to continue ignorant; therefore it is plain, that they could not sufficiently know all that they were to know, or all that our savior designed they should know of any article or institution of the Christian religion; that is, they were so far from knowing the whole nature and end of the

sacrament, that they knew the whole nature of nothing else in the Christian religion, but knew everything that they did know, in the most imperfect manner. For surely, if many things relating to the Christian salvation were yet to be kept secret from them, the Christian salvation was imperfectly made known unto them; and therefore they could only have been taught in part, and had only seen as it were some first sketches, or beginning lines of what they were afterwards to see in its true fullness. And that these many things, of which they were kept thus ignorant, were many things of the greatest importance and signification to the right knowledge of the Christian salvation, is evident from the reason given by our savior, why they were not then taught by him, viz., "But ye cannot bear them now." For surely, if those many things were then not taught them, for this reason, because they were not able to bear them then; they must have been things of the greatest importance, and most uncommon in their nature; such things as were the hardest to be comprehended, the most difficult to be believed, and the most contrary to the common conceptions of men, and consequently such as were most necessary and essential to a right knowledge of the Christian salvation. From this it also appears, how low a state of knowledge the apostles were in at the time of the institution of the sacrament, since they were not only ignorant of so many things of the greatest importance to be known, but were in a state so contrary to this knowledge, so full of dispositions contrary to it, that they were then incapable of being taught it. And though all this be declared by our savior himself, at the end of all his instructions, when he was upon the point of going from them; yet this author, in direct and full contradiction to scripture facts, and this express declaration of our savior, says, "It cannot be doubted, that he sufficiently declared to his disciples the whole of what he designed should be understood by it."

Whereas, the contrary to this is as plainly declared by our savior himself, as if he had said in express words, I have instituted a sacrament to be observed by you hereafter; but what is to be understood by it, and implied in it, can only be known by you now, in that poor, low, and ignorant manner, in which you know other things at present concerning me. But when the many things which ye now cannot bear to be taught, shall by my death, resurrection, and ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, be made truly intelligible to you, and become the real light of your minds, then shall ye clearly see and know the whole of that which I designed to be understood by, and implied in this sacrament of my body and blood. For what our savior has said concerning the imperfection of their knowledge then, and their unfitness to be instructed further, and of their necessity of being taught in another manner, is as plain a proof of this, as if it had in express words been applied to the sacrament. For though it is too much for anyone to pretend to say exactly what or how many these things were, that they were then not in a condition and capacity to understand; yet this may with great assurance be affirmed, that the doctrines concerning Christ's death, the nature, necessity, and merits of his sacrifice and atonement for the sins of the world, the possibility and necessity of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, were certainly amongst those many things; and therefore this holy sacrament, which hath its foundation in this atonement for sins, and is itself instituted for the eating his flesh, and drinking his blood must of all necessity be amongst those many things, of which they were then greatly ignorant, because they were not in a condition to receive a right and full knowledge of them. Therefore there is the fullest proof that can be desired, that our savior did not, and could not intend sufficiently to declare to them the whole of what he intended should be understood and implied in the sacrament of his body and blood. And for this reason also he saith unto them, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come. But if I depart, I will send him unto you." Again, "These things have I

said, being yet present with you; but the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." As if he had said, "It is expedient for you that I go away, because so long as I thus stay with you in the flesh, ye cannot know, nor believe, nor enter into the true nature, end, merits and effects of my death, resurrection and ascension; neither can the Holy Ghost come upon you in my name, till my kingdom is thus set up, and these things are accomplished in me. Therefore these things I have said, being yet present with you; that is, I have spoken thus far of these things in a way suited to your present state; not that they should be the matter of your present knowledge, whilst you know nothing rightly, nor apply anything that I say, to its proper object; but I have said these things to you, that they may be laid up in your minds, then and then only to be truly understood, rightly remembered in their proper place, and duly applied to their proper objects, when the Holy Ghost shall come in my name, that is, upon the foundation of my death, resurrection and ascension, and shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." From all these things it appears sufficiently, that this author's fourth and fundamental proposition is absolutely false, and grossly contradictory to scripture, facts, and the express declaration of our savior; and that our savior himself, in his own person, before he left the world, did not, could not intend sufficiently to declare to his disciples the whole of what he intended should be understood by, and implied in the sacrament. And here I must observe to you, that the confutation of this fourth proposition, is not to be considered as the discovery of a single error in this author, but as a full detection of the general falseness, and erroneous procedure of his whole book; for everything, and every other proposition of any moment, throughout his whole book, is founded upon the supposed truth of this fourth proposition. He cannot take one step, in the way he is in, without it. He has not an argument but what is built upon it. And all his treatise, from the beginning to the end, is as idle and wandering as a sick man's dream, unless you grant him these two bulky errors; 1st, that our savior himself, in the words of the institution, sufficiently declared to his disciples the whole of what he intended should be understood by, and implied in the sacrament. 2dly, that the only method of understanding the whole of what he so sufficiently declared to them, is to interpret the same bare words of the institution, according to the common rules of speaking. But as both these positions have, as I think, been already shown to be gross errors, directly contrary to reason, sense, scripture, facts, and the express declaration of our savior himself, so the whole of his treatise is already in the fullest manner confuted. But I shall now proceed to consider some poor, little pretenses of argument, which this author brings in support of this false proposition. Which are as follows: "For this being," says he, "a positive institution, depending entirely upon his will; and not designed to contain anything in it, but what he himself should please to affix to it, it must follow, that he declared his mind about it, fully and plainly," p. 4. This is his whole proof, that our savior himself sufficiently taught his disciples the whole nature and meaning of the sacrament, and they wholly understood it. The thing that he would here speak to, is very improperly expressed, and ought to have proceeded thus: "This being a positive institution, by his will and pleasure introduced into a religion, which contains the means and method of the salvation of mankind by himself the institutor, cannot be designed by him to be any ways understood, or to have any other nature, meaning, and end in it, than such as is truly and fully according to the doctrines of that religion into which he has introduced it, and more especially according to that part of religion in which he has placed it."

Whereas instead of this, this author poorly says, it was not designed to contain anything in it, but he should please to affix to it. For he put nothing to be contained in it, he affixed nothing to it, but only placed it in the heart, or midst of a religion; which religion, as soon as it was truly known by his disciples, would sufficiently declare and explain to them the whole nature and end of this positive institution. In consequence of what he had just now erroneously said, he proceeds thus: "Because otherwise he must be supposed to institute a duty, of which none could have any notion without his institution; and at the same time not to instruct his followers sufficiently what that duty was to be." Whereas instead of this, it ought to have been expressed thus: "Because otherwise, if he had not so instituted this sacrament, as to have its nature, end, and effects explained and determined by that religion, and chiefly by that part of religion, in which it was placed, it could never have appeared to any of his followers, what they were to do in it, or that there was any reason in its institution, or any benefit to be had from the observance of it." As for instance; if the religion, of which the sacrament is a part, did not teach us how his body is given and his blood shed for us, if it did not teach us something concerning the eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, what could the mentioning of these two strange things in the sacrament signify to us, or how could we have any notion of what was to be done or acknowledged by the sacrament? For if the sacrament speaks of anything that the religion in which it is placed speaks nothing of; if it represents anything that that religion has not to be represented, then it can signify no more in that religion after its institution, than it did before. But if to be a part of that religion in which it is appointed, it must speak the language of that religion; if the things that it represents, must be the things of that religion, then it plainly follows, 1st, that our savior himself in person, at the time, and by the words of the institution, did not, could not fully and plainly declare the whole nature of the sacrament; because the language which it spoke, and the things that it represented, were the language and things of a religion, which was not, and could not then be known by his disciples. 2dly, it follows also, that our savior had fully and sufficiently provided for their right knowledge of this sacrament, because it was so worded and so placed in their religion, that the first true knowledge of their religion would become the full and clear explication of it. This sacrament was instituted before the religion, of which it was to be a part, was known; is it therefore any wonder in itself, or any matter of accusation of our savior, that when he appointed this institution, he left it to be then only understood, when the religion, of which it was to be a part, should be known? And if he left his disciples in the same ignorance of the sacrament, as of the nature, merits, and end of his death, resurrection and ascension, is there any more to find fault with in the one, than in the other? And this author might with the same show of argument prove, that he did declare unto them, fully and plainly, the whole nature, merits, and end of his death. For it may as well be said of that, as of the sacrament, that he must have fully and plainly declared his mind about it; otherwise he must be supposed to have instructed them of a matter of faith, which, without his instruction, they could have no notion of, and at the same time not to instruct them fully about it.

Now if anything may be said in defense of what our savior did to his disciples with regard to that imperfect state in which he left them, as to the knowledge of the nature, merits, and end of his death; if he might justly leave the true and full knowledge of it, to its only proper time, and only proper manner of being fully known; namely, till the consequences of his death, till his resurrection, ascension, and coming of the Holy Ghost, should prove the nature, power, merits, and end of it; then the same may and must be said in defense of our savior's leaving his disciples so ignorant of the nature, end, and effects of the holy sacrament. It was not because he was deficient in

instructing them, but because he instructed them with the greatest wisdom; not giving them verbal explications of thing which could not so be understood by them, but leaving them to be informed in the one only proper time, and the only proper manner; namely, when by the knowledge of his death, resurrection, and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost, they should truly and fully know the whole of that religion, of which this sacrament was appointed to be a part.

All therefore which this author saith of the necessity of their knowing sufficiently at first from the words of the institution, the whole nature of it, because it was a positive institution, and could have no more in it than he intended should be in it, are mere empty words; for it is granted on all sides, that the institution can be only that which Christ intended it should be, and can imply no more than he designed should be implied in it. But the question is, how we are to know all that he designed should be understood by, and implied in it. This author says, this can only be known from the bare words of the institution considered in themselves, according to the common rules of speaking. Therefore, according to this author, had Socrates said the same things that Christ said, the institution had been just the same thing as it is; it had had the same meaning, and there had been neither more or less in it. This cannot be denied: for if the words of the institution are only to be understood according to the common meaning or sound of words in common life; then they must have the same meaning, and signify neither more or less, whether they be applied to Christ, or Socrates. On the other hand, we say, since Christ appointed this institution to stand in a certain place, to be a certain part, and to have relation to certain doctrines of a religion not known, when this institution was appointed; that therefore what Christ meant by it, and would have implied in it, can then only be fully known, and when that religion in which it was to have a certain place, and of which it was to be a certain part, and to whose doctrines it was to be related, came to be fully known and understood. In short, that a Christian institution, ingrafted into the Christian religion, and connected with its chief doctrines, could then only be fully known, when the Christian religion was fully known.

Thus for instance: let it be supposed that at the time of instituting the sacrament, the apostles had no other way of knowing what was meant by it, but by considering the words in themselves, according to the common sound of the words. Yet, if after the death, and resurrection, and ascension of our savior, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, they knew a religion, which they knew nothing of before, and saw this sacrament to be a part of that religion; had they not then got a new and sure way of understanding what our savior meant by it? And had they not this very new means of understanding it from our savior himself? Did not he teach them all that they were taught by his death, resurrection, and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost? And was not that which he thus taught them in this manner, to be as sacred with them, and as much to be adhered to, as when he only taught them the words, outward form, and matter of the sacrament? And if he thus led them into the possession and knowledge of every truth and doctrine upon which this sacrament was founded, and to which it was related; is he not still the teacher of the sacrament, as well as he was the teacher of it in the words of the institution?

Vainly therefore doth this author thus further argue, that seeing "no one can be a judge, but the institutor himself, of what he designed should be contained in it; therefore, supposing him not to have spoken his mind plainly about it, it is impossible that any other person should make up the defect," p. 5.

Vainly, I say, is all this argued, because here is no defect charged upon the words of the institution, nor any other person appointed or appealed to, to make up the defect. The words of the institution are allowed to be full and plain, as to all that is positive in this institution, both as to the matter and form of the sacrament: they were as plain at the first as they are now, or ever can be. But that part which is not positive in this institution, which is the greatest and chiefest part of it, namely, the truths signified and represented, and acknowledged by the outward form and matter of the sacrament; as the body of Christ given, and his blood shed for the sins of the world, and the eating his flesh and drinking his blood were not then, are not now, nor ever can be truly and rightly known from the plainness of the words of the institution alone. Yet here is not the smallest defect either in the institutor or the institution. For since the institution was not an independent thing, made for itself, and on its own account, nor to be practiced at the time it was appointed; it was no defect in it, that it did not explain itself, or was not then known, when it was not to be practiced. And seeing the institution was appointed for the sake of a religion, that then was not, but soon should be, it could be no defect in the institutor, that it was not known sooner than it was wanted, or till the time came, that everything else that was to be practiced with it, or for the sake of it, were fully and truly known.

It was no defect in our savior as a teacher of religion, that his religion was not known nor understood, till after his ascension into heaven, and the coming of the Holy Ghost; because his ascension, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, were to be fundamental articles and principal parts of his religion. So also it was no defect in him, as an institutor of the sacrament, that the true nature and end of it was not known, when he first instituted it, or from the bare words of the institution; or that it was not to be known, till such things as were to be the principal parts of it came to be known. And as that which was further and fully known of the Christian religion, after our savior's death, was not by anyone's making up the defect of his teaching, but was solely done by his own power, and in his own name; so all that which was further and fully known of the sacrament after the death of Christ, was not by anyone's making up the defect of his institution, but was his own further teaching them by his death, resurrection, and ascension, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost. For as he thus by his own power set up his own kingdom, so all that which was plainly shown and declared by his kingdom, was strictly shown and declared by himself. And as it necessarily followed, that they must know more of Christ as their savior, and the manner of their salvation, after his death, resurrection, and ascension, and mission of the Holy Ghost, than they did before; so also it necessarily follows, that they must have exactly the same increase of knowledge at that time, concerning the nature of the sacrament, which they had concerning their savior; because the sacrament is expressly appointed to do that which it does, in remembrance and acknowledgement of that savior so made known. And therefore the more they knew of him as their savior, the more they must know of that which was to be remembered and acknowledged of him in the holy sacrament.

All therefore which this author says, of the making up the defect, if Christ did not at first make the whole of the institution plain, is of no significancy; for what they further knew rightly of it, when they knew their religion, and saw how and in what manner it was part of it; all this further true and real knowledge of it, came as plainly and undeniably from him, as the words of the institution did; and what they were taught by his death and resurrection, and the consequences of them, was as truly from him, as what they were taught by his birth and incarnation, and miraculous conversation with

them.

Having thus despatched this author's fourth and chiefest proposition, and his proof of it; I shall now go back to his first, which stands thus.

Proposition I. The partaking of the Lord's Supper, is not a duty of itself, or a duty apparent to us from the nature of the thing; but a duty made such to Christians, by the positive institution of Jesus Christ, p. 2.

There is a great deal of error and deceit proposed to the reader in this proposition. For it is to make him believe, that the nature and end of the sacrament is wholly positive, and that all that we are to mean, and intend, and do by it, is something that we are only obliged to do by virtue of the institution: all which is absolutely false. For the institution, as to its nature and end, is so far from being wholly positive, that its nature and end hath nothing positive in it. And all that which it is our duty to intend and do by the sacrament, is to be intended and done for itself, on its own account; and that which is positive in the sacrament, is only as a means, or mark, or sign of our doing it. That which is positive in this institution, and not to be done but because of the will of the institutor, is something entirely distinct, and different from the nature, end, and intent of the institution. And that in which the whole reason, meaning, end and intent of this institution essentially consists; is something that is to be done for itself, and does not take its reason of being done from the institution.

Now if all that is to be done, implied and intended by our celebrating the Lord's Supper, was, and is absolutely necessary to be done, though the way of doing it by the sacrament had never been instituted; then the meaning, end and intent of the sacrament cannot be positive; and if our obligation to do all that is contained in this meaning and intent of the sacrament, is an obligation arising from the thing itself, then this is not a positive duty.

Now the meaning, end and intent of the sacrament, is to remember, acknowledge and profess Christ to be our savior, and the manner in which he is our savior; but all this is to be done on its own account, from the nature of the thing itself, and must have been done, though the sacrament had not been instituted; therefore the meaning, end and intent of the sacrament has nothing positive in it, and contains only our natural duty to Christ, arising from the relation between him and us. For to acknowledge and profess Christ to be our savior, and in all the respects in which he is our savior, is no more a positive duty, than it is a positive duty to acknowledge and profess the goodness of God towards us; but is a duty of itself, of the same nature, and of the same obligation, as faith and love, and adoration of our creator and redeemer are. But to show still more plainly, that the nature, end and intent of the sacrament, is not positive, but entirely distinct and different from that which is positive in the sacrament; take the following instance.

Let it be supposed, that God by a positive command enjoined the people of one age to build an altar for his honor and worship; the people of another age to set up a tabernacle, a third to build a temple for the same end and intent; namely, for his honor and worship.

Now here are three positive appointments, and three positive duties; and all that is positive in the one, is very different from that which is positive in the other; yet the meaning, end and intent of all three is the same, namely, the honor and worship of God; therefore the meaning, end and intent of positive appointments, is something not positive, but entirely different and distinct from that which

is the positive part of it.

Now this is exactly the case of the sacrament: bread and wine appointed to be used in acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as our savior, is as the altar or tabernacle, appointed to be built for the honor and worship of God. And as it was purely depending upon the will of God, whether it should be an altar or a tabernacle, or a temple, that should be built for his honor and worship; so it was solely depending upon the will of Jesus Christ, whether it should be bread and wine, or any other thing else that was to be used in remembrance and acknowledgement of him. And as the honor and worship of God, which was the sole meaning, end and intent of building either altar or tabernacle, was a natural duty, founded in the relation between God and his creatures, and was something that was to be done, though no altar or tabernacle had ever been built; so the remembrance and acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as our savior, which is the end and intent of our using bread and wine in the sacrament, was a natural duty, founded in the relation between Christ and us, and was something that was to be done for itself, though the use of bread and wine in the sacrament had never been appointed. It is therefore an unpardonable error in this author, to represent the sacrament, as containing nothing in its meaning, end and intent, that was a duty itself, or to be done upon its own account; but that everything implied by it, was only a duty by virtue of the institution. For the reverse of all this is the very truth; for all that is meant, implied and intended by the sacrament, is as much our duty to do on its own account, as it is our duty to believe in God; and the positive part, the use of bread and wine in this sacrament, is only an appointed way of our expressing, acknowledging and doing that, which it was our duty to express, acknowledge and do, though we had never been taught to use bread and wine for that end. And indeed this is the case of all positive appointments and institutions of revealed religion; the meaning, end and intent of them, was always something entirely different from that which was positive in them; for the same reason, that an idea or sentiment is entirely different from that English or Latin word by which you are to express it, or to put yourself, or another person in mind of it. For the positive part of an institution has much of the nature of language in it, and is to express and teach something by symbols and outward things, better than it could be expressed or taught by mere words; but that which is meant, implied, and intended by the symbol, is as different from it in its whole nature, as the idea of sentiment meant and intended by an English or Latin word, is different from it in its whole nature. To look therefore, as this author doth, for the whole nature, end and intent of the sacrament, in the positive part of this institution, is as absurd, as to look for the true knowledge of God and the divine attributes from the English word, "God." For the things meant and intended by the sacrament, are as entirely and wholly different from that use of bread and wine by which they are expressed, as the divine nature is entirely and wholly different from that English or Latin word which is to express or remind us of that divine nature.

Great part of the Jewish religion consisted in positive appointments and institutions; but the meaning, end and intent of them was entirely of another nature, and consisted of such things as were duties of themselves, and of the highest necessity to be done. For the end and intent of their institutions were either to keep up and exercise their faith and hope of a redeemer, or to set forth the character and marks by which they should know him, or to represent to them the nature and manner of their expected redemption, or to teach them some inward dying unto sin, and inward living unto God, or some other truth, doctrine or practice, that was to be acknowledged and done for itself, though no positive institution had ever been made on its account. And the one only

reason why the greatest part of the Jews lived in such a total ignorance of their religion, was, because they had learned it in the same manner as this author has learned Christianity; they would see nothing in their institutions but what a heathen might as well have seen, nothing but what could be seen in the outside of them; just as this author will see no more in the sacrament, than what a heathen that knows only the words of institution may see in it. They were too learned and rational to allow of any mysteries at the bottom of their services, as this author is too sober a critic to allow of any mystery in the institution of the sacrament. And as they, through a blind zeal for the letter, and to show their fidelity to them, lost all that which was truly meant and intended by them; so this author, full of the same zeal for the letter and plainness of this Christian institution, is doing all that he can to make us lose all that is truly meant and intended by it. The sacrifices of the Jews were at the bottom, only so many representations and applications of that great sacrifice for the sins of the world, first promised to all mankind, in these words: "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head"; but because this was not expressly said in the institution of any of their sacrifices, this is done in consequence of that first promise, or this is to show you how and in what manner you are to seek and find your redeemer, because the letter was not thus adapted to these carnal men, they contented themselves with the religion of slaying beasts. Just as this author is only a bare eater of bread and wine in the sacrament, because it is not there expressly said, what great mysteries of Christ as our savior are represented by it. The Jews had many passages in their scriptures that called them to the spirituality of their religion, and showed them the inward meaning, spirit and intent of all their institutions; but because it was not expressly said, This is an explication of such an ordinance, or this that is here said, relates to the true meaning and intent of such an institution, all these passages of scripture were neglected by them, and not applied to their proper objects. It is just thus with this author; the New Testament abounds with passages that prove, teach and explain the true meaning, end and intent of the holy sacrament; but because those passages don't expressly say, This is the proof or explication of what is said in the institution, they are by him overlooked and rejected, as having nothing to do with it. The learned Pharisee, in order to know the meaning and intent of killing a heifer in sacrifice, or of circumcising the flesh, would only look for such places of scripture, as appoint the killing of an heifer, and the circumcising of the flesh; just so this author, to know the true meaning and intent of the institution of the sacrament, only searches the scripture in the same manner. He seeks only such places as expressly mention the institution, or repeat the words of it. The Jews neither expected nor allowed any benefits and merits of Christ to be obtained by means of their sacrifices; because such benefits were not literally mentioned in the institution of their sacrifices; just so this author, neither expects nor allows the merits and benefits of Christ's passion to be applied to us by the holy sacrament, because the application of such benefits and merits is not expressly mentioned in the words of the institution. Thus was it that the Jews never found their savior in the Old Testament; and thus it is, that this author has lost him in the New. And indeed, upon his principles, it is impossible that anyone should ever know anything of the real nature and truth of the Jewish or Christian religion. For let anyone but search into the nature, meaning and intent of the Jewish institutions, as this author doth into the nature and intent of the sacrament; and he must, as I said above, be rendered stone-blind to all the mysteries of the Old Testament as well as of the New. For as Christ was the substance, the heart, and true meaning of all their ordinances, though not mentioned expressly in the letter of their positive institutions, they were obliged by this author's principles, not to acknowledge him to be in them, and to reject all such interpretations as led to

him; and to allow nothing to be meant by their positive institutions, but that which the words of them understood, according to the common rules of speaking, declared to be in them: therefore every Jew that had this author's principles, was under a necessity of being stone-blind, or totally ignorant of the real nature and truth of the Jewish religion.

Again, the apostle saith, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." {Romans 2:28} But according to this author's principles, you are to maintain, that he only is a Jew, which is one outwardly, and that only is circumcision which is outward in the flesh; for to allow Judaism to have anything inwardly more than is in the outward letter, or circumcision to be anything else than that which is expressed in the words of the institution, is a thing not lawful to be done upon this author's principles. This I think may sufficiently show you the truth of what I said to you in the beginning, that if you accept of this author's key of knowledge, for the right understanding the nature of the sacrament; you will not only lose all the right knowledge of the sacrament, but be rendered a blind, deaf and dead reader of all the other most important doctrines of scripture. For, according to his principles, you are to see no more spirit, life, or mystery in any other sayings of our savior, than in that of the sacrament; and low as he had reduced that, it is full as high and mysterious, and deep in its meaning, as anything in the whole nature of the Christian religion can be allowed to be by this author. But to return; there are plainly two distinct and essential parts of the sacrament, which constitute its whole nature. The first is in these words, "This is my body which is given for you, this is my blood which is shed for the remission of sins."

What is here said by our Lord Christ, we are to acknowledge to be true; therefore we are to own and acknowledge this great truth, that this bread and wine are made symbols and memorials of, viz., that his body is given for us, and his blood shed for the remission of sins; and consequently all that the scripture teaches concerning the truth, reality and manner in which he is the sacrifice, atonement and satisfaction for our sins, is in this sacrament to be of all necessity acknowledged and confessed by us. And we cannot perform this sacrament according to what it is, unless we see and own all that to be in it, which Christ saw and owned to be in it; unless we present it to him in the same meaning, as he presented it to his disciples. For if Christ has declared this nature and meaning to be in it, we cannot perform this sacrament according to Christ's declaration, unless we also in our performance of it, declare that same nature and meaning to be in it. Therefore the acknowledgement of Christ's being the atonement and satisfaction for our sins, is an essential and important part of the sacrament. If we were to mistake or neglect something in the right use of bread and wine in the sacrament, such mistake would only relate to the outward positive part of this institution, which has no obligation upon us but from divine appointment; but if we refuse to own and confess Christ to be the atonement and satisfaction for our sins, we sin against God and the nature of things, as those atheists do, who refuse to own that it was the goodness of God that created them.

Secondly, the other essential, and no less important part of the sacrament is, the eating the body, and drinking the blood of Christ. This is plainly another essential part of the sacrament, entirely distinct from the other. The one respects Christ, as he is the atonement and satisfaction for our sins; the other shows that he is to be owned and received as a principle of life to us. The other words, "Do this in remembrance of me," relate equally to both parts, and are only as if our savior

had said after the institution; Let this, which I have thus appointed to be done, be your acknowledgement of that salvation which is received through me, both as I am the atonement and satisfaction for sin, and a principle of life to all that lay hold of me.

You cannot help seeing that all this is plain, easy and natural in this explication of the words of the institution, and that I have used no art or force to come at it, and that no one can find any fault with it; but he that is unwilling to own these two great truths of scripture, that Christ as our savior is the atonement and satisfaction for our sins, and a principle of life to us. The short of the matter is this; the scriptures are full of proofs of these two great and fundamental characters, that he is in one respect the atonement and satisfaction for our sins, and in another, a principle of a new life to us; if therefore these two essential characters of our savior, which contain all that is said of him as such, are not to be acknowledged by us in the sacrament; then the sacrament must be said to be instituted for the denial of Christ; and the words, "Do this in remembrance of me," must have this meaning, "Do this in denial of me": then he is not to be remembered and acknowledged as he is, and therefore in the strictest sense is to be denied.

Hence it appears, that this author's Plain Account can have no truth or reasonableness in it, but upon this supposition, that Christ Jesus is not a real atonement and satisfaction for our sins, nor a real principle of life to us. For if these things were true of Christ as our savior, then the sacrament, which is done in acknowledgement of him, as such, must also of necessity acknowledge these truths. Therefore this author's Plain Account, which does not acknowledge these things of Christ, can have no truth or reasonableness in it, but upon this supposition, that these things are not true of Christ. For if these things were real doctrines of scripture, it must follow, that they were to be acknowledged in the sacrament, even though they were not expressly mentioned or pointed at in the words of the institution. For since the sacrament is to be done in remembrance and acknowledgement of Christ, it necessarily follows, that that which the scriptures teach us concerning the nature and character of Christ, is to be remembered and acknowledged of him in and by the sacrament, because the sacrament is appointed for that end. And therefore, since this author will not allow our savior to be thus acknowledged in the sacrament, he must deny that he is thus described in scripture.

Now deny either of these characters of our savior, and you deny all the Christian religion; the words, "savior," "salvation," "redemption," and such like, have no proper meaning, truth or reality in them. But if you allow these characters of our savior, that he really is, what he said he was, and what all the scriptures affirm of him; namely, the atonement for sins, and a principle of a new life to us; then the sacrament, which is the representation and acknowledgement of these two great truths, has all that is great, mysterious, and adorable in the Christian religion, centered in it. And had this author believed these two great doctrines concerning our savior, it had been as impossible for him to have his present poor notion of the sacrament, as it was impossible for St. John, who knew that the Word was God, and that the same Word was made flesh, to have had so poor a notion of Jesus Christ, as those Jews had, who took him to be only the carpenter's son.

Hence also it plainly appears, that seeing these two great truths are the essential parts of the sacrament, and that it is appointed to express our faith of them; that the nature and end of the sacrament is not, as this author teaches, to turn an act of our memory upon Christ; but that it is to exercise our faith in Christ, and to be our open profession of these two great truths; and also that

our faith is thereby exercised in this twofold manner; 1st, in believing Christ to be the true atonement for our sins, and a real principle of life to us; 2dly, in believing that this atonement, and his being a principle of life to us, is made certain and confirmed to us, by taking the bread and wine to be the true significations of them. For when our savior says, Do this, it is the same thing as if he had said, Do these two things appointed in the sacrament, as your act of faith, that I am both the atonement for your sins, and a principle of life to you. Don't say bare and empty outward words, when you say, "This is my body which is given for you, and this is my blood which is shed for the remission of sins"; but let faith say them, and acknowledge the truth of them: when you eat my body, and drink my blood, don't let your mouth only eat, or perform the outward action; but let faith, which is the true mouth of the inward man, believe that it really partakes of me, and that I enter in by faith; and when you thus by faith perform these two essential parts of the sacrament, then, and then only may what you do be said to be done in remembrance of me, and of what I am to you. For nothing remembers me but faith, nothing acknowledges me but faith, nothing finds me, nothing knows me but faith.

I appeal to the most ordinary understanding for the truth of all this; for it is so plain and visible, that nothing but art or prejudice can avoid it. For since our savior says, This is my body which is given for you, this is my blood which is shed for the remission of sins, what he says, that we are to say; and what we say, is an act or exercise of faith. And since in these words he says two things, the one, that he is the atonement for our sins; the other, that this bread and this wine are the signification or application of that atonement, or that which we are to take for it; therefore we in doing this, are by faith to say and believe these two things; and therefore all that we here do, is faith, and faith manifested in this twofold manner.

Again, seeing our savior commands us to eat his body, and drink his blood, we are to say and believe, that his body and blood are there signified and exhibited to us; and that his body and blood may be eaten and drank, as a principle of life to us; and therefore faith is all, or all is faith in this other essential part of the sacrament; and we cannot possibly do that which our savior commands us to do, unless it be done by faith. But now this author, in his Plain Account, takes no more notice of these two great essential parts of the sacrament, than if there was not one word about them: and yet they are so much there, that in the whole institution, there is not a word about anything else. For the words, "Do this in remembrance of me," are as entirely distinct from the institution, as a command to do a thing, is distinct from the thing that is to be done. They enter no more into the nature of the institution, nor any more teach us what is to be done in it, than if Christ had only said, "Do this as your duty to me." Had he said thus, it would easily have been seen, that the institution must be entirely distinct from such a command to observe it. And yet his saying, "Do this in remembrance of me," has neither more nor less in it, than if he had said, "Do this as your duty to me." The plain truth is this; the institution consists of those two essential parts just mentioned; that is, in offering, presenting, and pleading before God, by faith, the atonement of Christ's body and blood, and in owning him to be a principle of life to us, by our eating his body and blood: this is the entire, whole institution. The words, "Do this in remembrance of me," are only the command to observe the institution. Do this, is a command to do all that had been mentioned in the institution; and the words, in remembrance of me, don't show what the institution is, or what is to be done in it, but only the reason, why such an institution, whatever it is, was commanded to be observed. The words therefore, in remembrance of me, are not a part of the institution, but are

only a part of the command to observe the institution, and only show the reason why such an institution is commanded to be observed. And yet this poor man (for so I must call one so miserably insensible of the greatness of the subject he is upon) can find nothing in the institution, but, first, bread and wine, not placed and offered before God, as first signifying and pleading the atonement of his Son's body and blood, and then eaten and drank in signification of having our life from him; but bread and wine set upon a table, to put the people, that see it, in mind, that by and by they are to exercise an act of memory. And then, secondly, this same bread and wine afterwards brought to everyone in particular, not for them to know, or believe that they are receiving anything of Christ, or partaking of anything from him; but only to let them know, that the very instant they take the bread and wine into their mouth, is the very time for them actually to excite that act of memory, for the exciting of which, bread and wine had been before set upon a table. This is the author's great point in the observance of the sacrament, and what he calls the peculiar nature of this duty. And this he teaches, not because the church, or saint, or father of any age since Christ, has taught him so; but because being a serious man, and of great exactness in weighing of words, he has found out, that the words, in remembrance of me, which are only a part of the command to observe the institution, are the whole of the institution itself; and that therefore nothing is to be admitted into it but an act of the memory, and bread and wine taken into the mouth to excite that act of the memory; because remembrance which is the whole of this duty, neither is nor can be anything else but an act of the memory.

Thus by making first the words, in remembrance of me, the whole essence of the institution, when they are as distinct from it, as they are from these words, "This is my body which is given for you"; and teach us only the reason why we are commanded to do that which is to be done in the institution: And then, 2dly, by limiting the word "remembrance," and allowing nothing to be meant by it, but an act of the memory: by the help of these two equally false and shameful steps, this author has stripped the institution of every mystery of our salvation, which the words of Christ show to be in it, and which every Christian that has any true faith, though but as a grain of mustard seed, is sure of finding in it.

God, we know, made a certain great promise to Abraham; now let it be supposed, that God, after the making of this promise to him, had enjoined him to come frequently to that place where the promise was made to him in remembrance of it: could it be supposed, that the remembrance here spoken of, could signify anything else, but an exercise of his faith in that promise; and as an outward sign of his declaring to God his full belief in it? Or could anything be more extravagant, than to say that God here only required of Abraham an act of his memory, because the word remembrance relates only to the memory?

Now this is strictly the case of the sacrament. In the institution our savior has said, "This is my body and blood, which is given and shed for you, for the remission of sins"; in the institution he has bidden us to eat his body, and drink his blood. All this is proposed to our faith, just as the promise was proposed to Abraham's faith. When therefore he bids us to do this, that is, do these two things in remembrance of him; can it be supposed, that the remembrance of him can be anything else but an act of faith in him, believing and owning all that concerning him, which we say and do in and by the sacrament? For nothing but faith can see, or hear, or understand, or do that which is to be done in the sacrament: nothing but faith can say, that this his body and blood are the atonement of our sins: nothing but faith can say, that the bread and wine are his body and blood: nothing but

faith can eat his body, and drink his blood: nothing but faith can say, that his body and blood are a principle of life to us: therefore the command to do these things, is a command to exercise so many acts of faith; because the things commanded can only be done by faith; and the person, in remembrance of whom these things are to be done, can only be remembered by faith. For to remember him, neither is nor can be anything else, but to have faith in him. And therefore it is out of all doubt, that when he said, "Do this in remembrance of me," nothing more nor less can possibly be meant by it, than if he had said, Do all this, as your act of faith in me.

Since therefore this is so plainly the nature of the institution, which is solely appointed to express our faith in these two great characters of our savior, both as he is the atonement for our sins, and a principle of life to us; you may well ask how it was possible for this author, with his eyes open, and the scriptures before him, to give us so false and so poor an account of it.

Now the one only reason why the scriptures are thus useless to him, and why he is forced to find out a doctrine that is not in them, is this, it is because he is blinded with a philosophy, and science falsely so-called, which will not allow him to believe, that Jesus Christ was truly and essentially God, as well as a perfect man: for the foundation and possibility of Christ's being a real atonement and satisfaction for our sins, and a real principle of life to us, was his divine nature; but as this author cannot be suspected to believe this great foundation doctrine, that Christ was truly and essentially God, very God of very God, so he could not believe him to be a true and real atonement for sins, or a true and real principle of life to us, and therefore could admit nothing of these truths into his account of the sacrament. The way therefore that this author came by his Plain Account of the sacrament, was not, as he would have you believe, from a bare impartial consideration of the words of the institution, but from his wrong knowledge of the Christian faith. He had first lost and renounced all the right and true knowledge of our savior in the scriptures, and therefore was obliged not to find it in the sacrament. And because it would be openly confessing to the world, that he was in the sense of the scripture an anti-Christ, if he should plainly have told you, that he did not believe Christ to be truly and essentially God, or the atonement and satisfaction for our sins, or a principle of life to us; therefore he only tells you, that he has been led into this account of the sacrament, by a bare consideration of the words of the institution, according to the common rules of speaking.

Now if this author will declare, that he sincerely believes Jesus Christ to be truly and really God by nature, and the true real atonement and satisfaction for our sins, and a true and real principle of life to us; I shall be glad, and he ought to be glad, that I have been the occasion of his declaring things so important to himself, and to the matter in hand. But this I may still say, that he could not have had this faith, when he wrote his Plain Account, unless he may be supposed to have had it, but would not write of the sacrament conformably to it.

And, secondly, if he will now declare, that without any equivocation or mental reserve, he fully believes these great truths, no further recantation of his whole book need to be desired. For if these things are true and undeniable characters of our savior; then it follows, that the nature and end of the sacrament must be essentially concerned with them, since it is the confessed nature and end of the sacrament, to remember and acknowledge Christ to be that which the scriptures testify him to be. The short of the matter is this; either this author will plainly own a sincere belief of these doctrines, or he will not: if he will not own the belief of them, you have no reason to consider

him as a Christian writer upon this subject; and so ought no more to learn from him, than from a Jew, the nature of the sacrament. But if he will declare his full belief of these doctrines, then you have the fullest assurance from himself, that his Plain Account cannot be Christian: because if these things are true of Christ, they must be remembered and acknowledged in that sacrament, which is appointed for the remembrance and acknowledgement of him.

Now these two essential parts of the sacrament, relating to this twofold character of our savior, as he is the atonement and satisfaction for our sins, and as he is a principle of life to us, contain the whole nature, end, and effects of the sacrament. You are to look nowhere, nor in anything else, for the right knowledge of this sacrament, but in the right faith and knowledge of these two great points. And everything that they teach you, and everything that scripture teaches you of these two great points, is the only true doctrine of the sacrament.

All that you know of Christ, as the atonement for our sins, all that you know of him, as a principle of life to us, is neither more nor less than that which you are to know, and confess, and appeal to, in and by the use of the sacrament. And indeed these two great points do so plainly show themselves, at first sight, to be in the words of the institution, that any man upon the bare reading of them, without any further knowledge, might justly say, If Christ is not an atonement for our sins, why is his body said to be given, and his blood shed for our sins? If he is not a food to our souls, or a principle of life to us, why are we commanded to eat his body, and drink his blood? So that though a man could not say, that these things were certainly true, or in what sense they were true, merely from the mention of them in the sacrament, yet he might justly say, that the words of the institution pointed at such truths, and could have no foundation, unless these things barely mentioned in it, were in the scriptures proved and declared to be true doctrines of the Christian religion. And as these two great points are so visibly plain in the sacrament, and constitute its whole nature; so as soon as we rightly understand what the scripture has taught concerning these points, they make known to us, in the shortest and plainest way, all the merit, dignity, and value of this sacrament, all the blessings and advantages derived to us from it, and all the pious dispositions with which we are to approach it. Hence it was that the apostles, after the day of Pentecost, when they had all their ignorance dispelled, yet gave us no further or particular explications of the nature of the sacrament; because as soon as it was known, that Christ was a real atonement and satisfaction for sins, and a real principle of life to us; as soon as these two great doctrines were known, the sacrament had all the explication it could possibly have. For no more can be known of the sacrament, than is signified by them. All that is great, mysterious, and adorable in these doctrines, as found in the scriptures, is equally great, mysterious and adorable in them as they are found in the sacrament.

Needless therefore would all books be upon the nature of the sacrament, and the right preparation for it, did we but truly know and believe Christ to be the atonement and satisfaction for our sins, and a principle of life to us; for the belief of these things in the sacrament, would like the unction, spoken of by St. John, teach us all things concerning it; and we should have no need of other teaching. No one need then, as this author vainly does, enquire for some promise of scripture annexing a benefit to this sacrament, to know what good we are to receive by it. For the knowledge of these two great parts of the sacrament, would sufficiently show us the inestimable benefit that we receive by it. For if this sacrament is appointed by Jesus Christ, as the acknowledgement of his being the atonement of our sins, and a principle of life to us; if it is

appointed to stand between him and us, as a declared proof on his side, that he is thus our atonement and life; and as a declared proof on our side, that we own, seek, and apply to him as such; and if this is not set as a mark once for all, but as a proof that is to be repeated continually, and that is to be made good to us, not by our once having done it, or he once owned it, but to be perpetually owned and done, both on his side and ours, can we want any other assurance of the benefit and advantage of observing this sacrament, than the thing itself by its own nature declares? For if we are in covenant with Christ, and have an interest in him, as our atonement and life; not because he once said, that this was his body and blood, given and shed for our sins, or because we once owned it, and pleaded it before him; but because he continues to say the same thing in the sacrament, and to present himself there to us as our atonement and life, and because we continue to own and apply to him as such; it necessarily follows, that the sacrament rightly used, is the highest means of finishing our salvation, and puts us in the fullest possession of all the benefits of our savior, both as he is our atonement and life, that we are then at that time capable of. For if the atonement of our sins by Christ, and that life which he communicates to us, is not to be considered as a transient matter, as something that is done and past, but as something that on the side of Christ is always doing, and never will be done, till the consummation of all things; if our applying to, and receiving Christ as our atonement and life, is not to be considered as a transient act, as something that is done and past, but as something that is always doing, and never will be done, till we depart out of a state of trial; then it follows, that that which is the appointed means or proof of Christ's continuing to communicate himself to us, as our atonement and life, and of our continuing to apply to, and receive him as such, is in its own nature, unless hindered by us, a certain means and instrument of conveying and imparting to us all the benefits of Christ, both as he is our atonement and life. To ask therefore for a particular promise annexed to this institution, which in its nature communicates to us all that ever was promised to us in a savior, is highly absurd. But after all, it can be truly said, that the scriptures are very full and particular in setting forth the benefits and advantages of the holy communion, to all those that have eyes that see, and ears that hear. For do not the scriptures plainly enough tell us of the benefit of believing, seeking, and applying to Christ as the atonement for our sins? And is not the benefit of this faith the benefit of the sacrament, if Christ is there believed, sought and applied to as our atonement? And is it not the sole end of the sacrament to continue, confirm and exercise this faith, to which all the blessings of our salvation are annexed? Therefore, all that the scriptures say of the riches and blessings, and treasures, which faith in Christ as our redeemer, can procure to us, all that they say of the benefit of that faith, which is absolutely required and exercised by this sacrament.

Again, do not the scriptures plainly and frequently enough tell us of the benefit of the new birth in Christ, of the putting on Christ, of having Christ formed in us, of Christ's being our life, of our having life in him, of his being that bread from heaven, that bread of life, of which the manna was only a type; of his flesh being meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; of our eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, and that without it we have no life in us; and are not all these things so many plain and open declarations of that which we seek and obtain, by eating the body and blood of Christ? For we eat the sacramental body and blood of Christ, to show that we want and desire, and by faith lay hold of the real, spiritual nature and being of Christ; to show that we want and desire, the progress of the new birth in Christ; to put on Christ, to have Christ formed and revealed in us, to have him our life, to partake of him our second Adam, in the same fullness and reality, as we partake of the nature of the first Adam: and therefore all that the scripture says of the benefits

and blessings are sought and obtained by the eating the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. For to eat the body and blood of Christ, is neither more nor less than to put on Christ, to receive birth and life, and nourishment and growth from him; as the branch receives its being and life, and nourishment and growth from the vine. And because Christ is that to us, which the vine is to the branches, therefore there is a strict truth and reality in these expressions; and the same truth and reality, whether it be expressed, by saying, that we eat the flesh and blood of Christ, or that we put on Christ, or that Christ is formed, manifested or revealed in us. For if you could bid the branch to eat the substance and juice of the vine, the same must be intended, as if you had said, that the vine must be formed in the branch, or must manifest itself in the branch. So when it is said, that we must eat the flesh and blood of Christ, it is the same thing as saying, that Christ must be formed in us, or manifested in us. But you will perhaps say, How does it appear, that these expressions of putting on Christ, of Christ's being formed in us, of his being our life, the bread of life, and his flesh meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; how does it appear, that these and the like places of scripture are to be understood sacramentally?

I answer, it does not appear. And the question itself is as absurd, as if it was asked, How does it appear, that the scriptures are to be understood sacramentally? Whereas, if the question began at the right end, it should proceed thus, How does it appear, that the sacrament is to be understood scripturally, or according to the plain doctrines of scripture? Was the question thus put, as it ought to be, it would fall of itself. For surely it need not be proved, that the things spoken of Christ in the sacrament, are to be understood according to that which is spoken of Christ in the scripture. When our savior said in the sixth of St. John, "that his flesh was meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, and that except a man eat his flesh, and drink his blood, he hath no life in him; and that he who eateth his flesh, and drinketh his blood, dwelleth in him, and he in him"; he did not speak of the sacrament, nor could possibly speak of it, for this plain reason, because he spoke of the truth, the reality, and the thing itself; for the sake of which, and for the application of which to ourselves, he afterwards instituted the sacrament. But if the sacrament was instituted for the sake of that truth and reality, of which he then spake; then the sacrament must be essentially related to that which he then said, and must have its meaning and end according to it. And if what he then said, was that truth and reality of the thing itself, and the sacrament was instituted as an outward sign, proof or declaration of it; then what he said in St. John, he spoke not of the sacrament; and yet what he instituted in the sacrament, has all its meaning according to that which he said in St. John. To ask, whether our savior meant the sacramental bread and wine, when he said, my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed, is as absurd as to ask, whether he did not mean the flesh and blood of some other person, when he said, my flesh and my blood?

And, on the other hand, to ask, whether the sacramental bread and wine does not signify to us that flesh and blood which is our meat indeed, and drink indeed, is as absurd, as to ask, whether the appointed sign of a thing, does not signify that which it is appointed to signify?

These two things therefore are evidently plain: First, that our savior in John 6:1-71 did not, could not possibly speak of his sacramental body and blood, or bread and wine, because he spoke of himself, of his real, natural, and true life, of which we must partake: Secondly, that what he calls his body and blood in the sacrament, or has appointed to be the signs of his body and blood, must be understood according to that which he has said in St. John, of his flesh which is meat indeed, and his blood which is drink indeed; for this plain reason, because the appointed sign of a thing

must signify that which it is appointed to signify.

Therefore in St. John there is nothing said of the sacrament; and yet what is said in the sacrament, is to be necessarily understood of that very thing which is said in St. John. And the reason is plain; for the thing is essentially different from that which is appointed to be a sign of it; therefore, he that speaks of the thing, cannot in speaking of that, speak of the sign. But the sign, as such, has all its nature from the thing that it is to signify; and therefore the thing itself must be meant by that which the sign speaks of. To say, as some do, that our savior could not speak of that in St. John, which is intended by the sacrament, because the sacrament was not then instituted, is very weak and unreasonable; for it is saying, that he could not then speak of a thing or doctrine, because he afterwards appointed something to be a sign or outward declaration of it. For if he had appointed an institution, or positive rite, which related to nothing that he had before taught, it must have been very unaccountable. Thus to command us to eat his body and blood in the sacrament, if he had not beforehand taught that we had our life from him, and that his flesh was our meat indeed, and his blood our drink indeed, had been very unaccountable. But seeing he had in the openest, plainest manner declared, that he was the life of men, and that except we eat his flesh and drink his blood we have no life in us; the command to eat bread and wine as his body and blood, is plain and intelligible; and we have the fullest assurance of the meaning of it, for this reason, because Christ had often, and long beforehand taught that truth, of which he afterwards appointed the sacrament to be an outward sign, and an outward means of our owning, confessing, and embracing it. Thus all the controversy about this place in St. John, and other like passages of scripture, is at an end, and has the most plain and satisfactory solution; such passages do not speak of the sacrament, because they speak of the thing itself, of which the sacrament is an appointed outward signification; but the sacrament directly speaks of, and points to those passages, because they contain that truth and reality which the sacrament is appointed to signify. For were not Christ our real life, there had not been any outward figure or declaration of it appointed; was there not a real eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ, was there not a true substantial putting on of Christ, or partaking of the nature of Christ, the sacramental eating and drinking of his body and blood, had not been appointed; there could have been no foundation for it; or if appointed, it could have had no meaning suitable to the words. But since that which is sacramentally figured or signified, by the eating and drinking the sacramental body and blood of Christ, is in the scriptures declared to be a real truth, since its reality is taught, declared and explained by various ways and manners of speech, it is undeniable, that the sacrament, which is an appointed figure, must be explained and asserted according to that truth and reality, of which it is the appointed figure. When our savior said, "he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him": when he said, "I am the life"; and again, "I am the true vine, and ye are the branches," &c., he spake as much strict and real truth, and as much according to the letter, as when he said of himself, he came down from heaven, or that he is in the Father, and the Father in him. What is there said, is no more to be considered as a metaphor, or figure of speech, than when it is said, that God is our Father, or that in God we live, move, and have our being. For what is said of Christ, as our life, is as strictly true, as when it is said, that in God we live, and move, and have our being; and what is said of Christ's being the true vine, has the same real truth in it, as when God is said to be our Father. Had Christ indeed said, This vine is me, and these branches are ye, what he said must then have been as figurative, as when he said of the bread, "This is my body"; and his speaking so of a vine, must have been only a sign to us, that he was in truth and

reality that to us, which the vine is in a poor, earthly, perishable manner to its branches. But seeing he does not speak of a vine, but speaks directly of himself, and says, that I am the true vine; it is as if he had said, I am the vine in truth and reality, as God is the Father of you all in truth and reality, because I am that in a true and real, and living manner to you, which the vine is in a poor, earthly, perishable manner to its branches.

Therefore all that is here said, is the real truth, as far as human words can set it forth; and when it is said, that we must put on Christ, or that Christ must be formed in us, or that he is the true vine, and we are the branches, there is the same literal, real, immutable and eternal truth in these expressions, as when it is said, that "in God we live and move, and have our being," or that God is our Father, and we are his children.

Now to deny that Christ is thus our life, is as great a denial of him, as to deny him to be the eternal Word, or the Son of God, or the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. And to deny that we receive our life from him, or eat his flesh and blood in the same reality as the branch eateth of the substance and juice of the vine, and receiveth what it hath from it, is as great a denial of him, as if we deny that he came from heaven, and was in heaven, even when he was upon earth. But if we own these great truths, which are the very heart and substance of Christianity, if we know and acknowledge that we are thus of him, and by him, that our inward man, which is all that is Christian within us, has all its birth, life, and growth from Christ, as its principle, eating, drinking, and drawing in life from him, as the branch eats, drinks, and draws its life and substance from the vine; then we cannot be at a loss either to know what is meant by the sacrament, and the benefits we receive thereby, or to know what parts of scripture explain those benefits to us. Since it must appear to us beyond all doubt, that all that which the scriptures speak to us of Christ, as the atonement for our sins, and our peace with God, and all that they speak to us of our life in Christ, of his forming and manifesting himself in the birth and growth of our inward new man; is that which it speaks to us of the meaning and benefits of this holy sacrament, which is solely appointed as the figure of all this, as the application of all this to us, and as an established means of exercising, increasing and strengthening our faith in him, as he is all this to us.

Here therefore is full room for all our devotion, and at the same time a full security against all delusion. For whilst we believe nothing of the sacrament, seek nothing in it, nor plead anything by it, but such scripture truths and benefits as we are obliged to believe, own and plead, though the sacrament had not been appointed, all the devotion which the sacrament thus raises in us, is as secure from delusion, has as much the stamp of truth upon it, and is as proper an exercise of solid piety, as when any thing or occasion excites us to an act of loving God with all our mind, and heart, and strength. For as we cannot too much esteem, love and adore our savior, both as he is the atonement for our sins, and a principle of life to us; so if the use of the sacrament quickens, nourishes, keeps up, and increases this esteem, love and adoration of him, as such, it cannot do this too much. For as we do nothing in the sacrament, but what is our natural duty, and good and right in itself; as we seek to Christ, trust in Christ, rely upon his merits, desire to have life in and from him, only in such a manner as we ought to do, though we were not assisted in it by the sacrament; so all this faith and hope, and love and desire, and devotion which we practice by means of the sacrament, has everything in it, that can prove to be right, and just, and good. And the want of this faith, hope, love, desire, adoration and devotion, is more blamable in the use of the sacrament than anywhere else, because it is there more properly required, and has the most

proper object and occasion to excite it.

You must therefore consider the sacrament purely as an object of your devotion, that is to exercise all your faith, that is to raise, exercise, and inflame every holy ardor of your soul that tends to God. It is an abstract, or sum of all the mysteries that have been revealed concerning our savior, from the first promise of a seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head, to the day of Pentecost. As you can receive or believe nothing higher of our savior, than that he is the atonement for our sins, and a real principle of life to us; so every height and depth of devotion, faith, love, and adoration, which is due to God as your creator, is due to God as your redeemer.

Jacob's ladder that reached from earth to heaven, and was filled with angels ascending and descending between heaven and earth, is but a small signification of that communion between God and man, which this holy sacrament is the means and instrument of.

Now here it may be proper for you to observe, that whatever names or titles this institution is signified to you by, whether it be called a sacrifice propitiatory, or commemorative; whether it be called an holy oblation, the eucharist, the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the heavenly banquet, the food of immortality, or the holy communion, and the like, matters not much. For all these words or names are right and good, and there is nothing wrong in them, but the striving and contention about them. For they all express something that is true of the sacrament, and therefore are every one of them, in a good sense, rightly applicable to it; but all of them are far short of expressing the whole nature of the sacrament, and therefore the help of all of them is wanted.

He therefore that contends for one name, as the only proper one in exclusion of the rest, is in the same mistake, as he that should contend for one name and character of our savior, as the only proper one, in exclusion of all the rest. For as all the names and titles by which Christ is described, from the seed of the woman in Genesis, to the Alpha and Omega in the last chapter of the Revelation, are only to help us to know, believe, and experience more of him as our savior, than can be expressed by all these different characters of him: so all the various names and titles given to the sacrament, are only to teach us to know, believe, and find more of our redemption and salvation in the sacrament, than can be pointed out to us by any or all these expressions.

If you have yet known Christ in any true degree, what must you think of him, who should contend that the Lamb of God was the only proper character of our savior, and that therefore those other names, seed of the woman, root of David, bright and morning star, bread of life, tree of life, son of man, first-born of all creatures, Word of God, could not belong to him as our savior, because of the disagreement there is between a lamb, and the bread of life, or a tree of life?

Now this is the learning this author is full of; from this scrupulous attention to words, and the ideas annexed to them, he rejects almost all the names by which the sacrament has ever been expressed.

He is able to prove, that the sacrament is not a commemorative sacrifice, because it is the Supper of the Lord; just as another by the same skill in words, might prove, that the Lamb of God is not the tree of life, or the bread that came down from heaven, because of the great difference there is between a tree, bread, and a lamb.

Now the reason why our savior is described under this vast variety of characters, is this, because no one phrase or particular form of expression can truly describe him to us; therefore that is to be done as well as it can, by different and seemingly contrary characters.

Thus he is called the seed of the woman that was to bruise the serpent's head, in another aspect the Lamb of God, in another the desire of all nations, in another the son of man, in another the brightness of his Father's glory, in another the bread that came down from heaven, in another the tree of life, the Alpha and Omega. Now it is the exceeding difference, and even literal contrariety of these expressions, that makes them proper and useful to us; and we have the more true knowledge of our savior because of these characters, which, considered in themselves, seem to have no agreement with each other.

Thus the Lamb of God, and the bread of life, are characters of our savior, that have no connection with each other, and yet they teach us the greatest truths concerning our savior, because they are thus without connection, and so unrelated to each other.

It is just thus with the sacrament; the different and seemingly incoherent characters and expressions by which it is signified to us, help us to know more truth of it, merely because of their difference, than could be taught us by such expressions as had a literal agreement and connection with each other. Do you therefore reject this author's wisdom of words which he proposes to you, and be content to be devout without it. Be glad to know, that as the nature, office, and condition of our savior could not be made known to us, but by a variety of different names and titles ascribed to him; so the nature and end and effects of this holy sacrament could not be made known to us, but by a variety of different names and titles ascribed to it; that in one respect it is a propitiatory sacrifice, in another a commemorative sacrifice; in one respect it is the seal and renewal of the covenant between God and man, in another the food of immortality, the life of the soul, the bread that came down from heaven, the tree of life; that in one respect it is the holy eucharist, in another the holy communion. And be assured, that he who tries to set these expressions at variance with each other, and would persuade you that if one is a true account of the sacrament, the others cannot be so, is as vain a disputer of this world, as he that would persuade you, that if our savior be the seed of the woman, he cannot be essentially the Son of God; or if he be the Lamb of God, he cannot be the bread of life. The reason why this sacrament is said in one respect to be a propitiatory, or commemorative sacrifice, is only this, because you there offer, present, and plead before God, such things as are by Christ himself said to be his body and blood given for you: but if that which is thus offered, presented, and pleaded before God, is offered, presented, and pleaded before him only for this reason, because it signifies and represents both to God, and angels, and men, the great sacrifice for all the world, is there not sufficient reason to consider this service as truly a sacrifice? Or even supposing, that the calling the service a sacrifice, is no more according to a certain literal exactness of some critics, that when our savior says of himself, "I am the resurrection"; or that a quibbler in words may be able to object as much against it, as against our savior's saying of himself, "I am the resurrection and the life," have you any reason to dislike it on that account, or to wish that such little critics might find more of their empty, superficial, worthless niceties in the language of the church, than in the language of scripture? The miserable use which this author makes of this kind of learning may be sufficiently seen by the following instances: "To say," says he, "that this communion is the actual partaking of all the benefits of Christ's body broken and blood shed for us, or of his living and dying for our good, has this peculiar absurdity in

it, that in this rite, which was instituted for the remembrance of Christ, it destroys that very notion of remembrance, which is the essence of it. The great design of this institution is to call to mind the remembrance of Christ, and to commemorate the benefits accruing to Christians from it. To make it therefore the actual partaking of these benefits, is altering the nature of it, as much as actual partaking of anything is different from remembering it." {Page 158.} Many other passages like this are to be found in this author.

Now to see the truth and sense of this doctrine in its proper light: Let it be supposed, that our savior, after the institution, had thus added, "Observe well what it is that I have taught you to understand and do by this rite: I have indeed said, This is my body which is given for you; but the meaning of my institution does not lie in these words, nor are you to think that I am any way present in that which I call my body, or that you are to present, and show, and plead it before God as my body, which is given for you; for this is not my intent, though I thus speak. I have also said, This is my blood which is shed for the remission of sins, and have ordered you to say so of it before God, and angels, and men in the church; but what I have taught has nothing to do with this institution, nor is it to be any part of it; there is no remission of sins to be thought of in it, or pleaded by it. I have also bid you to eat that which I have declared to be my body, and to drink that which I have declared to be my blood; but you must not therefore imagine, that you receive anything of me, or of my nature, into yourselves, or that I am a principle of life to you. For though I thus speak so fully and plainly of eating my very body and blood, yet nothing is meant of any real partaking of anything from me. For this is no part of my institution, nor is it appointed for you to receive anything from me, nor for me to communicate anything to you. And to prevent your apprehension of anything of this kind, and to secure you from the dangerous error of supposing that any benefits and blessings are received by your receiving my body and blood; I have added, Do this in remembrance of me; which words sufficiently show, that neither me, nor the benefits of me, as your savior, can here be received, because that which is appointed here to be remembered, cannot, without great absurdity, be supposed to be present. Had I indeed said, Do this in acknowledgement of me, or of that salvation which is received through me; or had I said, Do this as an act of faith in me as your savior, then indeed you must have believed that there were great benefits and blessings presented to you by this institution; for ye could not by faith appeal to this my body and blood, without the actual partaking of my benefits and blessings, both as I am the atonement for your sins, and a principle of life to you: but as I have chosen the word remembrance, you must see that it is only an act of your memory that is required of you; for this is the great point in this institution, perform but this and you have performed all that the nature and end of this institution requires of you. Take care therefore that you keep strictly to this bare act of the memory, and that you don't add anything to it; for the essence of this institution consists in this simple act of the memory. But above all, take heed of such faith, devotion, and desire of me, as may lead you to hope or believe that you partake of my benefits by the partaking of this holy rite; for such a faith and hope are so inconsistent with this institution, that they would destroy the very nature and essence of it, which is to be the remembrance of my benefits, and therefore cannot possibly be the actual partaking of them. Nor can you think of partaking of them by this holy institution, but by making it an institution of your own, directly contrary to that which I designed it to be."

Everyone, I believe, must at first sight perceive, that to put this paraphrase upon the sacrament into the mouth of our savior, would be profaneness and blasphemy; and yet everyone must plainly see, that profane and blasphemous as it would be, there is not a thought or word in it, but what is strictly according to this author's doctrine.

Secondly, let it be supposed that instead of "Do this in remembrance of me," our savior had said, Do this as a means of partaking of all my benefits to mankind: this author's criticism would prove it absurd to make the sacrament even than an actual partaking of those benefits. For he must say, that the great design of it, was to be a means of partaking of those benefits. To make it therefore the actual partaking of those benefits, is altering the nature of it, as much as actual partaking of anything is different from the means of partaking of it. Such is his wisdom of words!

Thirdly, if it were true, that the actual partaking of Christ's benefits was not only not intended by, but also inconsistent with the right observance of this institution, so as to destroy its essence, and alter its nature, if such actual partaking was thought of by it; then it would follow, that no good Christian ought to observe this institution, or act according to the nature and intent of it. For it is as unlawful and even atheistical for any Christian to think himself not an actual partaker of the benefits and blessings of Christ, as to think himself not an actual partaker of the benefits and blessings of a God and providence. "Without me," says our blessed Lord, "ye can do nothing." {John 15:5} But, according to this author, we not only can, but must do all that is done in this sacrament without him, and must look upon the sacrament as instituted for this very end, to keep up a sense and belief of our being without him, and to assure us, that we are not actual partakers of him, that he is not present with us, nor acting in us. Again, saith our blessed Lord, "Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bear fruit, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

But, according to this author, he that would rightly perform this institution, must, every time he performs it, come out of Christ as perfectly as he can, and make himself as separate from Christ, as the withered branch that is separated from the vine; that having no actual possession of the benefits and blessings of Christ, he may be qualified to do this in remembrance of them.

Further, no one can believe in Christ, love Christ, adore him, and hope and trust in him, without being an actual partaker of the benefits of Christ by so doing; if therefore to the due observation of the sacrament, and to preserve its nature and essence, there must be no actual partaking of the benefits of Christ allowed in it, or by it; then it must be performed without faith or love of Christ, and without any devotion towards him, or adoration of him; for if these accompany that which we do in the sacrament, and attend our reception of it, the benefits of Christ must be actually received by it.

Fourthly, to see still more of the absurdity and impiety of this author's observation on the remembrance in the sacrament, we need only apply it to this parallel text of scripture, "Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth." {Ecclesiastes 12:1} For, according to our author, he that would not alter and destroy the nature and essence of this duty of remembering God, must not pretend, or hope, or believe, that by the observance of this duty, he is made an actual partaker or sharer of the goodness, perfections, and attributes of his creator, or of anything that belongs to his creator, or that can be remembered of him: because so long as he keeps strictly to the true nature of this duty, and continues to remember his creator, so long every thing, or attribute, or perfection that belongs to his creator, must be considered as at a distance from him, as unenjoyed and

unpossessed by him, because that which is to be remembered, cannot be present. And therefore the command to remember our creator, is, according to this doctrine, a command to look upon our creator as at a distance and far from us, and is inconsistent with our believing, that "in him we live, move, and have our being"; because we cannot remember a creator so present with us, and of whose perfections we are actual partakers.

If therefore this author has found out the right way of remembering God as our redeemer, he ought to have told us, that the same way of remembering God as our creator was wrong, and tended to atheism. For to remember God as absent, is but a very little way from atheism.

Lastly, if, as this author teaches, the actual partaking of the benefits of Christ's living and dying for us, by means of this sacrament, is an absurdity that cannot be supposed, without destroying the nature and essence of the sacrament, for this reason, because that which is possessed as present, and actually partaken of, cannot be remembered; then it follows, that no man can fully perform this duty, that is, make it a remembrance of all the benefits of Christ, but he that is actually dispossessed of all of them. Because he cannot remember all, if any of them are then present with him, and enjoyed by him.

Secondly, it follows, that he who daily grows in the gifts and graces of Christ, and in whom Christ is every day more and more formed, must, in proportion as the strength, and spirit, and power of Christ is revealed in him, daily be less qualified to do perfectly that which is to be done in the sacrament; because being daily more and more possessed of the benefits and blessings of Christ, he has every day less and less to commemorate in and by the sacrament.

Thirdly, it follows, that he who falls from his state of grace in Christ, who becomes every day more and more empty and destitute of his gifts and graces, who daily loses something of the sense and taste of the heavenly gifts, and the powers of the world to come, and finds himself less animated, assisted and strengthened by the power and spirit of Christ, must in proportion, as he becomes every day more earthly, sensual, carnal, blind and weak, and wretched, and dead, and fallen from Christ, be more and more qualified to do that which, according to this author, is to be done in the sacrament; for losing every day something of the benefits of Christ, and being daily less a partaker of them, he is daily qualified to commemorate more of them, and so to perform that which is to be performed in this sacrament in a more perfect manner.

Again, the apostle saith, "Know ye not that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates"? {2 Corinthians 13:5} But this author must say, Know ye not that Christ Jesus is not in you, nor can be in you, if the sacrament is to be observed in remembrance of him? For how can ye without absurdity commemorate that which is not absent from you?

Lastly, he who can say with the apostle, "the life that I now live is not mine, but Christ that liveth in me," is utterly incapable of remembering Christ in the sacrament; for he cannot commemorate an absent Christ, and therefore cannot commemorate him, till Christ has done living in him. But there is no end of exposing all the impious consequences of this author's learned account of the word remembrance. Which, monstrous as it is, is only founded upon a little criticism, that the word remembrance can only signify an act of the memory upon something that is absent. And yet it is certain that it does not, cannot signify so, when you are to remember your creator, and therefore need not signify so, when you are to remember your redeemer. And if you do but suppose it

possible, that "Do this in remembrance of me," may only signify, do this in regard of me, as your act of faith in me; then all this extraordinary doctrine of the impossibility and absurdity of partaking of the benefits of Christ by partaking of the sacrament, has not so much as one of his quibbles to support it.

Further, this author's absurd interpretation of the word remembrance in the sacrament is founded on this gross error, that the things to be remembered, are things done and past, and therefore only capable of being remembered by an act of the memory. This he expressly says in many places. Thus, "They," says he, "could not do the actions here named, in remembrance of anything which was not done and past." And in other places, that the "benefits cannot be present that are to be commemorated." And therefore the whole support of this arguing is founded on this error, that the things to be remembered, are done and past. Which is an error, that he could not have fallen into, if he had but moderately understood the nature either of the Jewish or Christian religion.

Now that which is to be remembered in the sacrament is Christ, or the benefits and blessings of Christ as the savior of mankind; but neither Christ, nor his benefits and blessings have the nature of things done, or gone, and past, but are always present, always in being, always doing, and never done.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever," always was, now is, and ever will be present as the savior of the world. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, and therefore equally present in and through all from the beginning to the end. "Behold," saith he, "I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him." {Revelation 3:20} Thus he stood at the door of Adam's heart, as near as he stood to the apostles'; and thus he stands, and will stand knocking at the door of every man's heart, till time shall be no more. Happy he that does not consider this Christ as absent, and is only for such a Supper of the Lord, as will not admit of his presence. The benefits and blessings of Christ as the savior of mankind, began with the first promise of a seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head; they have continued with this promise, they are the benefits of every age, they will never be at an end, till all that was implied in the promise shall have its full completion in the utter destruction of the serpent. Jesus Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; and the first sacrifice of the first man, and every sacrifice since, that hath been accepted of God, has been made solely acceptable through the benefits and blessings of Christ.

All the shadows and types, sacrifices and ceremonies of the Jewish religion were only so many ways of applying the benefits of Jesus Christ to that people. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever," is the same in and through all ages; he was the savior of Adam, the patriarchs, and the Jews, just as he is our savior. His body and blood, offered in their sacrifices, was their atonement, as it is ours, offered upon the cross. His flesh and blood was meat and drink, or a principle of life to them, as it is to us.

Jesus Christ was theirs, as he is ours; he was the life, and substance, and spirit of the Law, as he is the life, and substance, and spirit of the gospel; only with this difference, that then Christ was covered, and received under more outward figures and ceremonies than he is now; we do that more openly, which was then done more covertly by the Israel of God. His atonement for our sins is not a transitory thing, that began and ended with his passion and death, but it began with the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world; for he was the Lamb of God slain in all their

types and sacrifices through every age, till he became the real expiatory sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world. When he died upon the cross, his atonement did not then become a thing that was over, or past, and done, that was only to be remembered by an act of the memory, but continued increasing in its power and virtue. As Christ by his death put an end to nothing in religion but types and prefiguration; so by his death he put an end to nothing of his atonement, but that which was typical and prefigurative of it. And as he arose from the grave with greater power and strength, and became instead of a meek and suffering Lamb, a powerful conqueror over death, a royal priest over the house of God, so his atonement went on increasing in strength and virtue. His atonement was so far from being a thing done and past, when his blood was shed upon the cross, that it was shed for this very end, that he might for ever do that in the reality, which the high priest did in the type, when with the blood of the sacrifice he entered once a year into the holiest of all, to make the highest atonement for the people.

Thus Christ, to perform, and to continue for ever the most powerful way of atoning for us, by his own blood he entered once into the holy place--now to appear in the presence of God for us. {Hebrews 9:24} Where he continueth for ever, and hath an unchangeable priesthood; {Hebrews 7:24} and therefore our atonement is never done and past, but is just as perpetual and unchangeable as his priesthood. For he can be no longer a priest, than while he maketh an atonement and intercession for us. And from this his unchangeable priesthood, the apostle thus argues, "wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him, {Hebrews 7:25} seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us." But if he is "able to save them to the uttermost, who come unto God by him"; then his atonement is not something done and past, but always in being, always present, always doing, and always presenting itself everywhere, and to every man; and if he is ever living to make intercession for us, then we have a propitiation that never ceases, that is as near to us as it was to the apostles, and will be as present to those that shall be born two thousand years after Christ, as it was to those who stood by his cross when he died. Agreeable to this, St. John saith, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins." He does not say, we have had an advocate with the Father, nor that Christ was our propitiation some time ago, but that he is the propitiation for our sins. And indeed Jesus Christ is the atonement for our sins, in that same unlimited universal and omnipresent manner, in which he is the life and light of the world. And as he is the light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and is not an actual present light to some, and a distant unpossessed light to others, only to be remembered by an act of their memory; so he is the atonement for every man that cometh into the world, and is not an actual, present atonement to some, and a distant atonement to others, only to be remembered by an act of their memory; but is an atonement actually and really present to all, as he is a light actually and really present to all, and every man that cometh into the world.

Therefore this author's account of the remembrance in the sacrament, has not only those absurdities in it demonstrated above, but is also solely founded upon this grossest of all errors, that the benefits and blessings of Christ, as the savior of mankind, are something done and past; which is an error that no one could have fallen into, that had but a common knowledge of the first and plainest principles either of the Jewish or Christian religion. For both these religions are founded upon this great truth, and suppose it in every part, that the benefits and blessings of Christ were always in being, always doing, always present in and to every age, as well before as

since the incarnation and death of Christ. And as this author has been forced to assent, they were things absent, done, and past, in order to make the sacrament to consist of an action of the memory upon those absent things; so seeing it is an undeniable truth, that they are not things absent, done, and past, but are as actually present, as ever they were, or ever could be, it follows, according to his own principles, that the remembrance spoken of in the sacrament, cannot possibly signify only an action of the memory, but must necessarily signify such faith and acknowledgement of Christ, as when we are bid to remember our creator, or believe in God.

Further, this author proceeds thus: "To say that the communion is the actual partaking of all the benefits of Christ's living and dying for us, is to put that upon one single act of obedience, which is by our blessed Lord made to depend upon the whole system of all virtues united." And again, "Such a doctrine as this would, in my opinion, be not only inconsistent with the plainest declarations of the gospel, but directly contradictory and destructive to the main design of it."

What this author calls here a single act, and a single instance of obedience, is true only of his own sacrament, which consists only of a single action of the memory cast upon Christ at a certain instant of time, and to which single action, this author expressly says, that no prayer is necessary, not even necessary to attend upon it, either as going before, or following after it. That in its own proper and peculiar nature, it has nothing to do with prayer or devotion of any kind, can have no perfection from it, nor be in any degree imperfect as to its nature and essence, for want of any prayer, because its essence is entirely distinct from prayer. And therefore all prayers, thanksgivings and devotions, are to be considered as things distinct from this sacrament, that have no relation to the peculiar nature and proper essence of it.

Hence it is plain, that we do not overcharge this author, when we say, that he places the whole nature of the sacrament in a bare single action of the memory. For if, as he says, no kind of prayer, devotion or thanksgiving, is of the essence of this sacrament, or can be an essential part of it; then it has all its perfection within itself, as it is a bare act of the memory, and cannot, as to its own proper nature or essence, have anything added to it by prayer, or taken from it by the want of prayer. Hence it is also undeniable, that this author's sacrament is not so much as a bare act of religion, nor can have any more religion in it, than if it was the act of a parrot. For no act can be a religious act, but so far, and in such degree, as it is an act of faith, and love, and devotion to God. But this author's sacrament will not, as it is a sacrament, allow faith, or love, or devotion to be any part of it, therefore it cannot be so much as a bare act of religion.

Nay, it may and must be said, that the right observation of this author's sacrament is directly an act of atheism. For if it is an act, that in its own nature, and according to its peculiar essence, cannot be performed according to what it is, unless it be done without faith, and love, and devotion towards God; then it is directly an act of atheism, because atheism is nothing else but a cessation of faith, love and devotion towards God. But the essence of this author's sacrament cannot be preserved, unless you keep prayer, devotion and thanksgiving out of it. Therefore to perform it rightly according to what it is, is to perform an act of atheism. And if at the taking of the bread and wine, you should suffer faith, or love, or adoration of God, or thanksgiving, to take up your mind, you might as well have let the sacrament alone, for you have neglected all that in which its whole nature consists; and have only been in such a state of devotion, as has nothing to do with it, nor can possibly be a part of it. And therefore, if you will perform this sacrament rightly according to

this author, you must perform it atheistically; you must excite such a remembrance as excludes faith, love, devotion and thanksgiving, from being a part of it. And your remembrance is not performed, unless it be such a remembrance as these things cannot be a part of. The devils are said to believe a God; but why is it that their faith is no religious act, nor of any benefit to them? It is because their faith is only a bare act of believing, just as this author's sacrament has only a bare act of remembering; and that which is the perfection of his sacrament, is their wretchedness.

If you ask this author, why faith, and prayer, and adoration and thanksgiving, are not of the essence, or cannot be essential parts of the sacrament: all he has to say is this, that the "duty of prayer is a duty absolutely distinct from the participation of the Lord's Supper."

It may and must be granted, that prayer, humility, faith, hope, charity, &c., are absolutely distinct from each other; that humility is not prayer, nor faith in its proper idea prayer, and so of the rest. Yet notwithstanding this distinction between them, they are all of them essential to each other. Faith is of the essence of prayer, hope is of the essence of faith, and all of them are essential parts of prayer. Therefore when this author asserts that prayer is not an essential part of the communion, he is just as much in the right, and has as much truth on his side, as he who says, that humility, faith and hope are not essential to prayer, because prayer is distinct from humility, faith and hope.

What this author saith of the sacrament, that it is one single act, or one single instance of obedience, is only true of his own fiction of a sacrament, which he makes to consist in a single act of the memory; and indeed it would be highly inconsistent with the gospel, to make such a sacrament a means of obtaining the benefits of Christ. But this is not the sacrament of Christ, nor the sacrament which the church of Christ observes. For all that relates to our salvation, either on the part of Christ, or on our own part, is plainly united in that sacrament which Christ has instituted. All that relates to our salvation on the part of Christ, is in the sacrament, because he has said that his body and blood are there for the remission of our sins, and that his body and blood are there to be eaten and drank, as the food and life of our souls, therefore Christ as our savior is wholly there. And all that relates to our salvation on our own part, is there; because we cannot come to Christ, or find him to be there, as he has said he is, unless we come to him with all those qualities and pious dispositions that correspond to him, as he is an atonement for our sins, and a principle of life to us; therefore all that relates to our salvation, either on the part of Christ, or on our own part, is plainly united in the sacrament. And to call such a communion one single act of obedience, is just the same absurdity, as to say, that the baptism of a heathen converted to Christianity, is but one single instance of obedience. For everything that is implied in such a conversion and baptism, whether it be on the part of Christ, or on the part of the person baptized, is implied in this communion. And as the baptism of such a person contains all in it that relates to his salvation, either on the part of Christ, or on his own part, and therefore cannot without great ignorance be called a single instance or act of obedience: so it is with the sacrament, it is all that to the pious communicant, both on the part of Christ, and on his own part, that baptism is to the true converted heathen; and he is made an actual partaker of all the benefits of Christ by it, as the convert is made so by baptism; and therefore it is the same absurdity to call it a single act, or instance of obedience. And as it would be vain and groundless to say, that it was inconsistent with the main design of the gospel, to make such baptism the actual partaking of all the benefits of Christ; so it is equally, if not more so, to say the same thing of communion; because every pious and holy

disposition is to be supposed to be in an higher state, in the pious communicant, than in the pious desirer of baptism; and therefore, it cannot without much absurdity be supposed, that the sacrament is not as beneficial to the pious communicant, as baptism is to the pious convert. For if Christ has appointed this institution, to assure us, that he is there, both as the atonement for our sins, and a principle of life to us, and we come to it with such pious dispositions as correspond and answer to him in both these respects, and make us capable of him; it must be great absurdity to say, that we find him not there as our atonement, nor receive him as a principle of life to us, nor are made partakers of these benefits of him.

If we stand before this atonement, without such dispositions as correspond to it, we are as absent from the sacrament of Christ, as they are that refuse to come to it; if we eat that which is before us in the sacrament, without such faith and purity as qualify us to receive the flesh and blood of Christ, we are only eating that, which might have been the bread of life to our souls. But if we, according to the condition of our humanity, are that which these two essential parts of the sacrament require us to be, then we may and ought as firmly to believe, that we are by this sacrament made actual partakers of all the benefits of Christ, as that we are saved through Christ, and not by ourselves. This author makes great complaint of ascribing these benefits to the reception of the communion, because it is, as he says, to put that upon a single instance of obedience, which our blessed Lord has made to depend upon the whole system of all virtues united in us: that is, Christ has made the system of all virtues united in us, to be the only qualification for the actual partaking of his benefits; which is not only utterly inconsistent with the gospel, but nonsensical in itself; for it is saying that we are then only qualified for the benefits of our savior, when we have no need of them; for if all virtues were so united in us, all that our savior could do for us, would be done beforehand. But let us take an instance or two from our savior's own words, and then we shall best see how truly this author has said, that he has made the actual partaking of his benefits, to depend upon the whole system of all virtues united. When our blessed Lord stood by Jacob's well, talking with the woman of Samaria, he said to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water; a water which shall be in him that drinketh it, a well of water springing up into everlasting life." {John 4:10}

Here, I suppose, are offered to this poor woman all the benefits of the savior of mankind. Our Lord does not say to her, If thou hadst the whole system of all virtues united in thee, then thou mightest be made a partaker of all my benefits; I could make the water of eternal life perpetually spring up within thee.

No, there is no such jargon as this in the gospel: but as he came as a compassionate savior, to make the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, and the dead to awake; as he came as a good shepherd to seek that which was lost, and as a physician to heal the sick; so he only says to the woman, if she had asked, that is, if she had felt the want of a savior, as the blind feel the want of sight, and her heart had only desired this gift of God, he would then have bestowed this greatest of all gifts upon her. But surely, if this desire in the woman would have made her thus capable of all the benefits of our savior, it cannot be inconsistent with the gospel, to make the same desire as beneficial to a true and pious Christian, as it would have been to an unbaptized Samaritan.

Again, our Lord saith, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." {Matthew 21:22} Here you see, all things, and therefore all the benefits of Christ, are ascribed to faith, and we have everything that we can desire or pray for, by virtue of it. Does not our Lord here ascribe as much benefit to faith, as ever anyone ascribed to the holy communion? Or who ever said that of the power, or benefit, or efficacy of the sacrament, which our Lord here says of the benefit of faith in prayer? Is not this as inconsistent with the gospel, as the actual partaking of Christ's benefits, by the single duty of receiving the sacrament? Is not this benefit of the prayer of faith as contrary to this author's whole system of virtues united in us, as that other benefit of the sacrament? Is it not as just to say, that this prayer of faith is only a single instance of obedience, as to say so of the sacrament? And is not the main design of the gospel as much destroyed by making faith to be thus beneficial, as by making the communion to be so beneficial? Or can it be supposed, that when our Lord, who ascribes thus much to the prayer of faith, when it is alone, would think it too much to be ascribed to it, when the holy sacrament is united with it? Or must it be supposed, that this prayer of faith loses its virtue and power, is deprived of its excellent effects, only then, when it is a part of the communion of Christ's body and blood.

Again, our Lord saith, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." Must not this author have as much to complain of in this doctrine, that ascribes so much to prayer in the name of Christ, as in that doctrine, that ascribes so much to the sacrament? Must he not say, that the praying in the name of Christ, is but one single instance of obedience; and that to say, we are thereby made partakers of all the benefits of Christ, is putting that upon one single act of obedience, which our blessed Lord has made to depend upon the whole system of all virtues united in us? Must he not say, that this account of the power and efficacy of prayer in Christ's name, is a doctrine destructive of the main design of the gospel? For everything that this author objects against this doctrine of the sacrament, must with the same strength be objected against these, and many other the like express declarations of our savior.

Everyone must know that it would be very easy to produce various passages of the gospel, that teach the same doctrine, as these do that I have quoted; and that when this author said, our savior made the partaking of his benefits to depend upon the whole system of all virtues united in us, he had just the same reason and authority from the gospel to say so, as he has to say, that Christ declared he came to seek that which was not lost, to heal those which were not sick, and save those who stood in no need of a savior. But now, seeing this is the nature, power, and efficacy of the prayer of faith, and of prayer in the name of Christ; seeing he himself has assured us, that they make us actual partakers of everything that we can ask of the Father, or that he through Christ can give us, we have the fullest assurance, that if we do that which the sacrament requires to be done; if we don't separate faith and prayer in the name of Christ from it, but perform it in this faith and prayer, or make it as it ought to be, a real exercise of this faith and prayer, then we receive in and by it all the benefits of our savior. But because this author seems entirely out of his element, when speaking of the benefits of Jesus Christ, and not to be able to speak an intelligible word about it, as to the true grounds and nature of it, but only to puzzle himself and the reader with an empty superficial way of arguing from the sound of words: I shall therefore, in a word or two, endeavor to lay before you the true grounds of the benefits of Jesus Christ, as he is the savior of all mankind.

It is the fundamental doctrine, or rather the known foundation of all revealed religion, and the known foundation of all natural piety and goodness, that Jesus Christ is the second Adam: that he

is a common head, or parent, or person to all mankind, in the same manner as Adam is the common head, or parent, or person to all mankind. That a real birth, life, nature, and true man, is in the same truth and reality derived to us from this our second Adam, as a real birth, and life, and nature is derived to us from our first Adam. And that as without any figure or metaphor of speech we are all said to be born of Adam, and descended from him; so we are all in the same dependence upon our second Adam, really and not figuratively born of him, and have our descent from him; spirit of his spirit, life of his life, in the same truth and reality, as every man has the nature of the first Adam. And herein is seen the infinite depth of divine love and goodness to mankind, who though they were by the condition of their creation to be derived from one head or parent, and to take his state of perfection or imperfection; yet were by the goodness and care of God for them, provided from the very beginning with a second parent, or common head, who after the fall of the first, and the fallen state that he had brought upon his posterity, should be a common restorer, and put it in every man's power to have the same choice of life and death, as the first man had; that so, they who were lost before they were born, and were made inheritors of a miserable nature without their choice, might have a divine life restored to them in a second parent, which should not be in the power of anyone to lose for them, but should depend entirely upon their own will and desire of it, upon their own faith, and hope, and hungering after it. This eternal and immutable truth, worthy of being written in capital letters of gold, is the foundation of all revealed and natural religion: and a standing monument of God's universal goodness and love to all mankind, and such as is sufficient to make all men rejoice and give praise to God. For by this truth, all that seems hard and cruel to human reason, that the posterity of Adam should be involved in the consequences of their first Father's fall, (yet how could it be otherwise?) all this, I say, is made a wonderful scene of love, as soon as we consider, that all mankind were redeemed as soon as they were lost, and that their redemption was as early, as universal, and as extensive in its effects, as the fall was. And that no son of Adam is left to inherit a poor, earthy, perishable, corrupt nature from him, without having it in his choice to be born again of a second Adam, and restored, with advantage, to all the riches, and treasures, and blessings of a divine and paradisiacal nature, which were lost without his consent.

There is something so amazingly loving and merciful in this conduct of divine providence over mankind, that I cannot help thinking, no one can calmly consider it in the quiet of his mind, without having all his infidelity melted down by it. And that such an act of general pardon, as early as the first sin, and a new parent provided for us, to be our parent by choice and faith, as soon as our first parent had undone us without our consent: such an act of pardon being the beginning and foundation of all revealed religion, and of everything that is afterwards revealed in it, has surely enough in it, if once known, to make revealed religion the joy, and comfort, and desire of every man's heart. What would I give that I could but dart one ray of this truth into every unbeliever's heart; for the smallest ray of it would do to everyone as the light that fell from heaven did to St. Paul, it would make as it were scales fall from his eyes: and he would find that all books and systems of infidelity were as unreasonable in themselves, and as hurtful to him, as those commissions were which Paul had from the high priest to bind all that called on the name of Christ. But to proceed: that Jesus Christ is thus the savior and universal redeemer of all mankind, that he is this second Adam or parent, giving a new birth and life to all that which was extinguished and lost by Adam; restoring Adam himself, and in him all mankind to a possibility of being born again, by their own will, choice, faith, and desire; and that revealed religion began with the declaration of

this redemption, and has revealed nothing but for the sake and support of it, is a truth sufficiently attested by scripture. The declaration which God made to Adam immediately after his fall, of a seed of the woman to bruise the serpent's head, was a declaration of pardon and redemption to Adam, and in him to all mankind; for what he said to Adam, that he said to all that were in the loins of Adam; who, as they fell in his fall before they were born, without the possibility of any one man's being exempted from it; so were they all put into his state of pardon and redemption before they were born, without the possibility of any one man's being excluded, or left out of it.

Thus revealed religion begins with an offer of a second Adam, and upon the foot of an universal pardon and redemption to all mankind. Every son of Adam is in the same covenant with God that Adam was, and has the same bruiser of the serpent as near to him, as he was to Adam, and declared to be his redeemer, in the same degree as he was declared to be the redeemer of Adam. And who would seek for arguments against such a savior? Or who would cavil at a revealed religion, that has no other beginning or end, but to reveal an universal redemption? Or who can enough call upon all creation, heaven and earth, angels and men, and everything that hath breath, to praise the Lord for such salvation? You must forgive these little digressions; for I want so much to touch the heart of my reader, and make him in love with God, and his own salvation in Christ Jesus, that I know not how to content myself with bare argument.

Now this declaration of God to Adam, of his pardon and redemption by the seed of the woman, is not to be considered, as we consider the declaration of a pardon made by some great prince to an offending subject, which is only a declaration of words, that are heard only with our outward ears, and of a person that is entirely distinct from us.

God's pardoning a sinner, or redeeming fallen man, has nothing like this in it. If this offending subject had his life, and breath, and being in and from this great prince, or could be said to live, and move, and have his being in him; it would be easy, nay, necessary to believe, that his declaration of pardon to him, must be something very different from a pardon of words, and must signify some inward light, or change, or new state of existence in his prince.

Now this declaration of God's pardon and reconciliation to Adam, and in him to all mankind, is not the declaration of a being that is out of, or separate from us, but of a God in whom we live, and move, and have our being; who is the center of that which is most central in us, the life of our life, the spirit of our spirit: his declaration therefore of pardon is not a declaration of words, or of a being that is separate from us; but must signify some inward change, or new state of our existence in him, or that he is to us, and in us, that which he was not before he pardoned us. For his words are power, and what he speaks he acts; and what he acts, he acts not out of us, but in the inmost essence of our being, because so we exist in him, and he in us.

If God at the fall had said, Let us save man, the same had been effected, as when he said, "Let us make man." When therefore God said to Adam and Eve, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," what was said, was done; and it was the same thing, had the same meaning and effect, as if he had said, "Be ye henceforth in a state of salvation, and let the redeeming, conquering seed of the woman from this time begin to have power in you, and to be in you a strength and might against the serpent." And what he said was done, as when he said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

Thus this declaration of pardon and redemption made by God to Adam, and, in him, to all his posterity, was not solely a promise of something to come, or of a pardon that was at a distance, no more than it was the promise of a God that was at a distance from him; but the declaration of something then inwardly done and given, by a God inwardly present in him, and signified no less than God's seeking and manifesting himself again to a creature, that had lost him as his God and only good. For how can the anger of that being, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being," be only an anger of words, or made known to us only by words? Or how can it be anything else, but some inward loss of that which is our good in him? Or how can his pardon be only a pardon of words, or something heard only with our ears? Or how can it be anything else, but his restoring that to us, or his reviving that in us, which makes us again capable of finding him our God and only good?

Therefore God's declaration of pardon to Adam, was not barely a promise of something to come, but the pardon itself; and was the real communication of something to Adam, which made him capable of enjoying God as his good, which he had not when he wanted to be pardoned, and which he could not have, if God was in a state of anger with him.

Now had not God spoken this pardon and reconciliation to Adam after his fall, he had been in the condition of the deep, when it was said, darkness was upon the face of the deep.

Nay, it had been much worse with him; for had not God made this declaration of pardon and redemption to him at that time, that is, had he not done inwardly in the depth of his soul, something like that which he did to the darkness of the deep, when he spoke light into it, Adam and Eve, and all their posterity, had been inwardly mere devils, and outwardly mere beasts, a motley mixture of both, till the beast fell into the earth, and the soul to the state of devils. For had not God thus in the beginning of the fall, before any man was born into the world of Adam and Eve, had he not spoke pardon and redemption unto Adam and Eve; neither they, nor any of their posterity had been capable of any faith, or hope, or desire of God, but had lived as much without all conscience, or instinct of goodness, as the beasts of the earth and devils do.

Therefore God redeemed man, that is, restored to him a power of being again his creature, or a power of knowing and finding him to be his God, when he said, the "seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." He redeemed him by communicating to him a sense, a feeling, and a desire of God, by communicating to him a capacity to enjoy him as his only good, by sowing into him a seed of the woman, a spark of life, an instinct of goodness, a taste of heaven, a principle of holiness, a touch of love, the pearl of the gospel, the pledge of immortality, the hidden kingdom of God. For all these expressions of a seed, a spark, an instinct, a principle, a pearl and kingdom, are insufficient to express that inward treasure of the soul, and fund of everlasting happiness, which God in the beginning of redemption, or as his act of redemption, communicated to man.

Now in this degree of redemption is every creature that is born of Adam; he has this kingdom of God in his soul, as a grain of mustard seed, as a spark of life, as a pledge of immortality, as his attraction to God: if he tramples this pearl under his feet, if he will choke this Word, if he will put out this spark, if he will resist this attraction, then his destruction is from himself; and when the carcass of flesh and blood falls off from him, he must find himself in his own hell, and must have the misery of a darkened, anxious, fiery, self-tormented nature for ever, that would not suffer itself to be redeemed. But if he will consent to his redemption, and cooperate with that inward redeemer

which God has put into his soul; if he will suffer his spark to kindle, his instinct of goodness to spread itself, the light of the life to arise in him, the voice of God to be heard in him; then will the divine life, the inward man, be brought forth in him; and when his body breaks off, heaven will be made manifest in his soul, and he will fall into all the fullness of God. The Son of God will be his light, the Holy Spirit will breathe in him, and the power and omnipotency of the Father will be life and strength in him; and thus, in the completest sense of the words, shall he ever live, and move, and have his being in God. And now, my dear reader, what shall I say to you? How shall I do that, which I most of all desire to do, touch your heart? Or how can your heart be untouched with this affecting view of the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, and of the riches and treasures which lie hid in your own soul, wanting nothing but your own consent and good wishes to be manifested in you? But it may be, modern infidelity has stolen into your heart, and so you lie starving in the midst of plenty, choosing rather to famish on the dry husks of reason, dispute, and infidelity, than to have this divine life, this riches of your own soul, discovered to you on the terms of the gospel. It may be you have buried this spark of life, this inward man, and have heaped all the earth upon him that you can get, that you have sealed the stone of his sepulcher, and have set your greatest enemy, a reasoning infidelity, upon the watch, to dispute, wrangle, and deny every doctrine of scripture, that as a good angel would roll away the stone of the sepulcher, and let your inward redeemer arise in you.

If this is your case, if you have let a reasoning infidelity into your heart, you know not what mischief you have let into it; for the denial of the gospel reaches much further, and is more extensive than you imagine. For to deny Jesus Christ, is to deny your share in the first pardon of God to man; it is returning into the first state of the fall, and refusing to be a partner with Adam in his state of forgiveness; it is going over to the side of the serpent, and declaring that you will not enter into peace with God on the terms of bruising his head; for Jesus Christ that calls upon you in the gospel, is that same Christ which became Adam's pardon; and if you reject him in the gospel, it is rejecting him from the beginning: and is saying, that you will have no share in that salvation which was granted to Adam, and in him to all mankind. Nay, what is still more, if you reject the savior offered to you in the gospel, you reject all that which makes you differ from a devil; for that savior which speaks to you in the gospel, is that very same inward light of your mind, which makes you differ from a devil; for had you nothing of that Jesus Christ in you, whom you reject in the gospel, you would be in the same dark malignity, and self-tormenting wretchedness, in which every diabolical nature is. To refuse him that speaketh to you in the gospel, is not barely to renounce a certain particular religion revealed by God at a certain time, it is not barely to reject Christ as come in the flesh; but it is rejecting all that God has ever transacted with man, it is renouncing all that is divine and good within you, all that God inwardly speaks and teaches in the depth of your soul; it is saying that you will have no benefit from the good workings or motions of your own heart, or the instincts of goodness that are stirring in it; for Jesus Christ that calls you to repentance in the gospel, is the very same blessed savior, that warns, reproveth, and preaches repentance in the inmost essence of your spirit. For it is a deceit of the grossest kind, to think that Christ came only as our savior, when he came in the flesh, or that he only speaks to us that which is outwardly spoken in the gospel; for he always was that in every man that saved him from being entirely a diabolical nature, and was as really the teacher and mover of all that is good within you, as he was the teacher of the gospel. Therefore to reject him as your savior, to refuse him as such, and to desire to be without him, is in reality to desire to be in hell, to have the darkness and distress of

diabolical beings; it is desiring to be without any light of God upon your mind, or any instincts of goodness stirring in your heart. And if this is not the immediate effect of your infidelity, if you don't immediately find that the denial of Christ is putting out all the light within you; 'tis because Christ is love, and will be so good towards you, as to continue his inward light to you, though you reject his outward light of the gospel.

But, my friend, be wise in time, for this goodness will continue but a time; don't let a poor worthless infidelity beguile you to eat the dust of the earth with the serpent, when God has provided for you the bread of life. For this time of goodness and forbearance will soon be over; and if the end of it finds you in your infidelity, rejecting the benefits of Christ, you will then see the whole of all you desired, you will be without Christ, you will find that all is gone with him, and that you will have nothing left, but that nature which is the torment of hell.

You now think, that because you can frame ideas of virtue, and exert some acts of goodness, though you reject all faith in Christ, that therefore he is not necessary to your virtue and happiness; but your miserable mistake lies here, that you think Christ is only he that preached the gospel, and that it is not him that speaks and moves every good thought or word that is spoken in you, but that you have a light and goodness of your own. But when this time is over, and you have spent your hour of grace, Christ will no longer stand knocking at the door of your heart; and then you will find, that you are as empty of all inward light, as you are of the gospel, and that by rejecting him as your savior, you have rejected all that was divine and good within you.

Infidelity therefore is a much deeper evil than you may imagine, it denies and rejects more than you think of; you may intend by it only to change the light of the gospel for the light of reason, but Christ will not be divided by your intention; he is the one only light of men, the same in the heart that he is in the gospel; and though you may now think that you have two teachers, because he teaches in two places, and therefore may adhere to one, and reject the other; yet this is a deceit that can last no longer than the disputings of this world last with you. When the veil of flesh and blood is pulled off, and you must stand in the nakedness of your soul before God; then you will know, that these two lights are only one, and that neither of them can be rejected by itself. These lights appear now as two, only because God is so good as to leave no part of you untried, but presses the kingdom of heaven upon you, both from within, and from without. The eternal Word, the Son of God, took human nature upon him, worked all his miracles, taught all his doctrines, underwent all his sufferings, to make that light of the mind, which every man that cometh into the world had received from him, effectual to their salvation; therefore the light of the gospel, and the light of the mind, are one, as Christ is one, whether he speaks to you inwardly or outwardly. If therefore you reject Christ in the utmost efforts of his goodness to save you, you will find that the renouncing of Christ, is renouncing all that you have from him, and that all the good light of your mind, call it what you will, as it was his, is all rejected with him, and that nothing is left in that soul, where he is not, but mere darkness. But to return to my subject; what I have said above of God's covenant with Adam, and the redemption granted to him, is God's covenant with all mankind, and therefore thus far all mankind are the redeemed of Jesus. There is no partiality in God, no election of one people to salvation, and dereliction of another to their own misery. As all fell and died in Adam, so all were restored in his restoration.

Thus says the apostle, "As by the offense of one, judgment came upon all to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." {Romans 5:18} But you will perhaps say, how does it appear, that this first covenant of God with mankind, or redemption of all men in the redemption of Adam, is the redemption in and by Jesus Christ.

I may better ask you, Where you can have the smallest reason even to suspect the contrary? For is not the seed of the woman, Jesus Christ? And if our salvation then began, when God made declaration of the saving power of this seed, it is plain, that Christ's redemption then began in mankind, that he was thenceforward in every man as a spark of life, that as a secret power, should bruise the serpent, and support us against him, till he, in the fullness of time, should, in the fullness of the promise, become such a seed of the woman, as should openly triumph over death and hell, and all the kingdom of the serpent. For if it were Christ that became the ransom and life of his soul; then all the sons of Adam, from the first to the last, are in Adam's state of covenant with God through Jesus Christ, and have the seed of the woman doing all that for them, which it did for Adam.

Again, does not the gospel expressly say, that Jesus Christ is the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world? Therefore Jesus Christ is in every man that cometh into the world, and every son of Adam is in a state of redemption in and by Jesus Christ, and every son of Adam has received that same from Jesus Christ, which Adam received from him, viz., an inward light of life, a beginning of his salvation, an actual power or strength to resist the serpent; therefore Jesus Christ, as he is the light and life of men, as he is the bruiser of the serpent, as he is the power of salvation, is and ever was the free gift of God unto all men.

Again, does not the scripture teach us, that God is as well the God of the gentiles, as the God of the Jews? But if he is their God, then they are his people. And as we know that God is not the creator of any beings, but in and by Jesus Christ, by whom everything was made, that was made; so he is not the God of any people, but in and by Jesus Christ, who is the reconciler of all things unto God, by whom alone all things and persons are made acceptable to him; therefore if he is the God and Father of the gentiles, then the gentiles have an interest in Jesus Christ, have all their access to God, as their Father and creator, in and by the benefits and merits of Jesus Christ; or, in other words, are actual partakers of the benefits of Jesus Christ, as he is the savior of mankind. Which is a privilege or blessing that this author will not allow Christians to have, even when eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ; so little does he know what he speaks of, when he speaks of the partaking of the benefits of Christ. But you will perhaps further ask, how can the gentiles have an interest in the benefits of Jesus Christ, since they know him not, nor ask anything in his name. May you not as well ask me, how they can be said to live, and move, and have their being in God, who know not what it is to have life, and motion, and being in him, nor ever confessed it in a true manner, or under a right sense of it? For if they can have the benefit of a life in God, and be blessed by it, who are either totally, or much ignorant of it; then Christ, as he is the atonement and life of Adam and his posterity, may be a benefit and blessing to those who are totally ignorant of it, or at least know nothing of him, as he is Christ, or the Son of God manifest in the flesh.

Again, the scripture says of Jesus Christ, that he came unto his own, and his own received him not, that is, they knew him not: now if he could come unto his own, though they knew him not, then

it is plain, that they may be his, who know him not, that is, they may have some interest in him, be purchased by him, have received much from him, be greatly related to him, who yet are insensible of it.

Lastly, you might much better ask me, how can they, who never knew anything of Christ, as their mediator and atonement, be judged by him at the last day? For if they were altogether strangers to Christ, had no relation to him, had received nothing from him, or by means of him, he could not be their judge. For Jesus Christ cannot do anything as a judge, till he has done everything as a savior; nor be anywhere a judge, but where he has first appeared as a savior.

Therefore, it is an evident truth, that had not all nations, and every individual man, received a certain means of salvation through him, he could not be the judge of all.

Heathens, Jews, and Christians differ not thus, that the one have a savior and are in a redeemed state, and the other are not; or that the one have one savior, and the other have another; for the one judge of all, is the one savior of all: but they only differ in this, that one and the same savior is differently made known to them, and differently to be obtained by them. The heathens knew him not as he was in the numerous types of the Jewish Law, they knew him not as he is gloriously manifested in the gospel; but they knew him as he was the God of their hearts, manifesting himself by a light of the mind, by instincts of goodness, by a sensibility of guilt, by awakenings and warnings of conscience; and this was their gospel, which they received as truly and really in, and by, and through Jesus Christ as the Law and gospel were received through him.

Therefore it is a great and glorious truth, enough to turn every voice into a trumpet, and make heaven and earth ring with praises and hallelujahs to God, that Jesus Christ is the savior of all the world, and of every man of every nation, kindred and language. Therefore saith St. John, "They sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." {Revelation 4:9} And again, "After this I beheld," says he, "and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and with palms in their hands, and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." {Revelation 7:9-10}

I must, before I proceed further, put in here a word of caution to two sorts of readers. If you are in such a state, as I supposed one to be above, touched with modern infidelity, having your reason set upon the watch to guard you against the gospel, it may here do its office, and will perhaps tell you, that what I have here said in favor of the general light, or seed of life that is in all men, is much the same thing that you say in defense of natural reason, or religion, only with this difference, that I mention it as coming from Christ, and you consider it as the bare light of nature.

Now if this were all the difference, is not this enough to show you, that my opinion is the very denial of yours; for if I proved that what you called the natural light of men, was wholly derived from the divine revelation, would not that be a sufficient proof that I denied and disproved your religion of natural reason? And have I not done the same thing, if I have asserted the light of men to be a light derived from Christ? And how can such an assertion be made in the least favorable to your opinion, that such a light is natural? But to prevent all misapprehensions, I now declare to you, and

will show you in the most explicit manner, that that which I call the light of men, or the seed of life sown into all men by Jesus Christ, is as wholly different from that which you call natural reason, as light is different from darkness; and that they stand in that same state of contrariety to each other, both as to their original, their nature and qualities, as our savior and Pontius Pilate did.

I must therefore assure you, that as I fear God, and wish your salvation, so I can no more say a word in favor of what is now called the religion of natural reason, than I would recommend to you the ancient idolatry of heathens. And yet at the same time, I am no more an enemy to reason, than I am an enemy to the light of the sun, and as freely wish you all the benefits of the one, as of the other. But if you do by reason, as they did by the sun, who thought it to be divine, fell down before it, and expected all from it; then I must speak as plainly to you of the inability of reason to do you this good, as I must have spoken of the inability of the sun to such idolaters of it. And if I should have told them, that the sun was no more their God, than the poorest worm upon earth, and that it could no more make those to be divine that worshipped it, than a storm of hail could make those to be divine that it fell upon, I should have told them a great truth. So if I say to you, that reason, or the faculty of reasoning, is no more the religion of man, than the faculty of doubting or erring is; and that it can no more make those to be divine who place their trust in it, than a great error can make those to be divine who abide by it, I should tell you a great and useful truth. For reason, or a faculty of reasoning upon the moral habitudes and relations of things and persons, or upon the moral proportion of actions, has no more of the nature and power of religion in it, than so much reasoning upon the relations of squares and triangles. And if a man had this religion of reason only when he was dreaming in sleep, it would be the same good thing to him, as it is to those who make it their religion when they are awake. For the good of religion, is like the good of food and drink to an hungry and thirsty creature; and if instead of giving such a one bread and wine, or water, you should teach him to seek for relief, by attending to clear ideas of the nature of bread, of different ways of making it, and the relation it hath to water; he would be left to die in the want of sustenance, just as your religion of reasoning leaves the soul to perish in the want of religion. And as such a man would have no more benefit from such reasoning about the relation that bread had to water, whether it was the reasoning of a dream, or the reasoning of a man awake, because either way he was kept under the same want of that which was to preserve his life; so whether a man has your religion of reasoning only when he is asleep, or when he is awake, is the same thing; because either way he is kept under the same want of that which can alone preserve the life of the soul. For the good that is in religion, or the good that we want to receive by it, is no more within the reach of our reason, or to be communicated to us by it, than the good of food is in the reach of our reason, or can be communicated to us by it. And yet as a man may have the good of food much assisted and secured to him, by the right use of his reason, though reason has not the good of food in it; so a man may have the good of religion much assisted and secured to him by the right use of reason, though reason has not the good of religion in it. And as a man ought not to be accused as an enemy to the true use of reasoning about food, because he declares that reason is not food, nor can supply the place of it; so a man ought not to be accused as an enemy to the use of reasoning in religion, because he declares that reason is not religion, nor can supply the place of it. But to show you the bottom of this whole matter, pray consider with me as follows: We have no want of religion, but so far as we want to better our state in God, or so far as we are unpossessed of God, or less possessed of him than we might be. This is the true ground of religion, to alter our state of existence in God, and to have more of the divine nature or perfections

communicated to us. Nothing therefore is our good in religion, but that which alters our state of existence in God for the better, and puts us in possession of something of God, or makes us partakers of the divine nature in such a manner and degree as we wanted it.

Everything that is in life, has its degree of life in and from God, it lives, and moves, and has its being in God. This is as true of devils themselves, as of the highest and most perfect angels. Therefore all the happiness or misery of all creatures consists only in this, as they are more or less possessed of God, or as they differently partake of the divine nature, according to their different state of existence in God. But if this be the truth of the matter, (and who can deny it?) then we have the certainty of demonstration, that nothing can be our good in religion, but that which communicates to us something of God, or the divine nature, or that which betters our state and manner of existence in God. For if devils are what they are, because of their state and manner of existence in God; if blessed angels are what they are, because of their state and manner of existence in God; then it undeniably follows, that all that is betwixt angels and devils, all beings from the happiness of the one to the misery of the other, must and can have no other happiness or misery, but according to their state and manner of existence in God, or according as they have more or less of the state of angels, or the state of devils in them. Therefore nothing can be our good in religion, but that which alters our state and manner of existence in God, and renders us possessed of him in a different and better manner.

Now if you were to send to the fallen spirits of darkness, all the systems of your religion of reason, that have been published here, to let them know that they have the power of their own restoration and happiness within themselves, that they need seek to nothing, but their own natural reason and understanding, and the strength and activity of their own powers, to raise them to all the happiness they are capable of; such a religion would be so far from altering or mending their state of existence in God, or doing them any good, that it would add strength to all their chains; and the more firmly they believed and relied upon it, the more would they be confirmed and fixed in their separation from God. And yet, a religion that must necessarily keep them in hell, is the only religion that you will have to carry you to heaven. May God deliver you from this error! On the other hand, if you could infuse into those dark spirits a glimpse of that light of the mind, or instinct of goodness, which I have said all mankind have received from Jesus Christ, as their second Adam, their salvation would be so far begun, and hell would become a state of trial for their redemption. Therefore that light of the mind, or instinct of goodness, which I have spoken of, has the utmost contrariety to your religion of reason, that can possibly be imagined. The one is the beginning of the new birth in Christ, and the foundation of heaven; the other is the growth of death, and the very essence of hell in the soul. Now that here is no aggravation of the matter, but plain and naked truth, you may easily see from a consideration of the articles of your religion of reason. Your religion of reason, is a religion of natural strength and power, that rejects the necessity of a savior, that feels no want of him, that rejects the necessity of divine grace, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and feels no want of it; these are the essential parts of your religion of reason, which are in truth and reality the religion of hell, or that very state of mind which reigns and governs there. For could those miserable spirits renounce these articles of your religion, their chains of darkness would break off from them. Could they cast themselves down before God, humbly confessing, that of themselves they are not able to save themselves, or even to think a good thought: could they in humility and penitence beg of the mercy of God, to do something in them and for them, which they

cannot do for themselves: could they acknowledge the want of a savior, ask God to find one for them: could they feel and own the want of his Holy Spirit, and humbly beg of God to be assisted by it, a door of salvation would be opened to them. And yet you see that nothing opens this door, but the plain and full renunciation of every part of your religion of reason. And if it be asked, why they cannot be saved? no other reason can be given, but because they will not; they cannot renounce your religion of reason, that is, they cannot humbly acknowledge their own inability to do themselves good; they will not admit the thought of a savior, they will not be assisted by the Spirit of God, or own the want of his life in them, and therefore they are and must be what they are, prisoners in chains of darkness.

Awake therefore, my dear friend, and cast away this religion from you, with more earnestness than you would cast burning coals out of your bosom: for could it only destroy your body, I should have been less earnest in giving you notice of it. But as I have the fullest conviction, that it is the death and darkness of your soul, and is bringing the essence of hell secretly and invisibly into it; you must forgive me, if I use all the expressions and descriptions I can think of, to prevent your giving into it. Had I a superficial charity for you, or a slight view of the hurt you are doing to yourself, I should speak to you accordingly; but the depth and earnestness of my desire to do you good, must have expressions suitable to it. Study not therefore how to find fault with me, or to dislike the words, or manner of my style, for it is the style of love and zeal for your salvation; and if you condemn anything but love in it, you condemn something that is not there.

I have shown you, that the religion of reason is the very state of hellish minds, and that they are what they are, because they will do all for themselves, place all in their own strength, because they cannot be humble, cannot own the want of a savior; and have only appealed to this instance of the nature and power of your religion of reason, to show you in the most undeniable manner, that it must, and can have no other effect upon you, than it has upon them; that it must produce the same hell in your soul, the same separation from God, and cannot possibly be any more the way of salvation for you, than it is for them.

What is the reason that the faith of the devils, or their belief of a God, does them no good? It is because there is nothing in it but their own act, a mere product of their own; it is because it is an act of your religion of reason, that will have no virtue but by its own strength, and of its own growth. But if they could have so much of the religion of the gospel, as to say in the language of it, "Lord, help our unbelief," their faith would be changed, and be beneficial to them, only for this reason, because they had renounced your religion of doing good to themselves by their own natural powers.

Hence it sufficiently appears, that your way of natural reason cannot be the way of salvation; 1st, because the want of salvation is nothing else, but the wanting to have our state, or manner of existence in God, altered for the better; or to have something of God communicated to us, which we want and are capable of receiving. But if this is the nature of salvation, then no religion can save us, can do us our proper good, or supply our proper want, but that which has power to alter our state of existence in God, or to communicate to us that of God which we want, and are capable of. Therefore it follows, that nothing but that same God which created us, which gave us our state and manner of existence in him, and communicated to us that which we possess of him; nothing but that same God can redeem us, or help us to that state or manner of existence in him, which we

have lost, or are in want of. But if God alone can redeem us, and for the same reason that he alone can create; if creation and redemption necessarily require the same power, and must for the same reason be necessarily appropriated to God, because each of them equally imply the communication of something of God to us; then I suppose it may be granted, that the religion of reason, which is for saving ourselves by our own natural powers, is the greatest of all absurdities; as absurd as to suppose, that we can create by our own natural powers, because creation and redemption both of them equally imply a communication of something of the divine nature; and therefore he that cannot do the one, cannot do the other. And if a man was to ask himself, why he cannot be the savior of other people, as well as of himself? He could say nothing against the one, but what must for the same reason be said against the other. For if salvation is a communication of something of God to the person saved, then it is plain, that a man can no more do this for himself, than he can do it for another.

There never could have been any dispute about the possibility of saving ourselves, nor any pretense to save ourselves by our own natural faculties, had not men lost all true knowledge both of God and themselves. For this dispute cannot happen, till men suppose that God is some outward being, that our relation to him is an outward relation, that religion is an outward thing that passes between God and us, like terms of behavior between man and man; that sin hurts and separates us from God, only as a misdemeanor hurts and separates us from our prince; that an offended or angry God either gives or refuses pardon to us, as an angry prince does to his subjects; and that what he gives us, or forgives us, is something as distinct and different from himself, as when a prince sitting upon his throne gives or forgives something to an offender, that is an hundred miles from him.

Now all this is the same total ignorance of God, of what he is, of the relation we have to him, and the manner of his being our good, as when the old idolaters took men to be gods. And yet nothing is more plain, than that your religion of reason is wholly founded upon these gross and false notions of God. You have not an argument in its defense, but what supposes all these errors just mentioned; that our relation to God is an outward relation, like that of subjects to their prince, and that what we do to, and for God, as our service to him, is and must be done by our own power, as that which we do to, and for our prince, must be by our own power. And here lies the foundation of all your religion of reason and natural power, that if it was not sufficient to obtain for us all that we want of God, he must be less good than a good earthly prince, who requires no more of us, than that which we have a natural strength to do, or can do by our own power. And yet this error appears to have all the grossness of idolatry, as soon as you suppose, that God is no outward separate being, but that we are what we are, have what we have, can do that which we can do, because he has brought us to this state of life, power and existence in himself, because he has made us, so far as we are made partakers or possessors of his own nature, and has communicated to us so much of himself; or, in the words of scripture, because in him we live, move, and have our being, and consequently have no life, motion or being out of him. For from this state of our existence in God, it necessarily follows, first, that by the nature of our creation we are only put into a capacity of receiving good: a creature as such, can be in no other state; it is as impossible for him to enrich himself, or communicate more good to himself, as it was to create himself. 2dly, that nothing but God himself can do us any good. 3dly, that God cannot do us good, but by the communication of himself in some manner to us. For hence it evidently follows, that

your religion of reason, which supposes that we have natural powers that can put us in possession of that, which we want to be possessed of in God, or that we need no more divine assistance to recover what we have lost of God, than to obtain a pardon from a prince; or that God need communicate no more of himself to us in our salvation, than a prince communicates of himself to his pardoned subject, has all the mistakes, error and ignorance of God that is in idolatry, when it takes God to be something that he is not; and has all the false devotion that is in idolatry, when it puts the same trust in, and expects the same help from its own powers and faculties, which idolaters did in and from their idols.

Therefore your religion of reason, which you esteem as the modern refinement of an human mind, and more excellent and rational than the faith and humility of the gospel, has all the dregs of the heathen idolatry in it, and has changed nothing in idolatry, but the idol; but has the same mistakes of the nature of God, and of the manner in which he is our God, and our good, as those idolaters had; and only differs from them in such a degree of philosophy, as the religion of worshipping the sun differs from the religion of worshipping an onion. And if you expect that divine assistance from your reason, which one did from the sun, and another from an onion; ye are all equally idolaters, though ye may not be equally philosophers. For as soon as it is known and confessed, that God is all in all, that in him we live, move, and have our being; that we can have nothing separately or out of him, but everything in him; that we can have no being, nor any degree of being, nor any degree of good but in him; and that he can give us nothing but himself, nor any degree of salvation, but in such a degree as he communicates something more of himself; as soon as this is known, then it is known with the utmost evidence, that to put our trust in the sun, an onion, or our own reason, if not equally absurd, is yet equally idolatrous, and equally prejudicial to our salvation. This I think, my friend, may sufficiently show you both the nature and danger of your religion of reason; and that it can no more supply the needs and necessities of your soul, than an idol can save them that worshipped it; that in this respect it has the insignificancy of an idol, the vanity of an idol, and the sin of an idol; that it is that same self-confidence, self-acquiescence, that same refusal of a savior and all divine assistance, that keeps lost spirits the prisoners of hell. Could they touch the spirit of the gospel, their freedom would be begun; and because they will not, cannot depart in the smallest tittle from your religion of natural strength, their chains are unmovable. For no soul can be lost, that can truly humble itself before God, and apply to his mercy to be helped, saved, and redeemed in such a manner as it shall please him. Let it be hid, or buried, or imprisoned where it will, hell and earth, death and darkness, and everything must give way to the soul thus converted to God, that has no confidence in itself, that sees nothing of its own but sin, and that desires and calls upon God to save it by some miracle of his own mercy and goodness. By this sensibility of the want of a savior, and by this humble conversion and application to God for him, all chains are broken off, all wounds are healed, and the soul must infallibly find, if it thus continues to seek, its salvation in the unknown depths and riches of the divine mercy. On the other hand, no soul, however refined and speculative, however lofty and aspiring in its imaginations, spiritual in its conceptions, or deep in its penetration, can possibly be saved, that trusts in its own strength and ability, and will have no other savior or redeemer, but its own natural reason and faculties. The whole universe has not two truths of greater certainty than these. And yet if they are truths, and truths of the utmost certainty, then the absolute necessity of the gospel salvation, and utter impossibility of being saved by your religion of reason, has its final decision.

Further, that principle of life, or light of the mind, which I have said that every man receives from Jesus Christ, as the beginning of his salvation, is entirely different from your magnified light of reason, as that signifies a faculty of viewing the relations of the ideas of things, and drawing consequences from them. For that light I speak of, is goodness itself, a seed or degree of so much of the heavenly life in the soul; but this faculty of speculating and reasoning has nothing of the nature of goodness or religion; it has not so much as the shadow of it, and is in its own nature as foreign from religion, when it is speculating upon it, as when it is speculating upon anything else. Just as our faculty of seeing has no more of goodness, or the nature of an angel in it, when it sees the picture of an angel, than when it sees the picture of a beast. And as a blind man has no more light in him, when he reasons about light and colors, than when he discourses about weights and measures; so this ratiocination, or reasoning of the mind, has no more of religion in it, when it speculates its ideas of God, goodness and morality, than when it speculates its ideas of trees and houses. And the reason is plain, because this faculty of speculating and arguing, is only the activity of the mind upon its own images and ideas, and is only the same bare activity, whatever the images be that exercise it; it has nothing of the nature of the images that it views, nor gets the nature of them, because it views them; as it does not become dark when it considers the nature, causes, and effects of darkness, nor becomes light when it reasons about it; so neither is it religion, nor gets anything of the nature of religion, when it is wholly taken up in making descriptions and definitions of it.

If the needle touched with the loadstone was an intelligent being, it could reason and make definitions of itself, of attraction, and of the loadstone; but it would be easy to see, that the attraction of the needle, or the virtue of the loadstone that was left in it, was something in its whole nature really different from this reasoning about it; and that this reasoning and defining had no relation to this attraction, nor would ever be the more like it, for its reasoning upon it, though it continued ever so long, or improved ever so much in its descriptions of it, but would always be at the same distance from it, and could have nothing of its nature in it. But now if this reasoning faculty in the needle should pretend, that the needle need not be drawn by an inward attraction, that it need not be unfixed, or delivered from any outward impediments of its turning to the loadstone, because this reasoning faculty was its true and proper attraction, being full of ideas and definitions of it; you would then have a plain example of your practice, in taking natural reason to be true religion, and to have the nature and power of something that carries the soul to God. For this instance is a clear explication of the whole matter; for that which I have called the first redemption of Christ in the soul, a seed of life, an instinct of good, a stirring of conscience, an attraction to God, is that to the soul, which attraction is to the needle that is touched, and is as different from your religion of reason, as a reasoning faculty in the needle would be different from its attraction, and never could be attraction, or have the nature of it.

If the needle loses its attraction, its communication with the loadstone is at an end; and though it reasons never so long about it, it is still at the same distance from it. So if the soul loses its instinct of goodness, its seed of a divine life, its attraction to God, all its reasonings and definitions about God and goodness are of no use to carry it to God, but it must lie in an absolute state of separation from him, if its attraction, its inward tendency to God, is lost. And let me tell you, my dear friend, for so I must call you and think of you, that there is much more in this instance than you imagine. For all is magnetism, all is sentiment, instinct, and attraction, and the freedom of the will has the

government of it. There is nothing in the universe but magnetism, and the impediments of it. For as all things come from God, and all things have something of God and goodness in them, so all things have magnetical effects and instincts both towards God and one another. This is the life, the force, the power, the nature of everything, and hence everything has all that is really good or evil in it; reason stands only as a busybody, as an idle spectator of all this, and has only an imaginary power over it.

We discover this magnetism in some things, where it breaks out sensibly; but it is everywhere, for the same reason that it is anywhere, though we are too busy with the fictions of our own minds to see it, or too much employed in such things as resist and suppress its force. But because this magnetism is a secret life, that wants to increase its strength before it can sensibly show its power; and because we have an activity of reason within us, that is soon in action, and concerns itself with everything, and takes all upon it, as if it did all; because it can look at all, and dispute about all, therefore it is, that this magnetism, or instinct towards God and goodness, has much difficulty to show itself sufficiently, and only stirs now and then within us, or when sickness, distress, or some great outward shock has so dashed in pieces all images of reason, and stopped the activity of our minds, that this secret power of the soul has liberty to awake in it. This is that trumpet of God which will raise and separate the dead, and then all impediments being removed, everything will take its place not according to the images and ideas it has here played with, but according to the inward tendency and attraction of its nature, and heaven and hell will each take its own. And even whilst we are in this life, this magnetism is the mark within us, to what part we belong; and that which has its attraction in us, has the right to us, and power over us, though for a while flesh and blood, and the nature of our temporal state, hinders this from being visibly and sensibly known.

Nothing however is more plain, than that our goodness bears no proportion to our intellectual abilities of reason; everyone sees this, and yet no more than this need be seen, to give us the fullest demonstration, that natural reason has no connection with virtue and goodness, and therefore surely can have no connection with our salvation, or be the proper cause of it.

Hence we see, that learned, acute, rational philosophers are often atheists; and those that can demonstrate the foundation of virtue, and paint every office of it, are rakes and debauchees, and will sell every appearance of practical virtue for a salary of so much a year; whilst those that seem to have little of intellectual accomplishments, are virtuous and honest, have a taste and relish for every practical virtue. The natural love or affection of relations, bears no proportion to our rational abilities to speak or write of them. A parent that is of too refined an understanding to content himself with the morals of the gospel, or its low way of making men good, and that wants to be entertained with a virtue of more mathematical exactness, is often content with the demonstration, and so remains deficient in the plainest duties of domestic affection: when the poor laborer or mechanic, that knows not what you mean by a definition, has all the solid love and affection that becomes a good relation. All this, and much more, which you and everyone may think for himself of the same kind, is something entirely distinct from our natural faculties of reason and speculation. And therefore, when you place the power of your salvation in your intellectual light, or the strength of your own reason, you place it in your weakest part, in the poorest, most trifling and insignificant thing that belongs to you, and upon that which has the least effect in human life. The only good that reason can do to you, is to remove the impediments of virtue, and to give room to

that inward instinct or attraction to God and goodness to display itself; that the inmost spirit of your mind may receive its strength and assistance from the Spirit of God, from which, as the needle from the loadstone, it has all its instinct of goodness and tendency towards God. For this inward instinct of goodness, or life of God in the soul, is all the real and living goodness that is in you, and is as different and distinct from natural reason, as the light, and heat, and power and virtue of the sun, is different from a picture of it upon a piece of canvas, and has as different effects upon the mind. For this light of bare reason, or the reasoning faculty of the mind, has no contrariety to the vices of the heart, it neither kills them, nor is killed by them. As pride, vanity, hypocrisy, envy or malice, don't take away from the mind its geometrical skill; so a man may be most mathematical in his demonstrations of the religion of reason, when he has extinguished every good sentiment of his heart, and be the most zealous for its excellency and sufficiency, when he has his passions in the most disordered state. But in that light of the heart, or attraction to God, which I have said is common to all mankind in and through Jesus Christ, all is contrary. As it is a gift and grace of God, so it is a real life, a living thing, a sentiment of the heart, and so far as it grows and increases in us, so far it destroys all that is bad and corrupt within us. It has the same contrariety to all vices of the heart, that light has to darkness, and must either suppress or be suppressed by them.

Now when I speak of this light, or instinct of the heart, or attraction to God, I have not only the authority of scripture, but every man's own experience on my side; that distinction between the head and the heart, which everyone knows how to make, plainly declares for all I have said. It shows that the state, and manner, and tendency of our heart, is all that is good within us; and that the reasonings and speculations of the head, are only an empty show and noise that is made in the outside of us. For that which we mean by the heart, plainly speaks thus much; it is a kind of life and motion within us, which everyone knows contains all that is good or bad in us; that we are that which our hearts are, let us talk, and reason, and dispute what we will about goodness and virtue; and that this state of our heart is as distinct from, and independent of all speculations of our reasoning faculties, as it is distinct from, and independent of all the languages in which a scholar can reason and speculate upon it. And if a man should say, that the excellency and sufficiency of natural religion consisted in knowing all the languages in which virtue, goodness and religion are expressed by different sounds and characters, he would have said as much truth, and as well grounded, as he who places the excellency and sufficiency of natural religion in the many arguments and demonstrations which reason can raise about it. For all reasoning and speculation stand on the outside of the heart, in the same superficial manner as all languages do. For our heart is our manner of existence, or the state in which we feel ourselves to be; it is an inward life, a vital sensibility, which contains our manner of feeling what and how we are; it is the state of our desires and tendencies, of inwardly seeing, hearing, tasting, relishing and feeling that which passes within us: it is that to us inwardly with regard to ourselves, which our senses of seeing, hearing, feeling &c., are, with regard to things that are without, or external to us.

Now as reason is a poor, superficial, and insignificant thing with respect to our outward senses, unable to add anything to our hearing and seeing, &c., or to be the true power and life of them, by all its speculations and reasonings upon them; so it is much more a poor, and superficial, and insignificant thing with respect to the inward sensibility of the heart, or its seeing, feeling, &c., and much more unable to add to, or amend the state of the heart, or become the life and power of its motions, by its arguings about them. And therefore, to seek for the religion or perfection of the

heart in the power of our reason, is more groundless and absurd, and against the nature of things, than to seek for the perfection and strength of our senses in the power of our reason.

Now I appeal to every man in the world for the truth of all this; for every man has the fullest inward conviction, that his heart is not his reason, nor his reason his heart, but that the one is as different from the other in its whole nature, as pain, and joy, and desire, are different from definitions of them; and that as a thousand definitions of joy and desire, will not become that desire and joy itself; so a thousand definitions of religion will not become religion itself, but be always in the same state of distance from it; and that all reasoning and speculations upon religion, are at the same state of distance from the nature and power of religion, as speculations upon our passions are from the nature and power of them.

You know, not by hearsay, reasoning, or books, but by an inward sentiment, that your reason can be very nicely religious, very strict in its descriptions of goodness, at the same time that the heart is a mere libertine, sunk into the very dregs of corruption: on the other hand, you know, that when your reason is debauched with arguments, is contending for profaneness, and seems full of proof that piety is superstition, your heart at the same time has a virtue in it, that secretly dissents from all that you say.

Now all this proof that the state of reason is not the state of your heart, is the same proof that reason is not the power or strength of our religion, because what our heart is, that is our religion; what belongs to our heart, that belongs to our religion; which never had nor can have any other nature, power, or perfection, than that which is the nature, power, and perfection of our heart.

You are forced to know and feel, whether you will or no, that God has a certain secret power within you, which is watching every opportunity of saying something to you, either of yourself, the vanity of the world, or the guilt and consequences of sin. This is that instinct of goodness, attraction of God, or witness of himself in the soul of every man, which without arguments and reasonings rises up in the soul, and would be doing some good to it, if not quenched and resisted by the noise and hurry either of pleasures or business. And this is everyone's natural religion, or call to God and goodness, which is faithful to every man, and is the only foundation of all the virtue and goodness that shall be brought forth in him. And the least stirring of this inward principle, or power of life, is of more value than all the activity of our reason, which is only as it were a painter of dead images, which leave the heart in the same state of death, and emptiness of all goodness in which they find it.

Therefore, my dear friend, know the place of your religion, turn inwards, listen to the voice of grace, the instinct of God that speaks and moves within you; and instead of forming dead and lifeless images, let your heart pray to God, that all that is good and holy in him, may touch, and stir, and revive all that is capable of goodness and holiness in you. Your heart wants nothing but God, and nothing but your heart can receive him. This is the only place and seat of religion, and of all communication between God and you.

We are apt to consider conscience only as some working of our heart, that checks us, and so we are rather afraid, than fond of it. But if we looked upon it as it really is, so much of God within us, revealing himself within us, so much of a heavenly life, that is striving to raise us from the dead, we should love and adhere to it, as our happy guide to heaven. For this reason, I have called this

spark of life, or instinct of goodness, our inward redeemer; not only because it is the only thing within, that helps forward our salvation, but also because it is the first beginning of Christ's redemption in the souls of all men, by his becoming the atonement for all. And as it is the first step of Christ's redemption in the soul, and that which became their capacity of salvation; so the progress of their redemption consists in the increase and growth of this first seed of life, till the new man be wholly raised up by it.

Lastly, another real difference between this instinct of goodness, or piety of the heart, and your religion of reason, is this, that natural reason in itself is incapable of Jesus Christ; it cannot comprehend him, it is at enmity with him, and sets itself up against him. For it feels no want of a savior, and therefore is unwilling to receive one. Or if it were to admit of a savior, it must be only such a one as came to increase the number of its images and ideas, or to help it to be more active and artful in the ranging, dividing and distinguishing them. And for this reason it is, that a book of ideas and distinctions is more valued by some people, than all the salvation that is offered in the gospel. But this natural religion or instinct of goodness, of which I have spoken, as God's free gift to all men in Jesus Christ, has that natural fitness for the receiving of Christ, as the eye has for receiving the light; it wants him, it desires him, it is for him, it knows him, it rejoices in him, as the eye wants, desires, knows, and rejoices in him, as the eye wants, desires, knows, and rejoices in the light. And of this natural religion, or religion of the heart, does our savior plainly speak, when he saith, "He that is of God heareth God's Word," and again, "My sheep hear my voice." Therefore this instinct of goodness, or piety of the heart, though it is God's gift to man before his hearing the outward word, is yet a certain preparation for it; and if it be brought forth in us, is a never-failing fitness to receive it. Therefore he that has this natural religion of the heart, of which I have spoken, has the greatest fitness to receive the gospel, he is so of God, that he heareth God's Word, such a sheep of Christ as knoweth his voice. And therefore the receiving, or not receiving the gospel, is the greatest of all demonstrations, whether a man hath, or hath not that right religion that is antecedent to it.

Natural religion, when rightly understood, is a real thing, and of the same truth as revealed religion. But the mistake lies here, in our taking natural religion to be the work or effect of natural reason; whereas reason, or our faculty of reasoning upon our ideas, is not a part of natural or revealed religion, but only a bare spectator of its own images of natural and revealed religion, just as it is not a part of our hearing and seeing; nor can come any nearer to them, than as it is a bare spectator of its own images of them.

All men, by virtue of God's first pardon to Adam, are put into a state of salvation; and as this state, though it is the free gift of God, is common to all men, as men, or born of Adam; so it may in a good sense be called their natural state, and the religion of this state, their natural religion.

Now the question is, What is the natural religion of this state? It is that which his state and condition speaks to him. Now his condition and state in the world plainly speaks thus much to him, that he is a sinner, and yet in a state of favor with God, or in a possibility of being accepted of him. Every man's nature teaches him thus much, with the same certainty that it teaches him, that he is weak and mortal. That he is a sinner, and at the same time an object of divine mercy, are things that are made known to him, not by arguments or speculation, but by his own being what he is.

Therefore the whole of natural religion consists in a man's following this voice of nature, and acting conformably to it; in acknowledging the sinfulness of his state, and in imploring and relying upon the divine mercy to be delivered from it. This is the whole truth of natural religion; an humble penitent sense of sin, and an humble faith and trust in the mercy of God to be delivered from it; though it is not known by what name to call that deliverance, or what kind of savior is wanted to effect it. But he that thus according to the direction of his natural state lives before God, in penitence, and in faith in his mercy, is sure of having the benefit of all the mercy of God, though he does not know the method, or the means, by which the mercy of God will save him. So that true, natural religion and revealed religion agree in these two great and essential points, that man is in a state of sin, and yet in a state of acceptance with God through his mercy; therefore the piety of the one, is the piety of the other, viz., a penitent sense of sin, and a humble faith and trust in God to be delivered from it by his mercy. And here you may again see, why this natural religion is to be considered, not as a matter of reason, but as an instinct of goodness, or piety of the heart; because it is nothing else but so much goodness, not in idea, but in the very inward essence of the soul, as distinguishes and preserves it both from beasts and fallen spirits. Had a man no sense of shame for his sins, he would be in the very state of the beasts; had he no faith and hope in the mercy of God, he would be in the state of the devils. Therefore that internal sentiment of heart, that instinct of goodness, is his only true religion of nature, because it is thus the preservation of his nature, and the saving him from being like to beasts and fallen spirits.

Reason therefore, as it is a faculty of speculating and comparing ideas, has no more share in this religion of nature, than it has a share in our natural powers of hearing and seeing; and as it can only in a little way, and in certain circumstances, do some outward service to these senses, so it can only in the same little and low way help and assist this religion of nature by some outward services. And as this instinct of goodness, or inward sentiment of the heart, is that alone which preserves our nature, and therefore is alone the true religion, or salvation of nature; so the whole of all revealed religion is to improve this true religion of nature in its two essential parts, penitence for sin, and faith and trust in the mercy of God. For all revealed religion has only this end, it teaches nothing, intends nothing, but to give us more reasons for penitence, and more reasons for faith and trust in the mercy of God. And therefore it was that I said, this instinct of good, or true religion of nature, is the very preparation of the heart for the reception of the gospel. For so much as there is of this penitence and faith living in the soul, so much it has of eyes to see, of ears to hear, and of a heart to understand all the truths of divine revelation. The humility and penitence of the gospel, the mercies of God in and through Jesus Christ, are as agreeable to a man in this state of heart, as food and water to the hungry and thirsty soul. The gospel presents everything to him that he wants; and God is thereby become all that to him, which the miserable state of his soul stood in need of. And so when he finds the gospel, he finds the pearl, for which he gladly sells all that he hath.

Therefore a man can have no greater proof that the religion of nature is suppressed in him, that he has not the religion of penitence and faith, than by his refusal of the gospel; for the gospel as naturally agrees with such a state of heart, as light mixes with light, and darkness with darkness.

Lay the cause of infidelity where you will, it is a certain truth, that it lies only in this insensibility of heart, in this extinction of the religion of nature. And if the least sentiment of penitence arises in your heart, or a sensibility of the need of divine mercy, the gospel has got so far an entrance into

you, and it cannot lose its hold of you, but by your losing this state of heart.

Let your reason pretend what it will, and fancy it has ever so many objections of speculation and argument against the gospel, they are all objections of the heart. For the gospel speaks only to the heart, and nothing but the heart can either receive or reject it. For this is an eternal truth, which you cannot too much reflect upon, that reason always follows the state of the heart, and what your heart is, that is your reason. If your heart is full of sentiments of penitence, and of faith in the divine mercy, your reason will take part with your heart, and will entertain itself with all arguments, ideas, and discourses, that can exercise this religion of the heart. But if your heart is shut up in death and dryness, your reason will be according to it, a poor quibbler in words, and dead images, and will delight in nothing but such dry objections and speculations as answer to the deadness and insensibility of your heart. So what you imagine, of your having a religion of pure reason, is the merest fiction of deceit that can be imposed upon you; for reason has nothing of its own, it acts nothing of itself, it barely reflects that which comes from the heart, as the servant of the heart, and must act or not act in obedience to it; what the heart loves, that reason contends for; and what the heart has no inclination to, that reason objects against. Therefore there neither is, nor was, nor ever can be any other religion but the religion of the heart, and reason is only its servant, in the same manner, and in the same degree, whatever the religion of the heart be, whether true or false. And to imagine that natural religion is the effect of pure reason and speculation, is as great an error against the nature of things, and more hurtful to you, than to imagine that natural hearing and seeing is the effect of reason and speculation.

Natural religion, if you understand it rightly, is a most excellent thing, it is a right sentiment of heart, it is so much goodness in the heart, it is its sensibility both of its separation from, and its relation to God; and therefore it shows itself in nothing but in a penitential sentiment of the weight of its sins, and in an humble recourse by faith to the mercy of God. Call but this the religion of nature, and then the more you esteem it, the better; for you cannot wish well to it, without bringing it to the gospel state of perfection. For the religion of the gospel is this religion of penitence, and faith in the mercy of God, brought forth into its full perfection. For the gospel calls you to nothing, but to know, and understand, and practice a full and real penitence, and to know by faith, such heights and depths of the divine mercy towards you, as the religion of nature had only some little uncertain glimmerings of. Therefore there is the same agreement, and the same difference between the true religion of nature, and the religion of the gospel, that there is between the breaking of the day, and the rising of the sun to its meridian height; the one is the beginning, and the other is the perfection of the same thing. And as the light of the daybreak, and the light of the noonday, are both the same light, and from the same producer of light; so the light of the religion of nature, and the light of the gospel, are the same light, and from the same producer of light in the mind.

If you only stood for some time in the first break of day, sensible of the misery of darkness, and only feeling some hope and expectation of the light, yet knowing nothing of that globe of fire that afterwards was to appear, and bless you with so many unknown and unhoped for joys and comforts of the noonday light, you would then resemble one standing for some time in the daybreak of natural religion, sensible of the weight of his sins, and only hoping in God for some kind of mercy towards him; yet knowing nothing of that globe of fire, that mystery of divine love that was by degrees to discover itself, and bless him with so many unknown, unhoped-for joys and comforts of the divine mercy towards him. The original instinct of goodness in the soul, which I

have shown to be the only religion of nature, is the light of daybreak in the soul, and is that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The light of the gospel is that noontday light, which discovers such joys and comforts as no one could have thought of, that had only stood in the break of day. And as no one, when the day arises, can reject or dispute the coming or goodness of the rising sun, but because he has lost that sense which was to distinguish light from darkness; so no one can reject or dislike, or dispute against the light of the gospel, but he that has extinguished that instinct of goodness in his soul, which alone can distinguish good from evil, and make him love the one, and reject the other.

Don't therefore, my dear friend, deceive yourself, nor let anyone else deceive you. The matter is of infinite consequence that you have before you. You come into the world but once, and have but one trial, but the effects of it are to last for ever. The time of disputing and speculating upon ideas is short; it can last no longer than whilst the sun of this world can refresh your flesh and blood, and so keep the soul from knowing its own depth, or what has been growing in it. But when this is over, then you must know and feel what it is to have a nature as deep, and strong, and large as eternity.

If you have lived upon the amusements of reason and speculation, your life has been worse than a dream, and your soul will, at the end of such a life, be left to itself in its own darkness, hunger, thirst, and anxiety, to be for ever devoured by its own fire. But if you have watched over that instinct of goodness which God planted in your soul, and have exercised yourself in that penitence for your sins, and humble faith in the mercy of God, that the gospel proposes to you; then when your body falls off from you, you will feel and know what a kingdom of God lay hid in your soul, you will see that you have a life and strength like that of eternity, and the fullness of God himself will be your everlasting enjoyment. For heaven and hell stand ready to awake and be revealed in you, and can no longer be hid from you, than whilst you are under the cover of flesh and blood. And then will be fully verified in you that saying of scripture, "he that seeketh findeth": for you will find that which you have sought, and according to your faith, so will it eternally be done unto you. Your soul will have nothing taken from it, but it will have all that good which you sought after, and provided for it. You chose to be saved only by the powers of your own reason, and refused the mercy of God that was to have saved you, and therefore you will have that very salvation you have chosen, you will be entirely without the mercy of God, and left wholly to your own nature: and that salvation is the misery of hell.

You are now your own carver, and must be that which you shall have made of yourself. If the depth of your heart has not in this lifetime its proper cure; if it has not something done to it, which your reason can no more do, than it can create the light, your heart will become your hell. And if you let the light of the gospel shine into it, and revive the good seed of life in it, then it will become the seat and habitation of your heaven.

You may perhaps imagine, that because you practice sobriety and justice, and are a friend to moral behavior, both in yourself and other people, that therefore your disbelief of the gospel cannot proceed from the disorder of your heart, or a want of piety. But this, sir, is all mistake. For you may have all this moral behavior, and yet have nothing at all of that sentiment of penitence, and faith in the divine mercy, which I have shown to be the only true religion of nature. It is as easy to have all this kind of goodness which you appeal to, as it is to be civil, well-bred, and a friend to the peace and order of that society of which one is a member. Even an atheist may find his ends,

and act suitably to his own principles of self-love, ease and reputation, by this moral behavior. But the preaching of the gospel discovers all, and shows from what principle all this morality proceeds. If there was this sentiment of penitence and faith in the mercy of God at the bottom, then this morality would want and rejoice at the precepts and doctrines of the gospel, because they raise a morality built upon the foundation of penitence and faith. But when this morality is only a worldly wisdom, a convenience of life, a political conformity, and as mere a gratification of selfishness, as any other worldly accomplishments are, then this morality is in the greatest enmity with the gospel, because the gospel takes away its worth, and all the self-accomplishment that was placed in it.

Therefore it is not the mere moral man that has that goodness of the heart, that is a qualification to receive the gospel: for an atheist may be such a moral man; but it is he, whose heart is in a state of penitence for his sins, and humbly looking to the mercy of God to be some way or other delivered from them. This is the only foundation of a religious morality, and this is that state of heart which must be wanting in every moralist that refuses the gospel.

Hence therefore it is plain, that you may have a great deal of morality in your behavior, and yet nothing of the religion of nature in your heart, and so be entirely unqualified to receive the gospel, because of the disorder of your heart. For the morality of an unreformed heart, adds no more goodness to it, than whited sepulchers do to the rottenness of dead men's bones.

What I say I say not to reproach you, but from a sincere desire of doing you all the good that I can. For I have too much experience myself of the weakness and mistakes of human nature, to reproach any degree of them in other people. But if you will take in good part what is well meant, I hope you will find that I have been your friend in discovering the bottom of your disorder. But it may be you will say, you would believe the gospel if you could, but that its evidence cannot have that effect upon your mind. You may say also, the gospel is a matter of fact; you must examine into the truth of it, as you do into the truth of other matters of history; and as both the internal and external evidence of the gospel is much defended and opposed by learned men, its evidence is so perplexed, and made a matter of such laborious and intricate enquiry, that your mind cannot come at any certainty of what you ought to believe concerning the truth of it.

I will therefore propose to you the shortest, and at the same time the surest of all methods, and such as you shall either be obliged to acquiesce in as sufficient, or to own that you have suppressed that instinct of goodness within you, which I have shown to be the original birthright of all mankind, and to be the only state of heart that saves us from being a mere mixture of the beasts and the devils.

I don't recommend to you to lay aside prejudice, and begin again the controversy from the bottom, and read all on both sides with all the impartiality you can. I would as soon send you on a pilgrimage, to be a penitent, as propose to you this travel to be a Christian. The truth of the gospel lies much nearer to us than we imagine, and we only dispute and wrangle ourselves into a distance from it. Do you think that you need many books to show you that you are a sinner, that you have the disorder of almost all the beasts within you; that you have besides this, such passions and tempers of pride, envy, selfishness and malice, as would make you shun the sight of other people, if they could see all that passes within you? Need any learning instruct you, that at the same time that you have all these disorders, both of the beasts and evil spirits within you, you have a great desire to seem to be without them, and are affecting continually to have, and appear

in those very virtues which you feel the want of? When you are full of hatred and envy, you affect to be thought good and good-natured, when proud, to appear as humble.

Now I desire you to know no books, but this book of your own heart, nor to be well read in any controversy but in that which passes within you, in order to know the gospel to be the greatest of all truths, and the infallible voice of God speaking the way of salvation to you. No echo answers to the voice that raises it, so certainly and agreeably as the voice of nature or the state of your own heart answers to that which the gospel preaches unto you. And this I will show you to be the shortest and surest of all methods to discover the truth of the gospel. The gospel is built on these two pillars, first, that you are a fallen: secondly, that you are a redeemed creature. Now every man's own soul, and what daily passes within him, speaks these two great truths to him, with a conviction and sensibility that cannot be avoided.

You have seen, and you feel, and know that you are a sinner, that you have the disorders of the beasts, and the depravity of evil spirits within you. Is not this saying to you, not in the sound of words, but by the frame and voice of your nature, that you are a fallen creature, and not in that state in which a good being must have created you? For I appeal to yourself, in your own degree of goodness, if you could create your own children, whether you would not create them in a better state, and with less evil, both of the beast and the devil, in them, than that in which you were born yourself?

Therefore, only supposing God to have your degree of goodness, he could not have created the first man, from whom your nature is derived, in the state that you are; and therefore supposing him only to be good, you have a sufficient proof; but supposing him to be infinitely good, or goodness itself, you have an infallible demonstration written in the frame of your nature, that you are a fallen creature, or not in that state in which God created you.

Again, do you want any learning, or books, or reasoning, to show you, that every man, as well as yourself, affects to appear virtuous, to have good qualities, and is ashamed of every beastly and diabolical disorder; and would seem to have virtues and goodness that he has not, because of an innate love that he has for them, and from a sense of their being proper for him? And is not this saying again with the same fullness of certainty, that you are a redeemed creature, that there is in you an inward redeemer, a light of the mind, a seed of goodness, an instinct to virtue, given you by God, though without revelation you don't know when nor how? And is not this such an evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, and of its fitness to save your soul, as not only needs not the assistance of foreign books and learning, but is also sufficient to support itself against all the books and learning in the world that should oppose it? Can any echo answer better to the voice that raises it, than the voice of your nature answers to the sound of the gospel? And do you not hereby plainly see, that you stand nearer to the truth of the Christian religion, than you do to anything else? It is only the description of that which passes within you. It is the book of yourself, it talks of nothing out of you, it speaks but that which is written within you, and therefore you have a sufficient help to understand it. To look for outward testimonies, is like looking for yourself abroad; turn but your eyes inward, and you have no need of miracles to show you, that Jesus Christ came from that God that made you, and that he teaches you the only way to find that perfection and happiness for which he made you.

What can the gospel say to you of the fall of man, that your heart does not feel to be true? What can it say to you of your redemption, that is not at the same time said to you by the state of your own soul? For if you were not fallen, how could you labor under so much corruption? A sinful creature cannot come from God in its sinful state. And, on the other hand, if you were not redeemed, how could you feel a dislike of sin, an inclination to goodness, and a desire of appearing virtuous? For what else is this desire of goodness, but a certain inward principle that has begun your redemption, and is trying to carry it on?

Now the Christian religion says nothing to you; it has not one doctrine, or practice, or institution, but what has its immediate relation to these two great truths, and is, for the sake of them, either to convince you of your fall, or to assist your redemption.

Now if a revelation from God had only told you, that you had a mixture of evil and good in you, could you have any doubt about the truth of such a revelation? Or if it told you that the evil came from the fault of your first parents, and the good was God's free gift to you at their fall, that the evil might be resisted and suppressed; if it told you, that God had a desire, and a design in the depths of his mercy, to assist the good that was in you, that it might conquer and put an entire end to all the evil of your nature, would you ask for proofs of the goodness of such a revelation, or of its being worthy of God, and suitable to your own needs?

Now the Christian religion is this revelation. It tells you only this great truth, that you are fallen and redeemed, that is, that you have a mixture of evil and good in you; it tells you that God, as early as the fall, redeemed you, when the seed of the woman became the enemy of the serpent; that is, as soon as the evil came into you, he of his free gift put a good power into you to withstand it; it tells you, that from the beginning of the world, it has been God's gracious desire and design in and by Jesus Christ to render your redemption effectual, that is, to make the good that is in you perfectly overcome all your evil.

Complain therefore no more of want of evidence; neither books, nor study, nor learning is wanted; the gospel is within you, and you are its evidence; it is preached into you in your own bosom, and everything within you is a proof of the truth of it.

Ask how you shall know there is such a thing as day and night; for the fall and redemption are as manifest within you, as day and night are manifest without you.

Here, sir, in this intimate and true knowledge of yourself lies the most precious evidence of the gospel, and is as near to you, as you are to yourself; because all that is said and declared, and recorded in the gospel, is only a plain record of that which is said and done, and doing in yourself. And when you once feel it thus proved to you, by its agreement with the state of your own nature, then it becomes a pearl that is dearer to you than your life; and what is best, it is then a pearl which no one can rob you of. You are then in such assurance and possession of the power and goodness of Christ, as those blind men were, whose eyes he had opened to see the light.

Then all the wrangle and dispute of learned men against the truth of the gospel, will signify no more to you, nor raise any more doubt in you, than if by history and criticism they would prove, that you never had any benefit from the light of the sun.

If you go only outwardly to work, and seek only for an outward proof of the truth of the gospel, you can only know it by such labors, and in such uncertainty as you know other matters of history, and must be always balancing what is said for, and against it. And if you come to believe it this way, your faith will be held by an uncertain tenure, you will be alarmed at every new attack, and frightened at every new enemy that pretends to lessen the evidence of the gospel. But these, sir, are difficulties that we make to ourselves, by neglecting the proper evidence of the gospel, and choosing only to know it, as we know other histories that have no relation to us, or connection with our own state. The gospel is not a history of something that was done and past 1700 years ago, or of a redemption that was then present, and only to be transmitted to posterity as a matter of history; but it is the declaration of a redeemer, and a redeeming power that is always in its redeeming state, and equally present to every man.

We all stand as near to the reasons and motives for receiving the gospel, as they did to whom it was first preached. No one then did, or could receive Jesus Christ when he was on earth, but for the same reasons, that the sick, the lame, and the blind, sought to him to be cured, namely, because they felt their infirmities, and wanted to be relieved from them. But if this state of heart, or their insensibility of their condition, of what they were, and what they wanted, was then the only possible reason they could have for receiving Christ; then it follows, that every man of every age, has all the reasons for receiving or not receiving the gospel within himself, and stands just as near to and just as far from the evidence of it, as those did who first heard it.

If you know of no burden or weight of sin, nor want any assistance to overcome it, the gospel has no evidence for you; and though you had stood by our savior, you had been never the nearer to it. But if you know your state, as the sick, the lame, and the blind knew their state; if you groan under the power of sin, and are looking towards God for some assistance to overcome it, then you have all the reasons for receiving the gospel written in your heart, and you stand as near all its proper evidence, whether you were born the last age, or 1700 years ago.

Now if you don't know and feel, that the gospel has this foundation in you, that you have that fall and redemption in you that it teaches, then all external evidence of it can be of no use to you, because you are not the person that wants such a salvation. But if you know that these two things are written in the frame of your nature, that evil and good, or the fall and the redemption, are at strife within you, and that you want some divine assistance to help you to overcome the evil that is in you; then the gospel needs no external evidence, because your heart is a witness of all the truth of it. For you are then only doing that in a lower degree, which the gospel teaches and enables you to do in a more perfect and prevailing manner.

Further, if you have only that instinct of goodness in you, which I have shown to be the only religion of nature; if you have a desire to act suitably to this state of your heart, this struggle of evil and good that is in you, and are weary of your sins, and desirous to be delivered from them, then you are fully prepared to love, admire, and receive all the precepts of the gospel, because they have no end, but to do that which you want and desire to have done in you; that is, to suppress the power of evil in you, to destroy the old man, or the first life of your corrupt nature, and to raise the new man, or principle of goodness that is in you, to its full state of strength and perfection. And here you have the shortest and surest of all methods, to find both the truth and excellency, and necessity of the gospel method of salvation.

I put no labor or deep enquiry upon your hands; I desire you only to know, what you cannot help knowing, that you have good and evil alive, and at work in you. For this is the whole of the fall of Adam, and of the redemption of Jesus Christ. Say that you have no evil in you, and I will not desire you to believe the fall of Adam. Say that you have no sense of goodness in you, and I will not desire you to acknowledge the redemption through Jesus Christ. But if neither of these can be denied to be in you, if your own heart confesses these two things; how can you want a proof of the truth of that religion, which only tells you that which your own heart is a witness of?

Again, say that you have no instinct of goodness in you, that you have no dislike of the corruption of your nature, nor the smallest desire to be free from it, and then I will excuse your ignorance of the truth and fitness of the precepts of the gospel. But if you will but own so much of natural religion, as to be at all troubled at your sins, or but secretly wish that God would some way or other help you to get the better of them; then you are under a necessity of seeing and knowing that the precepts of the gospel are highly suited to the state of your soul, to assist this degree of natural religion in you, and to help you to that conquest over sin which you want. So that from this plain and easy knowledge of yourself, you are absolutely obliged either to deny the most known state of your heart, and to deny that you have any degree, or desire of goodness in you; or to own the gospel to have everything in it, both as to doctrine and precept, that strictly answers to the state and necessities, and good inclinations of your heart. And therefore the proof of the gospel is at no distance from you, requires no labor of learning, or search of history, but arises from the most obvious knowledge of yourself, what you are, and what you want. And you may have the utmost assurance, that you cannot hurt or deceive yourself in this short method that I have recommended. For if you cannot be hurt or deceived in believing yourself to be a sinner, and yet to be in a state that admits of the divine mercy to you, then you are sure that you cannot have any hurt or deceit put upon you by the gospel; because it is to do nothing to you, you are to receive nothing from it, but a confirmation of your penitence, and a strengthening your faith in the mercy of God.

Understand all the gospel in this manner, and then you understand it according to the truth, as it is in itself. For there is not a doctrine or precept of the gospel, but is given you for this end; to perfect your penitence, to show you all the grounds, and reasons, and extent of it, and to confirm, increase, and exercise your faith in the mercy of God, by such a discovery of God, and his goodness towards you, as without the gospel could not have been known. So then, if you know the religion of nature, the religion of penitence and faith, to be a true and good religion; if the proof of the truth and goodness of this religion lies within you, then the proof of the truth and goodness of the gospel is in the same degree of nearness to you, and you cannot but know it in the same manner and degree as you know yourself, what you are, and what you want.

Thus much may serve to convince my unbelieving reader, if I have such a one, whom I would fain lead to God, that I have said nothing in favor of a modern religion of reason; which I have shown to have the vanity, insignificancy, and sin of the ancient idolatry in it, and to be that very confidence in natural strength, and hardness of heart, which keeps fallen angels prisoners of darkness.

I must now say a word to the zealous Christian, who may perhaps imagine, from what I have said of that inward light, which is the gift of God to all men in Jesus Christ, that I have brought this light too near to the advantageous state of revealed religion, whether Jewish or Christian. To such a one I say, first, that what I have said of this light of the mind, or instinct of goodness common to all

men, is so much said of the light and benefit of divine revelation. Because this light of the mind, or instinct of goodness, is not something independent of, and antecedent to all divine revelation, but was the effect of God's revealing himself as reconciled to Adam through the seed of the woman. God's pardoning Adam as the head and representative of all mankind, and giving him a mediator and redeemer, was putting him into a state and capacity of being renewed in his mind; and this renewing power, which God then by pardoning him bestowed upon him, is that instinct of goodness, or light of the mind, of which I have spoken. And therefore all the possibility of religion, and all that is good in it, is to be ascribed to divine revelation.

Secondly, what I have said of this common light, or piety of the heart, is only to signify, that they have a possibility of such good dispositions as belong to those, of whom it is said, "He that is of God, heareth God's Word"; and of such as Christ spoke, when he said, "My sheep hear my voice."

Now if there were not a possibility or capacity of this degree of goodness in men, distinct from all outward revelation, how could mankind be fit for God to make a revelation to? For if men could not be in this state of goodness, so as to be prepared or qualified hearers of the Word of God, why should God speak to them? Or why should the voice of Christ be sounded, if there were no sheep that could know it? Therefore what I have said of this light of men, is only so much said of their capacity to receive divine revelation; it is only a glimmering of light, a seed of goodness, a possibility of piety, which lies only in the soul, as the beginning of its salvation, and therefore is in great want of, and must be much benefited by further revelations from God.

I have not considered it as a species of religion that may trust in itself, or set up itself against divine revelation, as having no need of it. When it is thus, it is not the religion I speak of, it is so far from being then the light of Christ in the soul, or the instinct of goodness that it had from him, that it is the darkness and depravity of the heart, and the foundation of that hell which will be at last manifested in it.

Lastly, if my zealous Christian should find it a disagreeable thought to him, to think that all mankind have had some benefit from Christ, and that the seed of the woman from the beginning has helped, and will to the end of the world help and call every man to resist and make war against the serpent; I must tell him, he need have no greater proof than this, that his own heart is not yet truly Christian, that he is not a true disciple of that Lord who would have all men to be saved.

Having said this much to guard against all misapprehension, either by the unbeliever, or the Christian, I now return to my subject, concerning the benefits of Christ, as he is the savior of mankind.

Now this great truth that I have already declared, namely, that all mankind were pardoned and redeemed in Adam's pardon and redemption; that at the fall, Jesus Christ became the second Adam, or parent of all mankind, who from him received a principle or seed of life, an instinct of goodness, which was to be in every man a beginning of a new birth, a possibility of his salvation, or receiving a new man from this second Adam, in the same reality as he received a natural life from the first Adam; this great and glorious truth is of great importance when rightly known, and is the key to all the mysteries of scripture; it leads you into the fullness of the greatest truths, and disperses all difficulties. This free gift of God to all men, in thus making all men partakers of Christ's redemption, by a seed of life, which all men, as men, receive from Christ, is the true and

solid meaning of that which is called preventing grace, and which, when rightly spoken of, is said to be common to all men. It is grace, because it is God's free gift; we could not lay hold of it by any power of our own, nor had any right to claim it. It is preventing grace, because it prevents, or goes before, and is not given us for anything that we have done. And therefore it has its plain distinction from God's assisting grace, which always is in proportion to the nature of our actions, and only works as they work. Hence there is a full end of all the wretched disputes of an abominable election and reprobation, and of other disputes concerning the grace of God. For if all men, as sons of Adam, are by the free gift of God made sons of the second Adam, and, as such have a principle or seed of life in them from him, in order to be raised up to a perfection of the new man in Jesus Christ; and if this seed of life, or instinct of goodness, or light of the mind, is the general preventing grace of all men, that enables them so to act as to obtain God's assisting grace in the renewal of their minds; then you must easily see, that all men have a general call and a general capacity to obtain their salvation, and that the doctrine of particular absolute election and reprobation is plucked up by the roots, and most of the difficulties of God's dispensation fairly solved. But this is by the by.

Now you must have observed that this general grace, or redemption, of life given to all men in Christ as their second Adam, is not done only by an outward teaching, as when one teaches another the way of a new life, or by an outward adoption, as when a person takes a stranger to be his son; but by the communication of an essential seed or principle of life from the second Adam to all the sons of the first Adam. From which seed or principle of life, every son of Adam has Christ for his spiritual father and parent in the same reality, as he had the first Adam for his natural parent. For this reason, the change that religion aims at, is constantly represented as a new birth, and our progress in religion as our progress in regeneration, or being born again. We are not called upon only to change our notions, or to receive such an alteration, as scholars may receive from their teachers, but to die to ourselves, that a new life may be raised up in us; or to suffer something to be revived in us that is not of our own growth, or any change that we can make upon ourselves.

Thus says our Lord, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." {John 3:5} And to show that this new birth is to be understood according to the literal truth of the expression, there is added, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Therefore the birth of the spirit is as real as the birth of the flesh, and Christ is a principle of life to us, as surely as we derive our flesh from Adam.

Again, "The first Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit." {1 Corinthians 15:45} That is, the first Adam was made to be a fountain, or original, of a natural life to men, the second Adam was made a reviver or parent of a spiritual life in men. Therefore the spiritual life derived from the second Adam, is in the same degree of reality, as the natural life derived from the first Adam. The apostle adds, "The first is of the earth, earthy; the second is the Lord from heaven. And as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."

Therefore those that are related to Christ, have his heavenly life and nature in them, in the same reality as those that are related to Adam have his earthy nature in them. "And as we have borne the image of the earthy, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Therefore, as we bear

the image of the first Adam, by having his nature and life in us, derived, from him; so we can only bear the image of the second, by having his nature and life in us, derived from him. So that it is an undoubted truth, that Christ is our second Adam, or a raiser of a new birth and life in us, in the same reality as we have our natural birth and life from Adam. Hence it is that you see so much mention in scripture of Christ's being in us, formed in us, revealed in us, of our putting on Christ, of our receiving life from him, as the branches from the vine. Hence also so much mention of a new and old man that is in us, and the whole of religion represented as a contest betwixt this twofold man that is in us, the one from the first, the other from the second Adam. The knowledge of this great truth, that Christ is our second Adam, as mentioned above, renders all the most mysterious, and seemingly hard passages of scripture, not only plainly intelligible, but full of a most affecting sense. Thus when it is said, that Christ must be formed in us, and that "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," &c. {Ephesians 5:30} all this, and the like, is highly intelligible, as soon as it is known, that Christ is the parent of a spiritual man in us, in the same reality, as Adam is the parent of our natural life.

Thus also when Christ saith, "Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." And again, "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." {John 6:35} And again, "Whosoever shall drink the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst: but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." {John 4:14} And again, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die." {John 11:25}

Now if Jesus Christ had been only a teacher of morality, how unaccountable must all this language have been? But as soon as it is known that he is a spiritual parent, or principle of life to us, in the same reality as we derive our flesh and blood from Adam, and that this life lieth in us as a seed, which is to be brought forth to the fullness of its stature by faith in Christ, then all these passages have a meaning that is plainly intelligible, yet never to be exhausted, but is always suited to the state and progress of the reader. For if Christ is a principle of life to us, and this life is drawn into, or formed in us by means of our faith; then how justly are we said to eat Christ as the bread of life, to eat his flesh and drink his blood, &c., when by faith we draw him into us, as our principle of life? For what can express the nature of this faith, so well as hunger and thirst? Or how can it be a real faith, unless it have much of the nature of hunger, or a strong desire, and ardent thirst?

Therefore all these expressions are as literally suited to the nature of the thing, to that which Christ is to us, as human words can be, and are not a language adapted to our reason, to increase its ideas; but are the language of heaven to the heavenly part of us, and are only to excite, direct, and confirm our faith in Christ, or to raise, increase, and exercise our hunger, thirst, and desire of the new birth of Christ in our soul. But this author knowing nothing of this doctrine, is forced to deny the most precious truths of scripture. Thus all that our savior says of himself in the sixth of St. John, of his flesh being "meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed," and of the necessity of eating and drinking it, to have eternal life in us; all this, says this author, "was only a very high figurative representation to the Jews then about him, of their duty and obligation to receive into their hearts, and digest his whole doctrine, as the food and life of their souls." {Page 100.}

Therefore, according to this author, Christ is our life, in no other meaning or sense, than any other person who teaches us any doctrine that may do us good, and we have no life from him any other

way, than we may have from any teacher of useful truths. And therefore what he says of himself, of his being the life of the world, has just as much truth in it, as if any of the apostles had said the same things of themselves. Nay, had Socrates, or Plato, or anybody else, preached the same gospel that our savior has done, there had been just the same meaning, and neither more nor less in it than in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

St. John saith, "Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is anti-Christ that denieth the Father and the Son." {1 John 2:22}

Now surely the Son could not be mentioned with the Father, as an equal object of our faith and acknowledgement, if he could not in reality be said to be our life in such a sense, as the Father may be said to be our God, not by a very high or strong figure of speech, but in truth and reality. The scriptures tell us that Jesus Christ is the "Word that was with God," and "was that God by whom all things were made." {John 1:3} "That by him all things were created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible, and that in him all things consist." {Colossians 1:16} {Sic, but should be Colossians 1:17}

Must not this author be here obliged to have recourse to much higher and stronger figures of speech, to account for the meaning of these expressions? For if there is anything in the nature of our savior, to support the literal meaning and truth of these expressions, then it must not only be groundless, but absolutely false, to say, that we can only be said to dwell in him, or have our life from him, by a very high or strong figure of speech. For surely, if all things both in heaven and earth are created by him, if "in him all things consist," then it may be said without any strong figure, that he is our life, and that we "dwell in him, and he in us," in the same reality, as we are said to "live, and move, and have our being in God." For if this creator becomes our redeemer, we may be said to receive life from him, to be new-born, or created again by him, in the same reality and fullness of truth, as we can be said to be created by him at first. When therefore this author saith, "We may be said (by a strong figure of speech) to dwell in him, and he in us; to be one with Christ, and Christ with us," that is, that "Christ and we, to all the intents and purposes of true religion, shall be in perfect friendship and union together": it is the same barefaced denial of the gospel, the same direct blasphemy against God, as to affirm, that God can only by a strong figure of speech, be said to be our life, our "creator, in whom we live, and move, and have our being." It is the same blasphemy as to affirm, that we have no relation to, or dependence upon God, or existence in him, but such as any party of people, whether at court, or the exchange, have with one another, when they are to all the intents and purposes of their party interest, in perfect friendship and union together. But to return: from this doctrine of Christ's being a principle of life, or parent of a new birth in us, we may see the plain reason, why the scripture describes a Christian as a creature or instrument of the Holy Spirit, and entirely animated by it, so far as he is truly Christian. Because as Christianity consists in the birth of a new man within us, it must needs have a Spirit and breath as suitable to it, as the spirit and air of this world is suitable to a life of flesh and blood. And as every thought and motion of our outward man must be in, and by the assistance of the spirit, and air of this outward world: so every thought, and motion, and desire of our inward spiritual man, must be in, and by the assistance of the Spirit, and air of that world, whose creature it is.

Now, was there not as really this new spiritual man within us, in the same reality of existence, as our outward rational nature, there could be no foundation for this doctrine of the necessity of God's

Holy Spirit. Nor could the scripture account of the guidance of that Holy Spirit be at all intelligible, upon this supposition, that we had nothing more in us, but our outward rational nature.

Thus when it is said, "No one can call Jesus the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit": how could this be intelligible, or have any truth in it, if there were not a principle in us, a spiritual man, distinct from our rational nature? For our rational nature can as well call Jesus Lord, as it can call anyone else Lord, or as Judas said, "Hail master."

Therefore since man in his natural state, and by his powers as a rational man, cannot truly call Jesus Lord, it follows, that he has a spiritual nature or principle in him, entirely distinct from his rational nature, and which receiving its life and power from the Spirit of God, has alone the power of owning, knowing, and receiving Jesus Christ as Lord.

St. Paul saith, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. Now if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." {Romans 8:9} And again; "Now we have received not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." {1 Corinthians 2:12}

Therefore there is a spiritual life, or man within us, by which alone we have our communication with God, and which is so distinct and different from our natural, rational man, that they are of a nature contrary to each other. The one is by nature fitted to receive, and know the things of the Spirit of God; the other has a nature that cannot know, nor receive them. This is not to be understood, as if the natural man could not understand the words of scripture, as other words are to be understood, for he can reason and discourse as well upon scripture, and the things of the Spirit of God, as upon other matters.

Neither are we to take him that is able to discern things spiritually, to be only such a one whose faculty of reasoning is assisted by the Holy Spirit. For this does not make the spiritual man here spoken of. No, the subject of the Holy Spirit, or that which {it?} operates upon in us, is not our reasoning faculty, it no more assists our reason in this manner, than it assists our eyes to read a difficult print, or our ears to hear sounds more distinctly. For as the Holy Spirit is holiness itself, or the life and power of holiness, so it operates only in the manner of itself, and only upon that part of us, which has its own nature, or a real agreement with it. Therefore the spiritual man that is animated, enlightened and guided by the Holy Spirit, is that vital instinct of goodness, that spark of life, of which I have spoken so much, and which shows itself in an inward sentiment of the weight of sin, and in an inward sentiment of hope and conversion to the mercy of God. This is the beginning, or foundation, or seed of that spiritual man, for whom the scriptures are written, to whom they speak, and who alone has a capacity to be animated, moved, and governed by the Holy Spirit. And therefore it is, that our savior saith so often, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Meaning only this inward state of sensibility of the heart. He is so far from saying, according to modern learning, he that hath clear ideas, that has accustomed himself to reason, and distinguish about them; he that can speculate impartially, and search into the nature of things, actions and persons, by comparing the ideas of them; let such a one so prepared, draw near to the kingdom of heaven; he is so far from saying anything like this, that he rejects it all as the burden and darkness of the heart and says, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye

cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But you will perhaps say, If the scriptures are not proposed to our reason, if reason is not the subject or faculty of religion in us; is not this the same as to say, that the scriptures and religion are proposed to the unreasonable part of us; is it not saying, that we must neglect or suppress that which is most excellent in us, in order to be religious?

You shall see reason possessed of all that belongs to it, and yet religion set up in a better place.

I will grant you much more than you imagine in respect of reason; I will grant it to have as great a share in the good things of religion, as it has in the good things of this life; that it can assist the soul, just as it can assist the body; that it has the same power and virtue in the spiritual world that it has in the natural world; that it can communicate to us as much of the one as in the other. Can you ask more?

Now man considered as a member of this world, that is to have his share in the good that is in it, is a sensible and a rational creature; that is, he has a certain number of senses, as seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching, by which he is sensible of that which the outward world, in which he is placed, can do to him, or communicate to him, he is sensible of what kind and degree of happiness he can have from it; besides these organs of sense, he has a power or faculty of reasoning upon the ideas which he has received by these senses.

Now how is it, that this world, or the good things of this world are communicated to man? How is he put in possession of them? To what part of him are they proposed? Are his senses or his reason the means of his having so much as he has, or can have from this world?

Now here you must degrade reason, just as much as it is degraded by religion. And as we say, that the good things of scripture and religion are not proposed to our reason; so you must say, that the good things of this world are not proposed to our reason. And as St. Paul says, the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, because they are spiritually discerned; so you must also say, the rational man cannot receive the things of this world, because they are to be sensibly received, that is, by the organs of sense.

Thus must you necessarily set reason as low, with respect to the things of this world, as it is set with respect to the things of the spiritual world. It is no more the means of communicating the good things of the one, than of communicating the good things of the other.

It stands in the same incapacity in one world, as in the other. For everyone knows, that we know no more, can receive no more, can possess no more of anything that is communicable to us from this world, than what we know, receive and possess by our senses, or that sensible capacity that is in us, of having something communicated to us by the world. Sounds are only proposed to our ears, light our eyes; nothing is communicated to our reason; no part of the world hath any communication with it. Reason therefore has no higher office or power in the things of this world, than in the things of religion. The world is only so far known, received and possessed, as we receive and possess it by our senses. And reason stands by, as an impotent spectator, only beholding and speculating upon its own ideas and notions of what has passed between the world and the sensible part of the soul. And as this is the state of man in this world, where he receives all the good he can receive from it, by a sensibility of his nature, entirely distinct from his faculty of reasoning; so is it his state with regard to the spiritual world, where he stands only capable of receiving the invisible good things of it, by a sensibility of his nature, or such a capacity as lets the

spiritual world into him, in the manner as the natural is let into him in this life. Religion therefore does no more violence to your reason, or rejects it in any other way, than as all the good things of this life reject it. It is not seeing, it is not hearing, it is not tasting and feeling the things of this life, it can supply the place of no one of these senses. Now it is only thus helpless and useless in religion; it is neither seeing, nor hearing, tasting nor feeling of spiritual things; therefore in the things of religion, and in the things of this world, it has one and the same insignificancy. So that the things of the Spirit of God belong not to reason, cannot be known and received by it, for the same reason, that the good things of this world belong not to reason, and cannot be known and received by it.

It is the sensibility of the soul that must receive what this world can communicate to it; it is the sensibility of the soul that must receive what God can communicate to it. Reason may follow after in either case, and view through its own glass what is done, but it can do no more.

Now the sensibility of the soul, which is its capacity for divine communications, or for the operation of God's Holy Spirit upon it, consists in an inward sentiment of the weight and disorder of sin, and in an inward sentiment of hope and conversion to the mercy of God. This is the first seed of life, sown into the soul when Adam was redeemed; and it is this seed of life, or sensibility, that the Holy Spirit of God acts upon, moves and quickens, and enlightens; and to this it is, that all that is said in the scripture is addressed. Nothing but this sensibility, or state of heart, has eyes to see, or ears to hear the things of the Spirit of God.

Reason may be here of the same service to us, as it may be when we want any of the enjoyments of this life. It may take away a cover from our eyes, or open our window-shutters, when we want the light, but it can do no more towards seeing, than to make way for the light to act upon our eyes. This is all its office and ability in the good things of religion, it may remove that which hinders the sensibility of the soul, or prevents the divine light's acting upon it, but it can do no more.

Hence you may judge of the following passage of the Plain Account, "We may be sure we are pleasing God, whilst we are obeying the command of his Son." "But in this particular instance of our duty, we can with reason go no further, I say with reason; because the benefits received from all such performances by reasonable creatures, cannot possibly be received in but a reasonable way. These duties, how well soever performed, cannot be supposed to operate as charms; nor to influence us, as if we were only clock-work, or machines, to be acted upon by the arbitrary force of a superior being."

Now all this is in direct contradiction to the nature and state of man in this world. For no good thing of this world, no power or virtue in the whole system of beings that surround us, can possibly be communicated to our reason, or by the way of our reason. Whatever the world communicates to us of its power and virtue must be communicated to the sensibility of our nature, to that part of us which is as distinct from our reasoning faculty, as seeing the light is distinct from a conjecture about the nature of it.

Now let us suppose a man to stand in this world, only with his rational nature, or faculty of reasoning, but destitute of the sensibility of his nature, or the organs of sense; what would all this world, or all the good of it signify to him? If he was to receive nothing but the way of reason, would it not be the same thing as to say, that he was to receive nothing from it?

Now this is the state that this author would have you be in, with relation to God, and the spiritual world. No power, or virtue, or influence of God, or the spiritual world, is to be communicated to you, but by the way of reason, and you are to stand with relation to all the riches and powers, and virtues of God, and the spiritual world, in the same state as he stands in this world, who is to know and feel, and possess no more of it, than he can know, and feel, and possess by way of reason, without any one sense. Therefore it is plain, that this author desires all communication from God to you, to be as much at an end, as all communication from this world must be at an end, if you had not one sense left.

I have just supposed a man to stand in this world, without all sensibility of nature, endued only with a faculty of reasoning; let it now be supposed, that you had a power to awaken a sensibility of nature in him, and to help him to all those senses that are common to man. Would you say, this must by no means be done? Would you say, that you must keep off this sensibility of nature, that you might preserve him a free agent? And that if the light and heat of the sun, the virtues and powers of the world, should operate upon him in any other manner than by the way of reason, he would be turned from a rational creature, into a mere machine and clock-work.

Now this is the way that this author would preserve you a free agent, with relation to God, and the spiritual world: he will not allow you to have any senses, that he may preserve your reason. For if God, or the spiritual world, could do that to you, which this outward world can do to a man that has his senses; if God should communicate any good to you, as the sun communicates its light and good influence without the assistance of your reason, and only by making you sensible of them, you are undone, the freedom and rationality of your nature is lost, and you are turned into clock-work.

Let me ask this rational man, who is so great an enemy to all that is not done in a rational way, whether he feels no attachment to the world, and his interest in it; whether he pursues it no further, and has no sensibility of its power over him, but just so much as pure reason and the light of the gospel raise in him; whether he has no self-love, no family-love, no party-love, no ambition, no pride, no sensuality, but what is weighed out to him by arguments and motives of pure reason, enlightened by the letter of the gospel? Now if there is something of those tempers in him, arising from some secret power that is working in him, that has not all its life and working from pure reason, will he therefore say, that he is a mere machine, that he has no liberty left, that he is no longer a rational creature; now if a degree of goodness should steal upon him this way, without consulting his reason, if he should find a heavenly love, a purity of heart, an attraction to God, a desire of holiness, a poverty of spirit, a contempt of the world, a sensibility of the greatness of eternal things, stirring and awakened in him in a greater degree than ever he intended to have them by his own reason, would he be obliged to cry out, that his reasonable soul was undone, that he had lost the rationality of his nature, was become a machine, because such a sense of God and goodness had got entrance into him without consulting his reason? And if God is as ready to operate upon our souls, and to manifest his power and presence in them, when we give way to it, as the world and the devil are when we leave an entrance for them, has a preacher of the gospel any authority from thence, to reproach this divine assistance, as "communications and impressions from above, which leave the mind in a state satisfied with what carries no rational satisfaction in it"? For however this author may please himself with thinking that his mind is free from communications and impressions from above, and satisfied only with such things as carry a

rational satisfaction in them; yet it is an eternal immutable truth, founded in the nature of things, that no soul can enjoy any degree of good whatsoever, but by a communication or impression of something upon it.

Every creature, as such, is by the necessity of nature, in a state of poverty and want, and may be defined to be only a capacity to receive so much good as shall be communicated to it, or impressed upon it. Were not this the state of our souls, it would not be the state of our bodies; and as the body stands in this world in poverty and want, only capable of being fed, nourished, comforted and blessed by communications and impressions from the things that surround it, so the soul stands in the same poverty and want in the spiritual world, and only capable of being nourished, comforted, and blessed by communications and impressions from God. So that this author's satisfaction which he has chosen for himself, a satisfaction purely rational, or by way of his reason, instead of divine impressions, is the choice of a man in a dream, that knows nothing of the nature of God, or of his soul, or of the state and nature of things. For the satisfaction of every being, from the highest angel to the lowest of human creatures, is all sensible, and wholly seated in the sensibility of their nature. This is as certain, as that a child has no rational satisfaction; for no man ever was satisfied or dissatisfied for any other reason, or upon any other account, than as a child is satisfied or dissatisfied, namely, according as its senses, or the sensibility of its nature, has or has not that which is agreeable to it. For nature shows what it is in a child, and does not become another thing in a grown man. The child has no cunning or fraud, and therefore he plainly owns what he wants and cries for it.

Grown men are under the same sensibility of nature, want only what the child wanted, viz., to have their senses gratified, but they have the cunning not to own it, and the fraud to pretend something else. And thus it must be with every human creature. He must be governed by this sensibility of his nature, must be happy or unhappy, according as his senses are gratified, till such time as he is born again from above, till the new birth has awakened another sensibility in him, and opened a way for divine communications and impressions to have more effect upon him, than the things of this world have upon his natural senses. For no created being whatever, can any moment of time be free from communications and impressions of some kind or other; if it is not governed by communications and impressions from above, it is certainly governed by communications and impressions from below. The needle that is touched with the loadstone, does not then begin to be under the power of attraction, for it was under the power of attraction from the earth before. And if it loses the attraction of the loadstone, it does not cease to be attracted by something else. The soul that is touched with an impression from God, does not then begin to be under the power of something that acts upon it, for the world and the devil, or the nature of those things that surround it, attract it, and act upon it. For as it has something of the nature of everything in it, so the whole nature of things as continually act upon it by impressions, as the sun acts upon everything that has anything of the nature of the sun in it.

Now the freedom of the will, is not a freedom from communications and impressions, but is only a liberty of choosing to be made happy, either by yielding ourselves up to the attraction or operation of God upon us, or to be miserable, by yielding ourselves up to the impressions of the world, and sensible things.

There is no middle way; if we reject or make ourselves incapable of impressions from God, we are the machines and clockwork of this sensible world.

Two men born blind may talk and dispute about receiving light in a rational way, and think it ought only to be received by their reason, or in conformity to its power of speculating; as soon as their eyes are opened, they both see that reason was a fool, and that light can only act upon them by way of impression upon the sensibility of their nature.

It is so far therefore from being a dangerous delusion to expect, desire, believe, and pray for communications and impressions from above, by means of the holy sacrament, that it is as right and sound a faith, and as beneficial to the soul, as to believe that the goodness of God's providence is in everything, and that everything is blessed by his power and presence in it to the faithful receiver.

All the perfections of God have some kind of similitude or resemblance of their power in the perfections of the sun, which refresh our animal and rational nature by continual communications and impressions upon it, as the perfections of God communicate and impress themselves upon the inmost spirit of our souls. And he that would have his animal rational nature comforted and refreshed only in a rational way, without communications and impressions from the sun, would be just such a pleader for reason, as he that would have religious satisfaction only in a rational way, without communications and impressions from above. For the impressions from God are more necessary and essential to the pious life of the soul, than the impressions of the sun are to the comfortable life of our outward rational man. And he that prays for nothing else but these divine communications and impressions, who thinks of nothing else, desires nothing else, trusts in nothing else, as able to comfort, strengthen, and enrich his soul: he that is thus, all prayer, all love, all desire, and all faith, in these communications and impressions from above, is just in the same state of sobriety, as he that only prays that God would not leave him to himself. For he that is without anything of these communications and impressions of God upon him, is in the same state of death and separation from God as the devils are. And to turn men from the faith and love, and desire of these divine impressions, is to lay the ax to the root of religion, and is as direct a way to atheism, as to teach them, as Epicurus did, that God is afar off. For a God without any communications and impressions upon us, a God afar off, are equally atheistical tenets, equally destructive of all piety. The one opinion is the same denial of God as the other. And when men have once lost all sense of the necessity of being inwardly, invisibly, and secretly supported, assisted, guided, and blessed by communications and impressions of God upon their souls, it signifies not much what religion they profess, or for what reason they profess it, whether they have the reason of Epicurus, or Hobbs, or this author. For a religion has no good of religion in it, but so far as it introduces the life, power, and presence of God into the soul. For there is nothing good even in heaven itself, but the fullness of divine communications and impressions; no wretchedness in hell, but what arises from an entire cessation of them; and this life has no possibility of being changed into a heavenly life, but so far as it is capable of divine communications and impressions. For as the sun is the light of this world, only by communications and impressions of his light upon all objects, according to their capacity to receive it; so God is the God of all his creatures, only by communications and impressions of his life, and power, and presence upon all his creatures, according to their capacity to receive them. And therefore to discredit and ridicule the desire, hunger, faith, and expectation of divine communications and impressions in all acts and parts of

religion, is to teach men to unite religion with atheism, and to make their very acts of religion, a renunciation of, and departure from God. Had this author openly and plainly said with Epicurus, God is afar off, the atheism had been plain and apparent, and confessed by all; and yet he has said more than this; for to say that we are without all communications and impressions of God upon us, for this reason, because they would make us machines and clock-work, and could give us no rational satisfaction, is not only saying that God is afar off, but that he ought and must continue to be so, if we are not to be machines, and lose the rationality of our nature. So that according to this author's doctrine, rational and free agents are not only to believe with Epicurus, but also ought to rejoice that God is afar off, and to desire, for the sake of the rationality of their nature, that he may always be at the same distance from them.

Hence it is, that this author is, as Epicurus was, forced to invent a summum bonum, or chief good for man, exclusive of the enjoyment of God. Thus says he, "The highest good of mortal man, is the uniform practice of morality, chosen by ourselves, as our happiness here, and our unspeakable reward hereafter." For as Epicurus was forced to place the highest good of man in his philosophical garden, because he had separated the gods from men, and placed them apart by themselves; so this author having rejected all divine communications and impressions upon us, as having no rational satisfaction in them, as making us machines and clock-work, was forced to invent a highest good for mortal man, both here and hereafter, that has nothing of good in it.

Epicurus therefore and this parochial minister of the gospel agree in this: first, that they place the highest good, or happiness of man, in something that is exclusive of God. Secondly, that they place it in something that they can do for themselves. The church, of which this author says he is a minister, sings every day, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God, heaven and earth are full of thy majesty and glory"; but according to him, it sings of something that is no part of its happiness, either here or hereafter. The gospel, of which he pretends to be a preacher, brings the glad tidings of a savior, and salvation to all mankind; but he preaches a highest good of mortal man, that has nothing of this savior or salvation in it.

Jesus Christ says, "Except a man be born again of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." That, "as the Father raises up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." {John 5:21} And "that to as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." Who "were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." {John 1:12} Again, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. If any man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The apostle saith, "Giving thanks unto the Father, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, in whom we have redemption through his blood."

Now had a Celsus, or a Porphyry, or any modern adversary of the gospel, a mind to show their utmost detestation and abhorrence of these doctrines, of a birth of the Spirit, a birth of God, a quickening savior, a life in him and through him, a redemption through his blood, a translation into his kingdom, of our asking and receiving all through him, of his Father's and his abode in us, had they the greatest desire to persuade all people that all this was a groundless fiction, without the least truth, or reasonableness in it, need they declare any more, or desire any more to be believed

than this, "That the highest good of man, is the uniform practice of morality, chosen by ourselves, as our happiness here, and our unspeakable reward hereafter"? For is not this the same thing as to say, all the doctrines of the gospel savior and salvation, of a new birth, of the Spirit of God, of redemption through Christ, of righteousness in him, of entering into his kingdom, are absolutely false? For it is the same total denial of all the Christian method of salvation, as to say, that we have our happiness or highest good both here and hereafter from Epicurus. For the salvation, and happiness, and eternal life which we receive through Jesus Christ, is equally denied and rejected as false, whether you place our highest good in what we can do for ourselves, or in what Epicurus can do for us. The scripture saith, "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." {Romans 6:23} And again, "He that hath the Son, hath life; and he who hath not the Son, hath not life." {1 John 5:12} Again, "By grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." {Ephesians 2:8.} And again, "If Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins": And, "as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." And again, "Your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." {Colossians 3:3}

Now this author does not expressly say all this is absolutely false, and not fit to be believed, but he only desires you to believe something, that will show it to be impossible to be true. For if our own morality, chosen by ourselves, is our highest good and reward both here and hereafter, it is impossible to be true, that we have no life but in the Son of God, or that eternal life is the gift of God to us through Jesus Christ, or that we are saved by grace, through faith, and not of ourselves. So that this author is not to be considered as one that has barely mistaken something in the nature of the sacrament, but as one that rejects the whole method of salvation through Jesus Christ, and will have no happiness or redemption from him here, or eternal life hereafter. When therefore he saith, "Do we not partake of the benefit of remission of our sins, by partaking of the Lord's Supper worthily?" I must answer, No; if the gospel be true. This ought to have no more weight with you, than if Celsus or Porphyry, or Hobbs, had said the same thing. For since he makes our own morality, chosen by ourselves, to be our highest good, both here and hereafter, he as absolutely rejects our salvation through Jesus Christ, and denies the love and goodness of God towards us in Christ Jesus, to be our highest good, both here and hereafter, as ever Celsus or Porphyry did: and therefore can have no more right or pretense to explain any part of that salvation, which he has so totally denied, than they had. In the gospel, says he, no pardon of past sins is promised or given, unless to those just converted, renouncing their sins, and baptized into the Christian faith; or to those, who having sinned after baptism, actually amend their lives. This is to show you, that there is no remission of sins obtained by worthy partaking of the sacrament, if the gospel be true.

Now in the gospel, our blessed Lord seeing their faith, "saith to the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee."

Now here pardon of sins is given, directly contrary to this author's assertion, to one not converted and baptized into the Christian faith, but because of his and their faith that brought him on a bed.

Again, of Magdalen, our Lord saith, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Here you see again a plain confutation of this author's doctrine; for here remission of sins is actually given and declared to be due to love, and love is affirmed to be the measure of it.

Therefore it is an undeniable doctrine of the gospel, that faith and love are certain means of obtaining remission of our sins; if therefore the sacrament is an exercise of our faith and love, then we have the utmost assurance from our savior's own words, that we thereby obtain remission of our sins. But this author has another argument against it, taken from our liturgy. In our public office, says he, "it is not supposed that the worthy partaking of the Lord's Supper does itself operate this forgiveness; but it is made part of a prayer to God, that they who have partaken of it, may obtain remission of their sins, &c. They are taught to pray thus, after the act of communion is over, which supposes that it is not already obtained."

Now if there was any truth or reason in this argument, it would follow, that our savior's apostles had obtained no remission of sins from him; and though he had chosen them out of the world, called them his friends, and declared his extraordinary love for them, and though they left all and followed him, yet he had not done that for them, which he had done for the sick of the palsy, and many others; for this reason, because he had taught and enjoined them a form of prayer, in which they were to pray for the forgiveness of their sins. For if it is rightly argued, that there is no remission of sins obtained by the use of the sacrament, because afterwards there is prayer made for the forgiveness of sins; then it must follow, that our savior's apostles could not have received any remission of sins, when he taught them to pray for it. It must follow also, that he never intended that they should be in the state of new converts, baptized for the remission of their sins, because then they could not without great absurdity have used that form of prayer which he gave them.

It follows also, that the apostles could not have taught this form of prayer, or enjoined the use of it to their new baptized converts, because it would have been, according to this author, a proving to them, that they had not received the pardon of their sins by baptism.

Now the inconsistency which this author finds in praying for the forgiveness of sins, and all other benefits of Christ's passion, after the reception of the sacrament, if the sacrament itself was a means of obtaining them, all this inconsistency and difficulty had been removed, if he had only known or acknowledged, that the Christian life is a progressive state, and that forgiveness of sins is a grace and benefit of Jesus Christ, bestowed upon us in the same manner as every other grace or degree of holiness, as a talent to be improved, as a seed to be nourished up by us to its full growth. And for this reason it is, that we are obliged to pray for every grace, and every virtue, that we have already received, because we had received it to grow up in us, and prayer or desire of it is the only soil in which it can grow.

Thus he to whom God has already given the grace of penitence, for that reason prays for penitence; he that has already received of God the gift of faith, for that reason prays, Lord, help thou my unbelief; and he that is the fullest of righteousness, feels the greatest hunger and thirst after it. But according to this author's religion, he that has received the Spirit of God, cannot be supposed to pray for it; and yet according to the religion of the gospel, no one can pray for it, but because he has received it.

I shall now add a word or two on what this author says in defense of the safety of his doctrine of the sacrament; though it should be erroneous.

"It ought certainly," says he, "to be far from the thoughts of every Christian to lessen any privileges, or undervalue any promises, annexed by Christ to any duty or institution of his religion. It is an inexcusable carelessness to do it for want of due consideration. But this, I think, may with truth be said, that an error of this sort (should it be supposed) does not really hurt any Christian, nor alter the effect of the duty at all." {Pref., p. 5.} The safety therefore of his doctrine of the sacrament, supposing it to lessen and undervalue the benefits of it, is grounded upon this general proposition, which he takes to be a great truth, viz., "That to lessen or undervalue the privileges and promises annexed to any duty or institution by Jesus Christ, does not really hurt any Christian, or alter the effect of the duty at all."

Now this doctrine directly leads to infidelity, for infidelity is nothing else but a lessening and undervaluing the privileges and promises annexed to faith in Christ. The scripture saith, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him"; and again, He sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. {1 John 4:10} "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." Here the privilege and promise of life, and atonement for our sins, is annexed to faith in Christ; but according to this author, it does you no real hurt, nor alters the effect of your faith at all, though you lessen and undervalue this privilege and promise of life, and atonement for your sins, offered to your faith in Christ Jesus. Is not this directly saying, that infidelity is as safe and beneficial to you, as a belief in the privileges and promises of the gospel? Is it not saying, that it is as beneficial to you to esteem Christ only as a carpenter's son, as to expect atonement and life from him, as the only begotten Son of God?

It is said of our blessed Lord, that among those of his own country he did no mighty works, because of their unbelief. Now what was their unbelief? It was nothing but the infidelity which this author would prove to be harmless; it was only a lessening and undervaluing all those privileges and promises which our savior offered to those that would have a just sense of the value of them. Now if we lessen or undervalue any privileges and promises annexed to faith in Christ, or any other duty, such unbelief will certainly have the same effect upon us that it had upon those amongst whom Christ lived, it will hinder him from doing any mighty works among us, or in other words, render our knowledge and profession of him ineffectual to our salvation.

Prayer and faith are amongst the greatest duties of the Christian life, and are the most powerful means of obtaining all the blessings of our salvation. Now to these two duties the greatest privileges and promises are annexed by Christ. The promise of the Holy Spirit is made to prayer. Now, according to this author, if you lessen and undervalue this privilege and promise annexed to prayer, if you grow indifferent about the necessity or benefit of the Holy Spirit, and fancy that you are sufficient of yourself for all the virtue that you want, all this does you no real hurt, nor alters at all the effect of your prayer.

Again, another privilege annexed to prayer, is that of being heard in and through the name of Christ.

"Hitherto," says our blessed Lord, "ye have asked nothing in my name; ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." {John 16:24}

Now if any infidel, to abate your zeal for, and confidence in this kind of prayer, should teach you, that no one can suffer any real hurt by lessening and undervaluing prayer in the name of Christ, and that it would have the same effect upon you, though you expected little or no good from it, the gospel would be preached to you, just as it is by this author.

Again, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." Now what is this believing, but an entire faith in the privileges and promises annexed to prayer? But if prayer is effectual because of this faith in the promises made to prayer, then everyone suffers a real hurt, and the effect of his prayer is altogether hindered by this want of faith, or by a lessening and undervaluing the privileges and promises annexed to it. But if this author's doctrine was true, it might then be said, in contradiction to the gospel, prayer does you as much real good when you have little or no faith in it, as when you have ever so much, and your believing is no help to your receiving. The scriptures attribute a kind of omnipotence to faith; thus, "All things are possible to him that believeth." Again, "According to thy faith, so be it done unto thee. Thy faith hath saved thee. Thy faith hath made thee whole." But according to this author, it must be said, that the want of faith does you no real hurt, that you will be healed and saved, and have all things done to you, in the same manner, whether you be faithless or believing. And on this foundation it is that he grounds your safety in receiving his doctrine of the sacrament, though he should have lessened and undervalued the benefits annexed to it. But you ought to observe, that you can have no safety in receiving his doctrine of the sacrament, unless it be safe for you to receive another gospel. Had the sick, the lame, the blind, and the deaf believed that which this author would have you believe, as safe doctrine, viz., that to lessen and undervalue the promises and privileges made to faith, could do them no real hurt, they had continued in their infirmities, merely for knowing Jesus Christ and the gospel as this author would have you know them. When two blind men ran crying after our savior to have mercy on them, "He saith unto them, believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, yea, Lord. Then touched he their eyes, saying, according to your faith be it unto you. And their eyes were opened." {Matthew 9:30} The poor woman that wanted to be healed of her infirmity, said, "If I may but touch his clothes I shall be whole.": upon this faith of the woman, our savior said, "I perceive that virtue is gone out of me; and turning him about, and seeing the woman, he said unto her, daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole." {Matthew 9:22}

Now, had the blind men answered to our savior's question, No, Lord, we do not believe that thou canst give us sight; had the diseased woman said, I am so far from expecting to be healed by touching his clothes, that I don't believe he has the power of healing in himself; according to this author, their infidelity must have helped them to just the same benefit from Christ, as their faith did, notwithstanding that Christ himself ascribes it to their faith. For unless it be true, that their want of faith had helped them to the same benefit from Christ that their faith did, it cannot be true, that to lessen and undervalue the privileges and promises annexed to any duty, does you no real hurt, nor alters the effect of it at all. And therefore the safety which this author proposes to you, in lessening and undervaluing the privileges and promises annexed to the sacrament, is only the safety of infidelity, and such a safety as they are in, who lessen and undervalue the privileges and promises annexed to faith in Jesus Christ. And indeed herein he is, though inconsistent with the gospel, very consistent with himself. For if, as he has said, an uniform morality chosen by ourselves, is our highest good both here and hereafter; our highest good makes Christ as

needless to us as the sacrament; for if this is true, you can no more need the benefits of a savior, than the benefits of a sacrament, and it can signify nothing to your happiness, whatever privileges and promises are offered to you in the gospel, because you want none, can receive none as a part of your happiness, because you have it all from yourself, both here and hereafter. So that if this minister of the gospel carries his point with you, if you believe his doctrines of the sacrament, upon the principles on which he teaches it, you may indeed retain something of the outward form of the sacrament, but must reject the whole salvation of the gospel

FINIS.

05.00 THE GROUNDS AND REASONS OF CHRISTIAN REGENERATION

THE GROUNDS AND REASONS OF CHRISTIAN REGENERATION, OR, THE NEW-BIRTH,
Offered to the Consideration of CHRISTIANS AND DEISTS by William Law

05.01 Grounds and Reasons of Christian

I should reckon it a matter of great importance, if I knew how to bespeak the serious attention of the reader to one of the greatest articles of the Christian religion, and of the greatest concern to himself. And though the subject is particular, and seems only to relate to one point, yet the things which will here come under consideration, will extend to matters of the most general moment, and contain the most affecting reasons to awaken and convert the heart both of the Deist, and the Christian. For it is my intent so to search and lay open the true grounds and reasons of the Christian new -birth, that the things said, may equally reach both these sorts of readers. For the Deists, and unbelievers, have a great share of my compassionate affections, and I never can think, or write of the infinite blessings of the Christian redemption, without feeling in my heart, an impatient longing to see them the happy partakers of them. And as one naturally believes, what one strongly wishes; so I cannot help hoping, that both Christians and Deists will here find truths of such a nature, as must in some degree touch their hearts, if not read with prejudice and aversion. OF THE Nature and Necessity OF R E G E N E R A T I O N, OR, THE N E W - B I R T H.

Man was created by God after his own image, and in his own likeness, a living mirror of the divine nature; where Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each brought forth their own nature in a creaturely manner.

(2.) As the Son, who is begotten of the Father, is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son, as an amiable, moving life of both; so it was in this created image of the Holy Trinity. In it, the Father's nature generated the nature of the Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeded from them both, as an amiable, moving life of both. {See "An Appeal to Deists, Arians, &c.i, c.i., pp. 45-58.} This was the likeness or image of God, in which the first man was created, a true offspring of God, in whom the divine birth sprung up as in the Deity, where Father, Son, and Holy Ghost saw themselves in a creaturely manner.

(3.) In the divine nature the Father cannot possibly be separated from the Son, nor the Holy Ghost from both, or either of them. But such separation could come to pass in the Trinity, become creaturely, or in the created living image of the Trinity.

(4.) If such separation could not have happened, man could not have fallen out of paradise; for so long as this image of the Holy Trinity continued unbroken, so long it must be in paradise, heaven, or the kingdom of divine joy.

(5.) But that this separation could happen in this created image of the Trinity, viz., that the birth of the Son, and the arising or proceeding of the Holy Ghost, could be separated or lost, is also certain; because man is actually fallen out of paradise into this poor, wretched, perishable world.

(6.) Whilst man continued an unbroken image of the holy Trinity, he was necessarily in paradise, in the open enjoyment of the kingdom of God. He stood indeed upon the earth, and with the same outward world about him, as we do now; but paradise was over all, the cover of all; and therefore he neither saw nor felt either his own outward body, or the things of this outward world, in the

manner, as we now see, and feel them. His own dark, gross, heavy, fleshly body, which appeared after the fall, and the naked grossness, heaviness, darkness, discord, contrariety, and enmity, of the elements of this outward world, the strife of heat and cold, of storms and tempests, were things suppressed in paradise, and as entirely hid from his eyes, as the darkness of the night is hid from our eyes by the light of the day.

(7.) This is plainly taught us in the holy scripture, where it is said of our first parents in paradise, before the fall, that "they were naked, and were not ashamed." And again, after the fall it is said, "their eyes were opened," and "they saw they were naked," and through shame sought for a covering. It is not said, they saw their nakedness in paradise, but that though they were naked, that is, had such bodies as afterwards appeared to be naked, yet they were not ashamed, and the reason of their not being ashamed, was because that nakedness was not then visible, could not then show itself, but was concealed and covered from them by their paradisaical glory; but as soon as by sin, they died to the paradisaical life and glory, then they saw their nakedness, which sight filled them with shame and confusion.

(8.) From these two passages of scripture it is most plain, first, that another sort of seeing, or another sight of things, was opened in Adam after the fall, than that which he had before it: for he then first saw his own nakedness, and therefore first also then saw the outward world, with such eyes as he saw his own body, that is, in the same state of nakedness, as he saw himself, destitute of its paradisaical glory. Secondly, that before his fall, his seeing was divine, by means of a divine light, shining forth from the kingdom of God, that was then not hid, but powerfully opened within him. It was then with him, as with the heavenly city, of which St. John says, "It had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Rev.xxi.23. Thirdly, that after the fall, when the image of the Holy Trinity was broken in him, this divine light departed from him, and he was left to the firmamental light of this world, to the light of beasts, to see himself, and all other outward things, in no other light and glory, but such as the sun, stars, and elements, cast upon one another. Thus he stood with regard to this outward world, a poor prisoner of this earthly life, as much under the power and slavery of the elements, as his fellow-creatures the beasts.

(9.) Paradise being departed from the earth (which before kept all in harmony) now discord and contrariety broke forth in all the elements, and animals upon it. The elementary nature in man, and beasts, was in the same disorder with the outward elements and stars. From this time storms and tempests, thunders and lightnings, earthquakes, and all sorts of strife and contrarieties through all temporal nature; and in man, and other animals, arose the same disquiet; for the elements in and without man, were of the same nature, and therefore acted upon one another. Hence, heat, cold, pain, sorrow, fear, disquiet, diseases, sickness and death, came upon man, fallen out of paradise into this world.

(10.) This was the state of the world, and of man in it, after that paradise was retired from it; when, instead of the light and glory of paradise, which before made it all peace and unity, and a sweet habitation of divine joy, it had now only the light of the sun, which could only keep the elements in such harmony, and discord, as we now see in the world. Thus stood man in this outward world; let us now look at the inward state of his soul, and see what condition he was of, in the inward, and spiritual world.

(11.) We have before shown, that man was created a living image of the holy Trinity in Unity, that the divine birth arose in him, and that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, saw themselves in him, in a creaturely manner.

Now by his transgression this image of the Holy Trinity was broken; the generation of the Son, or Word, and the proceeding of the Holy Ghost in him, were at an end; in the day that he sinned, in that day he died this death. And therefore what was he as to his soul? What must be said of it? It was something, that was deprived of that birth, which was the brightness of its glory, and which should be that in it, which the Son of God is to the Father; it wanted that Spirit, which was its amiable life, and which was to be that to it, which the Holy Ghost is to the Father, and the Son.

Yet the soul was still a life, an imperishable life, that could not be dissolved, or cease to be. Now seeing every life, whether spiritual or corporeal, consists in fire, or rather is fire; therefore we may say of the soul in this state, that it is a spiritual dark, fire-breath, an anger-fire, that must heat, and torment itself with its own inward burning strife, and yet be unable to reach, touch, or obtain any spark of light and love, to make its fire-life sweet and amiable, or such a flame of fire, as angels are said to be

(12.) This was the state of the soul after the fall, when the birth of the Son of God, and the proceeding of the Holy Ghost, were no more to be found, or felt in it. It was in the state and condition of the devils, who in their fallen nature, are from flames of love, become this spiritual, dark, raging, aching fire-breath, that can draw no light of love into it. And the reason why, even the most profligate persons do not fully know, and perceive their souls to be in this miserable state, a dark root of self-tormenting fire, is this, because the soul, though thus fallen, was still united to the blood of an human body, and therefore the sweet, and cheering light of the sun, could reach the soul, and do that for it in some degree, and for some time, which it does to the darkness, sharpness, sourness, bitterness, and wrath that is in outward nature, that is, it could enlighten, sweeten, and cheer it in a certain degree But as this is not its own light, that is, does not arise in the soul itself, but only reaches it by means of the body; so if the soul hath in this time got no light of its own, then, when the death of the body breaks off its communion with the light of this world, the soul is left a mere dark, raging fire, in the state of devils And if all the light of this world was to be immediately at once extinguished, all human souls that were not in some real degree of regeneration, would immediately find themselves to be nothing but the rage of fire, and the horror of darkness

(13.) Now, though the light and comfort of this outward world, keeps even the worst of men from any constant, strong sensibility of that wrathful, fiery, dark, and self-tormenting nature, that is the very essence of every fallen, unregenerate soul; yet every man in the world has, more or less, frequent and strong intimations given him, that so it is with him, in the inmost ground of his soul

How many inventions are some people forced to have recourse to, to keep off a certain inward uneasiness, which they are afraid of, and know not whence it comes? Alas, it is because there is a fallen spirit, a dark aching fire within them, which has never had its proper relief, and is trying to discover itself, and calling out for help, at every cessation of worldly joy

Why are some people, when under heavy disappointments, or some great worldly shame, at the very brink of distraction, unable to bear themselves, and desirous of death of any kind? 'Tis

because worldly light and comforts, no longer acting sweetly upon the blood, the soul is left to its own dark, fiery raging nature, and would destroy the body at any rate, rather than continue under such a sensibility of its own wrathful, self-tormenting fire Who has not at one time or other felt a sourness, wrath, selfishness, envy, and pride, which he could not tell what to do with, or how to bear, rising up in him without his consent, casting a blackness over all his thoughts, and then as suddenly going off again, either by the cheerfulness of the sun, or air, or some agreeable accident, and again, at times, as suddenly returning upon him? Sufficient indications are these to every man, that there is a dark guest within him, concealed under the cover of flesh and blood, often lulled asleep by worldly light and amusements, yet such as will, in spite of everything, show itself, which if it has not its proper relief in this life, must be his torment in eternity. And it was for the sake of this hidden hell within us, that our blessed Lord said when on earth, and says now to every soul, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. For as the soul is become this self-tormenting fire, only because the birth of the Son of God was extinguished in it by our first parents; so there is no other possible remedy for it, either in heaven or earth, but by its coming to this Son of God, to be born again of him

Oh, poor unbelievers, that content yourselves with this foundation of hell in your nature, and either seek for no salvation, or, what is worse, turn your backs with disregard on the one only savior, that God himself can help you to

Think not of saving yourselves. It is no more in your power, than to save the fallen spirits that are in hell; you can no more do the one than the other. Talk not of the mercy and goodness of God; his mercy is indeed infinite, and his goodness above all conception; but then the infiniteness of it consists in this, that he of his own mere mercy found out, and offered this savior to all mankind, because in the nature of things, nothing less than this savior could redeem them

Therefore to rely upon a mercy of God, that is not within the Christian scheme of it, is to rely upon a fiction of our own minds; because all the mercy that God can show to mankind, all that his omnipotent love can do for them, is done and offered to them in, and through the redemption of Jesus Christ

If either devils, or lost souls could possibly be annihilated, neither of them would by the goodness of God, be suffered to exist in misery, for misery's sake. But a man may as well expect that his soul shall be annihilated through the goodness of God, though annihilation is impossible, and what cannot be done, as to expect to be saved through the divine goodness, without the mediation of the Son of God, when the birth of the Son of God in the soul, is the one only salvation, that the omnipotence of God can bestow upon him

Therefore to choose or rely upon some other goodness of God besides that, which he has offered to us in Jesus Christ, is the most dreadful mistake that can befall any man, and must, if persevered in, leave him out of the possibility of any kind, or degree of salvation. For as the Son of God is the brightness and glory of the Father, so no soul made in the likeness of God is capable of any degree of brightness and glory, but so far as the birth of the Son of God is in it; therefore to reject this birth, to refuse this method of redemption, is to reject all the goodness, that the divine nature itself hath for us

(14.) But to return. I have shown in few words the original dignity and glory of man's creation and state in paradise, and the lamentable change, that the fall has brought upon him From a divine and heavenly creature, he is so wretchedly changed, as to have inwardly the nature, and dark fire of the devils, and outwardly the nature of all the beasts, a slave of this outward world, living at all uncertainties, amongst the pains, fears, sorrows, and diseases, till his body is forced to be removed from our sight, and hid in the earth

Now from this short view of what man is fallen from, and what he is fallen into, we may see at once in the strongest light the divine excellency and absolute necessity of those doctrines of our blessed Lord, calling us to all kinds of renouncing the world, to so many ways of denying all the passions and inclinations of flesh and blood Were the world, as it now is, and we, as we now are, in the very first state in which God made it and us, there would be some foundation for saying, as some do, "What are all these things for, if they are not to be enjoyed? Why have we these passions and inclinations, if they may not be gratified?" But all these questions are fully answered, as soon as it is known, that the first state of things is quite altered; that we were not created to be in this world in the manner we are now in it; that paradise was our first state, where we should have stood in divine strength and ability, insensible of any evil from outward nature; that sin destroyed this first state of things, destroyed the divine life in the soul, and removed paradise from off the earth; that man, cast out of paradise, came as a malefactor into this outward world, to be punished and scourged by all its divided, warring elements; that by his falling into this world, it got the same power over him, as over the beasts, that are its proper inhabitants, and of the same nature with itself; that thus fallen under its dominion, it continually breathes its own corrupt nature into him, feeds him with such husks as the swine eat, and proposes such pleasures to him, as make him unwilling, and unable to regain his first divine life

Now, as soon as this is known to be the condition of man, thus fallen from a divine life under the dominion of this world, then all the renouncing, self-denying doctrines of the gospel, appear to have the utmost reason and necessity in them; then it appears to be as much our happiness, to deny the tempers and inclinations of this earthly nature, and to be delivered from the power of its pleasures over us, as to be delivered from the power of death and hell And the most sober reason thus acquainted with the nature of our fall, must be forced to consider this world as having merely the nature of an hospital, where people only are, because they are distempered, and where no happiness is sought for, but that of being healed, and made fit to leave it

(15.) To proceed: that I have not stated man's first dignity too high, is evidently plain from the scripture account of it. It is a fundamental truth of our religion, that he was created in paradise for a life suitable to it. But paradise is a divine habitation, still existing where it was at the first, though not visible to eyes which see only by the light of the sun, and is the habitation of such as have attained their first paradisaical nature; it was in this paradise, that our savior, through a miracle of love, promised to be with the thief on the cross

It is also a fundamental truth of scripture, that man was created to be immortal, incapable of death, and of everything that had any likeness to it, so long as he continued in the perfection of his state. That it was sin alone which brought sorrow, pain, evil, distress, sickness and death upon him But if this be a truth that cannot be denied, then it must be equally true, that before he sinned, he must have stood in such a paradise, as kept everything in the outward world entirely under him, so that

neither fire nor water, nor any other element, could have the least power over him. But if fire, the fiercest of the elements, had not the least power of touching his body in any hurtful manner, or of causing any pain to it; then it must be granted, that paradise covered, and governed the power of all the elements of this outward world; that man lived in it as an absolute Lord over it; and therefore it undeniably follows that the manner, in which he now is under the power of the elements, capable of receiving pain and evil from them, is a state that he was not in, till sin took paradise from him, and left him in the same poor condition, that we now are in, capable of receiving pain and death, from almost everything that is about us That man in paradise lived in this world insensible, and also incapable of any evil from it, superior to all its elements, is plain from the tree of knowledge of good and evil For how could it be more plainly told us, that outward things, the stars and elements could not affect his state, or make any impression upon him, than by telling us, that he had no knowledge of good and evil in this world, till he had eaten of that tree? Is not this directly telling us, that before such eating, he was above the nature of this world, that it had not power to operate upon him, or give him any sense or feeling, of what there was of good or evil in it

Now that he was created to be, and to continue thus a lord over all temporal nature, superior to all the influences and effects of the stars and elements, is also plain from the prohibition given him, not to eat of this tree of knowledge But he was not content with this happy superiority above the evil and good of outward nature. His imagination, helped on by the devil, longed to look into, to know and feel the secret working powers of that outward nature, which it was his happiness, and paradise to be insensible of When God forbade his eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, it was the same thing as if he had said, Fall not into the outward world, under the dominion of its stars and elements, but keep thy state in paradise When man disobeyed God, and took the fruit of the tree into his body, which brought the nature and power of the stars and elements into it; this is not to be considered, as that single act of eating, but it signifies as much as if he had said; By eating this fruit, I desire to come within the influences of the stars and elements, and to be made sensible, and feeling of the good and evil that is in them

Therefore, small as the action seems to be at the first view, and of a very limited nature, it was his refusing to be that, which God created him to be; it was his express, open, voluntary act and deed, by which he chose to fall into this outward world, in the manner we now are in it

Therefore it was not the mere eating of a fruit, that brought Adam's misery upon him, but it was the eating a fruit, as his chosen means of entering into this world

God himself was not angry at all, or at a small act of eating a fruit, and so in anger turned man out of paradise, into a world cursed for that sin. But man freely and voluntarily chose, against the will, and command of God, to be in the world in its cursed state, unblessed by paradise; for he chose to enter into a sensibility and feeling of its good and evil, which is directly choosing to be, where paradise is not; for nothing that is in paradise, can be touched, or hurt by anything of the outward world. Therefore the first state of man was a state of such glory, and heavenly prerogatives, as I have above related; and his fall, was a fall into, or under the power of this outward world

(16.) If it be also further asked, What sufficient proof there is, first, that the likeness and image of God, in which man was created, signified thus much, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, each brought forth their own nature in him, and in him saw themselves in a creaturely manner? And then, secondly, that by the first sin, this birth of the Son of God, and proceeding of the Holy Ghost

was extinguished and lost in the soul of man? It may be answered, that these great truths stand attested by undeniable evidence of scripture

First, from the means and manner of our redemption. For there is nothing that can so fully, and justly show us the true nature of our fall, as the nature and manner of our redemption. And it seems highly suitable to the wisdom of God to let the first, be but in part discovered, till the latter showed and proved itself in an undeniable manner. And this, no doubt, is the reason why Moses is suffered to write no more of the nature of the fall of man, or what it implied, than he has done. Because the time for a plain insight into that matter, was not then come, and it was to lie as much a secret, as to the true nature of it, as the nature and manner of our redemption then did; which was then only obscurely declared, by an enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. But when the seed of the woman showed itself to be the Son of God, the second person of the holy Trinity, united to our human nature; then the nature of our fall, and what we fell from, and what was the seed of the serpent in us, manifested themselves in the same degree of certainty. And therefore it is very unreasonable to hold, that we ought to say no more of our first state before the fall, of its dignity and perfection, and what was lost by the fall, than what is openly and expressly declared by Moses. For as it seemed good to the divine wisdom to conceal the mystery of our redemption and salvation for many ages, and to let Moses only discover it under a declaration of a serpent-destroyer; so there was a fitness, and even necessity, that the nature and degree of our fall should be kept in the same degree of secrecy, then only to be discovered with a sufficient degree of plainness and certainty, when our redemption and salvation came plainly to be laid open. The religion of the Jews was suited to that state of things and times in which they lived; neither the mysteries of the creation, nor redemption, were then discovered; things past, and things to come, had then only their figures, shadows, and types. But when the Son of God became incarnate, and showed forth in the plainest manner, the nature, manner, and necessity of our redemption through his blood, and a life received from him, then the nature and degree of our fall became equally plain and manifest; and everything that he has told us of the nature and necessity of a new or second birth from him, was so much told us of our first birth in paradise. For the nature and greatness of our redemption, must show the nature and greatness of our fall. These things have such a necessary correspondence, as cannot be denied, but by a mind utterly indisposed to receive conviction.

If our redemption proposed to restore to us a divine sight, would not this be a sufficient proof, that by the fall we had lost some divine manner of seeing? So, if God himself takes our nature upon him to redeem us, and it be declared that nothing, but this uniting the divine nature to the human, can be our redemption, can we want a proof, that the divine nature existed in some manner in us, before the fall.

Now it is a plain, manifest doctrine of the holy scriptures, that man by the fall is in such a condition, that there was no help or remedy for him, either in the height above, or in the depth below, but by the Son of God's becoming incarnate, taking the fallen nature upon him. If this alone could be the remedy, does not this enough show us the disease? Does not this speak plainly enough, what it was that man had lost by his fall, namely, the birth of the Son of God in his soul; and therefore it was, that only the Son of God in so mysterious a manner, could be his redeemer.

If he had lost less, a less power could have redeemed him. If he had lost something else, the restoration of that something, would have been his redemption. But since it is an open, undeniable doctrine of the gospel, that there can be no salvation for mankind but in the name, and by the power of the Son of God, by his being united to the fallen nature, and so raising his own birth and life in it, is it not sufficiently declared to us, that what was lost by the fall, was the birth of the Son of God in the soul

Secondly, this same doctrine is not left to be drawn from any consequences of things, but is in express words taught us, when it is said, that we must be born again from above, born of God; for this is expressly telling us what birth we have lost, and is only saying, that the first birth is to be restored, or that the divine birth is to arise, or to be brought again into us, as at the first, when the living image of the Holy Trinity was brought forth in us

What this new regained birth is, we are plainly told by St. Peter, that is a being born again of an incorruptible seed by the Word, that is, the eternal Word, or Son of God. Which divine Word being only in the soul as a seed, is to restore by degrees the first birth of the Word, or Son of God in the soul. Which is proof enough that this was the state of the soul in its creation, that this birth was then in it, and so was an image of the Holy Trinity; and that the death which Adam died in the day that he sinned, was the losing this holy birth from his soul. And on this account it was, that nothing could restore him, but that which was able to restore this birth again to his soul, and make it again such an image of God, as that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, might therein see themselves again in a creaturely manner, and dwell in it, and it in them

Thirdly, the Holy Ghost is in the scriptures declared to be the sanctifier, or renewer of holiness in the soul, and this in such a manner, that all the motions and operations of the soul, so far as they are without it, and unmoved by it, are so far unholy, and unable even for a good thought

Now how could our thoughts or operations be unholy in themselves, and want the sanctification and renewing of the Holy Ghost, unless this Holy Spirit had first existed in us, and by our fall had been separated from us. Had not the birth of the Holy Ghost arisen in us at our creation, we could no more be unholy for want of it, than the beasts are, nor any more now have wanted to be renewed by it, than the beasts that never had it. But since there is now no sanctification or redemption for us, but by having the Holy Ghost as a free gift of God breathed again into us, it is no less than a demonstration, that we had before we fell, this holiness by the nature which God gave us at first; and that the holiness of our creation consisted in this, that the Holy Spirit then proceeded, or arose forth in our soul, as the birth of the Son of God did; and that it might for the same reason be then called the holiness of our nature, as it is now after the fall, called a holiness by gift or grace. For if we are now to be born again of the Spirit by grace, does not this tell us, that we had this birth of the Spirit in us at the first, and that then it was the birth of our nature by creation

Fourthly, these same great truths are evidently signified to us in the fullest manner by our baptism, and the form of it. Our baptism is to signify our seeking and obtaining a new birth. And our being baptized in, or into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, tells us in the plainest manner, what birth it is that we seek, namely, such a new birth as may make us again what we were at first, a living real image or offspring of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

It is owned on all hands, that we are baptized into a renovation of some divine birth that we had lost? and that we may not be at a loss to know what that divine birth is, the form in baptism openly declares to us, that it is to regain that first birth of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in our souls, which at the first made us to be truly and really images of the nature of the Holy Trinity in Unity. The form in baptism is but very imperfectly apprehended, till it is understood to have this great meaning in it. And it must be owned, that the scriptures tend wholly to guide us to this understanding of it. For since they teach us, a birth of God, a birth of the Spirit, that we must obtain, and that baptism, the appointed sacrament of this new birth, is to be done into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, can there be any doubt, that this sacrament is to signify the renovation of the birth of the Holy Trinity in our souls? And that therefore this was the holy image born or created at first, when God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our own likeness," that is, so make him, that we may see ourselves, our own nature in him, in a creaturely manner

What an harmonious agreement does there thus appear, between our creation and redemption? and how finely, how surprisingly do our first and our second births answer to, and illustrate one another At our first birth it is said thus, "Let us make man in our image, after our own likeness"; when the divine birth was lost, and man was to receive it again, it is said, "Be thou baptized into the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost": which is saying, Let the divine birth, be brought forth again in thee, or be thou born again such an image of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as thou wast at first

These considerations all taken from the plain words, and acknowledged doctrines of scripture, do, I think, sufficiently declare and prove to us, these great truths of the last importance, namely, that the image in which man was created, was such, as in which, the Holy Trinity saw itself, or its own nature in a creaturely manner, in which the Father's nature generated the nature of the Son, and the Holy Ghost proceeded from them both, as the amiable moving life of both That by Adam's sin, this holy image of the Holy Trinity was broken, and in such a manner, that the birth of the Son of God, and of the Holy Spirit, was no more in it, and that therefore in a stupendous mystery of love, the Son of God united himself to our fallen nature, to recover, and restore to it, all that it had lost, and in such a manner, that it might never be lost again to all eternity As soon as it is observed and known, that our fall consisted in the losing of the birth of the Son of God in our soul, and consequently the proceeding forth of the Holy Spirit in it, there appears a surprising agreeableness and fitness, in the means of our redemption, namely, that we could only be saved by the eternal Son of God; that he only could save us, by taking our nature upon him, and so uniting it with him, that his life, or birth might again arise in us, as at the first, and so we become again a perfect living image of the Holy Trinity

(17.) Now the reason why I have gone thus far in inquiring into the dignity of man's original state, and searched thus deep into his lamentable fall, is this, to point out to the reader the true nature of the Christian religion, and the infinite importance of it; which religion is administered by God, as our only relief from our sad condition; and that he may at one view see the height and depth of divine love, which has had so great care of mankind

I persuade myself, no one can see these truths, in the manner that I have represented them, without being in some degree inclined to believe them; and in the same degree stirred up to act in conformity to them

We know nothing truly of the nature of the Christian religion, and our deep concern in it, but so far as we see into the nature of our first state in the creation, and our present state by the fall. And as this knowledge is in some degree necessary, so is it also in some degree obvious to every man

Every man has a consciousness within himself, that a perfection in all kinds of virtue becomes him; this consciousness obliges him to set the best foot forwards, and to put on the appearance of all the virtue that he can. Now what else is this, but an inward strong testimony of his own mind, declaring to him, that perfection was his first state, and that because his nature once had it, he can neither lose the agreeable idea of it, nor quit his pretenses to it; so that every man carries in his own breast, in the depth of his own frame and constitution, a strong proof of all those truths, that I have deduced from scripture. For I have not been speaking of things foreign or strange to us, but of things sensible felt within us, and spoken to us, by the whole form of our nature

(18.) The condition in which I have represented our soul to be by the fall, a mere dark fire-breath, of an hellish nature, showing itself in every man more or less by its fruits, by such eruptions and breakings forth of dark passions, but hiding itself under an outward appearance of good, and a feigned civility or rectitude of manners, is what every man must be forced to own to be more or less in himself For this is the state of every man's soul, because it has lost the birth of the Son of God in it, and so is only as a strong root of a fiery life, unenlightened, and unblessed by that holy Word, which is the brightness of the Father's glory This dark root of a fiery, self-tormenting life, which is the whole nature of the fallen soul, destitute of the birth of the Son of God in it, is a life that subsists in four elements, as the life of this world hath its four elements

Now the four elements of this dark, fiery soul, or fallen nature, are, (1.) a restless selfishness; (2.) a restless envy; (3.) a restless pride; and, (4.) a restless wrath or anger. I call them the elements of the fallen soul, because they are that to it, which the four elements of this world are to the life of the body

Now these four elements which nourish and keep up the life of the fallen soul, are also the four elements of hell, in which the devils dwell; they can no more depart from, or exist out of these elements, than an earthly life can depart from, or exist without the four elements of this world, fire, air, water, and earth

Now, as the soul, by the losing of the birth of the Son of God in it, is become an aching dark root of fire, that has this restless selfishness, restless envy, restless pride, and restless wrath in it, which are the four elements of hell; so by its being in these, or having them in it, it is come to pass, that evil spirits have such communion with it, and so great power over it

Every stirring of the soul in the element of pride, is a moving in the devil's element, where he is, and has power to join and act with it; every motion in the element of envy or wrath, is so far empowering him to enter into the breath of our life, and settle his fiery kingdom in us And thus in every one of these four elements, so far as we willingly are in their sphere of activity, and act and stir according to them, so far we become members of the devil's kingdom, and have him for our leader, and guide. How watchful therefore ought we to be of our hearts, how fearful of consenting to, or not enough resisting every motion of these elements within us, since every voluntary yielding to them, is opening the kingdom of darkness in our souls, and giving the devil power to infuse his wretched nature into us. And we have still further reason for this fear and watchfulness, if it be

considered, that as no one of the elements of this outward world could be, or subsist, if the other three were not, because they are the mutual cause of one another; so it is in these other elements, if we live in one, we live in all; selfishness cannot be, or subsist without envy, nor pride without wrath and selfishness, nor any one of the four, without carrying the other three in its bosom; therefore we must have the same fear of any one, as of them all, for the name of every one is legion Could we see, as we see outward objects, what a dreadful misery these four elements bring upon our souls, we should shun and fly from everything that gave life and strength to them, with more earnestness, than from the most violent evils that could threaten our bodies; we should choose to burn in any fire, rather than in that of our own wrath and pride, any poverty of outward life, rather than that of our own pinching envy, any prison, rather than to be shut up in our own dark selfishness. For all outward fires, chains, torments, slaveries, poverties, are but transient shadows, of the tormenting, fiery, dark slavery of an unredeemed soul, left, and given up to these four elements of hell And the reason why they are not a hell to profligate men now upon earth, is, as has been said, because we now live in flesh and blood, under the cheering influences of the sun, and the diversion and amusement of outward things, and in several forms of happiness, which our imagination through its own inventions of delight, hinders the poor soul from feeling what it is, in its own nature; and therefore, though ever so much a slave of these elements, it only feels or perceives the torment of them by fits, and on certain occasions. And yet sometimes it is seen, that one or other of these elements awakens so violently, as to become intolerable, and to give a true and plain foretaste of the condition and nature of hell in the soul that feels it

Here again, I cannot help observing by-the-by, the wondrous excellency and divine nature of the gospel religion, which knowing our fall to consist in this darkened fire of the soul, dwelling in these elements of hell, has set before us such amazing representations of humility, meekness, and universal love, as the imagination of man could never have thought of; namely, the humility, meekness, and lowliness of the Son of God, who left his glory, to take upon him the form of a servant for our sakes; the great love of God towards us sinners, in giving his only begotten Son to redeem us, and the love of God the Son, in laying his life down for us, that we might imitate this amazing humility, meekness, and divine love, and love one another as he has loved us. These are mysteries of love and mercy that are set before us, to quench the fiery wrath of our fallen nature, and to compel us, if possible, to abhor our own dark passions, and in humility and meekness become lovers of God, and one another

(19.) Now so far as we, by true resignation to God, die to the element of selfishness and own will, so far as by humility we die to the element of pride, so far as by meekness we die to the element of wrath, so far we get away from the devil, enter into another kingdom, and leave him to dwell without us in his own elements

These are not fictions of a visionary imagination, but sober truths, spoken by the Word of God in scripture, and written and engraven in the book of every man's own nature No man since the fall, but is a living witness to these truths; to deny them, is to own and prove them: for we could not tell a lie, or resist the truth, but because we have this dark enemy to truth hidden in our bosom

(20.) Now the greatest good that any man can do to himself, is to give leave to this inward deformity to show itself, and not to strive by any art or management, either of negligence or amusement to conceal it from him. First, because this root of a dark fire-life within us, which is of

the nature of hell, with all its elements of selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath, must be in some sort discovered to us, and felt by us, before we can enough feel, and enough groan under the weight of our disorder. Repentance is but a kind of table-talk, till we see so much of the deformity of our inward nature, as to be in some degree frightened and terrified at the sight of it. There must be some kind of an earthquake within us, something that must rend and shake us to the bottom, before we can be enough sensible, either of the state of death we are in, or enough desirous of that savior, who alone can raise us from it. A plausible form of an outward life, that has only learned rules and modes of religion by use and custom, often keeps the soul for some time at ease, though all its inward root and ground of sin has never been shaken or molested, though it has never tasted the bitter waters of repentance, and has only known the want of a savior by hearsay. But things cannot pass thus: sooner or later, repentance must have a broken, and a contrite heart; we must with our blessed Lord go over the brook Cedron, and with him sweat great drops of sorrow, before he can say for us, as he said for himself, "It is finished."

Now, though this sensibility of the sinfulness of our inward ground, is not to be expected to be the same in all, yet the truth and reality of it must, and will be in all, that do but give way to the discovery of it; and our sinfulness would ever be in our sight, if we did not industriously turn our eyes from it. If we used but half the pains, to find out the evil that is hidden in us, as we do to hide the appearance of it from others, we should soon find, that in the midst of our most orderly life, we are in death, and want a savior, to make our most apparent virtues to be virtuous.

It is therefore exceeding good and beneficial to us, to discover this dark, disordered fire of our soul; because when rightly known, and rightly dealt with, it can as well be made the foundation of heaven, as it is of hell. For when the fire and strength of the soul, is sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb, then its fire, becomes a fire of light, and its strength is changed into a strength of triumphing love, and will be fitted to have a place amongst those flames of love, that wait about the throne of God. The reason why we know so little of Jesus Christ, as our savior, atonement, and justification, why we are so destitute of that faith in him, which alone can change, rectify, and redeem our souls, why we live starving in the coldness and deadness of a formal, historical, hearsay-religion, is this; we are strangers to our own inward misery and wants, we know not that we lie in the jaws of death and hell; we keep all things quiet within us, partly by outward forms, and modes of religion and morality, and partly by the comforts, cares and delights of this world. Hence it is that we consent to receive a savior, as we consent to admit of the four gospels, because only four are received by the church. We believe in a savior, not because we feel an absolute want of one, but because we have been told there is one, and that it would be a rebellion against God to reject him. We believe in Christ as our atonement, just as we believe, that he cast seven devils out of Mary Magdalene, and so are no more helped, delivered, and justified by believing that he is our atonement, than by believing that he cured Mary Magdalene.

True faith, is a coming to Jesus Christ to be saved, and delivered from a sinful nature, as the Canaanitish woman came to him, and would not be denied. It is a faith of love, a faith of hunger, a faith of thirst, a faith of certainty and firm assurance, that in love and longing, and hunger, and thirst, and full assurance, will lay hold on Christ, as its loving, assured, certain and infallible savior and atonement.

It is this faith, that breaks off all the bars and chains of death and hell in the soul; it is to this faith, that Christ always says, what he said in the gospel, "Thy faith hath saved thee, thy sins are forgiven thee; go in peace." Nothing can be denied to this faith; all things are possible to it; and he that thus seeks Christ, must find him to be his salvation On the other hand, all things will be dull and heavy, difficult and impossible to us, we shall toil all the night and take nothing, we shall be tired with resisting temptations, grow old and stiff in our sins and infirmities, if we do not with a strong, full, loving, and joyful assurance, seek and come to Christ for every kind, and degree of strength, salvation and redemption. We must come unto Christ, as the blind, the sick, and the leprous came to him, expecting all from him, and nothing from themselves. When we have this faith, then it is, that Christ can do all his mighty works in us

(21.) From the foregoing account anyone may be supposed already to see the nature and necessity of regeneration, or the new birth. It is as necessary as our salvation. By our fall, our soul has lost the birth of the Son of God in it; by this loss it is become a dark, wrathful, self-tormenting root of fire, shut up in the four hellish elements of selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath; considered as a fallen soul, it cannot stir one step, or exert one motion but in, and according to these elements; therefore it is as necessary to have this nature itself changed, and to be born again from above, as it is necessary to be delivered from hell, and eternal death For these elements are hell, and eternal death itself, and not without, or standing at a distance from us, but hell and death springing up in the forms, and essences of our fallen nature; they are the serpent that is in us, and constitute that gnawing worm which never dieth; for they mutually beget, and mutually torment each other, and so constitute a worm, or worming pain, that never dieth

Now as this hell, serpent, worm, and death, are all within us, rising up in the forms and essences of our fallen soul; so our redeemer, or regenerator, whatever it be, must be also equally within us, and spring up from as great a depth in our nature. Now the scripture sufficiently tells us, that it is only the promised seed of the woman, the eternal Word, or Son of God made man, that can bruise this head, or kill this life of the serpent in us; therefore this seed of the woman must have its dwelling in the ground and essence of our nature, because the serpent is there, that a new life or a new nature may arise from this seed within us; and therefore it is plain, that regeneration, or the new birth, is, and can be no other thing, but the recovering of the birth of the Son of God in the fallen soul And this is what the scripture means by the necessity of our being born of God, born again from above, born of the Spirit. Hence also we see in the clearest light, the meaning of all those passages of scripture, where we are said to be in Christ, that Christ is in us; that he must put on Christ; that he must be formed in us; that he is our life; that we must eat his flesh and drink his blood; that he is our atonement, that his blood alone cleanseth us from all our sins; that we have life from him, as the branches have life from the vine; that he is our justification, or righteousness; that in him we are created again to good works; that without him we can do nothing, and have no life in us: all these, I say, and the like sayings of scripture, have a wonderful congruity and plainness in them, and fill the mind with the most excellent and solid truths, as soon as it is known, that regeneration is absolutely necessary, and that this regeneration signifies, the recovering of the birth of the Son of God in the soul

(22.) And as it does this justice to so great and concerning a part of scripture, so it sets the whole scheme of the Christian salvation in the most agreeable and engaging light, and such as is enough even to compel everyone, to embrace it with the utmost earnestness. The mystery of this salvation

is still preserved, and yet hereby so unfolded, that every man has as much reason to desire to be born again, and to believe that the Son of God can only bring forth this birth in him, as to believe that God made him, and can alone make him happy A mediator, an atonement, regenerator, thus understood, must be as agreeable and desirable to every human mind, and as much according to his own wishes, as to be delivered from the uneasiness and disquiets of a nature, which he finds himself not master of, nor able to fix it in a state of better enjoyment

What is it that any thoughtful, serious man could wish for, but to have a new heart, and a new spirit, free from the hellish, self-tormenting elements of selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath? His own experience has shown him, that nothing human can do this for him; can take away the root of evil that is in him; and it is so natural to him to think, that God alone can do it, that he has often been tempted to accuse God, for suffering it to be so with him

Therefore to have the Son of God come from heaven to redeem him by a birth of his own divine nature in him, must be a way of salvation, highly suited to his own sense, wants and experience; because he finds, that his evil lies deep in the very essence and forms of his nature, and therefore can only be removed by the arising of a new birth, or life in the first essences of it

Therefore an inward savior, a savior, that is God himself, raising his own divine birth in the fallen soul, has such an agreeableness and fitness in it, to do for him all that he wants, as must make every sober man, with open arms, ready and willing to receive such a salvation

(23.) Some people have an idea, or notion of the Christian religion, as if God was thereby declared so full of wrath against fallen man, that nothing but the blood of his only begotten Son could satisfy his vengeance

Nay, some have gone such lengths of wickedness, as to assert that God had by immutable decrees reprobated, and rejected a great part of the race of Adam, to an inevitable damnation, to show forth and magnify the glory of his justice But these are miserable mistakers of the divine nature, and miserable reproachers of his great love, and goodness in the Christian dispensation For God is love, yea, all love, and so all love, that nothing but love can come from him; and the Christian religion, is nothing else but an open, full manifestation of the universal love towards all mankind. {See "Spirit of Prayeri" As the light of the sun has only one common nature towards all objects that can receive it, so God has only one common nature of goodness towards all created nature, breaking forth in infinite flames of love, upon every part of the creation, and calling everything to the highest happiness it is capable of

God so loved man, when his fall was foreseen, that he chose him to salvation in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the world. When man was actually fallen, God was so without all wrath towards him, so full of love for him, that he sent his only begotten Son into the world to redeem him. Therefore God has no nature towards man, but love, and all that he does to man, is love

(24.) There is no wrath that stands between God and us, but what is awakened in the dark fire of our own fallen nature; and to quench this wrath, and not his own, God gave his only begotten Son to be made man. God has no more wrath in himself now, than he had before the creation, when he had only himself to love. The precious blood of his Son was not poured out to pacify himself (who in himself had no nature towards man but love), but it was poured out, to quench the wrath, and fire of the fallen soul, and kindle in it a birth of light, and love. {See "Spirit of Lovei, part ii, p. 50, &c.

As man lives, and moves, and has his being in the divine nature, and is supported by it, whether his nature be good or bad; so the wrath of man, which was awakened in the dark fire of his fallen nature, may, in a certain sense, be called the wrath of God, as hell itself may be said to be in God, because nothing can be out of his immensity; yet this hell, is not God, but the dark habitation of the devil. And this wrath which may be called the wrath of God, is not God, but the fiery wrath of the fallen soul. And it was solely to quench this wrath, awakened in the human soul, that the blood of the Son of God was necessary, because nothing but a life and a birth, derived from him into the human soul, could change this darkened root of a self-tormenting fire, into an amiable image of the Holy Trinity, as it was at first created. This was the wrath, vengeance, and vindictive justice that wanted to be satisfied, in order to our salvation; it was the wrath and fire of nature and creature kindled only in itself, by its departing from due resignation, and obedience to God. When Adam and Eve went trembling behind the trees, through fear and dread of God, it was only this wrath of God awakened in them; it was a terror, and horror, and shivering of nature, that arose up in themselves, because the divine life, the birth of the Son of God, which is the brightness and joy of the soul, was departed from it, and had left it, to feel its own poor miserable state without it. And this may well enough be called the wrath, and justice of God upon them, because it was a punishment, or painful state of the soul, that necessarily followed their revolting from God. But still there was no wrath, or painful sensation, that wanted to be appeased, or satisfied, but in nature and creature; it was only the wrath of fallen nature, that wanted to be changed, into its first state of peace and love. When God spoke to them, he spoke only love; Adam, where art thou? And he called him, only to comfort him with a promised redemption, through a seed of the woman, a spark of the Word of life which should reign in him, and his posterity, till all enemies were under their feet. God therefore is all love, and nothing but love and goodness can come from him. He is as far from anger in himself, as from pain and darkness. But when the fallen soul of man, had awakened in itself, a wrathful, self-tormenting fire, which could never be put out by itself, which could never be relieved by the natural power of any creature whatsoever, then the Son of God, by a love, greater than that which created the world, became man, and gave his own blood, and life into the fallen soul, that it might through his life in it, be raised, quickened, and born again into its first state of inward peace and delight, glory and perfection, never to be lost any more. O inestimable truths! precious mysteries, of the love of God, enough to split the hardest rock of the most obdurate heart, that is but able to receive one glimpse of them! Can the world resist such love as this? Or can any man doubt, whether he should open all that is within him, to receive such a salvation

O unhappy unbelievers, this mystery of love compels me in love, to call upon you, to beseech and entreat you, to look upon the Christian redemption in this amiable light. All the ideas that your own minds can form of love and goodness, must sink into nothing, as soon as compared with God's love and goodness in the redemption of mankind

I appeal to nothing but the state of your own hearts and consciences, to prove the necessity of your embracing this mystery of divine love. I will grant you all that you can suppose, of the goodness of God, and that no creature will be finally lost, but what infinite love cannot save. But still, here is no shadow of security for infidelity; and your refusing to be saved through the Son of God, whilst the soul is in the redeemable state of this life, may at the separation of the body, for aught you know, leave it in such a hell, as the infinite love of God cannot deliver it from. For, first, you have no kind, or degree of proof, that your soul is not that dark, self-tormenting, anguishing

and imperishable fire, above-mentioned, which has lost its own proper light, and is only comforted by the light of the sun, till its redemption be effected. Secondly, you have no kind, or degree of proof, that God himself can redeem, or save, or enlighten this dark fire-soul, any other way than, as the gospel proposes, by the birth of the Son of God in it. Therefore your own hearts must tell you, that for aught you know, infidelity, or the refusing of this birth of the Son of God, may, at the end of life, leave you in such a state of self-torment, as the infinite love of God can no way deliver you from.

You build much upon certain clear ideas, founded in the nature and fitness of things; but I beseech you to consider, that here in this great point, on which all depends, you have no ideas at all; for you have not one clear, or even obscure idea, that your souls cannot be in this disordered state, or that they can be set into a right order, without the birth of the Son of God brought forth in them But to return

(25.) What has been already said of the nature of regeneration, may sufficiently show us, how greatly it is mistaken, when it is said to signify only a moral change of our tempers and inclinations

Tempers and inclinations are the fruits of the new-born nature, and not the nature itself; and as fruits and flowers are entirely distinct, and different from the root and the tree, and necessarily suppose the root and the tree, before they can be brought forth; so good tempers and inclinations are as distinct from, and posterior to that nature, which is to produce them, as its fruits And if good tempers rightly purified, could really arise, or be brought forth in us, without a change first made in the root, or nature, that is to bring them forth, it would be no absurdity to say, that men may gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles But if our blessed Lord has declared this, to be contrary to the nature of things, and has further said, that the tree must first be made good, before it can bring forth good fruit; then we can with sufficient ground of assurance say, that our nature must first be made good, its root and stock must be new made, or regenerated again, before it can bring forth good fruits of moral behavior

(26.) Angels are justly represented to us, as flames of love; now every flame must have a hidden fire for its root, from which it has its subsistence; and the spiritual flaming angelical nature, must have a spiritual fire concealed under it. Now let it be supposed, that in an angel this flame of love was extinguished, and that there then only remained that inward root of a spiritual fire. Let it be supposed, that this spiritual fire that has lost its flame of love cannot cease to be, and to be a fiery spirit; that it cannot, by any properties of its fire kindle itself in its first flame of love; that all its own stirrings can produce no one thought, motion or desire, but what solely tends either to selfishness, envy, pride, or wrath; that it can of itself no more come out of this state, than fire locked up in a flint, can of itself become a flame; could it be said, that this angel had only lost some moral good dispositions? Must it not be said, to have lost that nature, from which alone, its good tempers could proceed? Let it be further supposed, that God, by a miracle of love entered into the fiery root, or essence of this fallen angel, and by a new birth made it again to be a flame of love; could it be said, that it had gained nothing by this new birth, but only a change of some moral tempers? Must it not be said to have gained a new nature, a flame of love, instead of a dark fire? and from this new nature, its angelical and good tempers can alone proceed

(27.) But the representing the new-birth as signifying only a change of moral behavior, is not only thus false and absurd in itself, but is also exceeding prejudicial to true conversion, and saps the

foundation of our redemption That it is highly prejudicial to true conversion, is most evident from this, that it hides and suppresses the real nature of our fallen state, and the true greatness of the love and mercy of God in our redemption. Now these two things it inevitably does in a great degree, and therefore the hurt that it does us, is more than can well be imagined And it is owing to this cause more than to any other, that even amongst people of sober behavior, religion is only a superficial thing, that has no true depth in them, because they have never understood the true depth of religion, nor conceived, in how deep a manner, their nature is concerned in it A heathen may say, that by going to such a neighborhood, or marrying into such a family, or falling into acquaintance with such a man, he obtained an entire change in his moral behavior. Now if Christians are told, that this is the true, and only meaning of their new birth in Christ Jesus, namely, a great change in their moral behavior, a thing that happens to heathens, by the ordinary occurrences of human life, it is no wonder, that they live all their lives, strangers to true humility, and penitence, are never truly converted to God, or have any just sense of his infinite mercy, in the manner of their salvation For if they are to believe, that to be born of God, born from above, born of the Spirit, born of an incorruptible seed of the Word of God, signifies no more than this now mentioned, must not this naturally lead them, to take everything that is said of God and Christ, in the mysteries of their redemption, in a sense as much below the expression, as this of the new birth? Must it not naturally lead them to think, that all scripture -doctrines, have more of height and mystery in the expression, than in the thing itself? and that there is no need to fear, or hope, or believe, or trust, or resign, or love, or seek, or do, or bear, or give, or suffer according to the apparent language, and plain expression of the gospel? And thus, the words of him that spoke as never man spoke, have all their spirit and life taken from them; and we may be said to have the words of Christ, as though we had them not

(28.) The whole nature of the Christian religion, stands upon these two great pillars, namely, the greatness of our fall, and the greatness of our redemption. In the full and true knowledge of these truths, lie all the reasons of a deep humility, penitence, and self-denial, and also all the motives and incitements, to a most hearty, sincere, and total conversion to God. And everyone is necessarily more or less of a true penitent, and more less truly converted to God, according as he is more or less deeply, and inwardly sensible of these truths And till these two great truths, have awakened, and opened our minds for the full reception of the divine light; all reformation and pretense to amendment, is but a dead and superficial thing, a mere garment of hypocrisy, to hide us from ourselves, and others

Nothing can truly awaken a sinner, but a true sense, of the deep inward possession, and power that sin has in him. When he sees, that sin begins with his being, that it rises up in the essences of his nature, and lives in the first forms of his life, and that he lies thus chained, and barred up in the very jaws of death and hell, as unable to alter his own state, as to create another creature; when along with this knowledge he sees that the free grace of God, has provided him a remedy equal to his distress, that he has given him the holy blood and life of Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, to enter as deep into his soul, as sin has entered, to change the first forms, and essences of his life, and bring forth in them a new birth of a divine nature, which is to be an immortal image of the Holy Trinity, everlastingly safe, blessed, and enriched in the bosom of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; when a man once truly knows, and feels these two truths, he may be said, truly to know, and feel so much of the power of Christ brought to life in him. And there seems to be no more, that you

need to do outwardly for him. The voice of his inward teacher is ever so speaking, so ever heard, and loved within him, that you can say nothing to him outwardly of any humility, penitence, or self-abasement, but what is less, than his own wounded heart suggests to him. Humility can only be feigned or false, before this conviction. He can now, no more take any degree of good to himself, than assume any share in the creation of angels; and all pride or self-esteem of any kind, seems to him to contain as great a lie in it, as if he was to say, that he helped to create himself

You need not tell him that he must turn unto God with all his strength, with all his heart, all his soul, and all his spirit; for all that he can offer unto God, seems to him already less than the least of his mercies towards him. He has so seen the exceeding love of God, in the manner and degree of his redemption, that it would be the greatest of pain to him, to do anything, but upon a motive of divine love. As his soul has found God to be all love, so it has but one desire, and that is, to be itself all love of God. This is the conviction and conversion, that necessarily arises from a full, inward sensibility of these truths; the soul is thereby wholly consecrated to God, and can like, or love, or do nothing, but what it can, some way or other, turn into a service of love towards him. But where the weight and power of these truths is not livingly felt in the heart, there it is not to be wondered at, if religion has no root, that is able to bring forth its proper fruits And if the generality of Christians, are a number of dead, superficial consenters to the history of scripture-doctrines, as unwilling to have the spirit, as to part with the form of their religion; loath to hear of any kind of self-denial, fond of worldly ease, indulgence, and riches, unwilling to be called to the perfection of the gospel, professing and practicing religion, merely as the fashion and custom of the place they are in, require; if some rest in outward forms of religion, others in certain orthodoxy of opinions; if some expect to be saved by the goodness of the sect they are of, others by a certain change of their outward behavior; if some content themselves with a lukewarm spirit, and others depend upon their own works, these are delusions, that must happen to those, who do not know and feel, in some good degree, the true nature of their own fallen soul, and what a kind of regeneration can alone save them But all these errors, delusions, and false rests, are cut up by the root, as soon as a man knows the true reason and necessity of his wanting so great a savior For he that knows the ground and essences of his soul to be so many essences of sin, which form sin as they form his life, entirely incapable of producing any good, till a birth from God has arisen in them; such a one can neither place his redemption, where it is not, nor seek it coolly and negligently, where it is For knowing, that it is the hell within his own nature, that only wants to be destroyed, he is intent only upon bringing destruction upon that; and this secures him from false religion And knowing, that this inward hell cannot be destroyed, unless God becomes his redeemer, or regenerator in the ground of his soul; this makes him believe all, expect all, and hope all from his savior Jesus Christ alone And knowing that all this redemption, or salvation, is to be brought about in the inmost ground and depth of his heart, this makes him always apply to God, as the God of his heart; and therefore what he offers to God is his own heart; and this keeps him always spiritually alive, wholly employed and intent upon the true work of religion, the fitting and preparing his heart for all the operations of God's Holy Spirit upon it. And so he is a true inward Christian, who, as our blessed Lord speaks, has the kingdom of God within him, where the state and habit of his heart continually, thankfully, worships the Father in spirit and in truth

(29.) Having sufficiently shown the nature and necessity of regeneration, that it consists solely in the restoration of the birth of the Son of God in the human soul, it must be plain from thence, that it

is solely the work of God, he being alone able to effect it; and that man can have no other share in it, but that of complying with the terms, on which it is to be received of God It may be proper to enquire, when, and how this great work is done in the soul The mercy and infinite goodness of God, has chosen all mankind to salvation in Jesus Christ, before the foundation of the world. Now this eternal decree of God, took place upon the fall of Adam; and as he was admitted into the terms of Christian salvation immediately after his transgression, so all mankind, as being in his loins, were taken into the same covenant of grace, and what was then done to Adam, was done to him, as the common parent of mankind The bruiser of the serpent given to Adam, as his savior, was not a verbal promise of something only, that should come to pass in future ages to redeem him, and which left his soul in the same state of inward darkness, disorder, and weakness in which it found him; but it was a redeeming power, which by the mercy of God, was treasured up in his fallen nature, which was to resist and overcome the wrath and death, and awakened nature of hell, that was in his soul; and from that time of God's accepting him to a salvation, through the seed of the woman, he was saved by the power of Christ within him, as really, as those that lived, and believed in Christ, after he had been incarnate. As nothing can save the last man, or become his righteousness, or redemption, but the divine nature of Jesus Christ, derived into his soul, so nothing else could be righteousness, redemption, or salvation to the first man

All men therefore that ever were, or shall be descended from Adam, have Jesus Christ for their savior, as Adam had, they receive the promise made to him, and receive by that promise, that which he received by it, they have a seed of the woman, an incorruptible seed of life, springing up in the first essences of their life, which is to oppose and resist the seed of the serpent, or the diabolical nature that is in them also. And therefore no son of Adam is without a savior, or can be lost, or entirely overcome by the evil, that the fall has brought upon him, but by his own turning away from this savior within him, and giving himself up to the suggestions, and workings of the evil nature, that is in him

(30.) This mystery of an inward power of a salvation hidden in all men, has had just such degrees of obscurity and manifestation, as the nature, and birth, and person of the messiah have had; that is, as the nature and person of Jesus Christ, as an atonement, savior and redeemer of mankind, were for several ages of the world only obscurely pointed at, and typified by the religion of the Jews; so this seed of a new birth, or saving power of Christ hidden in the souls of all men, was, through the same ages, under the same veil, and obscurity But when the eternal Son of God became incarnate, and manifested to the world the mysteries of his nature, person, and office, when it was publicly declared, that he was the life and light of the world, the only source of goodness in every creature, the "Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"; that we must all be born again of him, be born again from above, be born of the Spirit, and that everyone was to profess the owning, seeking and desiring this divine birth, by a baptism into the Name, or nature, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; then it became plainly manifest, what Christianity was from the beginning, and in what manner Jesus Christ was the savior of Adam, and what it was that he received, by receiving a bruiser of the serpent, into the first essences of his life

Therefore when Jesus Christ came into the world, declaring the necessity of a new birth, to be owned, and sought, by a baptism into the Name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; this was not a new kind, or power of salvation, but only an open declaration of the same salvation, that had been till then, only typified, and veiled under certain figures and shadows, as he himself had been. And

men were called not to a new faith in him, as then first become their inward life, and light, but to a more open and plain acknowledgement of him, who from the beginning, had been the one life and light, and only salvation of the first man, and all that were to descend from him

(31.) Now the things required on our part, towards the raising and bringing forth this new birth in us, are repentance, and faith. These are to be the continual support of our regeneration, carrying it on to the end of our lives But now though repentance and faith are to bring forth, and carry on our regeneration; yet they are themselves the effect and fruit of it, viz., of that first seed or light of life, which God willed to be in Adam For had not God of his own free grace, chosen Adam and Eve to salvation in Jesus Christ, by doing inwardly in the deep, and darkened essences of their fallen souls, something like that, which he did to the "darkness which was upon the face of the deep," when he said, "Let there be light" in it; Adam and Eve, and all their posterity, had been inwardly, as to their souls, only of the nature of the devils, full of their dark and fiery dispositions, shut up in their elements, incapable of any thought or motion, but what tended to selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath

Neither they, nor any of their posterity, could have brought forth any degree of humility, resignation, love, faith, hope, or desire of God; but had lived hardened and fixed, in the abovenamed elements of hell, full of their own perverse will, without all conscience, or instinct of goodness And therefore when God of free grace, provided that falling man should fall into a state of redemption, that is, into a possibility of being God's creature again; this was effected by God's treasuring up, or preserving in him a seed of the woman, a remaining spark of his first divine life; which first divine life, was then, Christ in him, his full birth of glory, as certainly, as Christ in us, is now our hope of glory

St. Paul says, "God hath chosen us in Christ Jesus, before the foundation of the world." Now from this eternal, foreseeing goodness of God towards all mankind, it is, that a root or remains of the first divine life, called a seed of the woman, the ingrafted Word, a kingdom of God, a pearl of great price, a treasure hid in a field, was fore-ordained to be preserved, and treasured up, though hidden under that death, which Adam died in paradise. And thence it was, that the goodness of God, could direct distressed Adam to this comfort, viz., "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent"; not a foreign seed, to be sown into thee from without, but a remaining, preserved seed of thy first life of Christ, which through the divine love for thee, is hidden, and securely treasured up under thy own fallen earthly nature, as a pearl hidden in thy own field, a principle of holiness, a touch of love, the pledge of immortality, and fund of everlasting happiness. For this heavenly pearl, called by St. Peter, "the incorruptible seed of the Word," shall surely come forth again out of its state of hiddenness and death; shall quicken and revive into its first glory, through Christ, who is, and ever shall be, the resurrection, and life of all that, which was hid and lost in the death, that Adam died

(32.) And here it is, that we see again how "God is love," universal love towards all mankind, having put all into a state of redemption. For if all men, as sons of Adam, are by the free grace of God made sons of the second Adam, and, as such, have a seed of life in them from him, in order to be raised up to a perfection of the new man in Christ Jesus; and if this seed of a new birth, or light of life, is the general, and preventing grace of all men, that enables them so to act, as to obtain God's assisting grace, in the renewal of their hearts and minds, then it is a glorious and

undeniable truth, that there is no partiality in God, no election of one people to mercy in Christ Jesus, and dereliction of another to their own helpless misery, but that all men, have a general call, and a general capacity to obtain their salvation; and that as certainly as all fell and died in Adam, so all were restored in his restoration

(33.) Now as the first power and ability of our having one good thought, or desire of turning to God in penitence and faith, is the effect of this first seed of a new birth in all men; so this seed of a new birth is quickened, strengthened, and brought forth to its full stature or highest degree of perfection, by acts, or rather habits of repentance and faith So that faith and repentance are the life of the new man, or the acts by which it grows, and is brought forth into its proper state of perfection. There is no difference between faith and works, in this inward new-born man. Its faith is its works, and its works are its faith. For faith is its turning to God, and its turning to God, is its aversion, or turning from all evil; so that faith and good works, are only two considerations of one and the same thing, or of one and the same state of mind, in the new-born man

(34.) This seed of the new birth, that is God's free, and fore-ordained gift to man, as the power that is to redeem him, is the reason and foundation of that language in scripture, of a new, inward and spiritual man, and of an old, natural, and outward rational man, and of the enmity between the one and the other; in which enmity, the whole warfare, and trial of the Christian life, consist The seed of the new birth, is the inward and new man, which is to grow up into that spiritual and holy man, which was first created in paradise This inward man, is alone the subject of religion and divine grace; he only is of God, and heareth God's Word; he only hath eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to conceive the things of God This is he alone, that is born of God, and cannot sin, because he has no sin in his nature. This is he alone, that overcometh the world, because he is of a divine nature, and is both contrary to the world, and above it. This is he alone, that can love his brother as himself, because the love of God is alone alive, and abideth in him The old, natural man, or the rational man of this world, is the dark fallen nature, enlightened only, and solely with the light of this outward world; it is the diabolical nature, only softened with flesh and blood, quieted and comforted with the light of the sun, by this light, he can only see the outward images of things, whether divine or human, and can only reason, dispute, and wrangle about his own shadowy images, but can know no more of God, and the things of God, than such dead images can represent unto him The old or natural man, may be an historian, a poet, an orator, a critic, a politician, or worldly wise man, &c., all this skill and art lies within his reach; the fire of his soul, kindled only by the light of the sun, may do all this. But notwithstanding all these trappings and endowments, he is wholly shut up in his own dark prison of selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath; his virtues, piety, and goodness can be only such, as give no disturbance to these four elements of the fallen nature

He is an animal, full of earthly, sensual passions and tempers, and can only favor such things as can gratify their nature

Here, and here only, lies the true, solid, and immutable distinction, between the old and the new man, and the plain reason, why the life of the one, is the death of the other

(35.) Now in this essential difference, between the old and the new man, we may at one view, see a clear and solid ground of distinction, between what is called a bare historical, and superficial faith, which cannot save the soul, but leaves it a slave to sin, and that living and real faith, which

effecteth our salvation, and sets us in the glorious liberty of the sons of God

Human reason, or the natural man of this life, can believe and assent to this truth, that Christ is our savior, and that we are to be saved by a righteousness from him, as easily, as it can assent to any other relation, or matter of fact. But whilst it is human reason only, that assents to this truth, little or nothing is done to the soul by it; the soul is under much the same power of sin as before, because only the notion, or image, or history of the truth is taken in by it; and reason of itself can take in no more. But when the seed of the new birth, called the inward man, has faith awakened in it, its faith is not a notion, but a real, strong, essential hunger, an attracting, or magnetic desire of Christ, which as it proceeds from a seed of the divine nature in us, so it attracts and unites with its like, it lays hold on Christ, puts on the divine nature, and in a living and real manner, grows powerful over all sins, and effectually works out our salvation. And therefore it is justly called a divine faith, not only because of its divine effects, but chiefly because it arises from that, which is divine within us, and by its attracting hunger, and thirst after that fountain of life, from whence it came, becomes essentially united with it; breathes by that Spirit, and lives by that Word which eternally proceeds out of the mouth of God. Of this faith alone it is, that our Lord speaks, when he says, "whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life. When this faith is thus awakened, and sprung up in the inward man, then we may be said to have a strong saving faith, or a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ

(36.) From these two sorts of faith here mentioned, we may very plainly see and perceive, why there is such a misunderstanding between two sorts of believers, and why they speak a language so unsatisfactory, and disgusting to one another

Busy inquisitive reason, learned enough in its own sphere, grammatically skilled in scripture-knowledge, looking no further, or deeper into the things of God, than a dictionary can guide it, cannot bear the language of the regenerate, inward man, but condemns it as fanatical, and enthusiastic; not considering, that this rational man, which is made the judge of salvation, is that very individual old man with his deeds, that we are by the religion of the gospel, to be saved, and delivered from; and that we should have no occasion for a new seed of a divine life in us, no occasion to be born again of God, but because this natural man of human reason, can neither see nor hear, nor feel, nor taste, nor understand the things of God, as they are in themselves

(37.) From this difference between the new, and the old man, which is a difference as real, as that between heaven and earth, several lessons of great instruction may be learnt. When religion is in the hands of the mere natural man, he is always the worse for it; it adds a bad heat to his own dark fire, and helps to inflame his four elements of selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath. And hence it is, that worse passions, or a worse degree of them, are to be found in persons of great religious zeal, than in others that make no pretenses to it. History also furnishes us with instances of persons of great piety and devotion, who have fallen into great delusions, and deceived both themselves and others. The occasion of their fall was this; it was, because they made a saint of the natural man. My meaning is, they considered their whole nature, as the subject of religion, and divine graces; and therefore their religion was according to the workings of their whole nature, and the old man was as busy, and as much delighted in it, as the new. And hence it was, that persons of this stamp, all inflamed, as they seemed to be, with piety, yet overlooked in their own lives, such errors of moral behavior, as the first beginners in religion, dare not allow themselves in

Others again, perhaps truly awakened by the Spirit of God, to devote themselves wholly to piety, and the service of God, yet making too much haste to have the glory of saints, the elements of fallen nature, selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath, could secretly go along with them. For to seek eminence, and significancy in grace, is but like seeking for eminence and significancy in nature. And the old man can relish glory, and distinction in religion, as well as in common life, and will be content to undergo as many labors, pains, and self-denials, for the sake of religious, as for the sake of secular glory. There is nothing safe in religion, but in such a course of behavior, as leaves nothing for corrupt nature to feed, or live upon; which can only then be done, when every degree of perfection we aim at, is a degree of death to the passions of the natural man

(38.) It may now perhaps be said, if regeneration is so great a matter, if it signifies the restoring to the soul its first paradisaical light, or the renewing of the birth of the Son of God in it; surely so great a thing, and transacted within us, must not only be known and felt, when it is brought about, but must be known and felt in some strange, and extraordinary manner

It may be answered, first, that all mankind may in a certain and good sense, be said to be in some degree sharers of this regeneration, as having in them a seed of life, that is contrary to their corrupt nature; which seed they partake of, as heirs of the first grace, granted to Adam in the ingrafted Word. This first seed, or light of life, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, is the first seed of the new birth; which birth stands in this life, as a tree or plant in the soil, and is only in a state of growing during this life. For was the new birth, with regard both to soul and body, ever totally finished in anyone, he would be as certainly in paradise, as Adam was, and be as much above the power of the elements of this world, as Adam was at his creation. Secondly, all Christians are in a higher and further state of regeneration, by the grace of baptism into the Name of the Holy Trinity. By baptism, they profess themselves disciples of Jesus Christ, in his kingdom of grace, to seek for life, righteousness, and sanctification in him; to live by his Spirit, in conformity to his doctrine, life, sufferings and death, in a continual resistance of the corruptions of their nature, the temptations of the world and the devil This profession faithfully kept, is their progress in the way of regeneration. Some only outwardly make this profession, and so only have the name of Christians. Some make it in a much better manner; yet being very defective in their conformity to the life and doctrines of Jesus, live and die far short of that purification, or renewal of the inward man, which the religion of the gospel proposes

Others renouncing all for Christ, and following his counsels, as well as his precepts, arrive at high degrees of regeneration, and experience such a life in Christ, or such a manifestation of Christ in them, as others less faithful to their master, must be strangers to To ask therefore by what strange or extraordinary effects, the work of the new birth is to be known, and felt to be done in the soul, is a very improper, and useless question. Because regeneration is not to be considered as a thing, done, but as a state that is progressive, or as a thing, that is continually doing

(39.) If it be further asked, what are then the certain marks, or effects of a highly advanced degree of regeneration, which Christians are to look for

It may be answered, this question is not useful: first, because there is no obligation upon anyone, to know and feel the height, or advancement of his state. Secondly, because the inquiry after such knowledge, and inward feeling of it, is very dangerous. Thirdly, because it can be no hurt to anyone's piety and holiness, to take it to be lower than it really is. Fourthly, because nothing keeps

up our progress in the way of regeneration, let it be in what degree it will in us, but our constant fidelity in conforming to the doctrines, life, and death of Jesus Christ. Fifthly, because this question directs, and turns people's minds to the seeking after certain effects, merely from ideas and descriptions of them, when their minds should only be set upon the causes that are to produce them

Thus, supposing it to be true, that an assurance of salvation, or continuance in grace, was a genuine effect of a certain degree of regeneration; Christians should not be directed to seek for this assurance, as a certain mark or effect of such a degree of regeneration, for this is directing them to seek for this effect from their own selves, and not from the state of their regeneration For their minds and imaginations will be naturally upon the stretch, how to work themselves up into this pitch of assurance, and so it will be something, that they have seized upon by their own will, and not received as the genuine effects of their state in grace. Whereas, supposing (but not granting) this assurance to be the proper effect of a certain degree of the new birth, yet it is an effect that is not to be sought for beforehand, but only to be received when its proper cause has produced it

(40.) It is a great error, to fix any certain marks or effects to such a degree of regeneration; for its effects will be various in different persons, from a variety of causes, both on the part of God, and man The truly pious Christian, in whom the Holy Ghost dwelleth as in his temple, is indeed in a state of high acquiescence in God; but he wants no more to have this acquiescence turned into an assurance of his own mind, that he cannot fall from his state of grace, than he wants to have the promises of God made sure to him, by the promise of some mortal man And if it pleases God to impress strongly and plainly upon his mind, that his salvation is secured, he receives it, as he does everything from God, with a grateful mind; yet will he not rest in it, or receive it as a sign of his high regeneration, but rather as a sign that God saw his weakness stood in need of it; and so will pass over it, and return to an humble, total resignation of his whole soul, spirit, and body, both for time and eternity, into the hands of God, through faith in the merits of his savior Jesus Christ

Least of all can such a one call peremptorily upon others, for such an assurance as he has had, or condemn their resignation and peace in the want of it; he will be more afraid of thus meddling with the things of God, than of being a busy-body in other men's matters

(41.) The only useful question in this matter, is this, how a man may know that he is in the way of regeneration, that he is spiritually alive, and growing in the inward and new man

It may be answered, just as the state, nature, and life of the natural man makes itself to be known, and felt. The soul of man, or that which is the subject both of the old and new nature, is not two, but one soul. The fire of the soul, or that spiritual fire which is the soul itself, is kindled or enlightened by the light of the sun; this makes the natural man, and from whence the imagination, will, desires, thoughts, and inclinations of the natural man arise The same individual fire-soul, enlightened by the Son of God, makes the true new man, from which soul thus enlightened, the imagination, will, desires, thoughts, and inclinations of the new man arise. So that the same proofs are to be expected in both cases, the spiritual man is to know that he is alive in the same manner, as the natural man knows and feels his life. In these things, in the imagination, will, desires, thoughts, and inclinations, consists the life of each nature; and what are more than these, are to be considered as the outward fruits and effects of each nature

(42.) Now though the natural life in all men is one and the same, yet there are under it variety of complexions, which makes men of the same nature, almost infinitely different from one another. Now the matter is just thus with the spiritual man, or in the inward world. As many different complexions arise in the soul, enlightened by the Son of God, as in the soul, enlightened by the outward light of this world For the outward world is but a glass, or representation of the inward; and everything and variety of things in temporal nature, must have its root, or hidden cause, in something that is more inward

It is therefore a well-grounded, and undeniable truth, that the new spiritual man hath his particular complexion, as sure as the outward and natural man hath. Hence it is, that there has been so great a difference, in the form and character of the most eminent and faithful servants of God; one could think of nothing but penitence and penitential austerities; another all inflamed with the love of God, could think or speak of nothing else; some have been driven into a holy solitude, living as John the Baptist; others have been wholly taken up in works of charity, loving their neighbor even more than themselves. A great variety of this kind, has been always found amongst those, who were most truly devoted to God, whose variety, is not only not hurtful in itself, nor displeasing to God, but is as much according to his will, and the designs of his wisdom, as the difference between cherubims and seraphims, or the variety of the stars in the firmament

Every complexion of the inward man, when sanctified by humility, and suffering itself to be turned, and struck, and moved by the Holy Spirit of God, according to its particular frame and turn, helps mightily to increase that harmony of divine praise, thanksgiving, and adoration, which must arise from different instruments, sounds, and voices. To condemn this variety in the servants of God, or to be angry at those who have not served him, in the way that we have chosen for ourselves, is but too plain a sign, that we have not enough renounced the elements of selfishness, pride, and anger

(43.) From this variety of complexions both in the inward and outward man, we may make some useful observations. And the first may be this, that every man whose complexion is strong in him, as to one particular kind, is vehemently inclined to imprint the same upon others, and that others of the same kind, are naturally disposed to catch and receive it from him. But I shall consider this matter only with regard to religion. Let it be supposed that men of a certain complexion, have taken upon them to try the religious state of others by these questions: Are you sure that you should be able to die a martyr? Do you find certain strong resolutions, not in your head, or your brain, but in your inward man, that you would not refuse a martyrdom of any kind? Have you the witness of the Spirit within you, bearing witness with your spirit, that you are in this state

Now, it is beyond all question, that an examination of this kind, or a demand of such a faith, can have no better foundation than complexion. Who do you think would be most likely to come into this faith? First, it would be those that were most unlikely to keep it. It would be those who knew the least of themselves, and whose piety had more of heat than of light in it. It would be those, whose outward man was of the same complexion, that was sanguine, capable of a false fire, and willing to have the glory of resolutions, and fine persuasions at so easy a rate. Let it now be supposed, that people of another complexion should put questions such as these: Do you know and feel that all your sins are forgiven you? Do you know when and where, or at what time, and in what place, you received this forgiveness? Do you know when and where you ceased to be one of those sinners called to repentance? And became one of those whole, that need not a physician?

Have you an absolute assurance of your salvation, and that you cannot possibly fall from your state of grace? Now who may be thought the most likely to come into this religion

First, not he who is deeply humble, that abhors self-justification, and truly knows the free grace of God. Such a one would say, I believe the forgiveness of sins, with as much assurance, as I believe there is a God; I believe that Jesus Christ does now to all those who have a true, and full faith in him, that which he did to those who so believed in him, when he was upon earth. That he forgives their sins, as immediately, as certainly, as fully, as when he said by an outward voice, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." I believe that in this faith lies all our strength, and possibility of growing up in the inward man, and recovering that image and likeness of God, in which we were created; that to this faith all things are possible, and that by this faith, every enemy we have, whether he be within us, or without us, may, and must be entirely overcome. I believe, that to repentance and faith in Christ, salvation is made as secure, and as absolutely assured, as paradise was made secure to the thief upon the cross, by the express word of our savior. I believe that my own sins, were they greater, and more than the sins of the whole world, would be wholly expiated, and taken away by my faith, in the blood and life of my blessed savior. But if I now want to add something of my own to this faith, if this great and glorious faith is defective, and saves me not, till I can add my own sense, and my own feeling to it, at such a time or place, is not this saying in the plainest manner, that faith alone cannot justify me? Is not this making this faith in the blood of Christ defective, and insufficient to my salvation, till as self-justification, an own-pleasure, an own-taste, are joined with it? Might it not better be said, that faith could not justify me till it had works, than that it cannot justify me without these inward workings, feelings, witnessings, of my own mind, sense, and imagination? Is there not likely to be a more hurtful self-seeking, a more hurtful self-confidence, a more hurtful self-trust, a more dangerous self-deceit, in making faith to depend upon these inward workings and feelings, than in making it depend upon outward good works of our own

Secondly, no one who was truly resigned unto God in all things, would come into these questions; for to be resigned unto God in all things, and yet seek to be not resigned to him, in these great matters above mentioned, is a contradiction

Such a one would say, I seek not to have an inward sense and feeling of the certainty of these things, because that would be departing from that pure, entire, full, and naked faith in God, and resignation of myself to him, which alone can justify me in his sight, and make me capable of the operations of his Holy Spirit. He can only then, do all his good pleasure in me, when I have no own will, no self-seeking; this total resignation of myself to him, is the one only immediate disposition, or capability of enjoying God himself with all his infinite treasures, particular impressions, sensible convictions, strong tastes, high satisfactions, though they may be often the good gifts of God, yet if they are much sought for, or rested in, they minister food to a spiritual self-love, and self-seeking, and lay the foundation of spiritual pride; and so become a wall of partition between God and the soul. For the soul may be as fully fixed in selfishness, through a fondness of sensible sweetness, pious motions, and delightful enjoyments in spiritual things, as by a fondness for earthly satisfactions

Thirdly, no one, whose heart was truly touched by a pure and perfect love of God, could come into these questions. For this love cannot seek for self-comfort in the answer of such questions as these

Such a person would say, my religion consists in living wholly to my beloved, according to his satisfaction, and not my own. What God wills, that I will; what God loves, that I love; what pleases God, that pleases me. I have no desire to know anything of myself, or to feel anything in myself, but that I am an instrument in the hands of God, to be, to do, and suffer, according to his good pleasure. I am content to know that I love and rejoice in God alone, that he is what he is, and that I am what he pleases to make of me, and do with me

(44.) Seeing then it appears that the truly humble man, the man that is wholly resigned to God, and the pure lover of him, are not likely to come into the religion of these questions, let us now see who may be supposed ready to receive it

First, all young persons, whose passions had not yet been much awakened, or spent their fire; who had but little experience of themselves, and the deceitfulness of their own hearts; for everything in their nature, would help them to like, love, and obtain such an assurance, strength of conviction, inward feeling, as is here required

Secondly, all restless self-lovers, who were uneasy with themselves, and everything else, who could find nothing in religion, or common life, that enough pleased them; these would be easily persuaded to work themselves up into a belief, that their sins were forgiven them at such a time, or that Christ took an entire possession of them as such a place. For hearing that true religion consisted solely in this, and that they only wanted it, because of their want of faith in it, they would naturally embrace this, as the shortest way to comfort and rest in themselves, in their own self-convictions

Thirdly, all persons of a sanguine, tender, and imaginary complexion, would be likely to strike in with the religion of these questions. For such persons receiving everything strongly, and having a power of believing and imagining almost in any degree, as they please, they would not find it hard, to comply with doctrines so suited to their nature, and which indulged that in them, which wanted most to be indulged, a sanguine imagination

Fourthly, all those who so blaspheme God, as to make him from all eternity absolutely to elect some to an irresistible salvation, and absolutely to reprobate others to an unavoidable damnation. For there could be no subsisting under such an horrid belief as this, but by those, who through a blind partiality, strong bias of self-love, and self-esteem, can work themselves up into a full awareness, inward infallible feeling, that they are in the number of the absolutely elected from all eternity

Lastly, these questions are a great bait to all kinds of hypocrites, who must find themselves much inclined to enter into a religion, where they may pass immediately for saints, upon their own testimony, and stand in the highest rank of piety, and of interest in Christ, merely by their own laying claim to it

(45.) Suppose it was to be asked Christians, as necessary to their salvation, Do you believe and know that you have the self-denial and mortification of John the Baptist? Have you an inward conviction that you have a zeal equal to that of St. Paul? Have you an assurance that your love is full as high as that of John the Evangelist? That your penitence is equal to that of Mary Magdalene Could these questions, with any warrant from scripture, be put to all Christians, as terms of their salvation

Yet there is as much foundation in the gospel, for putting such questions as these, and making the salvation of Christians to depend upon them, as for asking them, on the same account, when, and where, they felt their sins were forgiven them? When and where they felt Christ to take an entire possession of them? When and where they felt themselves made sure of their salvation, and incapable of falling from their state of grace For what is all this but calling, hastening, and stirring up people to seek for self- justification, and compelling them to think highly, and affirm rashly of themselves, in order to be saved? Why might it not be as well to call upon them to say, I feel myself to be as good as St. Paul, as pious as St. John, as to say, I feel that my salvation is secure, and that I cannot fall from my state of grace? Is not this making faith in one's self, as good, as necessary, and as beneficial to us, as faith in Christ Would it not be as well, nay better, to make good works of our own, necessary to true faith, than to make self-justification, which is not a good work, to be the very essence and perfection of it The matter will not be much mended by saying, that this feeling and assurance is acknowledged to be the pure gift of God, and so cannot be called our own, or our own justification. For if I have not this gift of God, till I pronounce it myself, till my own feeling and assurance confirms it to me, I am self-justified, because my justification arises, from what I feel and declare of myself

(46.) How strangely must they have read the gospel, who can take a naked implicit faith, and an humble total resignation of our spirit, state, and life, into the mercy and goodness of God, to be not only a poor and imperfect, but a reprobate state; or that a man has no true and saving faith, till it is an infallible own-feeling, and self-assurance? What must such people think of our savior dying upon the cross, with these words in his mouth, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" Will they say that this is a dangerous state? Is the spirit of Christ here to be renounced? Will they say, that no new-born Christian can die in this manner? Or that if he does, he is not in a state of salvation To know no more, and to seek to know no more of our salvation, than we can know by an implicit faith, and absolute resignation of ourselves to God in Christ Jesus, is the true saving knowledge of Christ, and such as keeps us in the highest degree of fitness to receive our perfect salvation

(47.) I hope it will here be observed, that I no way depreciate, undervalue, or reject any particular impressions, strong influences, delightful sensations, or heavenly foretastes in the inward man, which the Holy Spirit of God may at times bestow upon good souls; I leave them their just worth, I acknowledge them to be the good gifts of God, as special calls, and awakenings to forsake our sins, as great incitements to deny ourselves, and take up our cross, and follow Christ with greater courage, and resolution

They may be as beneficial, and useful to us in our spiritual life, as other blessings of God, such as prosperity, health, happy complexion, and the like. But then, as outward blessings, remarkable providences, religious complexion, and the like, may be very serviceable to awaken us, and excite our conversion to God, and much assist the spiritual life; so they may very easily have a contrary effect, serve to fill us with pride, and self-satisfaction, and make us esteem ourselves, as greater favorites of God, than those that want them. Who may yet be led to a higher degree of goodness, be in a more purified state, and stand nearer to God in their poor, naked, and destitute condition, than we in the midst of great blessings

It is just thus with regard to those inward blessings of the spiritual life. They are so many spurs, motives, and incitements to live wholly unto God; yet they may instead of that, fill us with self-satisfaction and self-esteem, and prompt us to despise others that want them, as in a poor, mean, and reprobate state; who yet may be higher advanced, and stand in a nearer degree of union with God, by humility, faith, resignation, and pure love, in their inward poverty and emptiness, than we who live high upon spiritual satisfaction, and can talk of nothing, but our feasts of fat things

All that I would here say of these inward delights and enjoyments, is only this, they are not holiness, they are not piety, they are not perfection, but they are God's gracious allurements, and calls to seek after holiness and spiritual perfection. They are not to be sought for, for their own sakes; they are not to be prayed for, but with such a perfect indifference and resignation, as we must pray for any earthly blessings; they are not to be rested in, as the perfection of our souls, but to be received as cordials, that suppose us to be sick, faint, and languishing; and ought rather to convince us, that we are as yet, but babes, than that we are really men of God But to demand them in others, to make them uneasy under the want of them, full of search and endeavor how to come at them, and satisfied in the enjoyment of them, is as great a mistake in itself, and as prejudicial to true piety, as to make outward blessings of providence, marks of salvation, or worldly poverty, pains, and distress, to be proofs, that we are not born of God

"There are indeed impressions and communications from God, which are more necessary and essential to the pious life of the soul, than the impressions of the sun are to the comfortable life of our outward man. And he that prays for nothing else but these divine communications and impressions, who thinks of nothing else, trusts in nothing else, as able to comfort, strengthen, and enrich his soul; he that is thus all prayer, all love, all desire, and all faith, in these communications and impressions from above, is just in the same state of sobriety, as he that only prays that God would not leave him to himself. For he that is without anything of these communications and impressions of God upon him, is in the same state of death and separation from God, as the devils are." {"Demonstration of the gross errors, &c., in the Plain Account of the Sacrament, p. 287.}

These impressions or operations of God upon our souls, are of the essence of religion, which has no goodness in it, but so far as it introduces the life, power, and presence of God into the soul. The praying therefore for impressions of this kind from God, is only praying that we may not be left to ourselves; to pray always for these with faith, and hunger and thirst after them, is only praying earnestly, that the kingdom of God may come, and his will be done in us For the soul is only so far cleansed from its corruption, so far delivered from the power of sin, and so far purified, as it has renounced all own will, and own desire, to have nothing, receive nothing, and be nothing, but what the one will of God chooses for it, and does to it

This, and this alone is the true kingdom of God opened in the soul, when stripped of all selfishness, it has only one love, and one will in it, when it has no motion or desire, but what branches from the love of God, and resigns itself wholly to the will of God

There is nothing evil, or the cause of evil to either man, or devil, but his own will; there is nothing good in itself, but the will of God; he therefore who wholly renounces his own will, turns away from all evil; and he who gives himself up wholly to the will of God, puts himself in the possession of all that is good

(48.) It may freely be granted, that conversion to God, is often very sudden and instantaneous, unexpectedly raised from variety of occasions. Thus, one by seeing only a withered tree {Frere Laurent.}, another by reading the lives and deaths of the antediluvian fathers, one by hearing of heaven, another hell, one by reading of the love, or wrath of God, another of the sufferings of Christ, may find himself, as it were, melted into penitence all on a sudden. It may be granted also, that the greatest sinner, may in a moment be converted to God, and feel himself wounded in such a degree, as perhaps those never were, who had been turning to God all their lives. But then it is to be observed, that this suddenness of change, or flash of conversion, is by no means of the essence of true conversion, and is no more to be demanded in ourselves, or others, than such a light from heaven, as shone round St. Paul, and cast him to the ground. Secondly, that no one is to expect, or require, that another should receive his conversion, or awakening, from the same cause, or in the same manner, as he has done, that is, that heaven, or hell, or the justice, or love of God, or faith in Christ, either as our light, or our atonement, must needs be the first awakening of the soul, because it has been so with him. Thirdly, that this stroke of conversion, is not to be considered, as signifying our high state of a new birth in Christ, or a proof that we are on a sudden made new creatures, but that we are thus suddenly called, and stirred up to look after a newness of nature. Fourthly, that this sensibility, or manifest feeling of the operations of God upon our souls, which we have experienced in these first awakenings, is not to be expected, or desired, to go along with us, through the course of our purification. Fifthly, that regeneration, or the renewal of our first birth and state, is something entirely distinct, from this first sudden conversion, or call to repentance; that it is not a thing done in an instant, but is a certain process, a gradual release from our captivity and disorder, consisting of several stages and degrees, both of death and life, which the soul must go through, before it can have thoroughly put off the old man. I will not say that this must needs be in the same degree in all, or that there cannot be any exceptions to this. But thus much is true and certain, that Jesus Christ is our pattern, that what he did for us, that we are also to do for ourselves, or, in other words, we must follow him in the regeneration. For what he did, he did, both as our atonement, and example, his process, or course of life, temptations, sufferings, denying his own will, death and resurrection, all done, and gone through, on our account, because the human soul wanted such a process of regeneration and redemption; because, only in such a gradual process, all that was lost in Adam, could be restored to us again. And therefore it is beyond all doubt, that this process is to be looked upon, as the stated method of our purification.

It is well worth observing, that our savior's greatest trials, were near the end of his process or life, that he then experienced the sharpest part of our redemption. This might sufficiently show us, that our first awakenings have carried us but a little way; that we should not then begin to be self-assured of our own salvation, but remember, that we stand at a great distance from, and in great ignorance of our severest trials. To sum up all in a word: nothing hath separated us from God but our own will, or rather our own will is our separation from God. All the disorder, and corruption, and malady of our nature, lies in a certain fixedness of our own will, imagination, and desire, wherein we live to ourselves, according to our own will, imagination, and desires. There is not the smallest degree of evil in us, but what arises from this selfishness, because we are thus, all in all to ourselves.

It is this self, that our savior calls upon us to deny; it is this life of self, that we are to hate and to lose, that the kingdom of God may arise in us, that is, that God's will may be done in us. All other

sacrifices that we make, whether of worldly goods, honors, or pleasures, are but small matters, compared to that sacrifice and destruction of all selfishness, as well spiritual, as natural, that must be made, before our regeneration hath its perfect work

There is a denial of our own will, and certain degrees even of self-denying virtues, which yet give no disturbance to this selfishness. To be humble, mortified, devout, patient in a certain degree, and to be persecuted for our virtues, is no hurt to this selfishness; nay, spiritual-self must have all these virtues to subsist upon; and his life consists, in seeing, knowing, and feeling the bulk, strength, and reality of them. But still in all this show, and glitter of virtue, there is an unpurified bottom on which they stand, there is a selfishness, which can no more enter into the kingdom of heaven, than the grossness of flesh and blood can enter into it

What we are to feel, and undergo in these last purifications, when the deepest root of all selfishness, as well spiritual as natural, is to be plucked up, and torn from us, or how we shall be able to stand in that trial, are both of them equally impossible to be known by us beforehand

It is enough for us to know, that we hunger and thirst after the righteousness which is in Christ Jesus; that by faith we desire, and hope to be in him new creatures; to know, that the greatest humility, the most absolute resignation of our whole selves unto God, is our greatest and highest fitness, to receive our greatest and highest purification, from the hands of God.

06.00 Humble, Affectionate, and Earnest Address to the Clergy

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06.01 An Humble, Affectionate, and Earnest Address

An Humble, Affectionate, and Earnest Address to the Clergy The reason of my humbly and affectionately addressing this discourse to the clergy, is not because it treats of things not of common concern to all Christians, but chiefly to invite and induce them, as far as I can, to the serious perusal of it; and because whatever is essential to Christian salvation, if either neglected, overlooked, or mistaken by them, is of the saddest consequence both to themselves and the churches in which they minister. I say essential to salvation, for I would not turn my own thoughts, or call the attention of Christians, to anything but the one thing needful, the one thing essential and only available to our rising out of our fallen state, and becoming, as we were at our creation, an holy offspring of God, and real partakers of the divine nature.

If it be asked, What this one thing is? It is the SPIRIT OF GOD brought again to his FIRST POWER OF LIFE IN US. Nothing else is wanted by us, nothing else intended for us, by the Law, the prophets, and the gospel. Nothing else is, or can be effectual, to the making sinful man become again a godly creature.

Everything else, be it what it will, however glorious and divine in outward appearance, everything that angels, men, churches, or reformations, can do for us, is dead and helpless, but so far as it is the immediate work of the Spirit of God breathing and living in it.

All scripture bears full witness to this truth, and the end and design of all that is written, is only to call us back from the spirit of satan, the flesh, and the world, to be again under full dependence upon, and obedience to the Spirit of God, who out of free love and thirst after our souls, seeks to have his first power of life in us. When this is done, all is done that the scripture can do for us. Read what chapter, or doctrine of scripture you will, be ever so delighted with it, it will leave you as poor, as empty and unreformed as it found you, unless it be a delight that proceeds from, and has turned you wholly and solely to the Spirit of God, and strengthened your union with and dependence upon him. For love and delight in matters of scriptures, whilst it is only a delight that is merely human, however specious and saintlike it may appear, is but the self-love of fallen Adam, and can have no better a nature, till it proceeds from the inspiration of God, quickening his own life and nature within us, which alone can have or give forth a godly love. For if it be an immutable truth, that "no man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost," it must be a truth equally immutable, that no one can have any one Christ-like temper or power of goodness but so far, and in such degree, as he is immediately led and governed by the Holy Spirit. The grounds and reasons of which are as follow.

All possible goodness that either can be named, or is nameless, was in God from all eternity, and must to all eternity be inseparable from him; it can be nowhere but where God is. As therefore before God created anything, it was certainly true that there was but one that was good, so it is just the same truth, after God has created innumerable hosts of blessed and holy and heavenly beings, that there is but one that is good, and that is God.

All that can be called goodness, holiness, divine tempers, heavenly affections, in the creatures, are no more their own, or the growth of their created powers, than they were their own before they were created. But all that is called divine goodness and virtue in the creature is nothing else, but the one goodness of God manifesting a birth and discovery of itself in the creature, according as its created nature is fitted to receive it. This is the unalterable state between God and the creature. Goodness for ever and ever can only belong to God, as essential to him and inseparable from him, as his own unity.

God could not make the creature to be great and glorious in itself; this is as impossible, as for God to create beings into a state of independence on himself. "The heavens," saith David, "declare the glory of God"; and no creature, any more than the heavens, can declare any other glory but that of God. And as well might it be said, that the firmament shows forth its own handiwork, as that a holy divine or heavenly creature shows forth its own natural power. But now, if all that is divine, great, glorious, and happy, in the spirits, tempers, operations, and enjoyments of the creature, is only so much of the greatness, glory, majesty, and blessedness of God, dwelling in it, and giving forth various births of his own triune life, light, and love, in and through the manifold forms and capacities of the creature to receive them, then we may infallibly see the true ground and nature of all true religion, and when and how we may be said to fulfill all our religious duty to God. For the creature's true religion, is its rendering to God all that is God's, it is its true continual acknowledging all that which it is, and has, and enjoys, in and from God. This is the one true religion of all intelligent creatures, whether in heaven, or on earth; for as they all have but one and the same relation to God, so though ever so different in their several births, states or offices, they all have but one and the same true religion, or right behavior towards God. Now the one relation, which is the ground of all true religion, and is one and the same between God and all intelligent creatures, is this, it is a total unalterable dependence upon God, an immediate continual receiving of every kind, and degree of goodness, blessing and happiness, that ever was, or can be found in them, from God alone. The highest angel has nothing of its own that it can offer unto God, no more light, love, purity, perfection, and glorious hallelujahs, that spring from itself, or its own powers, than the poorest creature upon earth. Could the angel see a spark of wisdom, goodness, or excellence, as coming from, or belonging to itself, its place in heaven would be lost, as sure as Lucifer lost his. But they are ever abiding flames of pure love, always ascending up to and uniting with God, for this reason, because the wisdom, the power, the glory, the majesty, the love, and goodness of God alone, is all that they see, and feel, and know, either within or without themselves. Songs of praise to their heavenly Father are their ravishing delight, because they see, and know, and feel, that it is the breath and Spirit of their heavenly Father that sings and rejoices in them. Their adoration in spirit and in truth never ceases, because they never cease to acknowledge the ALL of God; the ALL of God in the whole creation. This is the one religion of heaven, and nothing else is the truth of religion on earth. The matter therefore plainly comes to this, nothing can do, or be, the good of religion to the intelligent creature, but the power and presence of God really and essentially living and working in it. But if this be the unchangeable nature of that goodness and blessedness which is to be had from our religion, then of all necessity, the creature must have all its religious goodness as wholly and solely from God's immediate operation, as it had its first goodness at its creation. And it is the same impossibility for the creature to help itself to that which is good and blessed in religion, by any contrivance, reasonings, or workings of its own natural powers, as to create itself. For the creature, after its

creation, can no more take anything to itself that belongs to God, than it could take it, before it was created. And if truth forces us to hold, that the natural powers of the creature could only come from the one power of God, the same truth should surely more force us to confess, that that which comforts, that which enlightens, that which blesses, which gives peace, joy, goodness, and rest to its natural powers, can be had in no other way, nor by any other thing, but from God's immediate holy operation found in it.

Now the reason why no work of religion, but that which is begun, continued, and carried on by the living operation of God in the creature, can have any truth, goodness, or divine blessing in it, is because nothing can in truth seek God, but that which comes from God. Nothing can in truth find God as its good, but that which has the nature of God living in it; like can only rejoice in like; and therefore no religious service of the creature can have any truth, goodness, or blessing in it, but that which is done in the creature, in, and through, and by a principle and power of the divine nature begotten and breathing forth in it all holy tempers, affections, and adorations.

All true religion is, or brings forth, an essential union and communion of the spirit of the creature with the Spirit of the creator: God in it, and it in God, one life, one light, one love. The Spirit of God first gives, or sows the seed of divine union in the soul of every man; and religion is that by which it is quickened, raised, and brought forth to a fullness and growth of a life in God. Take a similitude of this, as follows. The beginning, or seed of animal breath, must first be born in the creature from the spirit of this world. In like manner, divine faith, hope, love, and resignation to God, are in the religious life its acts of respiration, which, so long as they are true, unite God and the creature in the same living and essential manner, as animal respiration unites the breath of the animal with the breath of this world.

Now as no animal could begin to respire, or unite with the breath of this world, but because it has its beginning to breathe begotten in it from the air of this world, so it is equally certain, that no creature, angel or man, could begin to be religious, or breathe forth the divine affections of faith, love, and desire towards God, but because a living seed of these divine affections was by the Spirit or {sic} God first begotten in it. And as a tree or plant can only grow and fructify by the same power that first gave birth to the seed, so faith, and hope, and love towards God, can only grow and fructify by the same power, that begot the first seed of them in the soul. Therefore divine immediate inspiration and divine religion are inseparable in the nature of the thing.

Take away inspiration, or suppose it to cease, and then no religious acts or affections can give forth anything that is godly or divine. For the creature can offer, or return nothing to God, but that which it has first received from him; therefore, if it is to offer and send up to God affections and aspirations that are divine and godly, it must of all necessity have the divine and godly nature living and breathing in it. Can anything reflect light, before it has received it? Or any other light, than that which it has received? Can any creature breathe forth earthly, or diabolical affections, before it is possessed of an earthly, or diabolical nature? Yet this is as possible, as for any creature to have divine affections rising up and dwelling in it, either before, or any further, than as it has or partakes of the divine nature dwelling and operating in it. A religious faith that is uninspired, a hope, or love that proceeds not from the immediate working of the divine nature within us, can no more do any divine good to our souls, or unite them with the goodness of God, than an hunger after earthly food can feed us with the immortal bread of heaven. All that the natural or uninspired man does, or can

do in the church, has no more of the truth or power of divine worship in it, than that which he does in the field, or shop, through a desire of riches. And the reason is, because all the acts of the natural man, whether relating to matters of religion or the world, must be equally selfish, and there is no possibility of their being otherwise. For self-love, self-esteem, self-seeking, and living wholly to self, are as strictly the whole of all that is or possibly can be in the natural man, as in the natural beast; the one can no more be better, or act above this nature, than the other. Neither can any creature be in a better, or higher state than this, till something supernatural is found in it; and this supernatural something, called in scripture the WORD, or SPIRIT, or INSPIRATION of God, is that alone from which man can have the first good thought about God, or the least power of having more heavenly desires in his spirit, than he has in his flesh. A religion that is not wholly built upon this supernatural ground, but solely stands upon the powers, reasonings, and conclusions of the natural uninspired man, has not so much as the shadow of true religion in it, but is a mere nothing, in the same sense, as an idol is said to be nothing, because the idol has nothing of that in it which is pretended by it. For the work of religion has no divine good in it, but as it brings forth, and keeps up essential union of the spirit of man with the Spirit of God; which essential union cannot be made, but through love on both sides, nor by love, but where the love that works on both sides is of the same nature. No man therefore can reach God with his love, or have union with him by it, but he who is inspired with that one same Spirit of love, with which God loved himself from all eternity, and before there was any creature. Infinite hosts of new created heavenly beings can begin no new kind of love of God, nor have the least power of beginning to love him at all, but so far as his own Holy Spirit of love, wherewith he hath from all eternity loved himself, is brought to life in them. This love, that was then in God alone, can be the only love in creatures that can draw them to God; they can have no power of cleaving to him, of willing that which he wills, or adoring the divine nature, but by partaking of that eternal Spirit of love; and therefore the continual immediate inspiration or operation of the Holy Spirit, is the one only possible ground of our continually loving God. And of this inspired love, and no other, it is that St. John says, "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God." Suppose it to be any other love, brought forth by any other thing but the Spirit of God breathing his own love in us, and then it cannot be true, that he who dwells in such love, dwells in God.

Divine inspiration was essential to man's first created state. The Spirit of the triune God, breathed into, or brought to life in him, was that alone which made him a holy creature in the image and likeness of God. To have no other mover, to live under no other guide or leader, but the Spirit, was that which constituted all the holiness which the first man could have from God. Had he not been thus at the first, God in him and he in God, brought into the world as a true offspring and real birth of the Holy Spirit, no dispensation of God to fallen man would have directed him to the Holy Spirit, or ever have made mention of his inspiration in man. For fallen man could be directed to nothing as his good, but that which he had, and was his good, before he fell. And had not the Holy Spirit been his first life, in and by which he lived, no inspired prophets among the sons of fallen Adam had ever been heard of, or any holy men speaking as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. For the thing would have been impossible, no fallen man could have been inspired by the Holy Spirit, but because the first life of man was a true and real birth of it; and also because every fallen man had, by the mercy and free grace of God, a secret remains of his first life preserved in him, though hidden, or rather swallowed up by flesh and blood; which secret remains, signified and assured to Adam by the name of a "bruiser of the serpent," or "seed of the woman," was his only capacity to

be called and quickened again into his first life, by new breathings of the Holy Spirit in him.

Hence it plainly appears that the gospel state could not be God's last dispensation, or the finishing of man's redemption, unless its whole work was a work of the Spirit of God in the spirit of man; that is, unless without all veils, types, and shadows, it brought the thing itself, or the substance of all former types and shadows, into real enjoyment, so as to be possessed by man in spirit, and in truth. Now the thing itself, and for the sake of which all God's dispensations have been, is that first life of God which was essentially born in the soul of the first man, Adam, and to which he died. But now, if the gospel dispensation comes at the end of all types and shadows, to bring forth again in man a true and full birth of that Holy Spirit which he had at first, then it must be plain, that the work of this dispensation must be solely and immediately the work of the Holy Spirit. For if man could no other possible way have had a holy nature and spirit at first, but as an offspring or birth of the Holy Spirit at his creation, it is certain from the nature of the thing, that fallen man, dead to his first holy nature, can have that same holy nature again no other way, but solely by the operation of that same Holy Spirit, from the breath of which he had at first a holy nature and life in God. Therefore immediate inspiration is as necessary to make fallen man alive again unto God, as it was to make man at first a living soul after the image and in the likeness of God. And continual inspiration is as necessary, as man's continuance in his redeemed state. For this is a certain truth, that that alone which begins, or gives life, must of all necessity be the only continuance or preservation of life. The second step can only be taken by that which gave power to take the first. No life can continue in the goodness of its first created, or redeemed state, but by its continuing under the influence of, and working with and by that powerful root, or Spirit, which at first created, or redeemed it. Every branch of the tree, though ever so richly brought forth, must wither and die, as soon as it ceases to have continual union with, and virtue from that root, which first brought it forth. And to this truth, as absolutely grounded in the nature of the thing, our Lord appeals as a proof and full illustration of the necessity of his immediate indwelling, breathing, and operating in the redeemed soul of man, saying, "I am the vine, ye are the branches, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. If a man abides not in me, he is cast forth as a withered branch; for without me, ye can do nothing," John 15:1-27.

Now from these words let this conclusion be here drawn, viz., that therefore to turn to Christ as a light within us, to expect life from nothing but his holy birth raised within us, to give ourselves up wholly and solely to the immediate continual influx and operation of this Holy Spirit, depending wholly upon it for every kind and degree of goodness and holiness that we want, or can receive, is and can be nothing else, but proud, rank enthusiasm.

Now as infinitely absurd as this conclusion is, no one that condemns continual immediate inspiration as gross enthusiasm, can possibly do it with less absurdity, or show himself a wiser man, or better reasoner, than he that concludes, that because without Christ we can do nothing, therefore we ought not to believe, expect, wait for, and depend upon his continual immediate operation in everything that we do, or would do well. As to the pride charged upon this pretended enthusiasm, it is the same absurdity. Christ says, "without me ye can do nothing," the same as if he had said, As to yourselves, and all that can be called your own, you are mere helpless sin and misery, and nothing that is good, can come from you, but as it is done by the continual immediate breathing and inspiration of another Spirit, given by God to over-rule your own, to save and deliver

you from all your own goodness your own wisdom, and learning which always were, and always will be, as corrupt and impure, as earthly and sensual, as your own flesh and blood. Now is there any selfish creaturely pride, in fully believing this to be true, and in acting in full conformity to it? If so, then he that confesses he neither has, nor ever can have a single farthing, but as it is freely given him from charity, thereby declares himself to be a purse-proud vain boaster of his own wealth. Such is the spiritual pride of him, who fully acknowledges that he neither has, nor can have the least spark or breathing after goodness, but what is freely kindled, or breathed into him by the Spirit of God. Again, if it is spiritual pride to believe, that nothing that we ever think, or say, or do, either in the church, or our closets, can have any truth of {sic} goodness in it but which is wrought solely and immediately by the Spirit of God in us, then it must be said, that in order to have religious humility we must never forget to take some share of our religious virtues to ourselves, and not allow (as Christ hath said) that without him we can do nothing that is good. It must also be said, that St. Paul took too much upon him when he said, "the life that I now live, is not mine, but Christ's that liveth in me."

Behold a pride, and a humility, the one as good as the other, and both logically descended from a wisdom, that confesses it comes not from above. The necessity of a continual inspiration of the Spirit of God, both to begin the first, and continue every step of a divine life in man, is a truth to which every life in nature, as well as all scripture, bears full witness. A natural life, a bestial life, a diabolical life, can subsist no longer, than whilst they are immediately and continually under the working power of that root or source, from which they sprung. Thus it is with the divine life in man, it can never be in him, but as a growth of life in and from God. Hence it is, that resisting the Spirit, quenching the Spirit, grieving the Spirit, is that alone which gives birth and growth to every evil that reigns in the world, and leaves men, and churches, not only an easy, but a necessary prey to the devil, the world, and the flesh. And nothing but obedience to the Spirit, trusting to the Spirit, walking in the Spirit, praying with and for its continual inspiration, can possibly keep either men, or churches, from being sinners, or idolators, in all that they do. For everything in the life, or religion of man, that has not the Spirit of God for its mover, director, and end, be it what it will, is but earthly, sensual, or devilish. The truth and perfection of the gospel state could not show itself, till it became solely a ministration of the Spirit, or a kingdom in which the Holy Spirit of God had the doing of all that was done in it. The apostles, whilst Christ was with them in the flesh, were instructed in heavenly truths from his mouth, and enabled to work miracles in his Name, yet not qualified to know and teach the mysteries of his kingdom. After his resurrection, he conversed with them forty days, speaking to them of things pertaining to the kingdom of God; nay though he breathed on them, and said, "receive ye the Holy Ghost," yet this also would not do, they were still unable to preach, or bear witness to the truth, as it is in Jesus. And the reason is, there was still a higher dispensation to come, which stood in such an opening of the divine life in their hearts, as could not be effected from an outward instruction of Christ himself. For though he had sufficiently told his disciples the necessity of being born again of the Spirit, yet he left them unborn of it, till he came again in the power of the Spirit. He breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," yet that which was said and done was not the thing itself, but only a type or outward signification of what they should receive, when he, being glorified, should come again in the fullness and power of the Spirit, breaking open the deadness and darkness of their hearts with light and life from heaven, which light did, and alone could, open and verify in their souls, all that he had said and promised to them whilst he was with them in the flesh. All this is expressly

declared by Christ himself, saying unto them, "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away"; therefore Christ taught them to believe the want, and joyfully to expect the coming of a higher and more blessed state, than that of his bodily presence with them. For he adds, "if I go not away, the comforter will not come"; therefore the comfort and blessing of Christ to his followers could not be had, till something more was done to them, and they were brought into a higher state than they could be by his verbal instruction of them. "But if I go away," says he, "I will send him unto you, and when the comforter, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; he shall glorify me" (that is, shall set up my kingdom in its glory, in the power of the Spirit) "for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you: I said of mine, because all things that the Father hath are mine," John 16:1-33.

Now when Christ had told them of the necessity of an higher state than that they were in, and the necessity of such a comforting illuminating guide, as they could not have till his outward teaching in human language was changed into the inspiration, and operation of his Spirit in their souls, he commands them, not to begin to bear witness of him to the world, from what they did and could in an human way know of him, his birth his life, doctrines, death, sufferings, resurrection, but to tarry at Jerusalem, till they were endued with power from on high; saying unto them, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you. And then shall ye bear witness unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the utmost part of the earth."

Here are two most important and fundamental truths fully demonstrated, First, that the truth and perfection of the gospel state could not take place, till Christ was glorified, and his kingdom among men made wholly and solely a continual immediate ministration of the Spirit: everything before this was but subservient for a time, and preparatory to this last dispensation, which could not have been the last, had it not carried man above types, figures and shadows, into the real possession and enjoyment of that which is the spirit and truth of a divine life. For the end is not come till it has found the beginning; that is, the last dispensation of God to fallen man cannot be come, till putting an end to the "bondage of weak and beggarly elements," Galatians 5:9, it brings man to that dwelling in God, and God in him, which he had at the beginning.

Secondly, that as the apostles could not, so no man, from their time to the end of the world, can have any true and real knowledge of the spiritual blessings of Christ's redemption, or have a divine call, capacity, or fitness to preach, and bear witness of them to the world, but solely by that same divine Spirit opening all the mysteries of a redeeming Christ in their inward parts, as it did in the apostles, evangelists, and first ministers of the gospel. For why could not the apostles, who had been eye witnesses to all the whole process of Christ, why could they not with their human apprehension declare and testify the truth of such things, till they "were baptized with fire, and born again of the Spirit"? It is because the truth of such things, or the mysteries of Christ's process, as knowable by man, are nothing else in themselves, but those very things which are done by this heavenly fire and Spirit of God in our souls. Therefore to know the mysteries of Christ's redemption, and to know the redeeming work of God in our own souls, is the same thing; the one cannot be before, or without the other. Therefore every man, be he who he will, however able in all kinds of human literature, must be an entire stranger to all the mysteries of gospel redemption, and can only talk about them as of any other tale he has been told, till they are brought forth, verified, fulfilled, and witnessed to by that, which is found, felt and enjoyed of the whole process of Christ in his soul. For as redemption is in its whole nature an inward spiritual work, that works only in the

altering, changing, and regenerating the life of the soul, so it must be true, that nothing but the inward state of the soul can bear true witness to the redeeming power of Christ. For as it wholly consists in altering that which is the most radical in the soul, bringing forth a new spiritual death, and a new spiritual life, it must be true, that no one can know or believe the mysteries of Christ's redeeming power, by historically knowing, or rationally consenting to that which is said of him and them in written or spoken words, but only and solely by an inward experimental finding, and feeling the operation of them, in that new death, and new life, both of which must be effected in the soul of man, or Christ is not, cannot be found, and known by the soul as its salvation. It must also be equally true, that the redeemed state of the soul, being in itself nothing else but the resurrection of a divine and holy life in it, must as necessarily from first to last be the sole work of the breathing creating Spirit of God, as the first holy created state of the soul was. And all this, because the mysteries of Christ's redeeming power, which work and bring forth the renewed state of the soul, are not creaturely, finite, outward things, that may be found and enjoyed by verbal descriptions, or formed ideas of them, but are a birth and life, and spiritual operation, which as solely belongs to God alone, as his creating power. For nothing can redeem, but that same power which created the soul. Nothing can bring forth a good thought in it, but that which brought forth the power of thinking. And of every tendency towards goodness, be it ever so small, that same may be truly affirmed of it, which St. Paul affirmed of his highest state, "yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." But if the belief of the necessity and certainty of immediate continual divine inspiration, in and for everything that can be holy and good in us, be (as its accusers say) rank enthusiasm, then he is the only sober orthodox Christian, who of many a good thought and action that proceeds from him, frankly says, in order to avoid enthusiasm, My own power, and not Christ's Spirit living and breathing in me, has done this for me. For if all that is good is not done by Christ, then something that is good is done by myself. It is in vain to think, that there is a middle way, and that rational divines have found it out, as Dr. Warburton has done, who though denying immediate continual inspiration, yet allows that the Spirit's "ordinary influence occasionally assists the faithful." {Sermons, vol. i.}

Now this middle way has neither scripture nor sense in it; for an occasional influence or concurrence is as absurd, as an occasional God, and necessarily supposes such a God. For an occasional influence of the Spirit upon us supposes an occasional absence of the Spirit from us. For there could be no such thing, unless God was sometimes with us, and sometimes not, sometimes doing us good, as the inward God of our life, and sometimes doing us no good at all, but leaving us to be good from ourselves. Occasional influence necessarily implies all this blasphemous absurdity. Again, this middle way of an occasional influence and assistance necessarily supposes, that there is something of man's own that is good, or the Holy Spirit of God neither would, nor could assist or cooperate with it. But if there was anything good in man for God to assist and cooperate with, besides the SEED of his own divine nature, or his own WORD of life striving to bruise the serpent's nature within us, it could not be true, that there is only one that is good, and that is God. And were there any goodness in creatures, either in heaven, or on earth, but the one goodness of the divine nature, living, working, manifesting itself in them, as its created instruments, then good creatures, both in heaven and on earth, would have something else to adore, besides, or along with God. For goodness, be it where it will, is adorable for itself, and because it is goodness; if therefore any degree of it belonged to the creature, it ought to have a share of that same adoration that is paid to the creator. Therefore, if to believe that nothing godly

can be alive in us, but what has all its life from the Spirit of God living and breathing in us, if to look solely to it, and depend wholly upon it, both for the beginning, and growth of every thought and desire that can be holy and good in us, be proud rank enthusiasm, then it must be the same enthusiasm to own but one God. For he that owns more goodness than one, owns more gods than one. And he that believes he can have any good in him, but the one goodness of God, manifesting itself in him, and through him, owns more goodness than one. But if it be true, that God and goodness cannot be divided, then it must be a truth for ever and ever, that so much of good, so much of God, must be in the creature. And here lies the true unchangeable distinction between God, and nature, and the natural creature. Nature and creature are only for the outward manifestation of the inward invisible unapproachable powers of God; they can rise no higher, nor be anything else in themselves, but as temples, habitations, or instruments, in which the supernatural God can, and does manifest himself in various degrees, bringing forth creatures to be good with his own goodness, to love and adore him with his own Spirit of love, for ever singing praises to the divine nature by that which they partake of it. This is the religion of divine inspiration, which being interpreted, is Immanuel or God within us. Everything short of this, is short of that religion which worships God in spirit and in truth. And every religious trust or confidence in anything, but the divine operation within us, is but a sort of image worship, which though it may deny the form, yet retains the power thereof in the heart. And he that places any religious safety in theological decisions, scholastic points, in particular doctrines and opinions, that must be held about the scripture words of "faith," "justification," "sanctification," "election," and "reprobation," so far departs from the true worship of the living God within him, and sets up an idol of notions to be worshiped, if not instead of, yet along with him. And I believe it may be taken for a certain truth, that every society of Christians, whose religion stands upon this ground, however ardent, laborious, and good their zeal may seem to be in such matters, yet in spite of all, sooner or later, it will be found that nature is at the bottom, and that a selfish, earthly, overbearing pride in their own definitions and doctrines of words, will by degrees creep up to the same height, and become that same fleshly wisdom, doing those very same things, which they exclaim against in popes, cardinals, and Jesuits. Nor can it possibly be otherwise. For a letter-learned zeal has but one nature wherever it is, it can only do that for Christians, which it did for Jews. As it anciently brought forth scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, and crucifiers of Christ, as it afterwards brought forth heresies, schisms, popes, papal decrees, images, anathemas, transubstantiations, so in Protestant countries it will be doing the same thing, only with other materials; images of wood and clay, will only be given up for images of doctrines; grace and works, imputed sin, and imputed righteousness, election and reprobation, will have their Synods of Dort, as truly evangelical, as any Council of Trent. This must be the case of all fallen Christendom, as well popish as Protestant, till single men, and churches, know, confess, and firmly adhere to this one scripture truth, which the blessed Behmen prefixed as a motto to most of his epistles, viz., "That our salvation is in the life of Jesus Christ in us." And that, because this alone was the divine perfection of man before he fell, and will be his perfection when he is one with Christ in heaven. Everything besides this, or that is not solely aiming at and essentially leading to it, is but mere Babel in all sects and divisions of Christians, living to themselves, and their own old man under a seeming holiness of Christian strife and contention about scripture works. But this truth of truths, fully possessed, and firmly adhered to, brings God and man together, puts an end to every Lo here, and Lo there, and turns the whole faith of man to a Christ that can nowhere be a savior to him, but as essentially born in the inmost

spirit of his soul, nor possible to be born there by any other means, but the immediate inspiration and working power of the Holy Spirit within him. To this man alone all scripture gives daily edification; the words of Christ and his apostles fall like a fire into him. And what is it that they kindle there? Not notions, not itching ears, nor rambling desires after new and new expounders of them, but a holy flame of love, to be always with, always attending to, that Christ and his Holy Spirit within him, which alone can make him to be and do all that, which the words of Christ and his apostles have taught. For there is no possibility of being like-minded with Christ in anything that he taught, or having the truth of one Christian virtue, but by the nature and Spirit of Christ become essentially living in us. Read all our savior's divine sermon from the mount, consent to the goodness of every part of it, yet the time of practicing it will never come, till you have a new nature from Christ, and are as vitally in him, and he in you, as the vine in the branch, and the branch in the vine. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," is a divine truth, but will do us no divine good, unless we receive it as saying neither more nor less, than "Blessed are they that are born again of the Spirit, for they alone can see God." For no blessedness, either of truth or life, can be found either in men or angels, but where the Spirit and life of God is essentially born within them. And all men or churches, not placing all in the life, light, and guidance of the Holy Spirit of Christ, but pretending to act in the name, and for the glory of God, from opinions which their logic and learning have collected from scripture words, or from what a Calvin, an Arminius, a Socinus, or some smaller name, has told them to be right or wrong, all such, are but where the apostles were, when "by the way there was a strife among them who should be the greatest." And how much soever they may say, and boast of their great zeal for truth, and the only glory of God, yet their own open notorious behavior towards one another, is proof enough, that the great strife amongst them is, which shall be the greatest sect, or have the largest number of followers. A strife, from the same root, and just as useful to Christianity, as that of the carnal apostles, who should be the greatest. For not numbers of men, or kingdoms professing Christianity, but numbers redeemed from the death of Adam to the life of Christ are the glory of the Christian church. And in whatever national Christianity anything else is meant or sought after, by the profession of the gospel, but a new heavenly life, through the mediatorial nature and Spirit of the eternal Son of God, born in the fallen soul, wherever this spirituality of the gospel-redemption is denied or overlooked, there the spirit of self, of satanic and worldly subtlety, will be church and priest, and supreme power, in all that is called religion. But to return now to the doctrine of continual inspiration. The natural or unregenerate man, educated in pagan learning, and scholastic theology, seeing the strength of his genius in the search after knowledge, how easily and learnedly he can talk, and write, criticize and determine upon all scripture words and facts, looks at all this as a full proof of his own religious wisdom, power and goodness, and calls immediate inspiration enthusiasm, not considering, that all the woes denounced by Christ against scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites, are so many woes now at this day denounced against every appearance and show of religion, that the natural man can practice. And what is well to be noted, everyone, however high in human literature, is but this very natural man, and can only have the goodness of a carnal secular religion, till as empty of all, as a new born child, the Spirit of God gets a full birth in him, and becomes the inspirer and doer of all that he wills, does, and aims at, in his whole course of religion. Our divine master compares the religion of the learned Pharisees "to whited sepulchers, outwardly beautiful, but inwardly full of rottenness, stench, and dead men's bones."

Now whence was it, that a religion, so serious in its restraints, so beautiful in its outward form and practices, and commanding such reverence from all that beheld it, was yet charged by truth itself with having inwardly such an abominable nature? It was only for this one reason, because it was a religion of self. Therefore, from the beginning to the end of the world, it must be true, that where self is kept alive, has power, and keeps up its own interests, whether in speaking, writing, teaching or defending the most specious number of scripture doctrines and religious forms, there is that very old Pharisee still alive, whom Christ with so much severity of language constantly condemned. And the reason of such heavy condemnation is, because self is the only root, or rather the sum total of all sin; every sin that can be named is centered in it, and the creature can sin no higher, than he can live to self. For self is the fullness of atheism and idolatry, it is nothing else but the creature broken off from God and Christ; it is the power of satan living and working in us, and the sad continuance of that first turning from God, which was the whole fall or death of our first Father. And yet, sad and satanical as this self is, what is so much cherished and nourished with our daily love, fears, and cares about it? How much worldly wisdom, how much laborious learning, how many subtleties of contrivance, and how many flattering applications and submissions are made to the world, that this apostate self may have its fullness, both of inward joys, and outward glory? But to all this it must yet be added, that a religion of self, of worldly glory and prosperity carried on under the gospel state, has more of a diabolical nature than that of the Jewish Pharisees. It is the highest and last working of the mystery of iniquity, because it lives to self, satan, and the world, in and by a daily profession of denying and dying to self, of being crucified with Christ, of being led by his Spirit, of being risen from the world, and set with him in heavenly places.

Let then the writers against continual immediate divine inspiration take this for a certain truth, that by so doing, they do all they can to draw man from that which is the very truth and perfection of the gospel state, and are, and can be, no better than pitiable advocates for a religion of self, more blamable and abominable now, than that which was of old condemned by Christ. For whatever is pretended to be done in gospel religion, by any other spirit or power, but that of the Holy Ghost bringing it forth, whether it be praying, preaching, or practicing any duties, is all of it but the religion of self, and can be nothing else. For all that is born of the flesh, is flesh, and nothing is spiritual, but that which has its whole birth from the Spirit. But man, not ruled and governed by the Spirit, has only the nature of corrupt flesh, is under the full power and guidance of fallen nature, and is that very natural man, to whom the things of God are foolishness. But man boldly rejecting, and preaching against a continual immediate divine inspiration, is an anti-apostle, he lays another foundation, than that which Christ has laid, he teaches that Christ needs not, must not, be all in all in us, and is a preacher up of the folly of fearing to grieve, quench, and resist the Holy Spirit. For when, or where, or how could everyone of us be in danger of grieving, quenching, or resisting the Spirit, unless his holy breathings and inspirations were always within us? Or how could the sin against the Holy Ghost have a more dreadful nature, than that against the Father and the Son, but because the continual immediate guidance and operation of the Spirit, is the last and highest manifestation of the Holy Trinity in the fallen soul of man? It is not because the Holy Ghost is more worthy, or higher in nature than the Father and the Son, but because Father and Son come forth in their own highest power of redeeming love, through the covenant of a continual immediate inspiration of the Spirit, to be always dwelling and working in the soul. Many weak things have been conjectured, and published to the world, about the sin against the Holy Ghost; whereas the

whole nature of it lies in this, that it is a sinning, or standing out against the last and highest dispensation of God for the full redemption of man. Christ says, "If I had not come, they had not had sin," that is, they had not had such a weight of guilt upon them; therefore the sinning against Christ come into the flesh, was of a more unpardonable nature, than sinning against the Father under the Law. So likewise sinning against the Holy Ghost is of a more unpardonable nature than sinning against the Father under the Law, or against the Son as come in the flesh, because these two preceding dispensations were but preparatory to the coming, or full ministration of the Spirit. But when Father and Son were come in the power and manifestation of the Spirit, then he that refuses or resists this ministration of the Spirit, resists all that the Holy Trinity can do to restore and revive the first life of God in the soul, and so commits the unpardonable sin, and which is therefore unpardonable, because there remains no further, or higher power to remove it out of the soul. For no sin is pardonable, because of its own nature: or that which is in itself, but because there is something yet to come that can remove it out of the soul; nor can any sin be unpardonable, but because it has withstood, or turned from that which was the last and highest remedy for the removal of it.

Hence it is, that grieving, quenching, or resisting the Spirit, is the sin of all sins, that most of all stops the work of redemption, and in the highest degree separates man from all union with God. But there could be no such sin, but because the Holy Spirit is always breathing, willing, and working within us. For what spirit can be grieved by us, but that which has its will within us disobeyed? What spirit can be quenched by us, but that which is, and ever would be, a holy fire of life within us? What spirit can be resisted by us, but that which is, and has its working within us? A spirit on the outside of us cannot be the Spirit of God, nor could such a spirit be any more quenched, or hindered by our spirit, than a man by indignation at a storm could stop its rage. Now, dreadful as the abovementioned sin is, I would ask all the writers against continual immediate divine inspiration, how they could more effectually lead men into an habitual state of sinning against the Holy Ghost, than by such doctrine? For how can we possibly avoid the sin of grieving, quenching, the Spirit, but by continually reverencing his holy presence within us, by continually waiting for, trusting, and solely attending to that which the Spirit of God wills, works, and manifests within us? To turn men from this continual dependence upon the Holy Spirit, is turning them from all true knowledge of God. For without this, there is no possibility of any edifying, saving knowledge of God. For though we have ever so many mathematical demonstrations of his being, we are without all real knowledge of him, till his own quickening Spirit within us manifests him, as a power of life, light, love, and goodness, essentially found, vitally felt, and adored in our souls. This is the one knowledge of God, which is eternal life, because it is the life of God manifested in the soul, that knowledge of which Christ says, No one knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son revealeth him. Therefore this knowledge is only possible to be found in him, who is in Christ a new creature, for so it is that Christ revealeth the Father. But if none belong to God, but those who are led by the Spirit of God, if we are reprobates unless the Spirit of Christ be living in us, who need be told, that all that we have to trust to or depend upon, as children of God and Christ, is the continual immediate guidance, unction, and teaching of this Holy Spirit within us? Or how can we more profanely sin against this Spirit and power of God within us, or more expressly call men from the power of God to satan, than by ridiculing a faith and hope that look wholly and solely to his continual immediate breathings and operations, for all that can be holy and good in us?

"When I am lifted up from the earth," says Christ, "I will draw all men to me." Therefore the one great power of Christ in and over the souls of men is after he is in heaven; then begins the true full power of his drawing, because it is by his Spirit in man that he draws. But who can more resist this drawing, or defeat its operation in us, than he that preaches against, and condemns the belief of a continual and immediate inspiration of the Spirit, when Christ's drawing can be in nothing else, nor be powerful any other way?

Now that which we are here taught, is the whole end of all scripture; for all that is there said, however learnedly read, or studied by Hebrew or Greek skill, fails of its only end, till it leads and brings us to an essential God within us, to feel and find all that which the scriptures speak of God, of man, of life and death, of good and evil, of heaven and hell, as essentially verified in our own souls. For all is within man that can be either good or evil to him: God within him, is his divine life, his divine light, and his divine love: satan within him is his life of self, of earthly wisdom, of diabolical falseness, wrath, pride, and vanity of every kind. There is no middle way between these two. He that is not under the power of the one, is under the power of the other. And the reason is, man was created in and under the power of the divine life; so far therefore as he loses, or turns from this life of God, so far he falls under the power of self, of satan, and worldly wisdom. When St. Peter, full of an human good love towards Christ, advised him to avoid his sufferings, Christ rejected him with a "Get thee behind me, satan," and only gave this reason for it, "for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." A plain proof, that whatever is not of and from the Holy Spirit of God in us, however plausible it may outwardly seem to men, to their wisdom, and human goodness, is yet in itself nothing else but the power of satan within us. And as St. Paul said truly of himself, "By the grace of God I am what I am"; so every wise {sic}, every scribe, every disputer of this world, every truster to the strength of his own rational learning, everyone that is under the power of his own fallen nature, never free from desires of honors and preferments, ever thirsting to be rewarded for his theological abilities, ever fearing to be abased and despised, always thankful to those who flatter him with his distinguished merit, everyone that is such, be he who he will, may as truly say of himself, Through my turning and trusting to something else than the grace and inspiration of God's Spirit, I am what I am. For nothing else hinders any professor of Christ from being able truly to say with St. Paul, "God forbid that I should glory in anything but the cross of Christ, by which I am crucified to the world, and the world to me." Nothing makes him incapable of finding that which St. Paul found, when he said, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me"; nothing hinders all this, but his disregard of a Christ within him, his choosing to have a religion of self, of laborious learning, and worldly greatness, rather than be such a gospel fool for Christ, as to renounce all that which he renounced, and to seek no more earthly honor and praise than he did, and to will nothing, know nothing, seek nothing, but that which the Spirit of God and Christ knows, wills, and seeks in him. Here, and here alone, lies the Christian's full and certain power of overcoming self, the devil, and the world. But Christians, seeking and turning to anything else, but to be led and inspired by the one Spirit of God and Christ, will bring forth a Christendom that in the sight of God will have no other name, than a spiritual Babylon, a spiritual Egypt, and Sodom, a scarlet whore, a devouring beast, and red dragon. For all these names belong to all men, however learned, and to all churches, whether greater or less, in which the spirit of this world has any share of power. This was the fall of the whole church soon after the apostolic ages; and all human reformations, begun by ecclesiastical learning, and supported by civil power, will signify little or nothing, nay often make things worse, till

all churches, dying to all own will, all own wisdom, all own advancement, seek for no reforming power but from that Spirit of God which converted sinners, publicans, harlots, Jews, and heathens, into an holy apostolical church at the first, a church which knew they were of God, that they belonged to God, by that Spirit which he had given them, and which worked in them.

"Ye are not in the flesh," says the apostle, "but in the Spirit"; but then he adds, as the only ground of this, "if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you"; surely he means, if so be ye are moved, guided, and governed by that, which the Spirit wills, works and inspires within you. And then to show the absolute necessity of this life of God in the soul, he adds, "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." And that this is the state to which God has appointed, and called all Christians, he thus declares, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." Galatians 4:6. The same thing, most surely, as if he had said, Nothing in you can cry, or pray to God as its Father, but the Spirit of his Son Christ come to life in you. Which is also as true of every tendency in the soul towards God or goodness; so much as there is of it, so much there is of the seed of the woman striving to bring forth a full birth of Christ in the soul.

"Lo, I am always with you," says the holy Jesus, "even to the end of the world." How is he with us? Not outwardly, every illiterate man knows; not inwardly, says many a learned doctor, because a Christ within us is as gross enthusiasm, or Quakerism, as the light within us. How then shall the faith of the common Christian find any comfort in these words of Christ's promise, unless the spirit brings him into a remembrance and belief, that Christ is in him, and with him, as the vine is with and in the branch. Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing"; and also, "If any man loves me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." Now if without him we can do nothing, then all the love that a man can possibly have for Christ, must be from the power and life of Christ in him, and from such a love, so begotten, man has the Father and the Son dwelling and making their abode in him. What higher proof, or fuller certainty can there be, that the whole work of redemption in the soul of man is and can be nothing else, but the inward, continual, immediate operation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, raising up again their own first life in the soul, to which our first father died?

Again, Christ, after his glorification in heaven, says, "Behold I STAND at the DOOR and KNOCK." He does not say, Behold ye have me in the scriptures. Now what is the DOOR at which Christ, at the right-hand of God in heaven, KNOCKS? Surely it is the heart, to which Christ is always present. He goes on, IF ANY MAN HEARS MY VOICE; how hears, but by the hearing of the heart, or what voice, but that which is the speaking or sounding of Christ within him; he adds, AND OPENS THE DOOR, that is, will be a living holy nature, and spirit born within him, AND SUP WITH HIM, and HE WITH ME. Behold the last finishing work of a redeeming Jesus, entered into the heart that opens to him, bringing forth the joy, the blessing, and perfection of that first life of God in the soul, which was lost by the fall, set forth as a supper, or feast of the heavenly Jesus with the soul, and the soul with him. Can anyone justly call it enthusiasm to say, that this supping of the soul with this glorified Christ within it, must mean something more heavenly transacted in the soul than that last supper which he celebrated with his disciples, whilst he was with them in flesh. For that supper of bread and wine was such, as a Judas could partake of, and could only be an outward type or signification of that inward and blessed nourishment, with which the believing soul should be feasted, when the glorified Son of God should as a creating Spirit enter into us, quickening, and raising up his own heavenly nature and life within us. Now this continual knocking

of Christ at the door of the heart, sets forth the case or nature of a continual immediate divine inspiration within us; it is always with us, but there must be an opening of the heart to it; and though it is always there, yet it is only felt and found by those, who are attentive to it, depend upon, and humbly wait for it. Now let anyone tell me how he can believe anything of this voice of Christ, how he can listen to it, hear, or obey it, but by such a faith, as keeps him habitually turned to an immediate constant inspiration of the Spirit of Christ within him? Or how any heathenish profane person, can do more despite to this presence and power of Christ in his own soul, or more effectually lead others into it, than that ecclesiastic, who makes a mock at the light within, a Christ within and openly blasphemes that faith, and hope, and trust, which solely relies upon being moved by the Spirit, as its only power of doing that which is right, and good, and pious, either towards God or man. Let every man, whom this concerns, lay it to heart. Time, and the things of time, will soon have an end; and he that in time trusts to anything but the Spirit and power of God working in his heart, will be ill fitted to enter into eternity; God must be all in all in us here, or we cannot be his hereafter. Time works only for eternity; and poverty eternal must as certainly follow him, who dies only fully stuffed with human learning, as he who dies only full of worldly riches. The folly of thinking to have any divine learning, but that which the Holy Spirit teaches, or to make ourselves rich in knowledge towards God, by heaps of common place learning crowded into our minds, will leave us as dreadfully cheated, as that rich builder of barns in the gospel, to whom it was said, "Thou fool, this night, shall thy soul be required of thee. And then, whose shall all these things be?" Luke 12:1-59. So is every man that treasures up a religious learning that comes not wholly from the Spirit of God. But to return. To this inward continual attention to the continual working of the Holy Spirit within us, the apostle calls us in these words, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not, who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn from him, that speaketh from heaven," Hebrews 12:25. Now what is this speaking from heaven, which it is so dangerous to refuse, or resist? Surely not outward voices from heaven. Or what could the apostle's advice signify to us, unless it be such a speaking from heaven, as we may and must be always either obeying or refusing? St. James saith, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." What devil? Surely not an outward creature or spirit, that tempts us by an outward power. Or what resistance can we make to the devil, but that of inwardly falling away, or turning from the workings of his evil nature and spirit within us? They therefore who call us from waiting for, depending upon, and attending to the continual secret inspirations and breathings of the Holy Spirit within us, call us to RESIST God in the same manner as the apostle exhorts us to resist the devil. For God being only a spiritual good, and the devil our spiritual evil, neither the one nor the other can be resisted, or not resisted by us, but so far as their spiritual operations within us are either turned from, or obeyed by us. St. James having shown us, that resisting the devil is the only way to make him flee from us, that is, to lose his power in us, immediately adds, how we are to behave towards God, that he may not flee from us, or his holy work be stopped in us. "Draw near," says he, "to God, and God will draw near to you." What is this drawing near? Surely not by any local motion, either in God or us. But the same is meant, as if he had said, Resist not God, that is, let his holy will within you have its full work; keep wholly, obediently attentive to that, which he is and has, and does within you, and then God will draw near to you, that is, will more and more manifest the power of his holy presence in you, and make you more and more partakers of the divine nature. Further, what a blindness is it in the forementioned writers, to charge private persons with the enthusiasm of holding the necessity, and certainty of

continual immediate inspiration, and to attack them as enemies to the established church, when everybody's eyes see, that collect after collect, in the established liturgy, teaches and requires them to believe, and pray for the continual inspiration of the Spirit, as that alone, by which they can have the least good thought, or desire? Thus, "O God, forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee, mercifully grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts." Is it possible for words more strongly to express the necessity of a continual divine inspiration? Or can inspiration be higher, or more immediate in prophets and apostles, than that which directs, that which rules our hearts, not now and then, but in all things? Or can the absolute necessity of this be more fully declared, than by saying, that if it is not in this degree both of height and continuance in and over our hearts, nothing that is done by us can be pleasing to God, that is, can have any union with him?

Now the matter is not at all about the different effects or works proceeding from inspiration, as whether by it a man be made a saint in himself, or sent by God with a prophetic message to others, this affects not the nature and necessity of inspiration, which is just as great, just as necessary in itself to all true goodness, as to all true prophecy. All scripture is of divine inspiration. But why so? "Because holy men of old spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Now the above collect as well as Christ and his apostles oblige us in like manner to hold, that all holiness is by divine inspiration, and that therefore there could have been no holy men of old, or in any latter times, but solely for this reason, because "They LIVED as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Again, the liturgy prays thus, "O God, from whom all good things do come, grant that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same." Now, if in any of my writings I have ever said anything higher, or further of the nature and necessity of continual divine inspiration, than this church- prayer does, I refuse no censure that shall be passed upon me. But if I have, from all that we know of God, of nature, and creature, shown the utter impossibility of any kind, or degree of goodness to be in us, but from the divine nature living and breathing in us, if I have shown that all scripture, Christ and his apostles, over and over say the same thing; that our church liturgy is daily praying according to it; what kinder thing can I say of those churchmen who accuse me of enthusiasm, than that which Christ said of his blind crucifiers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

It is to no purpose to object to all this, that these kingdoms are over-run with enthusiasts of all kinds, and that Moravians with their several divisions, and Methodists of various kinds, are everywhere acting in the wildest manner, under the pretense of being called and led by the Spirit. Be it so, or not so, is a matter I meddle not with; nor is the doctrine I am upon in the least affected by it. For what an argument would this be; enthusiasts of the present and former ages have made a bad use of the doctrine of being led by the Spirit of God, ergo, "He is enthusiastic, or helps forward enthusiasm, who preaches up the doctrine of being led by the Spirit of God." Now absurd as this is, was any of my accusers as high in genius, as bulky in learning, as colossus was in stature, he would be at a loss to bring a stronger argument than this, to prove me an enthusiast, or an abettor of them. But as I do not begin to doubt about the necessity, the truth, and perfection of gospel religion, when told that whole nations and churches have, under a pretense of regard to it, and for the sake of it, done all the bad things that can be charged upon this or that leading enthusiast, whether you call those bad things, schism, perjury, rebellion, worldly craft, and hypocrisy. So I give not up the necessity, the truth, and perfection of looking wholly to the Spirit of

God and Christ within me, as my promised inspirer, and only worker of all that can be good in me, I give not this up, because in this, or that age, both spiritual pride and fleshly lusts have prospered by it, or because satan has often led people into all the heights of self-glory, and self-seeking under a pretense of being inspired with gospel humility, and gospel self-denial.

Another charge upon me, equally false, and I may say, more senseless, is that I am a declared enemy to the use of reason in religion. And why? Because in all my writings, I teach that reason is to be denied. I own, I have not only taught this, but have again and again proved the absolute necessity of it. And this, because Christ has made it absolutely necessary, by saying, "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself." For how can a man deny himself, without denying his reason, unless reason be no part of himself? Or how can a rational creature whose chief distinction from brutes is that of his reason, be called to deny himself any other way, than by denying that which is peculiar to himself? Let the matter be thus expressed, man is not to deny his reason. Well, how then? Why, (N.B.) he is only to deny himself. Can there be a greater folly of words? And yet it is their wisdom of words, who allow the denying of self to be good doctrine, but boggle, and cry out at the denying of reason, as quite bad. For how can a man deny himself, but by denying that which is the life, and spirit, and power of self? What makes a man a sinner? Nothing but the power and working of his natural reason. And therefore, if our natural reason is not to be denied, we must keep up and follow that which works every sin that ever was, or can be in us. For we can sin nowhere, or in anything, but where our natural reason or understanding has its power in us. What is meant in all scripture by the flesh and its works? Is it something distinct, and different from the workings of our rational and intelligent nature? No, it is our whole intelligent, rational nature, that constitutes the flesh or the carnal man, who could not be criminally so, any more than the beasts, but because his carnality has all its evil from his intelligent nature or reason, being the life and power of it. And everything which our Lord says of self, is so much said of our natural reason; and all that the scripture says of the flesh and its evil nature, is so much said of the evil state of our natural reason, which therefore is, ought, and must be denied, in the same manner and degree as self and flesh is, and must be denied.

I have elsewhere shown the gross darkness and ignorance which govern that which is called metaphysics in the schools, "that it is so great, that if you were to say, that God first creates a soul out of nothing, and when that is done, then takes an understanding faculty and puts it into it, after that, adds a will, and then a memory, all as independently made, as when a tailor first makes the body of a coat, and then adds sleeves, and pockets to it were you to say this, the schools of Descartes, Malebranche, or Locke, could have nothing to say against it." {Spirit of Love, First Part.} And here truth obliges me to say, that scholastic divinity is in as great ignorance about the most fundamental truths of the gospel, as I have again and again shown, in regard to the nature of the fall of man, and all the scripture expressions concerning the new birth; and here also concerning the doctrine, of a man's denying himself, which modern learning supposes to be possible without, or different from a man's denying his own natural reason; which is an absurdity of the greatest magnitude. For what is self, but that which a man is, and has in his natural capacity? Or what is the fullness of his natural capacity, but the strength and power of his reason? How then can any man deny himself, but by denying that which gives self its whole nature, name, and power? If man was not a rational creature, he could not be called to deny himself, he could not need, or receive the benefit and goodness of self-denial: no man therefore can obey the precept of

denying himself, or have any benefit or goodness from it, but so far as he denies, or dies to his own natural reason, because the self of man, and the natural reason of man, are strictly the same thing. Again, our blessed Lord said in his agony, "Not my will, but thine be done." And had not this been the form of his whole life, he had not lived without sin. Now thus to deny our own will, that God's will may be done in us, is the height of our calling; and so far as we keep from our own natural will, so far we keep from sin. But now, if our own natural will, as having all sin and evil in it, is always to be denied, whatever it costs us, I would fain know, how our natural reason can ever escape, or how we can deny our own will, and not deny that rational or intelligent power, in and from which the will has its whole existence and continual direction? Or how there can be always a badness of our own will, which is not the badness of our own natural intellectual power? Therefore it is a truth of the utmost certainty, that as much as we are obliged to deny our own natural will that the will of God may be done in us, so much are we obliged to deny our own natural reason and understanding that our own will may not be done, or followed by us. For whoever lives to his own natural reason, he necessarily lives to his own natural will. For our natural will, in whatever state it is, is nothing else but our natural reason willing this, or that.

Now hard as this may seem to unregenerate nature, and yet harder to nature highly exalted, and big with the glory of all that, which wits, poets, orators, critics, sophists, and historians have enriched it with, yet true it is, and a truth as certain as the fall of man, that this full denial of our own natural will, and our own natural reason, is the only possible way for divine knowledge, divine light, and divine goodness, to have any place or power of birth in us. All other religious knowledge, got any other way, let it be as great as it will, is only great in vanity, emptiness, and delusion. For nothing but that which comes immediately from God, can have anything godly in it, and all that which comes from self, and natural reason, however outwardly colored, can have no better a nature within, that self-seeking, self-esteem, and fleshly wisdom, which (N.B.) are those very works of the devil in us, which Christ came into the world to destroy. For the efforts of natural reason, and self-abilities, to be great in religious knowledge from our own particular talents, are as satanical things as any we carry about us, and most of all fix us in the highest contrariety to that state, which our Lord affirms to be absolutely necessary.

"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now as sure as this is necessary, so sure is it, that no one can be thus converted, or come under the good influence of this childlike nature, till natural reason, self, and own will, are all equally denied. For all the evil and corruption of our fallen nature consists in this, it is an awakened life of own reason, own will broken off from God, and so fallen into the selfish workings of its own earthly nature.

Now whether this self broken off from God, reasons, wills, and contends about the difference of scripture words and opinions, or reasons against them all, the same evil state of fallen nature, the same loss of life, the same separation from God, the same evil tempers of flesh and blood, will be equally strengthened and inflamed by the one as by the other. Hence it is, that papists and Protestants are hating, fighting, and killing one another for the sake of their different excellent opinions, and yet, as to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, they are in the highest union and communion with one another. For if you expect a zealous Protestant to be therefore a new born creature alive unto God, or a zealous papist to be therefore dead to all divine goodness, you may be said to have lived in the world without either eyes or ears. And the reason

why it must be so, is because bad syllogisms for transubstantiation, and better syllogisms against it, signify no more towards the casting satan out of our souls, than a bad or better taste for painting.

Hence also it is, that Christendom, full of the nicest decisions about faith, grace, works, merits, satisfactions, heresies, schisms, is full of all those evil tempers which prevailed in the heathen world, when none of these things were ever thought of. A scholar, pitying the blindness and folly of those who live to themselves in the cares and pleasures of this vain life, thinks himself divinely employed, and to have escaped the pollutions of the world, because he is, day after day, dividing, dissecting, and mending church- opinions, fixing heresies here, schisms there; forgetting all the while, that a carnal self and natural reason have the doing of all that is done by this learned zeal, and are as busy and active in him, as in the reasoning infidel, or projecting worldling. For where self is wholly denied, there nothing can be called heresy, schism, or wickedness, but the want of loving God with our whole heart, and our neighbor as ourselves; nor anything be called truth, life, or salvation, but the Spirit, nature, and power of Christ living and manifesting itself in us, as it did in him. But where self or the natural man is become great in religious learning, there the greater the scholar, the more firmly will he be fixed in their religion, whose God is their belly. I write not to reason, says the blessed Jacob Behmen; O enthusiasm! says the mouth of learning: and yet Jacob said as sober a truth, as if he had said, I write not to self and own will; for natural reason, self and own will, always did, and always must see through the same eyes, and hear through the same ears. Now let it only be supposed, that Behmen and myself, when we speak of natural reason, mean only the natural man (as is over and over declared by us) and then Behmen's saying, that he writes neither from reason, nor to the natural reason of others, is only saying that very same thing as St. Paul says, that "the natural man receiveith not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, (N.B.) neither can he know them, (N.B.) because they are spiritually discerned." But that I may fully show the perverseness of my accusers, in charging me with denying the use of reason in religion, see here a word or two of what I have said at large, and in the plainest words, more than twenty-four years ago, which doctrine I have maintained in all that I have since wrote. My words are these.

"You shall see reason possessed of all that belongs to it. I will grant it to have as great a share in the good things of religion, as in the good things of this life; that it can assist the soul, just as it can assist the body, that it has the same power and virtue in the spiritual, that it has in the natural world; that it can communicate to us as much of the one, as of the other, and is of the same use and importance in the one as in the other. Can you ask more?" All which I thus make out in the following manner.

"Man, considered as a member of this world, who is to have his share of the good that is in it, is a sensible, and a rational creature, that is, he has a certain number of senses, as seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, and smelling, by which he is sensible of that which the outward world, in which he is placed, can do for him, or communicate to him, and so is sensible of what kind and degree of happiness he can have from it.

"Now besides these organs of sense, he has a power or faculty of reasoning upon the ideas, which he has received from these senses.

"Now how is it, that the good things of this world are communicated to man? How is he put in possession of them? To what part of him are they proposed? Are his senses, or his reason, the means of his having so much as he has or can have from this world?"

"Now here, you must degrade reason just as much as it is degraded by religion, and are obliged to set it as low with respect to the things of this world, as it is set with respect to the things of the spiritual world. It is no more the means of communicating the good things of the one, than of the other. And as St. Paul says, "The natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God," for this reason, because they are spiritually discerned; so you must of necessity say, the rational man cannot receive the things of this world, for this reason, because they are sensibly received, that is, by the organs of sense. Reason therefore has no higher office or power in the things of this world, than in the things of religion; and religion does no more violence to your reason, or rejects it any other way, than all the good things of this world reject it; it is not seeing, it is not hearing, tasting, or feeling the things of this life; it can supply the place of no one of these senses.

"Now it is only thus helpless and useless in religion; it is neither seeing, nor hearing, tasting, nor feeling of spiritual things; therefore in the things of religion, and in the things of this world, it has one and the same insignificance. It is the sensibility of the soul that must receive what this world can communicate to it; it is the sensibility of the soul that must receive what God can communicate: reason may follow after in either case, and view through its own glass what is done, but it can do no more. Reason may be here of the same service to us, as when we want any of the enjoyments of this life; it may direct us how and where they are to be had; it may take away a cover from our eyes, or open our window shutters when we want the light; but it can do no more towards seeing, than to make way for the light to act upon our eyes. This is all its office and ability in the things of religion; it may remove that which hinders the sensibility of the soul, or prevents the divine light's acting upon it, but the activity of the mind upon its own ideas or images, which the senses have caused it to form from that which has been stirred up in them, but has nothing of the nature of that which it speculates upon by ideas; it does not become dark, when it reasons upon the cause or nature of darkness, nor becomes light, when it reasons about it; neither is it religion, nor gets anything of the nature of religion, when it is wholly taken up in descriptions and definitions of religious doctrines and virtues.

"For the good of religion is like the good of food and drink to the creature that wants it. And if instead of giving such an one bread and wine, you should teach him to seek for relief by attending to clear ideas of the nature of bread, of different ways of making it, he would be left to die in the want of sustenance, just as the religion of reasoning leaves the soul to perish in the want of that good which it was to have from religion. And yet as a man may have the benefit of food much assisted by the right use of his reason, though reason has not the good of food in it, so a man may have the good of religion much assisted and secured to him, by the right use of his reason, though reason has not the good of religion in it. And as it would be great folly and perverseness, to accuse a man as an enemy to the true use of reasoning about food, because he declares that reason is not food, nor can supply the place of it, so is it equally such, to accuse a man as an enemy to the use of reasoning in religion, because he declares that reasoning is not religion, nor can supply the place of it. We have no want of religion, but because we want to have more of the divine nature in us than we have in our fallen nature. But if this be the truth of the matter (and who can deny it?) then we are sure that nothing can be our good in religion, but that which communicates to us

something of God, or which alters our state of existence in God, and makes us partakers of the divine nature, in such a manner and degree as we wanted. What a folly is it then to put any trust in a religion of rational notions and opinions logically deduced from scripture words? Do we not see sinners of all sorts, and men under the power of every corrupt passion, equally zealous for such a religion? Proof enough, that it has not the good of religion in it, nor any contrariety to the vices of the heart; it neither kills them, nor is killed by them. For as pride, hypocrisy, envy or malice, do not take away from the mind its geometrical or critical abilities; so a man may be most logical in his religion of reason, words, doctrines, and opinions, when he has nothing of the true good of religion in him.

"But as soon as it is known and confessed, that all the happiness or misery of all creatures consists only in this, as they are more or less possessed of God, or as they differently partake of this divine nature, then it must be equally known, that nothing but God can do or be any religious good to us, and also that God cannot do, or be any religious good to us, but by the communication of himself, or the manifestation of his own life within us."

Hence may be seen the great and like blindness both of infidels and Christians; the one in trusting to their own reason dwelling in its own logical conclusions; the other in trusting to their own reason dwelling in learned opinions about scripture words and phrases, and doctrines built upon them. "For as soon as it is known and confessed, that God is all in all, that in him we live and move and have our being, that we can have nothing separately, or out of him, but everything in him, that we have no being or degree of being but in him, that he can give us nothing as our good but himself, nor any degree of salvation from our fallen nature, but in such degree as he again communicates something more of himself to us, as soon as this is known, then it is known with the utmost evidence, that to put a religious trust in our own reason, whether confined to itself, or working in doctrines about scripture words, has the nature of that same idolatry that puts a religious trust in the sun, a departed saint, or a graven image." {Demonstration of the Gross Errors in the Plain Account} And as image-worship has often boasted of its divine power, because of the wonders of zeal and devotion that have been raised thereby in thousands, and ten thousands of its followers, so it is no marvel, if opinion-worship should often have and boast of the same effects. But the truth of the whole matter lies here: as the WORD manifested in the flesh or become man, is the one mediator, or restorer of union between God and man, so to seeing eyes it must be evident, that nothing but this one mediatorial nature of Christ, essentially brought to life in our souls, can be our salvation through Christ Jesus. For that which saved and exalted that humanity in which Christ dwelt, must be the salvation of every human creature in the world. But to return. What poor divinity knowledge comes from great scholars, and great readers, may be sufficiently seen from the two following judicious quotations in a late Dissertation on Enthusiasm; the one is taken from Dr. Warburton's sermons, the other from a pastoral letter of Mr. Stinstra, a preacher among the Mennonists of Friesland. That from Dr. Warburton stands thus: "By them (that is, by the writings of the New Testament) the prophetic promise of our savior, that the comforter should abide for ever, was eminently fulfilled. For though his ordinary influence occasionally assists the faithful, yet his constant abode and supreme illumination is in the sacred scriptures." {Dissertation, page 10.} Dr. Warburton's doctrine is this, that the inspired books of the New Testament is that comforter, or spirit of truth, and illuminator, which is meant by Christ's being always with his church. Let us therefore put the doctor's doctrine into the letter of the text, which will best show how true or false it

is. Our Lord says, "It is expedient for you that I go away, or that comforter will not come"; that is, it is expedient for you, that I leave off teaching you in words, that sound only into your outward ears, that you may have the same words in writing, for your outward eyes to look upon; for if I do not depart from this vocal way of teaching you, the comforter will not come, that is, ye will not have the comfort of my words written on paper. But if I go away, I will send written books, which shall lead you into such a truth of words as you could not have, whilst they were only spoken from my mouth; but being written on paper, they will be my spiritual, heavenly, constant abode with you, and the most supreme illustration you can receive from me.

Christ says further: "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now: howbeit when he, the spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you"; that is, though you cannot be sufficiently instructed from my words at present, yet when they shall hereafter come to you in written books, they will give you a knowledge of all truth, for they shall not speak of themselves, but shall receive words from me, and show them unto you. Again, Christ says, "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs; but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but will show you plainly of the Father." That is, hitherto you have only had spoken proverbs from me, and therefore you have not plainly known the Father; but the time cometh when these spoken proverbs shall be put into writing, and then you shall plainly know the Father. Again, Christ adds. "Ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." That is, you are now troubled at my personal departure from you, but some written books shall be my seeing you again, and in that visit you shall have such joy as cannot be taken from you.

Christ also says, "If any man loves me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." That is, according to the doctor's theology, certain books of scripture will come to him, and make their abode with him; for he expressly confines the constant abode and supreme illumination of God to the holy scriptures. Therefore (horrible to say) God's inward presence, his operating power of life and light in our souls, his dwelling in us, and we in him, is something of a lower nature, that only may occasionally happen, and has less of God in it than the dead letter of scripture, which alone is his constant abode and supreme illumination. Miserable fruits of a paradoxical genius!

Christ from heaven says, "Behold I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open unto me, I will come into him and sup with him." This is his true eminent fulfilling of his prophetic promise of being a comforter, and spirit of truth to his church to the end of the world. But according to the doctor, we are to understand, that not the heavenly Christ, but the New Testament continually stands and knocks at the door, wanting to enter into the heart, and sup with it; which is no better than holding, that when Christ calls himself alpha and omega, he means not himself, but the New Testament. Again, "I am the vine, ye are the branches; as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me; for without me, ye can do nothing." Now take the doctor's comment, and then the truth of all these words of Christ was only temporary, and could be true no longer, than till the books of the New Testament were written; for then all this, which Christ has affirmed of himself, of the certainty and necessity of his life and power in them, ended in Christ, and passed over to the written words of the New Testament, and they are the true vine, and we its branches, they are that without which we can do

nothing. For thus it must be, if, as the doctor affirms, the writings of the New Testament are that, by which we are to understand the constant abode and supreme illumination of God in man. Now absurd, and even blasphemous, as this interpretation of the foregoing text is, it must be evident to every reader, that it is all the doctor's own; for the letter of scripture is only made here to claim that divinity to itself, which the doctor has openly affirmed to be true of it.

"Rabbi," says Nicodemus to Christ, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God." Now that which was here truly said of Christ in the flesh, is the very truth that must be said of the scripture teaching in ink and paper; it is a teacher come from God, and therefore fully to be believed, highly revered, and strictly followed. But as Christ's teaching in the flesh was only preparatory to his future vital teaching by the Spirit, so the teaching of scripture by words written with ink and paper is only preparatory, or introductory to all that inward essential teaching of God, which is by his Spirit and truth within us. Every other opinion of the holy scripture, but that of an outward teacher and guide to God's inward teaching and illumination in our souls, is but making an idol-god of it: I say an idol-god; for to those who rest in it as the constant abode and supreme illumination of God with them, it can be nothing else. For, if nothing of divine faith, love, hope, or goodness, can have the least birth, or place in us, but by divine inspiration, they who think these virtues may be sufficiently raised in us by the letter of scripture, do in truth and reality make the letter of scripture their inspiring god. The apostles preached and wrote to the people by divine inspiration. But what do they say of their inspired doctrine and teachings? What virtue and power was there in them? Do they say that their words and teachings were the very promised comforter, the spirit of truth, the true abode and supreme illumination of God in the souls of men? So far from such a blasphemous thought, that they affirm the direct contrary, and compare all their inspired teachings and instructions to the dead works of bare planting and watering, and which must continue dead, till life comes into them from another and much higher power. "I have planted," says St. Paul, "Apollos has watered, but God gave the increase." And then further to show that this planting and watering, which was the highest work that an inspired apostle could do, was yet in itself to be considered as a lifeless, powerless thing, he adds, "So then, neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." But now, if this must be said of all that which the inspired apostles taught in outward words, that it was nothing in itself, was without power, without life, and only such a preparation towards life, as is that of planting and watering, must not that same be said of their inspired teachings, when left behind them in writing? For what else are the apostolical scriptures, but those very instructions and teachings put into writing, which they affirmed to be but bare planting and watering, quite powerless in themselves, till the living Spirit of God worked with them? Or will anyone say, that what Paul, Peter, John, spoke by inspiration from their own mouths, was indeed bare planting and watering, in order to be capable of receiving life from God; but when these apostolical teachings and instructions were written on paper, they were raised out of their first inability, got the nature of God himself, became spirit and life, and might be called the great quickening power of God, or, as the doctor says, the constant abode and supreme illumination of his Spirit with us?

It would be great folly and perverseness, to charge me here with slighting, or lessening the true value, use, and importance of the inspired apostolical scriptures; for if the charge was just, it must lie against Paul, and not against me, since I say nothing of them, but that which he says, and in his own express words, viz., that all their labor of preaching, instructing, and writing by divine

inspiration, had in themselves no other nature, use, or power, than that of such planting and watering as could not fructify till a higher power than was in them gave life and growth to that which they planted and watered.

I exceedingly love, and highly reverence the divine authority of the sacred writings of the apostles and evangelists, and would gladly persuade everyone, to be as deeply affected with them, and pay as profound a regard to them, as they would to an Elijah, a St. John Baptist, or a Paul whom they knew to be immediately sent from heaven with God's message to them. I reverence them as a literal truth of and from God, as much the greatest heavenly blessing that can be outwardly bestowed upon us. I reverence them as doing, or fitted to do all that good amongst Christians now, which the apostles did in their day, and as of the same use and benefit to the church of every age, as their planting and watering was to the first. But now, if this is not thought that fullness of regard that is due to the holy messengers of God; if anyone will still be so learnedly wise, as to affirm, that though Paul's preaching in his epistles, whilst he was alive, was indeed only bare planting and watering, but the same epistles, being published after his death, got another nature, became full of divine and living power, such a one has no right to laugh (as the doctor does) at the silly Mahometan, who believes the Alcoran to be uncreated. For wherever there is divine efficacy, there, there must be an uncreated power. And if, as the doctor says, the scriptures of the New Testament are the only constant abode and supreme illumination of the Spirit of God with us, all that is said of the eternal Spirit of God, of the uncreated light, might and ought to be said of them; that they are the WORD that was God, was with God, and are our true Immanuel, or God within us.

I shall now only add this friendly hint to the doctor, that he has a remedy at hand in his own sermon, how he may be delivered from thus grossly mistaking the spirit of the gospel, as well as the Law of Moses. St. Paul, (says the doctor) "had a quick and lively imagination, and an extensive and intimate acquaintance with those masters in moral painting, the classic writers, (N.B.) all which he proudly sacrificed to the glory of the everlasting gospel." {Sermons, vol i., page 229.}

Now if the doctor did that, though it was only from humility, which he says the apostle did proudly, such humility might be as great a good to him, as that pride was to the apostle. And indeed, one would have thought, that as soon as the doctor had discovered these writers to be only great masters in moral painting, it should have had the same effect upon him, as if he had found them great masters in delusion. For where there is moral painting, there, there is moral delusion. And the spirit, the life, the purity, and divine simplicity of gospel truth, is more eluded, lost, and destroyed by moral paintings, whether in books or pulpits, than by any material colorings put upon images of wood or clay, to excite spiritual devotion in churches. Again, if the everlasting gospel is now as glorious a thing, as it was in St. Paul's days; if the highest, most accomplished classic knowledge is so unsuitable to the light and Spirit of the gospel, that it is fit for nothing but to be cast away, or as the doctor says, "to be all sacrificed to the glory of the gospel," how wonderful is it, that this should never come into his head from the beginning to the end of his three long Legation-volumes, or that he should come piping hot with fresh and fresh classic beauties found out by himself in a Shakespeare, a Pope, to preach from the pulpit the divine wisdom of a loss and dung, that by so doing he might win Christ, and be found in him!

Let it be supposed, that our Lord was to come again for a while in the flesh, and that his coming was for this end, to do that for the Christian world cumbered with much learning, which he did to poor Martha, only cumbered with much serving, who thereby neglected that good part which Mary had chosen; must we suppose that the doctor would hasten to meet him with his sacred alliances, his bundles of pagan trash, and hieroglyphic profundities, as his full proof that Mary's good part, which shall never be taken from her, had been chosen for himself and all his readers? As well might it be thought, that the pope would come richly laden with his blessed images, his heavenly decrees, his divine bulls, as infallible proofs of his being born again from above, and solely devoted to the one thing needful.

Let the doctor figure to himself the gaudy pageantry of a divine high mass in a Romish cathedral; let him wonder at that flagrant daring contrariety that it hath to that first gospel- church of Christ, viz., "where two or three are gathered together in my Name, there am I in the midst of them"; would he not be still fuller of wonder, if he should hear the pope declaring that all this heathenish show of invented fopperies was his projected defense of that first church of Christ? But if the doctor would see a Protestant wonder full as great, he need only look at his own theatrical parading show of heathen mysteries, and heathenish learning, set forth in highest pomp. To what end? Why to bring forth, what he calls (as the pope above) his projected defense of Christianity.

O vainest of all vain projects! For what is Christianity, but that which Christ was whilst on earth? What can it be, but that which it is, and has from him? He is a king, who has all power in heaven and on earth, and his kingdom, like himself, is not of this world. Away then with the projects of popish pomp, and pagan literature to support it; they are as wise contrivances, as a high tower of Babel to defend it against the gates of hell.

I come now to the quotation from the pastoral letter of Mr. Stinstra. "A judicious writer," (says the Dissertation), "observes, that sound understanding and reason are that on which, and by which, God principally operates (N.B.) when he finds it proper to assist (N.B.) our weakness by his Spirit." {Dissertation, page 73.}

I cannot more illustrate the sense, or extol the judgment, both of the author, and quoter of this striking passage, than by the following words.

"A judicious naturalist observes, that sound and strong lungs are that on which, and by which, the air or spirit of this world principally operates, when (N.B.) he finds it proper to assist, (N.B.) the weakness of our lungs, by his breathing into them." Now if any right minded man should happen to find his heart edified, his understanding enlightened, by the above passage on divine inspiration, he will be much pleased at my assuring him, that the pastoral letter of Mr. Stinstra, and the Dissertation on Enthusiasm by Mr. Green, are from the beginning to the end full as good, in every respect, as that is.

These two instances are proof enough, that as soon as any man trusts to natural abilities, skill in languages, and commonplace learning, as the true means of entering into the kingdom of God, a kingdom, which is nothing else but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, he gives himself up to certain delusion, and can escape no error that is popular, or that suits his state and situation in the learned, religious world. He has sold his birth-right in the gospel state of divine illumination, to make a figure and noise with the sounding brass and tinkling cymbals of the natural

man.

Whence is it, that we see genius and natural abilities to be equally pleased with, and equally contending for the errors and absurdities of every system of religion, under which they are educated? It is because genius and natural abilities are just the same things, and must have the same nature now, as they had in the ancient schools of the peripatetic, academic, stoic, and atheistical philosophers. "The temptation of honor, which the academic exercise of wit" (as Dr. W. says) "was supposed to bring to its professor," {Divine Legation of Moses, Book I., page 33.} has still its power among church disputants. Nor can it possibly ever be otherwise, till parts and genius, do, as the blind, the deaf, the dumb, and lepers formerly did, go to be healed of their natural disorders by the inspiration of that oracle, who said, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness." "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." Well therefore might St. Paul say, "I have determined to know nothing among you, but Christ, and him crucified." And had it not been for this determination, he had never known, what he then knew, when he said, "The life that I now live, is not mine, but Christ's that liveth in me." Now did the apostle here overstretch the matter? Was it a spirit of enthusiasm, and not of Christ living in him, that made this declaration? Was he here making way for ignorance and darkness to extinguish the light that came down from heaven, and was the light of the world? Did he here undermine the true ground and rock on which the church of Christ was to stand, and prevail against the gates of hell? Did he by setting up this knowledge, as the best and only knowledge that an apostle need to have, break down the fences of Christ's vineyard, rob the church of all its strong holds, leave it defenseless, without a pale, and a ready prey to infidels? Who can say this, but that "spirit of anti-Christ, that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh?" For, as Christ's intending nothing, knowing nothing, willing nothing, but purely and solely the whole course of his crucifying process, was the whole truth of his being come in the flesh, was his doing the whole will of him that sent him, was his overcoming the world, death, and hell, so he that embraces this process, as Christ embraces it, who is wholly given up to it, as Christ was, he has the will of Christ, and the mind of Christ, and therefore may well desire to know nothing else. To this man alone, is the world, death, and hell, known to be overcome in him, as they were in Christ; to him alone is Christ become the resurrection and the life; and he that knows this, he knows with St. Paul that all other knowledge may, and will be cast away as dung. Now if St. Paul, having rejected all other knowledge but that of a crucified savior, which to the Jew was a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness, if he had afterwards wrote three such Legation-volumes as the doctor has done, for the food and nourishment of Christ's sheep, who can have no life in them but by eating the true bread that came down from heaven, must they not have been called Paul's full recantation of all that he had taught of a Christ crucified? The other instance of delusion from book learning, relates to Mr. Green, who wanting to write on divine inspiration, runs from book to book, from country to country, to pick up reports wherever he could find them, concerning divine inspiration, from this and that judicious author, that so he might be sure of compiling a judicious dissertation on the subject. All which he might have known to be mere delusion and lost labor, had he but remembered, or regarded any one single saying either of Christ or his apostles concerning the Holy Spirit and his operations. For not a word is said by them, but fully shows that all knowledge or perception of the Spirit is nothing else but the enjoyment of the Spirit, and that no man can know more of him than that which the Spirit himself is, and does, and manifests of his power in man.

"The things of God," says St. Paul, "knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." Is not this decisive upon the matter? Is not this proof enough, that nothing in man but the Spirit of God in him, can know what the Spirit's work in man is and does? The fruits of the Spirit, so often mentioned in scripture, are not things different, or separate from the Spirit; and if the Spirit is not always working in us, his fruits must be as absent from us as he is. St. John says, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us." A demonstration, that the Spirit can no other way make himself known to us, but by his dwelling and working in us. St. James says, "Every good and perfect gift cometh from ABOVE": but now does not he in reality deny this, who seeks for the highest gift of knowledge from BELOW, from the poor contrivance of a commonplace book? Again, "if any man lacketh wisdom, let him ask it of God"; St. James does not say, let him go ask Peter, or Paul, or John, because he knew that divine wisdom was nothing else, but divine inspiration. But Mr. Green has got together his ingenious, his eminent writers, his excellent, learned, judicious authors, his cool, rational- morality doctors (a set of men whose glorious names we read no more of in the gospel, than of the profound Aristotle, or the divine Cicero) and these are to do that for him, which the whole college of apostles could do for nobody. Now this doctrine, that nothing but the Spirit can know the things that be of God, and that the enjoyment of the Spirit, is all the knowledge that we can have of him, is a truth taught us, not only by all scripture, but by the whole nature of things. For everything that can be seen, known, heard, felt, must be manifested by itself, and not by another. It is not possible for anything but light to manifest light, nor for anything but darkness to make darkness to be known. Yet this is more possible, than for anything but divine inspiration to make divine inspiration to be known. Hence there is a degree of delusion still higher, to be noted in such writers as Mr. Green; for his collection of ingenious, eminent, rational authors, of whom he asks counsel concerning the necessity or certainty of the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, are such as deny it, and write against it. Therefore the proceeding is just as wise, as if a man was to consult some ingenious and eminent atheists, about the truth and certainty of God's immediate continual providence; or ask a few selected Deists, how, or what he was to believe of the nature and power of gospel faith. Now there are the Holy Spirit's own operations, and there are reports about them. The only true reports, are those that are made by inspired persons; and if there were no such persons, there could be no true reports of the matter. And therefore to consult uninspired persons, and such as deny and reproach the pretense to inspiration, to be rightly instructed about the truth of immediate continual divine inspiration, is a degree of blindness greater than can be charged upon the old Jewish scribes and Pharisees. The reports that are to be acknowledged as true concerning the Holy Spirit and his operations, are those that are recorded in scripture; that is, the scriptures are an infallible history, or relation of that which the Holy Spirit is, and does, and works in true believers; and also an infallible direction how we are to seek, and wait, and trust in his good power over us. But then the scriptures themselves, though thus true and infallible in these reports and instructions about the Holy Spirit, yet they can go no further than to be a true history; they cannot give to the reader of them the possession, the sensibility, and enjoyment of that which they relate. This is plain, not only from the nature of a written history or instruction, but from the express words of our Lord, saying, "Except a man be born again of the Spirit, he cannot see or enter into the kingdom of God." Therefore the new birth from above, or of the Spirit, is that alone which gives true knowledge and perception of that which is the kingdom of God. The history may relate truths enough about it; but the kingdom of God, being nothing else but the power and presence of God, dwelling and ruling in our souls, this can

only manifest itself, and can manifest itself to nothing in man but to the new birth. For everything else in man is deaf and dumb and blind to the kingdom of God; but when that which died in Adam is made alive again by the quickening Spirit from above, this being the birth which came at first from God, and a partaker of the divine nature, this knows, and enjoys the kingdom of God.

"I am the way, the truth, and the life," says Christ: this record of scripture is true; but what a delusion, for a man to think that he knows and finds this to be true, and that Christ is all this benefit and blessing to him, because he assents, consents, and contends, it may be, for the truth of those words. This is impossible. The new birth is here again the only power of entrance; everything else knocks at the door in vain: I know you not says Christ to everything, but the new birth. "I am the way, the truth and the life"; this tells us neither more nor less, than if Christ had said, I am the kingdom of God, into which nothing can enter, but that which is born of the Spirit.

Here again may be seen, in the highest degree of certainty, the absolute necessity of immediate divine inspiration through every part of the Christian life. For if a birth of the Spirit is that alone that can enter into, or receive the kingdom of God come amongst men, that alone which can find Christ to be the way, the truth and the life, then a continual life or breathing of the Spirit in us, must be as necessary as the first birth of the Spirit. For a birth of the Spirit is only to make a beginning of a life of the Spirit: birth is only in order to life; if therefore the life of the Spirit continues not, the birth is lost, and the cessation of its breathing in us is nothing else but death again to the kingdom of God, that is, to everything that is or can be godly. Therefore the immediate continual inspiration of the Spirit, as the only possible power and preservation of a godly life, stands upon the same ground, and is as absolutely necessary to salvation, as the new birth.

Take away this power and working life of the Spirit from being the one life of all that is done in the church, and then, though it be ever so outwardly glorious in its extent, or ever so full of learned members, it can be nothing else in the sight of God but the wise Greeks and the carnal Jews become a body of water-baptized Christians. For no one can be in a better state than this, the wisdom of the Greek, the carnality of the Jew, must have the whole government of him, till he is born of and led by the Spirit of God; this alone is the kingdom of God, and everything else is the kingdom of this world, in which satan is declared to be the prince. Poor, miserable man! that strives, with all the sophistry of human wit, to be delivered from the immediate continual operation and governance of the Spirit of God, not considering, that where God is not, there is the devil, and where the Spirit rules not, there all is the work of the flesh, though nothing be talked of but spiritual and Christian matters. I say talked of; for the best ability of the natural man can go no further than talk, and notions, and opinions about scripture words and facts; in these, he may be a great critic, an acute logician, a powerful orator, and know everything of scripture, except the Spirit and the truth.

How much then is it to be lamented, as well as impossible to be denied, that though all scripture assures us, that the things of the Spirit of God are and must, to the end of the world, be foolishness to the natural man, yet from one end of learned Christendom to the other, nothing is thought of as the true and proper means of attaining divine knowledge, but that which every natural, selfish, proud, envious, false, vain-glorious, worldly man can do. Where is that divinity student who thinks, or was ever taught to think, of partaking of the light of the gospel any other way, than by doing with the scriptures that which he does with pagan writers, whether poets,

orators, or comedians, viz., exercise his logic, rhetoric, and critical skill, in descanting upon them? This done, he is thought by himself, and often by others, to have a sufficiency of divine apostolical knowledge. What wonder therefore, if it should sometimes happen, that the very same vain, corrupt, puffing literature, that raises one man to be a poet-laureate, should set another in a divinity chair?

How is it that the logical, critical, learned Deist comes by his infidelity? Why just by the same help of the same good powers of the natural man, as many a learned Christian comes to know, embrace, and contend for the faith of the gospel. For, drop the power and reality of divine inspiration, and then all is dropped that can set the believer above, or give him any godly difference from the infidel. For the Christian's faith has no goodness in it, but that it comes from above, is born of the Spirit; and the Deist's infidelity has no badness in it, but because it comes from below, is born of the will of the flesh and the will of men, and rejects the necessity of being born again out of the corruption of fallen nature. The Christian therefore that rejects, reproaches, and writes against the necessity of immediate divine inspiration, pleads the whole cause of infidelity; he confirms the ground, on which it stands; and has nothing to prove the goodness of his own Christianity, but that which equally proves to the Deist the goodness of his infidelity. For without the new birth, or which is the same thing, without immediate continual divine inspiration, the difference between the Christian and the infidel is quite lost; and whether the uninspired unregenerate son of Adam be in the church, or out of the church, he is still that child of this world, that fallen Adam, and mere natural man, to whom the things of the Spirit of God are and must be foolishness. For a full proof of this no more need be seen, than that which you cannot help seeing, that the same shining virtues, and the same glaring vices are common to them both. For the Christian, not made such by the Spirit of God continually inspiring and working in him, has only a Christianity of his own making, and can have only such appearances of virtues, and will have such reality of vices, as natural self wants to have. Let him therefore renounce what is called natural religion as much as he will, yet unless he is a new born and divinely inspired Christian, he must live and die in all his natural corruption.

Through all scripture nothing else is aimed at or intended for man, as his Christianity, but the divine life, nor anything hinted at, as having the least power to raise or beget it, but the holy life-giving Spirit of God. How gross therefore is that blindness, which reading the gospel, and the history of gospel Christians, cannot see these two fundamental truths, (1) "That nothing is divine knowledge in man, but the divine life": (2) "That the divine life is nothing else but a birth of the divine nature within him"? But this truth being lost or given up, vain learning and a worldly spirit, being in possession of the gospel-book, set up kingdoms of strife and division. For what end? Why, that the unity of the church may not be lost. Multiply systems of empty notions and opinions: for what? Why, that words and forms may do that for the church now, which to the first church, of Christ's own forming, could only be done by being born of the Spirit.

Hence it is, that the scripture-scholar is looked upon as having divine knowledge of its matters, when he is as ready at chapter and verse, as the critic is at every page of Cicero. And nothing is looked upon as defective in divinity knowledge, but such supposed mistakes of the genius of the Hebrew, or Greek letter, as the sublime students of the immortal words of a Milton, or a Shakespeare, charge as blunders upon one another.

Now to call such scripture skill divine knowledge, is just as solid and judicious, as if a man was said, or thought to know, that which St. John knew, because he could say his whole gospel and epistles by heart, without missing a word of them. For a literal knowledge of scripture is but like having all scripture in the memory, and is so far from being a divine perception of the things spoken of, that the most vicious wicked scholar in the world may attain to the highest perfection in it. But divine knowledge and wickedness of life are so inconsistent, that they are mutual death and destruction to one another; where the one is alive, the other must be dead. Judas Iscariot knew Jesus Christ, and all that he said and did to his crucifixion; he knew what it was to be at the Lord's table, and to partake of his supper of bread and wine. But yet, with much more truth it may be said, that he knew nothing of all this, and had no better knowledge of it than Pontius Pilate had. Now all knowledge of Christ, but that which is from divine inspiration, or the new birth, is but as poor and profitless, as Judas his knowledge was. It may say to Christ, as he did, Hail master; but no one can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Spirit. This empty letter-learned knowledge, which the natural man can as easily have of the sacred scripture and religious matters, as of any other books or human affairs, this being taken for divine knowledge, has spread such darkness and delusion all over Christendom, as may be reckoned no less than a general apostasy from the gospel state of divine illumination. For the gospel state is in its whole nature nothing else; it has but one light, and that is the Lamb of God; it has but one life, and that is by the Spirit of God. Whatever is not of and from this light, and governed by this Spirit, call it by what high name you will, is no more a part of the gospel state, nor will have a better end, than that which entereth into the mouth, and corrupteth in the belly. That one light and Spirit, which was only one from all eternity, before angels or any heavenly beings were created, must to all eternity be that one only light and Spirit, by which angels or men can ever have any union or communion with God. Every other light is but the light whence beasts have their sense and subtlety; every other spirit, is but that which gives to flesh and blood all its lusts and appetites. Nothing else but the loss of the one light and Spirit of God turned an order of angels into devils. Nothing else but the loss of that same light and Spirit took from the divine Adam his first crown of paradisaical glory, stripped him more naked than the beasts, and left him a prey to devils, and in the jaws of eternal death. What therefore can have the least share of power towards man's redemption, but the light and Spirit of God making again a birth of themselves in him, as they did in his first glorious creation? Or what can possibly begin, or bring forth this return of his first lost birth, but solely that which is done by this eternal light and Spirit. Hence it is, that the gospel state is by our Lord affirmed to be a kingdom of heaven at hand, or come among men, because it has the nature of no worldly thing or creaturely power, is to serve no worldly ends, can be helped by no worldly power, receives nothing from man but man's full denial of himself, stands upon nothing that is finite or transitory, has no existence but in that working power of God that created and upholds heaven and earth, and is a kingdom of God become man, and a kingdom of men united to God, through a continual immediate divine illumination. What scripture of the New Testament can you read, that does not prove this to be the gospel state, a kingdom of God, into which none can enter but by being born of the Spirit, none can continue to be alive in it but by being led by the Spirit, and in which not a thought, or desire, or action, can be allowed to have any part in it, but as it is a fruit of the Spirit?

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." What is God's kingdom in heaven, but the manifestation of what God is, and what he does in his heavenly creatures? How is his will done there, but because his Holy Spirit is the life, the power, and mover of all that live in it.

We daily read this prayer, we extol it under the name of the Lord's Prayer, and yet (for the sake of orthodoxy) preach and write against all that is prayed for in it. For nothing but a continual, essential, immediate divine illumination can do that which we pray may be done. For where can God's kingdom be come, but where every other power but his is at an end, and driven out of it? How can his will only be done, but where the Spirit that wills in God wills in the creature?

What now have parts, and literature, and the natural abilities of man, that they can do here? Just as much as they can do at the resurrection of the dead; for all that is to be done here is nothing else but resurrection and life. Therefore, that which gave eyes to the blind, cleansed the lepers, cast out devils, and raised the dead, that alone can and must do all that is to be done in this gospel kingdom of God. For every the smallest work or fruit of grace must be as solely done by God, as the greatest miracle in nature; and the reason is, because every work of grace is the same overcoming of nature, as when the dead are raised to life. Yet vain man would be thought to be something, to have great power and ability in this kingdom of grace, not because he has happened to be made a scholar, has run through all languages and histories, has been long exercised in conjectures and criticisms, and has his head as full of all notions, theological, poetical, and philosophical, as a dictionary is full of all sorts of words.

Now let this simple question decide the whole matter here: has this great scholar any more power of saying to this mountain, "Be thou removed hence, and cast into the sea," than the illiterate Christian has? If not, he is just as weak, as powerless, and little in the kingdom of God as he is. But if the illiterate man's faith should happen to be nearer to the bulk of a grain of mustard seed, than that of the prodigious scholar, the illiterate Christian stands much above him in the kingdom of God.

Look now at the present state of Christendom, glorying in the light of Greek and Roman learning (which an age or two ago broke forth) as a light that has helped the gospel to shine with a luster, that it scarce ever had before. Look at this, and you will see the fall of the present church from its first gospel state, to have much likeness to the fall of the first divine man from the glory of paradisaical innocence and heavenly purity into an earthly state, and bestial life of worldly craft and serpentine subtlety. In the first gospel church, heathen light had no other name than heathen darkness; and the wisdom of words was no more sought after, than that friendship of the world which is enmity with God. In that new born church, the tree of life, which grew in the midst of paradise, took root and grew up again. In the present church, the tree of life is hissed at, as the visionary food of deluded enthusiasts; and the tree of death, called the tree of knowledge of good and evil, has the eyes and hearts of priest and people, and is thought to do as much good to Christians, as it did evil to the first inhabitants of paradise. This tree, that brought death and corruption into human nature at first, is now called a tree of light, and is day and night well watered with every corrupt stream, however distant, or muddy with earth, that can be drawn to it. The simplicity indeed, both of the gospel letter and doctrine, has the shine and polish of classic literature laid thick upon it. Cicero is in the pulpit, Aristotle writes Christian ethics, Euclid demonstrates infidelity and absurdity to be the same thing. Greece had but one Longinus, Rome had but one Quintilian; but in our present church, they are as common as patriots in the state. But now, what follows from this new risen light? Why, Aristotle's atheism, Cicero's height of pride and depth of dissimulation, and every refined or gross species of Greek and Roman vices, are as glaring in this new enlightened Christian church, as ever they were in old pagan Greece or Rome.

Would you find a gospel-Christian in all this midday glory of learning, you may light a candle, as the philosopher did in the midday sun, to find an honest man. And indeed, if we consider the nature of our salvation, either with respect to that which alone can save us, or that from which we are to be saved, it will be plain, that the wit and elegance of classic literature, brought into a Christian church to make the doctrines of the cross have a better salvation-effect upon fallen man, is but like calling in the assistance of balls and masquerades, to make the lent-penitence go deeper into the heart, and more effectually drive all levity and impurity out of it. How poorly was the gospel at first preached, if the wisdom of words, and the gifts of natural wit and imagination had been its genuine helps? But alas, they stand in the same contrariety to one another, as self-denial and self-gratification. To know the truth of gospel salvation, is to know that man's natural wisdom is to be equally sacrificed with his natural folly; for they are but one and the same thing, only called sometimes by one name, and sometimes by the other. His intellectual faculties are, by the fall, in a much worse state than his natural animal appetites, and want a much greater self-denial. And when own will, own understanding, and own imagination have their natural strength indulged and gratified, and are made seemingly rich and honorable with the treasures acquired from a study of the belles lettres, they will just as much help poor fallen man to be like-minded with Christ, as the art of cookery, well and daily studied, will help a professor of the gospel to the spirit and practice of Christian abstinence. To know all this to be strictly the truth, no more need be known, than these two things: (1) that our salvation consists wholly in being saved from ourselves, or that which we are by nature; (2) that in the whole nature of things, nothing could be this salvation, or savior to us, but such an humility of God manifested in human nature, as is beyond all expression. Hence, the first unalterable term of this savior to fallen man, is this, "Except a man denies himself, forsakes all that he has, yea and his own life, he cannot be my disciple." And to show, that this is but the beginning, or ground of man's salvation, the savior adds, "Learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly of heart." What a light is here, for those that can bear, or love the light! Self is the whole evil of fallen nature; self-denial is our capacity of being saved; humility is our savior. This is every man's short lesson of life; and he that has well learned it, is scholar enough, and has had all the benefit of a most finished education. Then old Adam with all his ignorance is cast out of him; and when Christ's humility is learned, then he has the very mind of Christ, and that which brings him forth a son of God. Who then can enough wonder at that bulk of libraries, which has taken place of this short lesson of the gospel, or at that number of champion disputants, who from age to age, have been all in arms to support and defend a set of opinions, doctrines, and practices, all which may be most cordially embraced, without the least degree of self-denial, and most firmly held fast, without getting the least degree of humility by it?

What a grossness of ignorance, both of man and his savior, to run to Greek and Roman schools to learn how to put off Adam, and to put on Christ? To drink at the fountains of pagan poets and orators, in order more divinely to drink of the cup that Christ drank of? What can come of all this, but that which is already too much come, a Ciceronian-gospeller, instead of a gospel-penitent? Instead of the depth, the truth and spirit of the humble publican, seeking to regain paradise, only by a broken heart, crying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner," the high-bred classic will live in daily transports at the enormous {See Milton's Enormous Bliss.} sublime of a Milton, flying thither on the unfeathered wings of high sounding words. This will be more or less the case with all the salvation-doctrines of Christ, whilst under classical acquisition and administration. Those divine truths, which are no further good and redeeming, but as they are spirit and life in us, which can have no

entrance, or birth, but in the death of self, in a broken and contrite heart, will serve only to help classic painters (as Dr. W {As this address was wrote some time ago, in which are certain strictures upon Dr. Warburton's writings, who has lately been consecrated a Right Reverend Lord Bishop; I thought it more candid not to alter my style, than to take the advantage of charging such gross errors on a Bishop of Gloucester, which I only found in a Mr. and Dr. Warburton.} calls them) to lavish out their colors on their own paper monuments of lifeless virtues.

How came the learned heathens by their pride and vanity, by their inability to come under the humility of the cross? It was because the natural man shined in the false glory of his own cultivated abilities. Have wit and parts, an elegant taste, any more good or redeeming virtue in Christians, than they had in heathens? As well might it be said, that own will is good, and has a redeeming virtue in a Christian, but bad and destructive in a heathen. I said a redeeming virtue in it; because nothing is or can be a religious good to fallen man, but that which has a redeeming virtue in it, or is, so far as it goes, a true renewal of the divine life in the soul. Therefore, said our only redeemer, "Without me, ye can do nothing." Whatever is not his immediate work in us is at best but a mere nothing with respect to the good of our redemption. A tower of Babel may to its builders' eyes seem to hide its head in the clouds, but as to its reaching of heaven, it is no nearer to that, than the earth on which it stands. It is thus with all the buildings of man's wisdom and natural abilities in the things of salvation; he may take the logic of Aristotle, add to that the rhetoric of Tully, and then ascend as high as he can on the ladder of poetic imagination, yet no more is done to the reviving the lost life of God in his soul, than by a tower of brick and mortar to reach heaven.

Self is the root, the tree, and the branches of all the evils of our fallen state. We are without God, because we are in the life of self. Self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, are the very essence, and life of pride; and the devil the first father of pride, is never absent from them, nor without power in them. To die to these essential properties of self, is to make the devil depart from us. But as soon as we would have self-abilities have a share in our good works, the satanic spirit of pride is in union with us, and we are working for the maintenance of self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking.

All the vices of fallen angels and men have their birth and power in the pride of self, or I may better say, in the atheism and idolatry of self; for self is both atheist and idolator. It is atheist, because it has rejected God; it is an idolator, because it is its own idol. On the other hand, all the virtues of the heavenly life are the virtues of humility. Not a joy, or glory, or praise in heaven, but is what it is through humility. It is humility alone that makes the unpassable gulf between heaven and hell. No angels in heaven, but because humility is in all their breath; no devils in hell, but because the fire of pride is their whole fire of life.

What is then, or in what lies the great struggle for eternal life? It all lies in the strife between PRIDE and HUMILITY: all other things, be they what they will, are but as under workmen; pride and humility are the two master powers, the two kingdoms of strife for the eternal possession of man. And here it is to be observed, that every son of Adam is in the service of pride and self, be he doing what he will, till a humility that comes solely from heaven has been his redeemer. Till then, all that he doth will be only done by the right hand, that the left hand may know it. And he that thinks it possible for the natural man to get a better humility than this from his own right reason (as it is often miscalled) refined by education, shows himself quite ignorant of this one most plain and capital truth of the gospel, namely, that there never was, nor ever will be, but one humility in the

whole world, and that is the one humility of Christ, which never any man, since the fall of Adam, had the least degree of but from Christ. Humility is one, in the same sense and truth, as Christ is one, the mediator is one, redemption is one. There are not two Lambs of God that take away the sins of the world. But if there was any humility besides that of Christ, there would be something else besides him that could take away the sins of the world. "All that came before me," says Christ, "were thieves and robbers": we are used to confine this to persons; but the same is as true of every virtue, whether it has the name of humility, charity, piety, or anything else; if it comes before Christ, however good it may pretend to be, it is but a cheat, a thief, and a robber, under the name of godly virtue. And the reason is, because pride and self have the all of man, till man has his all from Christ. He therefore only fights the good fight, whose strife is, that the self-idolatrous nature which he hath from Adam may be brought to death, by the supernatural humility of Christ brought to life in him. The enemies to man's rising out of the fall of Adam, through the Spirit and power of Christ, are many. But the one great dragon- enemy, called anti-Christ, is SELF-EXALTATION. This is his birth, his pomp, his power, and his throne; when self-exaltation ceases, the last enemy is destroyed, and all that came from the pride and death of Adam is swallowed up in victory.

There has been much sharp looking out, to see where and what anti-Christ is, or by what marks he may be known. Some say he has been in the Christian world almost ever since the gospel times, nay, that he was even then beginning to appear and show himself. Others say he came in with this, or that pope; others that he is not yet come, but near at hand. Others will have it, that he has been here, and there, but driven from one place to another by several new risen Protestant sects. But to know with certainty, where and what anti-Christ is, and who is with him, and who against him, you need only read this short description which Christ gives of himself. "(1) I can do nothing of myself. (2) I came not to do my own will. (3) I seek not my own glory. (4) I am meek and lowly of heart." Now if this is Christ, then self- ability or self-exaltation, being the highest and fullest contrariety to all this, must be alone the one great anti-Christ, that opposes and withstands the whole nature and Spirit of Christ.

What therefore has everyone so much to fear, to renounce and abhor, as every inward sensibility of self-exaltation, and every outward work that proceeds from it. But now, at what things shall a man look, to see that working of self which raises pride to its strongest life, and most of all hinders the birth of the humble Jesus in his soul? Shall he call the pomps and vanities of the world the highest works of self-adoration? Shall he look at the fops and beaux, and painted ladies, to see the pride that has the most of anti-Christ in it? No, by no means. These are indeed marks, shameful enough, of the vain, foolish heart of man, but yet, comparatively speaking, they are but the skin-deep follies of that pride which the fall of man has begotten and brought forth in him. Would you see the deepest root, and iron-strength of pride and self-adoration, you must enter into the dark chamber of man's fiery soul, where the light of God (which alone gives humility and meek submission to all created spirits) being extinguished by the death which Adam died, satan, or which is the same thing self-exaltation became the strong man that kept possession of the house, till a stronger than he should come upon him. In this secret source of an eternal fiery soul, glorying in the astral light of this world, a swelling kingdom of pomps and vanities is set up in the heart of man, of which, all outward pomps and vanities are but its childish transitory playthings. The inward strong man of pride, the diabolical self, has his higher works within; he dwells in the strength of the heart, and has every power and faculty of the soul offering continual incense to him. His memory,

his will, his understanding, his imagination, are always at work for him, and for no one else. His memory is the faithful repository of all the fine things that self has ever done; and lest anything of them should be lost or forgotten, she is continually setting them before his eyes. His will, though it has all the world before it, yet goes after nothing, but as self sends it. His understanding is ever upon the stretch for new projects to enlarge the dominions of self; and if this fails, imagination comes in, as the last and truest support of self, she makes him a king and mighty lord of castles in the air. This is that full-born natural self, that must be pulled out of the heart, and totally denied, or there can be no disciple of Christ; which is only saying this plain truth, that the apostate self-idolatrous nature of the old man must be put off, or there can be no new creature in Christ.

Now what is it in the human soul that most of all hinders the death of this old man? What is it that above all other things strengthens and exalts the life of self, and makes it the master and governor of all the powers of the heart and soul? It is the fancied riches of parts, the glitter of genius, the flights of imagination, the glory of learning, and the self-conceited strength of natural reason: these are the strongholds of fallen nature, the master-builders of pride's temple in the heart of man, and which, as so many priests, keep up the daily worship of idol-self. And here let it be well, and well observed, that all these magnified talents of the natural man are started up through his miserable fall from the life of God in his soul. Wit, genius, learning, and natural reason, would never have had any more a name among men, than blindness, ignorance, and sickness, had man continued, as at first, an holy image of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Everything then that dwelt in him, or came from him, would have only said so much of God, and nothing of himself, have manifested nothing to him but the heavenly powers of the triune life of God dwelling in him. He would have had no more sense or consciousness of his own wit, or natural reason, or any power of goodness in all that he was, and did, than of his own creating power, at beholding the created heavens and earth. It is his dreadful fall from the life of God in his soul, that has furnished him with the substantial riches of his bestial appetites and lusts. And when the lusts of the flesh have spent out their life, when the dark thick body of earthly flesh and blood shall be forced to let the soul go loose, all these bright talents will end with that system of fleshly lusts, in which they begun; and that of man which remains will have nothing of its own, nothing that can say, I do this, or I do that; but all that it has or does, will be either the glory of God manifested in it, or the power of hell in full possession of it. The time of man's playing with parts, wit, and abilities, and of fancying himself to be something great and considerable in the intellectual world, may be much shorter, but can be no longer, than he can eat and drink with the animals of this world. When the time comes, that fine buildings, rich settlements, acquired honors, and rabbi, rabbi, must take their leave of him, all the stately structures, which genius, learning, and flights of imagination, have painted inwardly on his brain and outwardly on paper, must bear full witness to Solomon's vanity of vanities.

Let then the high accomplished scholar reflect, that he comes by his wit, and parts, and acute abilities, just as the serpent came by his subtlety; let him reflect, that he might as well dream of acquiring angelic purity to his animal nature by multiplying new invented delights for his earthly passions and tempers, as of raising his soul into divine knowledge through the well exercised powers of his natural reason and imagination. The finest intellectual power, and that which has the best help in it towards bringing man again into the region of divine light, is that poor despised thing called simplicity. This is that which stops the workings of the fallen life of nature, and leaves room for God to work again in the soul, according to the good pleasure of his holy will. It stands in such

a waiting posture before God, and in such readiness for the divine birth, as the plants of the earth wait for the inflowing riches of the light and air. But the self-assuming workings of man's natural powers shut him up in himself, closely barred up against the inflowing riches of the light and Spirit of God.

Yet so it is, in this fallen state of the gospel church, that with these proud endowments of fallen nature, the classic scholar, full fraught with pagan light and skill, comes forth to play the critic and orator with the simplicity of salvation mysteries; mysteries which mean nothing else but the inward work of the triune God in the soul of man, nor any other work there, but the raising up of a dead Adam into a living Christ of God.

However, to make way for parts, criticism, and language- learning, to have the full management of salvation doctrines, the well- read scholar gives out, that the ancient way of knowing the things of God, taught and practiced by fishermen- apostles, is obsolete. They indeed wanted to have divine knowledge from the immediate continual operation of the Holy Spirit, but this state was only for a time, till genius, and learning entered into the pale of the church. Behold, if ever, "the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place!" For as soon as the doctrine is set up, that man's natural parts and acquired learning have full right and power to sit in the divinity chair, and to guide men into that truth which was once the only office and power of the Holy Spirit, as soon as this is done, and so far as it is received, it may with the greatest truth be said, that the kingdom of God is entirely shut up, and only a kingdom of scribes, Pharisees, and hypocrites, can come instead of it. For by this doctrine the whole nature and power of gospel religion is much more denied, than by setting up the infallibility of the pope; for though his claim to infallibility is false, yet he claims it from and under the Holy Spirit; but the Protestant scholar has his divinity knowledge, his power in the kingdom of truth, from himself, his own logic, and learned reason. Christ has nowhere instituted an infallible pope; and it is full as certain, that he has nowhere spoke one single word, or given the least power to logic, learning, or the natural powers of man, in his kingdom. He has never said to them, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven"; never said to them, "go ye and teach all nations," no more than he has ever said to wolves, "go ye, and feed my sheep." Christ indeed said of himself, according to the flesh, it is expedient for you that I go away. But where has he said of himself according to the spirit, "It is also expedient for you that I go away, that your own natural abilities and learned reason may have the guidance of you into all truth?" This is nowhere said, unless logic can prove it from these words, "Without me ye can do nothing," and, "Lo, I am with you to the end of the world." The first and main doctrine of Christ and his apostles was, to tell the Jews, "that the kingdom of God was at hand," or was come to them. Proof enough surely, that their church was not that kingdom of God, though by God's appointment, and under laws of his own commanding. But why not, when it was thus set up by God? It was because it had human and worldly things in it, consisted of carnal ordinances, and had only types, and figures, and shadows of a kingdom of God that was to come. Of this kingdom, Christ says, "My kingdom is not of this world"; and as a proof of it, he adds, "if it was of this world, then would my servants fight for me"; which was saying, that it was so different in kind, and so superior in nature to this world, that no sort of worldly power could either help, or hinder it. But of this world, into which the kingdom of God was come, the holy one of God says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good comfort, I have overcome the world." Now how was it that Christ's victory was their victory? It was, because he was in them, and they in him, "Because I live, ye shall

live also; in that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you." This was the kingdom of God come to them, the same kingdom of God in which Adam was born and begun his first glorious life, when the image and likeness of the Holy Trinity had an outward glory, like that which broke through the body of Christ, when on "Mount Tabor his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." To the children of this kingdom, says its almighty king, "When they bring you before magistrates and powers, take no thought how, or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say unto them, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in that same hour what ye ought to say. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." No higher, or other thing is here said, than in these other words, "Take no thought, what ye shall eat, or drink, or wherewithal ye shall be clothed, but seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." This is the truth of the kingdom of God, come unto men, and this is the birth-right privilege of all that are living members of it, to be delivered from their own natural spirit which they had from Adam, from the spirit and wisdom of this world, and through the whole course of their lives only to say, and do, and be that, which the Spirit of their Father worketh in them. But now, is not this kingdom gone away from us, are we not left comfortless, if instead of this Spirit of our Father speaking, doing, and working everything in us and for us, we are left again to our own natural powers, to run to every Lo here, and Lo there, to find a share in that kingdom of God, which once was, and never can be anything else but God, the wisdom and power of God manifested in our flesh? Had it not been as well, nay better for us, to have been still under types and figures, sacrificing bulls and goats by divine appointment, than to be brought under a religion that must be spirit and life and then left to the jarring interests of the wisdom of the Greek, and the carnality of the Jew, how to be living members of it? For where the Spirit of God is not the continual immediate governor of spiritual things, nothing better can come of it. For the truth and full proof of this, no more need be appealed to than all the libraries and churches of Christendom for many ages to this day.

What is the difference between man's own righteousness and man's own light in religion? They are strictly the same thing, do one and the same work, namely, keep up and strengthen every evil, vanity, and corruption of fallen nature. Nothing saves a man from his own righteousness, but that which saves and delivers him from his own light. The Jew that was most of all set against the gospel, and unable to receive it was he that trusted in his own righteousness; this was the rich man, to whom it was as hard to enter into the kingdom of heaven as for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. But the Christian, that trusts in his own light, is the very Jew that trusted in his own righteousness; and all that he gets by the gospel, is only that which the Pharisee got by the Law, namely, to be further from entering into the kingdom of God than publicans and harlots. How comes it, that a beast, a scarlet whore, a horned dragon, and other the most horrible descriptions of diabolical power, have been by the Spirit of God made descriptions of the Christian church? How comes it, that the Spirit describes the gospel-church as driven into a wilderness; the two faithful witnesses, Moses and Jesus, as prophesying so many ages in sackcloth, and slain in the streets of spiritual Sodom and Egypt? It is because man's own natural light, man's own conceited righteousness, his serpentine subtlety, his self-love, his sensual spirit and worldly power, have seized the mysteries of salvation that came down from heaven, and built them up into a kingdom of envious strife and contention, for learned glory, spiritual merchandise, and worldly power. This is the beast, the whore, and dragon, that has governed, and will govern in every private Christian, and public church, till, dead to all that is self, they turn to God; not to a God that they have only

heard of with their ears, and their fathers have told them, but to a God of life, light, and power, found living and working within them, as the essential life, light, and power of their own lives. For God is only our God, by a birth of his own divine nature within us. This, and nothing but this, is our whole relation to, our only fellowship with him, our whole knowledge of him, our whole power of having any part in the mysteries of gospel-salvation. Nothing can seek the kingdom of God, or hunger and thirst after his righteousness, nothing can cry, "Abba Father," nothing can pray, "Thy kingdom come," nothing can say of Christ, "My Lord, and my God," but that which is born of God, and is the divine nature itself become creaturely in us. Nothing but God in man can be a godly life in man. Hence is that of the apostle, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." But you will say, can this be true of the spiritual divine letter of the gospel? Can it kill, or give death? Yes, it kills, when it is rested in; when it is taken for divine power, and supposed to have goodness in itself; for then it kills the Spirit of God in man, quenches his holy fire within us, and is set up instead of it. It gives death, when it is built into systems of strife and contention about words, notions, and opinions, and makes the kingdom of God to consist, not in power, but in words. When it is thus used, then of necessity it kills, because it keeps from that which alone is life and can give life. This then is the whole of the matter; all the literal truths, and variety of doctrines and expressions of the written word, have but one nature, one end, and one errand, they all say nothing else to man but that one thing which Christ said, in these words, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you"; just the same, as when it is said, "Jesus Christ, who is of God made unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification"; this is the only refreshment from Christ. Again, "But ye are washed, but ye are cleansed in the Name of our Lord Jesus"; just the same as when it is said, "Except ye abide in me, and I in you, ye have no life in you." Again, "By grace ye are saved, by faith ye are saved," says neither more nor less than this, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life"; the same as when Christ says, "Without me ye can do nothing"; the same as the apostle says, "Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me"; the same as "Christ in us the hope of glory; if Christ be not in you, ye are reprobates." Therefore to come to Christ, to have our heavy laden, fallen nature refreshed by him, to be born spirit of his Spirit, to have his heavenly flesh and heavenly blood made living in us, before we put off the bestial body and blood of death which we have from Adam, is the one only thing taught and meant by all that is so variously said in the scriptures of the merits and benefits of Christ to us. It is the SPIRIT, the BODY, the BLOOD of Christ within us that is our whole peace with God, our whole adoption, our whole redemption, our whole justification, our whole glorification; and this is the one thing said, and meant by that new birth, of which Christ says, "Except a man be born again from above, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now, the true ground why all that is said of Christ in such a variety of expressions has only one meaning, and points only to one and the same thing is this, it is because the whole state and nature of fallen man wants only one thing, and that one thing is a real birth of the divine nature made living again in him, as at the first; and then all is done, that can be done, by all the mysteries of the birth, and whole process of Christ, for our salvation. All the Law, the prophets, and the gospel are fulfilled, when there is in Christ a new creature, having life in and from him, as really as the branch has its life in and from the vine. And when all scripture is thus understood, and all that either Christ says of himself, or his apostles say of him, are all heard, or read, only as one and the same call to come to Christ, in hunger and thirst to be filled and blessed with his divine nature made living within us; then, and then only, the letter kills not, but as a sure guide leads directly to life. But grammar, logic, and criticism knowing nothing of scripture

but its words, bring forth nothing but their own wisdom of words, and a religion of wrangle, hatred, and contention, about the meaning of them. But lamentable as this is, the letter of scripture has been so long the usurped province of school-critics, and learned reasoners making their markets of it, that the difference between literal, notional, and living divine knowledge, is almost quite lost in the Christian world. So that if any awakened souls are here or there found among Christians, who think that more must be known of God, of Christ, and the powers of the world to come, than every scholar can know by reading the letter of scripture, immediately the cry of enthusiasm, whether they be priests, or people, is sent after them. A procedure, which could only have some excuse, if these critics could first prove, that the apostle's text ought to be thus read, "The spirit killeth, but the letter giveth life." The true nature, and full distinction between literal and divine knowledge, is set forth in the highest degree of clearness in these words of our savior, "The kingdom of God is like a treasure in a field": thus far is the true use and benefit, and utmost power of the letter, it can tell us of a treasure that we want, a treasure that belongs to us, and how and where it is to be found; but when it is added, that a "man goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field," then begins the divine knowledge, which is nothing else, but the treasure possessed and enjoyed. Now what is here said, is the same that is said in these other words of Christ, "Except a man denies himself and forsakes all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple"; that is, he cannot partake of my mind, my Spirit, and my nature, and therefore cannot know me; he is only a hearer of a treasure, without entering into the possession and enjoyment of it. And thus it is with all scripture, the letter can only direct to the doing of that which it cannot do, and give notice of something that it cannot give.

Now clear and evident as this distinction is, between a mere literal direction to a thing and a real participation of it, which alone is a true perception of it, the generality of Christians seem quite insensible of any other religious perception, or knowledge of divine things, but such ideas or notions of them, as a man can form from scripture words. Whereas good and evil, the only objects of religious knowledge, are an inward state and growth of our life, they are in us, are a part of us, just in the same manner as seeing and hearing are in us, and we can have no real knowledge of them any other way, than as we have of our own seeing and hearing. And as no man can get or lose his seeing or hearing, or have less or more of them, by any ideas or notions that he forms about them, just so it is with that which is the power of good, and the power of evil in us; notions and ideas have no effect upon it. Yet no other knowledge is thought of, or sought after, or esteemed of any value, but that which is notional and the work of the brain.

Thus, as soon as a man of speculation can demonstrate that, which he calls the being and attributes of God, he thinks, and others think, that he truly knows God. But what excuse can be made for such an imagination, when plain scripture has told him, that to know God is eternal life, that is, to know God is to have the power, the life, and the Spirit of God manifested in him, and therefore it is eternal life. "No man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth him." Because the revelation of the Son is the birth of the Son in the soul, and this new creature in Christ has alone knowledge of God, what he is, and does, and works in the creature.

Again, another, forming an opinion of faith from the letter of scripture, straightway imagines that he knows what faith is, and that he is in the faith. Sad delusion! For to know what faith is, or that we are in the faith, is to know that Christ is in us of a truth; it is to know the power of his life, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection and ascension, made good in our souls. To be in the faith, is

to have done with all notions and opinions about it, because it is found and felt by its living power and fruits within us, which are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. All which are three names or powers peculiar to Jesus Christ; he alone is our righteousness, our peace, our joy in the Holy Ghost. And therefore faith is not in us, by reason of this or that opinion, assent or consent, but it is Christ, or the divine nature in us; or its operations could not be righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. "By faith ye are save," has no other meaning than by Christ ye are saved. And if faith in its whole nature, in its root and growth, was anything else but Christ, or a birth of the divine nature within us, it could do us no good, no power could be ascribed to it, it could not be our victory, it could not overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Every faith that is not Christ in us is but a dead faith.

How trifling therefore (to say no worse of it) is that learning, which sets up a difference between faith and its works, between a justification by faith, and justification by its works. Is there any difference between Christ, as a redeemer, and his redeeming works? Can they be set above one another in their redeeming efficacy? If not, then faith and its works, which are nothing else but Christ in us, can have no separation from, or excellency above one another, but are as strictly one, as Christ is one, and no more two things, than our savior and our salvation are two different things in us. Everything that is said of faith, from Adam to this day, is only so much said of the power, and life of a redeeming Christ, working within us; so that to divide faith from its works is as absurd, as to divide a thing from its self, a circle from its roundness. No salvation would have ever been ascribed to faith, but because it is, in the strictest sense, Christ himself, the power of God, living and working in us. It never would have been said of faith, that every power of the world, the flesh, and the devil, must yield to it, but because it is that very Christ within us, without whom we can do nothing. But if without Christ we can do nothing, and yet all things are possible to our faith, can there be a fuller demonstration that our faith is nothing else but Christ, born, and living within us? Whatever therefore there is of power within us, that tends to salvation, call it by what name you will, either faith, or hope, or prayer, or hunger after the kingdom of God and his righteousness, it is all but one power, and that one power is Christ within us. If therefore faith and its good works are but one and the same Christ living in us, the distinction between a good faith and its good works, and all the contentious volumes that have been written about it, are as mere ignorant jargon, as a distinction made and contended for, between life and its living operations. When the holy church of Christ, the kingdom of God came among men, was first set up, it was the apostle's boast, that all other wisdom or learning was sunk into nothing. "Where," says he, "is the wise, the scribe, the disputer of this world? Hath not God made them foolishness?" But now, it is the boast of all churches, that they are full of the wise, the scribes, the disputers of this world, who sit with learned pomp in the apostle's chair, and have the mysteries of the kingdom of God committed to them.

Hence it is, that from a religion of heavenly love, built upon the redeeming life and doctrine of a Son of God dying to save the whole world, division, bitterness, envy, pride, strife, hatred, and persecution, nay every outrage of war and bloodshed, breathe and break forth with more strength in learned Christendom, than ever they did from a religion of pagan idolatry, set up by satan.

It may perhaps be here said, Must there then be no learning or scholarship, no recondite erudition in the Christian church? Must there be nothing thought of, or got by the gospel, but mere salvation? Must its ministers know nothing, teach nothing, nothing but the full denial of self, poverty of spirit, meekness, and humility, and unwearied patience, a never ceasing love, an

absolute renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the world, a full dependence upon our heavenly Father; no joy or rejoicing but in the Holy Ghost; no wisdom but that which God gives; no walking but as Christ walked; no reward or glory for their labors of love, but that of being found in Christ, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bones, spirit of his Spirit, and clothed with the wedding-garment when the bridegroom comes, "when the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first"? To this the first answer is, Happy, thrice happy are they, who are only the thus learned preachers of the gospel, who through all their ministry, seek nothing for themselves or others, but to be taught of God; hunger after nothing but the bread of life that came down from heaven, owning no master but Christ, no teacher but his Holy Spirit; as unable to join with the diggers in pagan pits of learning, as with those that "labor for the wind, and give their money for that which is not bread."

Secondly, with regard to the demand of learned knowledge in the Christian church, it may be answered, that all that has been said above, is only for the increase and promotion of it, and that all ignorance and darkness may be driven quite out of it. The church of Christ is the seat or school of all the highest knowledge that the human nature is capable of in this life. Ignorance is everywhere but in the church of Christ. The Law, the prophets, and the gospel, are the only treasures of all that can be called the knowledge either of God or man; and he in whom the Law, the prophets, and the gospel are fulfilled, is the only well-educated man, and one of the first-rate scholars in the world. But now, who is he, that has this wisdom from these rich treasures? Who is he, in whom all is known and fulfilled which they teach? The lip of truth has told us, that it is he, and he alone, "who loves God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbor as himself." This is the man that is all wisdom, all light, and let into full possession of all that is meant by all the mysteries contained in the Law, the prophets, and the gospel. Where this divine love is wanting, and a diabolical self sits in its place, there may be great wits, shining critics, orators, poets, as easily as there may be a profound Machiavel, a learned Hobbs, or an atheistical Virtuoso. But would you divinely know the mysteries of nature, the ground and reason of good and evil in this world, the relation and connection between the visible and invisible world, how the things of time proceed from, are influenced by, and depend upon the things and powers of eternity, there is but one only key of entrance; nothing can open the vision, but seeing with the eyes of that same love, which begun and carries on all that is, and works in visible and invisible nature. Would you divinely know the mysteries of grace and salvation, would you go forth as a faithful witness of gospel truths, stay till this fire of divine love has had its perfect work in you. For till your heart is an altar, on which this heavenly fire never goes out, you are dead in yourself, and can only be a speaker of dead words, about things that never had any life within you. For without a real birth of this divine love in the essence of your soul, be as learned and polite as you will, your heart is but the dark heart of fallen Adam, and your knowledge of the kingdom of God will be only like that which murdering Cain had. For everything is murder, but that which love does. If love is not the breath of your life, the spirit that forms and governs everything that proceeds from you, everything that has your labor, your allowance and consent, you are broken off from the works of God, you have felt his creation, you are without God, and your name, and nature, and works, can have no other name, or nature, but that which is called pride, wrath, envy, hypocrisy, hatred, revenge, and self-exaltation, under the power of satan in his kingdom of darkness. Nothing can possibly save you from being the certain prey of all these evil spirits, through the whole course of your life, but a birth of that love which is God himself, his light, and

Spirit within you.

There is no knowledge in heaven, but what proceeds from this birth of love, nor is there any difference between the highest light of an angel, and the horrid darkness of a devil, but that which love has made. But now, since divine love can have no beginning, but from a birth of the divine nature in us, therefore says St. John, we love him because he FIRST loved us, the same as saying, we desire God, because he first desired us; for we could not desire God, but because he first desired us, we could not turn to God, but because he first turned to us. And so it is, that we could not love God, but because he first loved us, that is, because he first by our creation brought forth, and by our redemption continued and kept up that same birth of his own Spirit of love in us. For as his Holy Spirit must first be a gift to us, or born in us, and then we have that which can worship God in spirit, so his love must of all necessity be a gift to us, or born in us, and then we have that of God in us which alone can love him with his own love. A truth absolutely asserted in these words; "Love is of God, and he that loveth, is born of God."

Let this be my excuse to the learned world, for owning no school of wisdom, but where the one only lesson is divine love; and the one only teacher the Spirit of God. Let no one call this wild or extravagant; it is no wilder a step, no more injurious to man, to truth and goodness, than the owning no God but one. For to be called from everything but divine love and the Spirit of God, is only being called from everything that has the curse of fallen nature in it. And no man can come from under this curse, till he is born again of divine love and the Spirit of God. For thus to be born, is as much the one sole happiness, joy, and glory of men, both now and ever, as it is the sole joy and glory of angels eternally in the heavens. Believe me then, thou great scholar, that all that thou hast got of wisdom or learning, day after day, in any other school but this, will stand thee in as much stead, fill thee with as high heavenly comfort at the hour of death, as all the long dreams, which night after night, thou hast ever had in thy sleep. And till a man knows this, with as much fullness of conviction as he knows the vanity of a dream, he has his full proof, that he is not yet in the light of truth, not yet taught of God, nor like-minded with Christ.

One of Christ's followers said, "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father"; the answer was, "Let the dead bury their dead, follow thou me." Another said to him, "Let me first go bid them farewell, that are at home in my house"; Jesus answered, "No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." Now let it be supposed that a third had said, Lord, I have left several deep-learned books at home, written by the greatest masters of grammar, logic and eloquence, suffer me first to go back for them, lest losing the light which I had from them, I might mistake the depth and truth of thy heavenly doctrines, or be less able to prove and teach them powerfully to others. Would not such a request as this have had a folly and absurdity in it, not chargeable upon those two other requests which Christ rejected? And yet, what can scholastic, classic, and critical divinity say for itself, but that very same thing, which this requester here said? The holy Jesus said, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness." Here spiritual light and darkness are as immutably fixed, and separated from one another, as the light and darkness of this world were divided on the first day of the creation. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, is the one only light both of men and angels. Fallen nature, the selfish will, proud tempers, the highest abilities, the natural sagacity, cunning arts and subtleties, that are or can be in fallen men and angels, are nothing else but their fullness of spiritual darkness, from which nothing but works of darkness can come forth. In a word, darkness is the whole natural

man; light is the new born man from above. Therefore says the Christ of God, "I am the light of the world," because he alone is the birth of heaven in the fallen souls of men. But now, who can more reject this divine light, or more plainly choose darkness instead of it, than he who seeks to have his mind enriched, the faculties of his fallen soul cultivated by the literature of poets, orators, philosophers, sophists, sceptics, and critics, born and bred up in the worship and praises of idol gods and goddesses? What is this, but like going to the serpent to be taught the innocent spirit of the dove; or to the elegant lusts of Anacreon and Ovid, to learn purity of heart, and kindle the flame of heavenly love in our souls? Look where you will, this is the wisdom of those who seek to pagans for skill to work in Christ's vineyard who from long labors in restoring the grammar, and finding out hidden beauties of some old vicious book, set up for qualified artists to polish the gospel pearl of great price. Surely this is no better a proof of their savoring the things that are of God, than Peter gave, when his master said to him, "Get thee behind me, satan." A grave ecclesiastic, bringing forth out of his closet skillful meditations on the commentaries of Homer, or the astonishing beauties of a modern Dunciad, has as much reason to think that he is walking in the light of Christ, and led by the Spirit of God, as they have who are only eating and drinking, and rising up to play. But to see the exceeding folly of expecting ability in divine knowledge, from anything that is the wit, wisdom, or spirit of the natural man, you need only read these words of the holy messenger of God, the Elias that was to come. "I indeed," says he, "baptize you with water, but he that cometh after me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Now if this which the Baptist said of Christ is not our faith, if we do not receive it as the truth in which we are firmly to stand, then, be as learned as we will, we have no better a faith, or higher wisdom, than those blind rabbis who received not the testimony of John. A fire and Spirit from above was the news which he published to the world; this, and nothing else, was his kingdom of God that was at hand. Now if this fire and Spirit from above has not baptized us into a birth of the life of God in our souls, we have not found that Christ and kingdom of God, to which John bore witness. But if (what is still worse) we are so bewitched through the sorcery of learning, as to turn writers and preachers against this inward, and only redeeming heavenly fire and Spirit, we are baptized with the spirit of those, to whom our Lord said, "Woe unto you scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in." For what is, or can be the fall of a divine Adam under the power of sin, satan, and hell, but the extinction of that heavenly fire and Spirit, which was his first union with God and all heavenly beings. Say now, that he had not this heavenly fire and Spirit at the first, that nothing lived or breathed in him but that astral fire and spirit which is the life and spirit of all earthly animals, and then you have a religion as divine as that of the old Sadducees, who allowed of no resurrection, angel, or spirit. For, deny the truth and fullness of a divine life in the first man, and then his fall and redemption are equally empty sounds about nothing. For what can he be fallen from, or redeemed to, if he has now all that fire and spirit of life which he ever had, or ought to have, and if all that is more than this, is but the fiction and dream of a distempered brain? Tell me, why that burning and shining light, that man that was more than a prophet, should come with his water, and the Son of God, God of God, should come with his fire-baptism, if man neither wanted, nor could receive a higher water, and fire of life, than that which he has in common with the beasts of the field? Why is there all this stir about religions, expiations and atonements, why all these priestly ordinations, consecrations, churches, sacraments, and prayers? For if the fire and spirit of this world is the one life, and highest life, both of man and

beasts, we have it unasked for, and on the same terms as the beasts have it, and can only lose it, as they do when they lose their existence. But if fire and Spirit from heaven can alone make heavenly creatures, and us, to be children of an heavenly Father; if the Son of God took our fallen nature upon him, that the first heavenly fire and Spirit might again come to life in us, if divine life, divine light, and divine goodness, can only come from them, and only in such degree, as they are kindled in our souls, what a poverty of sense is it in those, who are called to a resurrection of the first divine life, where a new creature is taught by that same unction from above whence all the angels and principalities of heaven have their light and glory, what a poverty of sense, I say, in such, to set themselves down at the feet of a Master Tully, and a Master Aristotle, who only differ from the meanest of all other corrupt men, as the teaching serpent differed from his fellow animals, by being more subtle than all the beasts of the field.

Behold then your state, ye ministers, that wait at Christian altars, who will have neither faith, nor hope, nor desire of heavenly fire kindled in your souls, you have a priesthood, and an altar not fit to be named with that, which in Jewish days had a holy fire from God descending upon it, which made priest and sacrifice acceptable to God, though only type and pledge of that inward celestial fire, which Christ would kindle into a never ceasing burning, in the living temples of his new born children from above.

Complain then no more of atheists, infidels, and such like open enemies to the gospel kingdom of God; for whilst you call heavenly fire and Spirit, kindled into the same essential life in us as they are in holy angels, downright frenzy, and mystic madness, you do all that infidel work within the church, which they do on the outside of it. And if through a learned fear of having that done to your earthly reason, which was done to Enoch when God took him, you will own no higher a regeneration, no more birth of God in your souls, than can be had by a few cold drops of water sprinkled on the face, any of the heathen gods of wood and stone are good enough for such an elementary priesthood. For let this be told you, as a truth from God, that till heavenly fire and Spirit have a fullness of a birth within you, you can rise no higher by your highest learning, than to be elegant orators about scripture words. Our Lord has said, "The kingdom of God is within you," that is, the heavenly fire and Spirit, which are the true kingdom and manifestation of God, are within you. And indeed, where can it be else? Yet what learned pains are taken to remove the literal meaning from these words, as too visionary a thing for learned ears. And yet it is a truth obvious to common sense, that even this outward world of stars and elements, neither does, nor can belong to us, or we to it, but so far as it is, literally speaking, a kingdom within us. For the outward kingdom or powers of this world signify nothing to a worldly man that is dead; but no man is dead, but because the kingdom of this world, with all its powers of fire, light, and spirit, stands only outwardly about him, but has lost its life and powers within him.

Say now, out of reverence to sound literature, and abhorrence of enthusiasm, that the kingdom of God is not really and virtually within, that its heavenly fire, light, and Spirit, are not, ought not to be born in a sober right-minded follower of Christ, and then you have a good disciple of Christ, as absolutely dead to the kingdom of heaven, as the corpse that has nothing of the fire, spirit, and light of this world in it, is dead to all the outward world round about it.

What a sobriety of faith and sound doctrine is it, to preach up a necessity of being living members of the kingdom of heaven, and at the same time the necessity of orthodoxly holding, that a

heavenly birth neither is, nor can, nor ought to be within us! For if it either is, or could, or ought to be within us, then it could not be a brain-sick folly to believe, that the literal words of Christ had no deceit, falsity, or delusion in them, when he said, "Except a man be born again from above, he cannot see, or enter into the kingdom of God." That is, he cannot possibly have any godlike or divine goodness, he cannot be a child of a heavenly Father, but from the nature and Spirit of his heavenly Father, but from the nature and Spirit of his heavenly Father brought to a real birth of life in him. Now if, without this divine birth, all that we have in us is but fallen Adam, a birth of sin, the flesh, and the devil, if the power of this heavenly birth is all the power of goodness that is or was, or ever can be in a son of Adam; and if logic, learning, and criticism, are almost everywhere set in high places, to pronounce and prove it to be mere enthusiasm and spiritual frenzy, what wonder is it, if folly of doctrine, wickedness of life, lusts of the flesh, profaneness of spirit, wantonness of wit, contempt of goodness and profession of Christianity, should all of them seem to have their full establishment among us?

What wonder, if sacraments, church-prayers, and preachings, leave high and low, learned and unlearned, men and women, priests and people, as unaltered in all their aged vices, as they leave children unchanged in their childish follies? For where the one only fountain of life and goodness is forsaken, where the seed of the divine birth is not alive, and going forwards in the birth, all the difference between man and man is as nothing with respect to the kingdom of God. It matters not what name is given to the old earthly man of Adam's bestial flesh and blood, whether he be called a zealous churchman, a stiff-necked Jew, a polite civilized heathen, or a grave infidel; under all these names, the unregenerate old man has but one and the same nature, without any other difference, but that which time, and place, education, complexion, hypocrisy, and worldly wisdom, happen to make in him. By such a one, whether he be papist, or Protestant, the gospel is only kept as a book, and all that is within it is only so much condemnation to the keeper, just as the old man, a Jew, has kept the book of the Law and the prophets, only to be more fully condemned by them. That the Jewish and Christian church stand at this day in the same kind of apostasy, or fallen state, must be manifest to everyone, that will not shut his eyes against it. Why are the Jews in a fallen state? It is because they have refused him, who in his whole process was the truth, the substance, the life, and fulfilling of all that which was outwardly taught, and prescribed in their Law and prophets. But is it not as easy to see, that the whole Christian church are in a fallen state, and for the same reason, because they are fallen or turned away from that Holy Spirit who was promised, and given to be the one only power, life, and fulfilling of all that which was outwardly taught, and prescribed by the gospel. For the Holy Spirit to come was just the same ALL, and FULFILLING of the whole gospel, as a Christ to come was the all, and the fulfilling of the Law. The Jew therefore with his Old Testament, not owning Christ in all his process to be the truth and life, and fulfiller of their Law, is just in that same apostasy, as the Christian with his New Testament, not owning the Holy Spirit in all his operations, to be his only light, guide, and governor. For as all types and figures in the Law were but empty shadows without Christ's being the life and power of them, so all that is written in the gospel is but dead letter, unless the Holy Spirit in man be the living reader, the living rememberer, and the living doer of them. Therefore, where the Holy Spirit is not thus owned and received, as the whole power and life of the gospel state, it is no marvel, that Christians have no more of gospel virtues, than the Jews have of patriarchal holiness, or that the same lusts and vices which prosper amongst Jews, should break forth with as much strength in fallen Christendom. For the New Testament not ending in the coming of the Holy Spirit, with

fullness of power over sin and hell, and the devil, is but the same, and no better a help to heaven, than the Old Testament without the coming of a messiah. Need I now say any more, to demonstrate the truth of that which I first said was the one thing absolutely essential, and only available to man's salvation, namely, the SPIRIT of God brought again to his FIRST POWER OF LIFE IN US. This was the glory of man's creation, and this alone can be the glory of his redemption. All besides this, that passes for a time betwixt God and man, be it what it will, shows only our fall and distance from God, and in its best state has only the nature of a good road, which is only good, because that which we want is at the end of it. Whilst God calls us by various outward dispensations, by creaturely things, figurative institutions, it is a full proof, that we are not yet in our true state, or that union with God which is intended by our redemption.

God said to Moses, "Put off thy shoes, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Now this which God said to Moses, is only that very same thing, which circumcision, the Law, sacrifices, and sacraments, say to man. They are in themselves nothing else but outward significations of inward impurity, and lost holiness, and can do no more in themselves but intimate, point, and direct to an inward life and new birth from above, that is to be sought after. But here lies the great mistake, or rather idolatrous abuse of all God's outward dispensations. They are taken for the thing itself, for the truth and essence of religion. That which the learned Jews did with the outward letter of their Law, that same do learned Christians with the outward letter of their gospel. Why did the Jewish church so furiously and obstinately cry out against Christ, Let him be crucified? It was because their letter-learned ears, their worldly spirit and temple-orthodoxy, would not bear to hear of an inward savior, not bear to hear of being born again of his Spirit, of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, of his dwelling in them, and they in him. To have their Law of ordinances, their temple-pomp sunk into such a fulfilling savior as this, was such enthusiastic jargon to their ears, as forced their sober, rational theology, to call Christ, Beelzebub, his doctrine, blasphemy, and all for the sake of Moses and rabbinic orthodoxy.

Need it now be asked, whether the true Christ of the gospel be less blasphemed, less crucified, by that Christian theology which rejects an inward Christ, a savior living and working in the soul, as its inward light and life, generating his own nature and Spirit in it, as its only redemption, whether that which rejects all this as mystic madness be not that very same old Jewish wisdom sprung up in Christian theology, which said of Christ when teaching these very things, "He is mad, why hear ye him?" Our blessed Lord in a parable sets forth the blind Jews, as saying of himself, "We will not have this man to reign OVER us." The sober-minded Christian scholar has none of this Jewish blindness, he only says of Christ, we will not have this man to REIGN IN US, and so keeps clear of such mystic absurdity as St. Paul fell into, when he enthusiastically said, "Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me."

Christian doctors reproach the old learned rabbis, for their vain faith, and carnal desire of a glorious, temporal, outward Christ, who should set up their temple-worship all over the world. Vanity indeed, and learned blindness enough? But nevertheless, in these condemners of rabbinic blindness, St. Paul's words are remarkably verified, viz., "Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest dost the same thing." For, take away all that from Christ which Christian doctors call enthusiasm, suppose him not to be an inward birth, a new life and Spirit within us, but only an outward, separate, distant heavenly prince, no more really in us, than our high cathedrals are in the third heavens, but only by an invisible hand from his throne on high,

some way or other raising and helping great scholars, or great temporal powers, to make a rock in every nation for his church to stand upon; suppose all this (which is the very marrow of modern divinity) and then you have that very outward Christ, and that very outward kingdom, which the carnal Jew dreamed of, and for the sake of which the spiritual Christ was then nailed to the cross, and is still crucified by the new risen Jew in the Christian church. If it now be asked, whence, or from what, comes all this spiritual blindness, which from age to age thus mistakes and defeats all the gracious designs of God towards fallen mankind? Look at the origin of the first sin, and you see it all. Had Eve desired no knowledge but what came from God, paradise had been the habitation of her and all her offspring. If after paradise lost, Jews and Christians had desired no knowledge but what came from God, the Law and prophets had kept the Jew close to the first tree of life, and the Christian church had been a kingdom of God, and communion of saints to this day. But now corruption, sin, death, and every evil of the world, have entered into the church, the spouse of Christ, just as they entered into Eve, the spouse of Adam in paradise, in the same way, and from the same cause, viz., a desire of more, or other knowledge, than that which comes from God alone. This desire is the serpent's voice within every man, which does all that to him, and in him, which the serpent at the tree did to Eve. It carries on the first deceit, it shows and recommends to him that same beautiful tree of own will, own wit, and own wisdom, springing up within him, which Eve saw in the garden; and yet so blind is this love of wisdom as not to see, that his eating of it is in the strictest truth his eating of the same forbidden fruits as Eve did, and keeping up in himself all that death and separation from God, which the first knowledge- hunger brought forth.

Let then the eager searcher into words for wisdom, the book- devourer, the opinion-broker, the exalter of human reason, and every projecting builder of religious systems, be told this, that the thirst and pride of being learnedly wise in the things of God, is keeping up the grossest ignorance of them, and is nothing else but Eve's old serpent, and Eve's evil birth within them, and does no better work in the church of Christ, than her thirst after wisdom did in the paradise of God. Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth, is the one only way by which any man ever did, or ever can attain divine knowledge, and divine goodness. To knock at any other door but this, is but like asking life of that which is itself dead, or praying to him for bread who has nothing but stones to give.

Now strange as all this may seem to the labor-learned possessor of far-fetched book- riches, yet it is saying no more, nor anything else, but that which Christ said in these words, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." For, if classic gossellers, linguist critics, scripture-logicians, salvation orators, able dealers in the grammatic powers of Hebrew, Greek, and Roman phrases, idioms, tropes, figures, can show, that by raising themselves high in these attainments, they are the very men that are sunk down from themselves into Christ's little children of the kingdom of God, then it may be also said, that he who is laboring, scheming, and fighting for all the riches he can get from both the Indies, is the very man that has left all to follow Christ, the very man that "labors not for the meat that perishes."

Show me a man whose heart has no desire, or prayer in it, but to love God with his whole soul and spirit, and his neighbor as himself, and then you have shown me the man who knows Christ, and is known of him; the best and wisest man in the world, in whom the first paradisaical wisdom and goodness are come to life. Not a single precept in the gospel, but is the precept of his own heart, and the joy of that new-born heavenly love which is the life and light of his soul. In this man, all that

came from the old serpent is trod under his feet, not a spark of self, of pride, of wrath, of envy, of covetousness, or worldly wisdom, can have the least abode in him, because that love, which fulfilleth the whole Law and the prophets, that love which is God and Christ, both in angels and men, is the love that gives birth, and life, and growth to everything that is either thought, or word, or action in him. And if he has no share or part with foolish errors, cannot be tossed about with every wind of doctrine, it is because, to be always governed by this love, is the same thing as to be always taught of God. On the other hand, show me a scholar as full of learning, as the Vatican is of books, and he will be just as likely to give all that he has for the gospel-pearl, as he would be, if he was as rich as Croesus. Let no one here imagine, that I am writing against all human literature, arts and sciences, or that I wish the world to be without them. I am no more an enemy to them, than to the common useful labors of life. It is literal learning, verbal contention, and critical strife about the things of God, that I charge with folly and mischief to religion. And in this, I have all learned Christendom, both popish and Protestant on my side. For they both agree in charging each other with a bad and false gospel-state, because of that which their learning, logic, and criticism do for them. Say not then, that it is only the illiterate enthusiast that condemns human learning in the gospel kingdom of God. For when he condemns the blindness and mischief of popish logic and criticism, he has all the learned Protestant world with him; and when he lays the same charge to Protestant learning, he has a much larger kingdom of popish great scholars, logically and learnedly affirming the same thing. So that the private person, charging human learning with so much mischief to the church, is so far from being led by enthusiasm, that he is led by all the church-learning that is in the world.

Again, all learned Christendom agrees in the same charge against temporal power in the church, as hurtful to the very being and progress of a salvation-kingdom that is not of this world, as supporting doctrines that human learning has brought into it. And true it is and must be, that human power can only support and help forward human things. The Protestant brings proof from a thousand years' learning and doctrines, that the pope is an unjust usurper of temporal power in the church, which is Christ's spiritual spouse. The papist brings the learning of as many ages to show that a temporal head of the church is an anti-Christian usurpation. And yet (N.B.) he who holds Christ to be the one, only head, heart, and life of the church, and that no man can call Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, passes with the learned of both these people for a brain-sick enthusiast. Is it not then high time to look out for some better ground to stand upon, than such learning as this? Now look where you will, through all the whole nature of things, no divine wisdom, knowledge, goodness, and deliverance from sin, are anywhere to be found for fallen man, but in these two points; (1) a total entire entrance into the whole process of Christ; (2) a total resignation to, and sole dependence upon the continual operation of the Holy Ghost, or Christ come again in the Spirit, to be our never-ceasing light, teacher, and guide into all those ways of virtue, in which he himself walked in the flesh. All besides this, call it by what name you will, is but dead work, a vain labor of the old man, to new create himself. And here let it be well observed, that in these two points consists the whole of that mystic divinity, to which a Jewish orthodoxy at this day is so great an enemy. For nothing else is meant, or taught by it, but a total dying to self (called the process or cross of Christ) that a new creature (called Christ in us, or Christ come in the Spirit) may be begotten in the purity, and perfection of the first man's union with God. Now, let the Christian world forget, or depart from this one mystic way of salvation, let anything else be thought of or trusted to but the cross of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ, and then, though churches, and preachers, and

prayers, and sacraments are everywhere in plenty, yet nothing better can come of it than a Christian kingdom of pagan vices, along with a mouth-belief of an holy catholic church, and communion of saints. To this melancholy truth, all Christendom both at home and abroad bears full witness. Who need be told, that there is not a corruption or depravity of human nature, no kinds of pride, wrath, envy, malice, and self-love; no sorts of hypocrisy, falseness, cursing, swearing, perjury, and cheating; no wantonness of lust in every kind of debauchery, but are as common all over Christendom, as towns and villages? But to pass these by, I shall only instance in two or three particulars, which though little observed, and less condemned, yet fully show that the beast, the whore, and the fiery dragon, are in possession of Protestant as well as popish churches. And first, can it be said that Mammon is less served by Christians, than by Jews and infidels? Or can there be a fuller proof that Christians, Jews, and infidels, are equally fallen from God and all divine worship, since truth itself has told us, that we cannot serve God and Mammon? Is not this as unalterable a truth, and of as great moment, as if it had been said, Ye cannot serve God and Baal? Or can it with any truth or sense be affirmed, that the Mammonist has more of Christ in him than the Baalist, or is more or less an idolator for being called a Christian, a Jew, or an infidel? Look now at all those particulars which Christ charged upon the Jewish priests, scribes, and Pharisees, and you will see them all acted over again in the fallen state of Christendom. And if God's prophets were again in the world, they would have just the same complaints against the fallen Christian church, as they had against the old carnal stiff-necked Jews, namely, "that of their silver and gold they had made themselves idols," Hosea 8:4. For though figured idol-gods of gold are not now worshipped either by Jews or Christians, yet silver and gold with that which belongs to them is the Mammon god, that sits and reigns in their hearts. How else could there be that universal strife through all Christendom, who should stand in the richest and highest place, to preach up the humility of Christ, and offer spiritual sacrifices unto God? What god but Mammon could put into the hearts of Christ's ambassadors, to make, or want to make a gain of that gospel, which from the beginning to the end means nothing else but death to self, and separation from every view, temper, and affection, that has any connection with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life? Our blessed Lord said a word to the Jews, that might well have made their ears to tingle, when he told them that they "had made his Father's house a den of thieves"; because sheep and oxen were sold, and money-changers sitting in the outer court of the temple. Now if you will say, that Mammon has brought forth no profanation like this in our Christian church, your best proof must be this, because our church-sale, is not oxen and sheep, but holy things, cures of souls, parsonages, vicarages, and our money-changers, our buyers, and sellers, are chiefly consecrated persons.

Look at things spiritual, and things temporal, and say if you can, that the same arts, the same passions, and worldly wisdom, are not as visibly active in the one, as in the other. For if Christ at leaving the world had said to his disciples, "Labor to be rich; Make full provision for the flesh; Be conformed to the world; Court the favor and interest of great men. Clothe yourselves with all the worldly honors, distinctions, and powers you can get"; I appeal to every man, whether popish and Protestant churches need do anything else, than that which they now do, and have done for ages, to prove their faithfulness to such a master, and their full obedience to his precepts. And now, what is all this in truth and reality, but the same whore riding upon the same beast, not here or there, but through all fallen Christendom, where God has only, in every age, people, and language, his seven thousands, who have not bowed the knee to Mammon?

Again, secondly, "Ye have heard," says our Lord, "that it hath been said by them of old; thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." The Jews practiced promissory oaths, and thought all was well, when there was a performance of them. But this, with numbers of other Jewish practices, was not to be allowed in this kingdom of God, that was then come into the world. Christ totally rejects, and absolutely forbids it, saying, "I say unto you, swear not at all." But instead of it, he appoints and absolutely demands a most perfect simplicity of language, to support and adorn the mutual communication of those, whom he had created again unto righteousness, and given power to become sons of God saying, "Let your communication be YEA, YEA, and NAY, NAY, for (N.B.) whatsoever is more than this, cometh of evil." What more could have been done by Christ to prevent the use, or hinder the entrance of an oath into his church? What then shall we say of the present universal Christendom? For if Christ had commanded the direct contrary, had he said, "Behold I give you this new commandment, let not a simple YEA and NAY be of any avail in all your communication but let oaths be required of all that bear my name, as a proof that they belong to me, and act in all their dealings as become saints; for whatsoever is less than this, cometh of evil." Had this been Christ's new commandment, all the churches of Christendom, as well popish as Protestant, and these reformed kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, might have much to boast of their obedience to it. For through town and country, in all ignorant villages, in all learned colleges, in all courts spiritual and temporal, what with law-oaths, simony-oaths, bribery-oaths, election- oaths, there is more swearing and forswearing, than all history reports of any idol- worshipping nations. It was said of old, "Because of swearing, the land mourneth"; it is full as true to say now, Because of swearing, the land rejoiceth in iniquity, is full of profaneness, and without any fear or awe of the divine majesty, daily swallowing down all manner of oaths, in the same good state of mind, and with as much serious reflection, as pot -companions swallow down their liquor.

"He that despiseth me," says Christ, "despiseth not me, but him that sent me." Can that church, which absolutely requires that which Christ has absolutely forbidden, be free from the most open and public despising of Christ, which in full contrariety to his express word, refuses the sufficiency of that yea and nay, which he has commanded to be sufficient; and what is still more wonderful, compels all orders of Christians to swear by that very book, which says to all, whether high or low, prince, priest, or people, SWEAR NOT AT ALL?

If the swearing law was to order, that instead of kissing the gospel-book, the swearer should say, "In remembrance of, and in regard to the words of Christ, forbidding me to swear, I make this oath," who would not see the open contempt of Christ and his gospel? But the contempt of both is as truly there, when the gospel-book is kissed by the swearer; for the book has nothing relating to oaths, but those words of Christ, which absolutely forbid the use of them. Instead, therefore, of a SO HELP ME GOD and his HOLY GOSPEL, it might have been much better, if every swearing law through all Christendom had obliged every swearer to finish his oath with these words, Let God and his holy gospel PARDON ME IN THIS ONE THING.

If it here be asked, whether I would have all private Christians to beggar themselves, and lose all their right and title to house and land, which by the laws of Christendom, cannot be preserved without certain promissory oaths? I say not so. But my answer is, that as the Jews were of old carried captive into Babylon, so as real a captivity, and full as great, must happen to all private Christians, born and living under a fallen state of governing Christendom. For whether it be a

pope, or a Nebuchadnezzar, popish, or Protestant church governors, that make the goods and properties of private Christians, only possible to be possessed by obedience to their swearing laws, the captivity is the same. And as God bore with the want of a Jerusalem- worship in those Jews, whose captivity suffered them not to perform it, so it may well be hoped and believed, that he will bear with that want of gospel purity, in the yea and nay of private Christians, which their captivity under a fallen state of Christian government suffers them not constantly to adhere to. And also, that the piety of private Christians, loving and longing after gospel-purity of communication, under the church-captivity, will be as acceptable to God, as the piety of captive Jews was, who though living under heathen laws, and forced to say their prayers in Babylon, yet had always their eyes turned towards, and their hearts longing after Jerusalem and its holy worship.

What I write, is not to show that Christendom's oaths, and the manner of them, are not to be submitted to by any private good Christian, but to show in the plainest manner, that the laws of Christendom, which make them necessary, are a full proof that the spirit which governs all Christendom, is fallen away from the Spirit of Christ. And also to show, that if gross impiety runs through all the Christian world, if much and much the greatest part of swearing Christians have lost all pious fear of oaths and swearing, it is because the necessity of swearing meets every man, in almost everything, at the peril of losing all that he has, or can have, unless he will swear. When the matter of an oath is a manifest lie, or an engagement to do some wicked thing, all is to be suffered, rather than take it. But where there is nothing false or bad, affirmed or promised, nor any blame chargeable, but that of going further than our Lord's yea and nay, it is plain from Christ's words, that the evil is only in that, and there, from whence the oath comes. When a person swears of his own accord, or wantonly, then the oath comes of, or from the evil of his own heart. But when a Christian, in whose heart the simplicity and purity of gospel-language is written and loved, when he submits to use more than a yea or nay, compelled by that authority which makes the refusal to be the loss of goods, and bodily imprisonment, then such departure from gospel-language comes of and from the evil in that power which required it, whether it be a pope, a kirk, a church, an assembly of divines, or a Nebuchadnezzar. All this, I say, is plain from Christ's own words. "Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay." But why so? It is because whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil, that is, is caused by evil. Therefore the evil that is in the use of an imposed oath, is by the words of Christ, charged upon and confined to that, which causes or forces it to be done. For that which the oath comes from, is that which our savior calls the evil of it but the oath comes from that which causes it, therefore, that which causes swearing, is by our savior's words charged with all the evil of the oath. But (N.B.) all this supposed freedom from the evil of an imposed oath, in the private Christian's submission to the use of it, is only then and there, where what is affirmed, or denied by the oath, has all that innocence, truth, or righteousness in it, which the true yea or nay of Christ might justly affirm, or deny. But here let it be well observed, that nothing that has here been said, is intended to blame the piety of those, who on no account whatsoever will be prevailed upon to take any kind of oath, because our Lord and master has said, "Swear not at all." I am so far from blaming this, or looking upon it, as the effect of a false or blind piety, that I wish with all my heart, it may come to be the piety of all the three estates of this kingdom; and that all swearing, whether in secular or religious matters, may by all the authority of the nation be as utterly condemned, as absolutely renounced, and declared to be as anti- Christian, as the pope's supremacy. In a word, that which calls for, and requires oaths among Christians, requires that which Christ forbids; but governing Christendom everywhere establishes, requires, and even

compels Christians to swear, therefore governing Christendom is fallen from Christ, and acts by and through that spirit, which being contrary to Christ, is and must be called ANTICHRIST. But to proceed now to a third and last instance, which I shall mention, of the full power of anti-Christ in and through every part of governing Christendom. In the darkest ages of Romish superstition, a martial spirit of zeal and glory for the gospel, broke forth in kings, cardinals, bishops, monks, and friars, to lead the sheep of Christ, saints, pilgrims, penitents, and sinners of all kinds, to proceed in battle array, to kill, devour, and drive the Turks from the land of Palestine, and the old earthly Jerusalem. These bloodthirsty expeditions were called an holy war, because it was fighting for the holy land; they were called also a crusade, because crosses and crucifixes made the greatest glitter among the sharpened instruments of human murder. Thus under the banner of the cross went forth an army of church wolves, to destroy the lives of those, whom the Lamb of God died on the cross to save. The light which broke out at the reformation, abhorred the bloody superstitious zeal of these catholic heroes. But (N.B.) what followed from this new risen, reforming light, what came forth instead of these holy crusades? Why wars, if possible, still more diabolical. Christian kingdoms with bloodthirsty piety, destroying, devouring, and burning one another, for the sake of that which was called popery, and that which was called Protestantism.

Now who can help seeing, that satan, the prince of the powers of darkness, had here a much greater triumph over Christendom, than in all the holy wars and crusades that went before? For all that was then done, by such high-spirited fighters for old Jerusalem's earth, could not be said to be so much done against gospel-light, because not one in a thousand of those holy warriors were allowed to see what was in the gospel. But now, with the gospel opened in everyone's hands, papists and Protestants make open war against every divine virtue that belonged to Christ, or that can unite them with that Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world: I say against every divine, redeeming virtue of the Lamb of God, for these are the enemies which Christian war conquers. For there is not a virtue of gospel-goodness, but has its death-blow from it. For no virtue has any gospel-goodness in it any further, than as it has its birth and growth in and from the Spirit of Christ; where his nature and Spirit is not, there is nothing but the heathen to be found, which is but saying the same truth, as when the apostle said, that he who hath not, or is not led by the Spirit of Christ, is none of his.

Now fancy to yourself Christ, the Lamb of God, after his divine sermon on the mount, putting himself at the head of a blood- thirsty army, or St. Paul going forth with a squadron of fire and brimstone, to make more havoc in human lives than a devouring earthquake. But if this be too blasphemous an absurdity to be supposed, what follows, but that the Christian who acts in the destroying fury of war, acts in full contrariety to the whole nature and Spirit of Christ, and can no more be said to be led by his Spirit, or be one with him, than those his enemies who "came forth with swords and staves to take him."

Blinded Protestants think they have the glory of slaughtering blind papists; and the victorious papist claims the merit of having conquered the troops of heretics: but alas! the conquest is equally great on both sides, both are entitled to the same victory; and the glorious victory on both sides, is only that of having gospel goodness equally under their feet. When a Most Christian Majesty, with his catholic church, sings a Te Deum at the high altar, for rivers of Protestant blood poured out; or an evangelic church sings praise and glory to the Lamb of God, for helping them from his holy throne in heaven, to make popish towns like to Sodom and Gomorrah, they

blaspheme God as much as Cain would have done, had he offered a sacrifice of praise to God for helping him to murder his brother. Let such worshippers of God be told this, that the field of blood gives all its glory to satan, who was a murderer from the beginning, and will to the end of his reign be the only receiver of all the glory, that can come from it. A glorious Alexander in the heathen world is a shame and reproach to the human nature, and does more mischief to mankind in a few years, than all the wild beasts, in every wilderness upon earth, have ever done from the beginning of the world to this day. But the same hero, making the same ravage from country to country with Christian soldiers, has more thanks from the devil, than twenty pagan Alexanders would ever have had. To make men kill men, is meat and drink to that roaring adversary of mankind, who goeth about seeking whom he may devour. But to make Christians kill Christians for the sake of Christ's church, is his highest triumph over the highest mark, which Christ has set upon those whom he has purchased by his blood. "This commandment," says he, "I give unto you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another as I have loved you." Can the duelist, who had rather sheathe his sword in the bowels of his brother, than stifle that which he calls an affront, can he be said to have this mark of his belonging to Christ? and may not he that is called his SECOND, more justly be said to be second to none in the love of human murder? Now, what is the difference between the haughty duelist with his provided second, meeting his adversary with sword and pistol behind a hedge, or a house, and two kingdoms with their high-spirited regiments slaughtering one another in the field of battle? It is the difference that is between the murder of one man, and the murder of an hundred thousand.

Now imagine the duelist fasting and confessing his sins to God today, because he is engaged to fight his brother tomorrow; fancy again the conqueror got into his closet, on his bended knees, lifting up hands and heart to God for blessing his weapons with the death of his brother; and then you have a picture in little of the great piety, that begins and ends the wars all over heavenly Christendom.

What blindness can well be greater, than to think that a Christian kingdom, as such, can have any other goodness, or union with Christ, but that very goodness, which makes the private Christian to be one with him, and a partaker of the divine nature? Or that pride, wrath, ambition, envy, covetousness, rapine, resentment, revenge, hatred, mischief, and murder, are only the works of the devil, whilst they are committed by private or single men; but when carried on by all the strength and authority, all the hearts, hands, and voices of a whole nation, that the devil is then quite driven out of them, loses all his right and power in them, and they become holy matter of church thanksgivings, and the sacred oratory of pulpits.

Look at that which the private Christian is to do to his neighbor, or his enemy, and you see that very thing, which one Christian kingdom is to do to another. Look at that which proves a man to be not led and governed by the Spirit of Christ, and you see that, which proves a kingdom to be under the dominion and power of satan. Wherever pride is, there the devil is riding in his first fiery chariot; and wherever wrath is, there he has his first murdering sword at work. What is it, that fallen man wants to be redeemed from, but pride and wrath, envy and covetousness? He can have no higher separation or apostasy from God, no fuller union with satan and his angels, than he has of the spirit of these tempers: they constitute that, which whether you call it SELF, or satan in him, the meaning is the same. Now suppose man not fallen into this self or satan, and then there could be no more war or fighting in him, than there was in the WORD made man in our flesh. Or

suppose him redeemed from his fallen nature, by a new birth of the Lamb of God born in his soul, and then he can no more be hired to kill men gloriously in the field, than to carry a dark lantern by night to a powder-plot.

Love, goodness, and communication of good, is the immutable glory and perfection of the divine nature, and nothing can have union with God, but that which partakes of this goodness. The love that brought forth the existence of all things, changes not through the fall of its creatures, but is continually at work, to bring back all fallen nature and creature to their first state of goodness. All that passes for a time between God and his fallen creature, is but one and the same thing, working for one and the same end; and though this is called wrath, that called punishment, curse, and death, it is all from the beginning to the end, nothing but the work of the first creating love, and means nothing else, does nothing else, but those works of purifying fire, which must, and alone can burn away all that dark evil, which separates the creature from its first created union with God. God's providence, from the fall to the restitution of all things, is doing the same thing, as when he said to the dark chaos of fallen nature, "Let there be light"; he still says, and will continue saying the same thing, till there is no evil of darkness left in all that is nature and creature. God creating, God illuminating, God sanctifying, God threatening and punishing, God forgiving and redeeming, is but one and the same essential, immutable, never ceasing working of the divine nature. That in God which illuminates and glorifies saints and angels in heaven, is that very same working of the divine nature, which wounds, pains, punishes, and purifies sinners upon earth. And (N.B.) every number of destroyed sinners, whether thrown by Noah's flood, or Sodom's brimstone, into the terrible furnace of a life, insensible of anything but new forms of raging misery till judgment's day, must through the all-working, all-redeeming love of God, which never ceases, come at last to know that they had lost, and have found again such a God of love as this. And if long and long ages of fiery pain, and tormenting darkness, fall to the share of many, or most of God's apostate creatures, they will last no longer, than till the great fire of God has melted all arrogance into humility, and all that is SELF has died in the long agonies and bloody sweat of a lost God, which is that all-saving cross of Christ, which will never give up its redeeming power, till sin and sinners have no more a name among the creatures of God. And if long ages hereafter can only do that for a soul, departing this life under a load of sins, which days and nights might have done for a most hardened pharaoh, or a most wicked Nero, whilst in the body, it is because, whilst the soul is in the body, it has only the nature and state of fallen Adam, but when flesh and blood are taken from it, the strong apostate nature of fallen angels is found in it, which must have its state and place in that blackness of darkness of a fiery wrath, that burns in them and their kingdom.

O poor sinner, whoever thou art, repent and turn to God, whilst thou hast Adam's flesh upon thee; for as long as that lasts, the kingdom of God is nigh at hand; but if thou diest without Adam's repentance, black lakes, bottomless pits, ages of a gnawing worm, and fire that never ceases to burn, will stand between thee and a kingdom of heaven afar off. To prevent all this, and make thee a child of the first resurrection, Jesus Christ, God and man, the only begotten Son of this infinite love, came into the world in the name, and under the character of infinite pity, boundless compassion, inexpressible meekness, bleeding love, nameless humility, never ending patience, long suffering, and bowels of redeeming mercy, called the Lamb of God, who with all these supernatural virtues taketh away the sins of the world.

Now from this view of God's infinite love and mercy in Christ Jesus, willing nothing, seeking nothing through all the regions of his providence, but that sinners of all kinds, the boldest rebels against all his goodness, may have their proper remedy, their necessary means of being full delivered from all that hurt, mischief, and destruction, which in full opposition to their God and creator, they had brought upon themselves; from this view, I say, of God and Christ, using every miracle of love and wisdom to give recovery of life, health and salvation to all that have rebelled against them, look at the murdering monster of WAR. And what can its name, or nature be, but a fiery great dragon, a full figure of satan broke loose, and fighting against every redeeming virtue of the Lamb of God? The temporal miseries and wrongs which war carries along with it, wherever it goes, are neither to be numbered or expressed. What thievery bears any proportion to that, which with the boldness of drum and trumpet plunders the innocent of all that they have? And if themselves are left alive with all their limbs, or their daughters unravished, they have many times only the ashes of their consumed houses to lie down upon. What honor has war not gotten from its tens and tens of hundreds or thousands of men slaughtered on heaps, with as little regret or concern, as at loads of rubbish thrown into a pit? Who, but the fiery dragon, would put wreaths of laurel on such heroes' heads? Who but he could say unto them, "Well done, good and faithful servants"? But there is still an evil of war much greater, though less regarded. Who reflects, how many hundreds of thousands, nay millions of young men, born into this world for no other end, but that they may be born again of Christ, and from sons of Adam's misery become sons of God, and fellow heirs with Christ in everlasting glory; who reflects, I say, what nameless numbers of these are robbed of God's precious gift of life to them, before they have known the one sole benefit of living; who are not suffered to stay in this world, till age and experience have done their best for them, have helped them to know the inward voice and operation of God's Spirit, helped them to find, and feel that evil, curse, and sting of sin and death, which must be taken from within them, before they can die the death of the righteous; but instead of all this, have been either violently forced, or tempted in the fire of youth, and full strength of sinful lusts, to forget God, eternity, and their own souls, and rush into a kill or be killed, with as much furious haste, and goodness of spirit, as tiger kills tiger for the sake of his prey? That God's providence over his fallen creatures is nothing else but a providence of love and salvation, turning through ways of infinite wisdom, sooner or later, all kinds of evil into a new good, making that which was lost to be found, that which was dead to be alive again; not willing that one single sinner should want that which can save him from eternal death, is a truth as certain, as that God's Name is, I AM that I AM.

Among unfallen creatures in heaven, God's Name and nature is LOVE, LIGHT, and GLORY. To the fallen sons of Adam, that which was love, light, and glory in heaven, becomes infinite PITY and COMPASSION on earth, in a God clothed with the nature of his fallen creature, bearing all its infirmities, entering into all its troubles, and in the meek innocence of a Lamb of God living a life, and dying a death, of all the sufferings due to sin. Hence it was, that when this DIVINE PITY suffered its own life-giving blood to be poured on the ground, all outward nature made full declaration of its atoning and redeeming power; the strength of the earth did quake, the hardness of rocks was forced to split and long-covered graves to give up their dead. A certain passage, that all that came by the curse into nature and creature must give up its power; that all kinds of hellish wrath, hardened malice, fiery pride, selfish wills, tormenting envy, and earthly passions, which kept men under the power of satan, must have their fullness of death, and fullness of a new life, from that all-powerful, all-purifying blood of the Lamb, which will never cease washing RED into WHITE,

till the earth is washed into the crystal purity of that glassy sea, which is before the throne of God, and all the sons of Adam clothed in such white, as fits them for their several mansions in their heavenly Father's house.

Sing, O ye heavens, and shout all ye lower parts of the earth, this is OUR GOD that varies not, whose first creating love for {sic} knows no change, but into a redeeming pity towards all his fallen creatures.

Look now at warring Christendom, what smallest drop of pity towards sinners is to be found in it? Or how could a spirit all hellish, more fully contrive and hasten their destruction? It stirs up and kindles every passion of fallen nature that is contrary to the all- humble, all- meek, all-loving, all-forgiving, all-saving Spirit of Christ. It unites, it drives, and compels nameless numbers of unconverted sinners to fall, murdering and murdered among flashes of fire, with the wrath and swiftness of lightning, into a fire infinitely worse than that in which they died. O sad subject for thanksgiving days, whether in popish or Protestant churches! For if there is a joy of all the angels in heaven for one sinner that repents, what a joy must there be in hell over such multitudes of sinners, not suffered to repent? And if they who have "converted many to righteousness, shall shine as the stars in the firmament for ever," what Chorazin's woe may they not justly fear, whose proud wrath and vain glory have robbed such numberless troops of poor wretches, of all time and place of knowing what righteousness they wanted, for the salvation of their immortal souls.

Here my pen trembles in my hand; but when, O when will one single Christian church, people, or language, tremble at the share they have in this death of sinners! For the GLORY OF HIS MAJESTY'S ARMS, said once a Most Christian king: now if at that time, his catholic church had called a solemn assembly to unite hearts and voices in this pious prayer, "O blessed Jesus, dear redeeming Lamb of God, who camest down from heaven, to save men's lives, and not destroy them, go along, we humbly pray thee, with our bomb-vessels and fire-ships, suffer not our thundering cannon to roar in vain, but let thy tender hand of love and mercy direct their balls to more heads and hearts of thine own redeemed creatures, than the poor skill of man is able of itself to do": Had not such prayers had more of the man of the earth, more of the son of perdition in them, than the Most Christian king's glorying in his arms?

Again, would you further see the fall of the universal church, from being led by the Spirit of Christ, to be guided by the inspiration of the great fiery dragon, look at all European Christendom sailing round the globe with fire and sword, and every murdering art of war, to seize the possessions, and kill the inhabitants of both the Indies. What natural right of man, what supernatural virtue which Christ brought down from heaven, was not here trodden under foot? All that you ever read or heard of heathen barbarity, was here outdone by Christian conquerors. And to this day, what wars of Christians against Christians, blended with scalping heathens, still keep staining the earth and the seas with human blood, for a miserable share in the spoils of a plundered heathen world! A world, which should have heard, or seen, or felt nothing from the followers of Christ, but a divine love, that had forced them from distant lands, and through the perils of long seas, to visit strangers with those glad tidings of peace and salvation to all the world, which angels from heaven, and shepherds on earth, proclaimed at the birth of Christ.

Here now, let the wisdom of this world be as wise as ever it will, and from its learned throne condemn all this as enthusiasm; it need be no trouble to anyone, to be condemned by that

wisdom, which God himself has condemned as foolishness with him. For the wisdom of this world has all the contrariety to salvation-wisdom, that the flesh has to the spirit, earth to heaven, or damnation to salvation. It is a wisdom, whose spirit and breath keep all the evil that is in fallen man alive, and which in its highest excellence has only the full grown nature of that carnal mind, which is enmity against God. It is a wisdom that is sensual, and devilish, that hinders man from knowing, and dying all those deaths, without which there can be no new life. It is a wisdom that turns all salvation-truths into empty, learned tales, that instead of helping the sinner to confess his sins, and feel the misery that is hid under them, helps him to an art of hiding, nay of defending them. For that which the lusts and passions do contrary to the wisdom from above, is proved to be right reason by this wisdom from below, whose greatest skill is shown, in keeping all the powers and passions of the natural man in peace and prosperity; and so the poor blinded sinner lives and dies in a total ignorance of all that light, blessing, and salvation, which could only be had by a broken and contrite heart. For (N.B.) with respect to conscience, this is the chief office of worldly wisdom; it is to keep all things quiet in the old man, that whether busied in things spiritual, or temporal, he may keep up the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, without any disturbance from religious phantoms, and dreams of mystic idiots, who for want of sober sense and sound learning, think that Christ really meant what he said in these words, "Except a man be born again of the Spirit, or from above, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." For this wisdom, come to its highest perfection, is a classic moral painter, which though it cannot alter the nature, yet can change the colors of everything; it can give to the most heavenly virtue such an outward form and color, as will force the stoutest of aged and learned men to run away from it; and to a vice of the greatest deformity it can pencil such charming features, as will make every child of this world, wish to live and die with it. Its next perfection is that of a flattering orator, who has praise and dispraise at his own free disposal; for as they are all of his own making, so he can dispose them on whom, and on what he will; not only as outward interesting occasions call for them, but also as the inward necessities, the ups and downs of his own poor self want them. For self, however willing to be always strong, has its weak hours, and would be ever tottering, unless this elbow-orator kept him every day (though perhaps not every night) free from the disturbing whispers of a seed of God in his soul. Now join (if you please) learning and religion to act in fellowship with this worldly wisdom, and make their best of it, and then you will have a depravity of craft and subtlety as high as flesh and blood can carry it, which will bring forth a glittering Pharisee, with a hardness of heart, greater than that of the sinner publican.

"Demas," says St. Paul, "hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." Here you see all the good and blessing that is inseparable from the wisdom of this world, it always does the same thing, and has the same effect wherever it is; it will do to high and low, learned or unlearned, clergy or laity, that same unavoidably which it did to Demas; it will make them forsake Christ, turn their backs on every grace and virtue of his Holy Spirit, as certainly as the love of the world made Demas to forsake Paul. This wisdom has asked me, how it is possible for Christian kingdoms in the neighborhood of one another to preserve themselves, unless the strength and weapons of war are everyone's defense, against such invasions, encroachments, and robberies, as would otherwise be the fate of Christian kingdoms from one another. This question is so far from needing to be answered by me, that it is wholly on my side; it confesses all, and proves all that I have said of the fallen state of Christendom, to be strictly true. For if this is the governing spirit of Christian kingdoms, that no one of them can subsist in safety from its neighboring Christian kingdoms, but

by its weapons of war, are not all Christian kingdoms equally in the same unchristian state, as two neighboring bloody knaves, who cannot be safe from one another, but as each other's murdering arms preserve and protect them? This plea therefore for Christendom's wars, proves nothing else but the want of Christianity all over the Christian world, and stands upon no better a foundation of righteousness and goodness, than when one murdering knave kills another that would have killed him. But to know whether Christianity wants, or admits of war, Christianity is to be considered as in its right state. Now the true state of the world turned Christian, is thus described by the great gospel-prophet, who showed what a change it was to make in the fallen state of the world. "It shall come to pass," says he, "in the last days," that is, in the days of Christendom, "that the mountain of the Lord's house" (his Christian kingdom) "shall be established in the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow into it; and many people shall say, Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord's house, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths," Isaiah 2:2.

Now what follows from this going up of the nations to the mountain of the Lord's house, from his teaching them of his ways, and their walking in his paths? The holy prophet expressly tells you in his following words, "They shall beat their swords into plow-shares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up its sword against nation, (N.B.) neither shall they learn war any more." This is the prophet's true Christendom, with one and the same essential divine mark set upon it, as when the Lamb of God said, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another as I have loved you." Christ's kingdom of God is nowhere come, but where the works of the devil are destroyed, and men are turned from the power of satan unto God. God is only another name for the highest and only good; and the highest and only good means nothing else but LOVE with all its WORKS. Satan is only another name for the whole and all of evil, and the whole of evil is nothing else but its whole contrariety to love. And the sum total of all contrariety to love is contained in pride, wrath, strife, self, envy, hatred, revenge, mischief, and murder. Look at these with all their fruits that belong to them, and then you see all the princely power that satan is, and has in this fallen world. Would you see when and where the kingdoms of this fallen world are become a kingdom of God, the gospel prophet tells you, that it is then and there where all enmity ceases. "The wolf," says he, "shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. The calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed, and their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The suckling child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den." For, (N.B.) "they shall not HURT or DESTROY in all my holy mountain," that is, through all holy Christendom, Isaiah 11:6.

See here a kingdom of God on the earth; it is nothing else but a kingdom of mere love, where all HURT and DESTROYING is done away, and every work of enmity changed into one united power of heavenly love. But observe again and again, whence this comes to pass, that God's kingdom on earth is, and can be nothing else, but the power of reigning love; the prophet tells you, it is because in the day of his kingdom, "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Therefore, O Christendom, thy wars are thy certain proofs, that thou art all over as full of an ignorance of God, as the waters cover the sea. As to the present fallen state of universal Christendom, working under the spirit and power of the great fiery dragon, it is not my intention, in anything I am here upon, to show how any part of it can subsist, or preserve itself from being devoured by every other part, but by its own dragon weapons. But the Christendom which I

mean, that neither wants, nor allows war, is only that where Christ is king, and his Holy Spirit the only governor of the wills, affections, and designs of all that belong to it. It is my complaint against, and charge upon all the nations of Christendom, that this necessity of murdering arms is the dragon's monster, that is equally brought forth by all and every part of fallen Christendom; and that therefore all and every part, as well popish as Protestant, are at one and the same distance from the Spirit of their Lord and savior the Lamb of God, and therefore all want one and the same entire reformation. In these last ages of fallen Christendom, many reformations have taken place; but alas! truth must be forced to say, that they have been in all their variety, little better than so many run-away births of one and the same mother, so many lesser Babels come out of Babylon the great. For among all the reformers, the one only true reformation has never yet been thought of. A change of place, of governors, of opinions, together with new formed outward models, is all the reformation that has yet been attempted. The wisdom of this world, with its worldly spirit, was the only thing that had overcome the church, and had carried it into captivity. For in captivity it certainly is, as soon as it is turned into a kingdom of this world; and a kingdom of this world it certainly is, as soon as worldly wisdom has its power in it. Not a false doctrine, not a bad discipline, not an usurped power, or corrupt practice ever has prevailed, or does prevail in the church, but has had its whole birth and growth from worldly wisdom. This wisdom was the great evil root, at which the reforming ax should have been laid, and must be laid, before the church can be again that virgin spouse of Christ, which it was at the beginning. "If any man," says St. Paul, "will be wise, let him become a fool in this world." This admits of no exception, it is a maxim as universal and unalterable, as that which says, "If any man will follow Christ, let him deny himself." For no man has any more to deny than that, which the wisdom and spirit of this world are, and do in him. For all that is in this world, the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are the very things in which alone the wisdom of this world lives, and moves, and has its being. It can be no other, can rise no higher, nor be any better, than they are and do. For as heavenly wisdom is the whole of all heavenly goodness, so earthly wisdom has the whole evil of all the earthly nature.

St. Paul speaks of a natural man, that cannot know the things of God, but to whom they are mere foolishness. This natural man is only another name for the wisdom of this world; but though he cannot know the things that be of God, yet he can know their names, and learn to speak that which the saints of God have spoken about them. He can make profession of them, be eloquent in their praise, and set them forth in such a desirable view, as shall make them quite agreeable to the children of worldly wisdom. This is the natural man, who having got into the church, and church power, has turned the things of God into things of this world. Had this man been kept out of the church, the church had kept its first purity to this day; for its fallen state is nothing else but its fall into the hands of the natural man of this world. And when this is the state of the church, the wisdom of this world (which always loves its own) will be in love with it, will spare no cost to maintain it, will make laws, fight battles in defense of it, and condemn every man as heretical, who dares speak a word against this glorious image of a church, which the wisdom of this world has set up. This is the great anti-Christ, which is neither better nor worse, nor anything else, but the spirit of satan working against Christ, in the strength and subtlety of earthly wisdom.

If therefore you take anything to be church- reformation, but a full departure from the wisdom of this world, or anything to be your entrance into a salvation-church, but the nature, Spirit, and works of Christ, become living in you, then, whether papist or Protestant, reformation or no reformation,

all will be just as much good to you, as when a Sadducee turns publican, or from a publican becomes a Pharisee. For the church of Christ, as it is the door of salvation, is nothing else but Christ himself. Christ in us, or we in his church, is the same thing. When that is alive, wills, and works in you, which was alive in Christ, then you are in his church; for that which he was, that must they be who are his. Without this, it matters not what pale you are in. To everything but the new creature, Christ says, "I know you not"; and to every virtue that worldly wisdom puts on, "Get thee behind me, satan, for thou savorest not the things that be of God." And the reason why it must be thus, why worldly wisdom, though under a religious form, is and can be nothing else, but that which is called satan, or anti-Christ, is because all that we are, and have from this world, is that very enmity against God, that whole evil which separates us from him, and constitutes all that death and damnation that belongs to our fallen state. And so sure as the life of this world is our separation from God, so sure is it, that a total departure from every subtlety and prosperity of worldly wisdom, is absolutely necessary to change an evil son of Adam into a holy son of God. And here it is well to be observed, that the church of Christ is solely for this end, to make us holy as he is holy. But nothing can do this, but that which has full power to change a sinner into a saint. And he who has not found that power in the church, may be assured that he is not yet a true son of that church. For the church brings forth no other births, but holy children of God; it has no other end, no other nature or work, but that of changing a sinner into a saint. But this can only be done, just as the change of night into day is done, or as the darkness is quite lost in the light. Something as contrary to the whole nature of sin, as light is to darkness, and as powerful over it, as the light is powerful over darkness, can alone do this. Creeds, canons, articles of religion, stately churches, learned priests, singing, preaching, and praying in the best contrived form of words, can no more raise a dead sinner into a living saint, than a fine system of light and colors can change the night into day. For, (N.B.) that which cannot help you to all goodness, cannot help you to any goodness, nor can that take away any sin but that which can take away all sin. On this ground it is, that the apostle said, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing"; and on the same ground it must be said, that popery is nothing, and Protestantism is nothing, because all is nothing, as to salvation, but a sinner changed into a saint, or the apostle's new creature. Call nothing therefore your holy, salvation -church, but that which takes away all your sins; this is the only way not to be deceived with the cry about churches, reformations, and divisions. If it be asked, What is meant by taking away all our sins? The whole is fully told us in these words, "To as many as believed, to them he gave power to become sons of God." This is the true taking away, or forgiveness of sins; not a strong imagination, or brain-fancy, that on such an hour, on such a day, or in such a place, you felt and knew assuredly that all your sins were forgiven you: by such a forgiveness of sins, that which made you a sinner is not destroyed, but you will have every day the same necessity of confessing yourself a miserable sinner, as you had that morning, when your sins were not forgiven you till the afternoon. The true forgiveness of sins is only then, when that which sinned in us is done away, or become powerless in us; but nothing can do this, but that power by which we became sons of God. A blind man has then only a deliverance from his blindness, when he is put in full possession of seeing eyes; this is the only doing away of his darkness. Just so, and no otherwise, are our sins forgiven us, or done away, when the power by which we become sons of God, or the new creature, is so given to us, so possessed by us, as seeing eyes are given to and possessed by the man, who before that was all blindness. And as our old man can only then be said to be truly put off, when the new man in Christ is raised to life in his stead, so our sins are only

then truly blotted out, or done away, when an unsinning nature, or a birth of God that sinneth not, is come to be the ruling life in us.

Many are the marks, which the learned have given us of the true church; but be that as it will, no man, whether learned or unlearned, can have any mark or proof of his own true church-membership, but his being dead unto all sin, and alive unto all righteousness. This cannot be more plainly told us, than in these words of our Lord, "He that committeth sin, is the servant of sin"; but surely that servant of sin, cannot at the same time be a living member of Christ's body, or that new creature, who dwells in Christ, and Christ in him. To suppose a man born again from above, yet under a necessity of continuing to sin, is as absurd as to suppose, that the true Christian is only to have so much of the nature of Christ born in him, as is consistent with as real a power of Satan still dwelling in him. "If the son," says Christ, "shall make you free, then ye shall be free indeed." What is this, but saying, if Christ be come to life in you, then a true freedom from all necessity of sinning is given to you. Now if this is hindered, and cannot come to pass in the faithful follower of Christ, it must be, because both the willing and working of Christ in man is too weak to overcome that, which the devil wills and works in him. All this absurdity, and even blasphemy, is necessarily implied in that common doctrine of books and pulpits, which teaches, that the Christian can never have done sinning as long as he lives. Well therefore may Christendom sleep as securely as it does, under the power of sin, without any thought, hope, or desire of doing God's will on earth, as it is done in heaven; without any concern at their not being pure, as he who has called them is pure, or walking as he walked. The scripture knows no Christians but saints, who in all things act as becometh saints. But now if the scripture saint did not mean a man that escheweth all evil, and was holy in all his conversation, saint and no saint would have only such difference, as one carnal man will always have from another. Preachers and writers comfort the half Christians with telling them, that God requires not a perfect, sinless obedience, but accepts the sincerity of our weak endeavors instead of it. Here, if ever, the blind lead the blind. For St. Paul, comparing the way of salvation to a race, says, "In a race all run, but ONE obtaineth the prize: so run that ye may obtain." Now if Paul had seeing eyes, must not they be blind who teach, that God accepts of all that run in the religious race, and requires not that any should obtain the prize. How easy was it to see, that the sincerity of our weak endeavors was quite a different thing from that, which alone is, and can be the required perfection of our lives. The first God accepts, that is, bears with. But why or how? Not because he seeks or requires no more, but he bears with them, because though at a great distance from, they are, or may be making towards that perfection, or new creature, which he absolutely requires, which is the fullness of the stature of Christ, and is that which Paul says, is the ONE that obtains the prize. The same which Paul says, is said by Christ in other words, "Strive," says he, "to enter in at the strait gate." Here our best endeavors are called for, and therefore accepted by God, and yet at the same time he adds, "that many shall strive to enter in, but shall not be able." Why so, whence comes this? It is because Christ himself is the one door into life. Here the strivers mentioned by Christ, and those which St. Paul calls runners in a race, are the very same persons; and Christ calling himself the one door of entrance, is the same thing as when Paul says, that one only receives the prize, and that one, which alone obtains the prize, or that enters through the right door, is that new creature in whom Christ is truly born. For whether you consider things natural or supernatural, nothing but Christ in us, can be our hope of glory. The pleader for imperfection further supports himself by saying, No man in the world, Christ excepted, was ever without sin. And so say I too; and with the apostle I also add, "That if we say we have not

sinned, we make him a liar." But then it is as true to say, that we make him a liar, if we deny the possibility of our ever being freed from a necessity of sinning. For the same Word of God says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins, and (N.B.) to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But surely he that is left under a necessity of sinning as long as he lives, can no more be said to be cleansed from all unrighteousness, than a man who must be a cripple to his dying day, can be said to be cured of all his lameness. What weaker conclusion can well be made, than to infer, that because Christ was the only man that was born and lived free from sin, therefore no man on earth can be raised to a freedom from sinning; no better than concluding, that because the old man is everyone's birth from Adam, therefore there can be no such thing as a new man, created unto righteousness, through Christ Jesus, living and being all in all in him; no better sense or logic, than to say, that because our redeemer could not find us anything else but sinners, therefore he must of all necessity leave us to be sinners. Of Christ it only can be said, that he is in himself the true vine; but of every branch that is his, and grows in him, it must be as truly said, that the life and spirit of the true vine, is the life and spirit of its branches, and that as is the vine, so are its branches. And here let it be well noted, that if the branch has not the life and goodness of the vine in it, it can only be, because it is broken off from the vine, and therefore a withered branch, fit for the fire. But if the branches abide in the vine, then Christ says this glorious thing of them, "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you," John 15:7. The very same glorious thing, which he had before said of himself, "Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me," and (N.B.) "I knew that thou hearest me always," John 11:41. Now say that this new creature, who is in such union, communion, and power with God, because Christ is in him, and he in Christ, as really as the vine is in the branches, and the branches in the vine, say that he must be a servant of sin, as long as he lives in this world, and then your absurdity will be as great, as if you had said, that Christ in us must partake of our corruption. The sober divine, who abhors the pride of enthusiasts, for the sake of humility, says of himself and all men, we are poor, blind, imperfect creatures; all our natural faculties are perverted, corrupted, and out of their right state; and therefore nothing that is perfect can come from us, or be done by us. Truth enough! And the very same truth, as when the apostle says, "The natural man knoweth not the things that be of God, he cannot know them, they are foolishness to him." This is the man that we all are by nature. But what scripture ever spoke of, or required any perfect works from this man, any more than it requires the Ethiopian to change his skin? Or what an instructed divine must he be, who considers this old natural man as the Christian, and therefore rejects Christian perfection, because this old man cannot attain to it? What greater blindness, than to appeal to our fallen state, as a proof of a weakness and corruption which we must have, when we are redeemed from it? Is this any wiser, than saying, that sin and corruption must be there where Christ is, because it is there where he is not? Our Lord has said this absolute truth, that unless we be born again from above, there is no possible entrance into the kingdom of God. What this new birth is in us, and what we get by it, is as expressly told us by his beloved apostle, saying, "That which is born of God sinneth not." This is as true and unalterable, as to say, that which is born of the devil can do nothing else but add sin to sin. To what end do we pray, that "this day we may fall into no sin," if no such day can be had? But if sinning can be made to cease in us for one day, what can do this for us, but that which can do the same tomorrow? What benefit in praying, that "God's will may be done on earth, as it is in heaven," if the earth as long as it lasts must have as many sinners, as it has men upon it? How vainly does the church pray for the baptized person, "that he may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph

against the devil, the world, and the flesh," if this victorious triumph can never be obtained; if notwithstanding this baptism and prayer, he must continue committing sin, and so be a servant of sin, as long as he lives? What sense can there be in making a communion of saints to be an article of our creed, if at that same time we are to believe that Christians, as long as they live, must in some degree or other follow, and be led by the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life?

Whence now comes all this folly of doctrines? It is because the church is no longer that spiritual house of God, in which nothing is intended and sought after, but spiritual power and spiritual life, that is become a mere human building, made up of worldly power, worldly learning, and worldly prosperity in gospel matters. And therefore all the frailties, follies, and imperfections of human nature, must have as much life in the church, as in any other human society. And the best sons of such a church, must be forced to plead such imperfections in the members of it, as must be where the old fallen human nature is still alive. And alive it there must be, and its life defended, where the being continually moved, and led by the Spirit of God, is rejected as gross enthusiasm. For nothing but a full birth, and continual breathing and inspiration of the Holy Spirit in the new born creature, can be a deliverance from all that which is earthly, sensual, and devilish in our fallen nature. This new creature, born again in Christ, of that ETERNAL WORD which created all things in heaven and on earth, is both the rock and church, of which Christ says, "The gates of hell shall never prevail against it." For prevail they will, and must against everything, but the new creature. And every fallen man, be he where he will, or who he will, is yet in his fallen state, and his whole life is a mere Egyptian bondage, and Babylonian captivity, till the heavenly church, or the new birth from above, has taken him out of it.

See how St. Paul sets forth the salvation- church, as being nothing else, and doing nothing else, but merely as the mother of this new birth. "Know ye not," says he, "that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Here we have the one true church, infallibly described, and yet no other church, but the new creature. He goes on, "For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection." Therefore to be in Christ, or in his church, belongs to no one, but because the old man is put off, and the new creature risen in Christ, is put on. The same thing is said again in these words, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that (N.B.) HENCEFORTH we should not serve sin"; therefore the true church is nowhere but in the new creature, that henceforth sinneth not, nor is any longer a servant to sin. Away then with all the tedious volumes of church unity, church power, and church salvation. Ask neither a Council of Trent, nor a Synod of Dort, nor an assembly of divines, for a definition of the church. The apostle has given you, not a definition, but the unchangeable nature of it in these words. But now "being made free from sin, and become servants of God, yet have your fruits unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." Therefore to be in the true salvation-church, and to be in Christ that new creature which sinneth not, is strictly the same thing.

What now is become of this true church, or where must the man go, who would fain be a living member of it? He need go nowhere; because wherever he is, that which is to save him, and that which he is to be saved from, is always with him. SELF is all the evil that he has, and God is all the

goodness that he ever can have; but self is always with him, and God is always with him. Death to self is his only entrance into the church of life, and nothing but God can give death to self. Self is an inward life, and God is an inward Spirit of life; therefore nothing kills that which must be killed in us, or quickens that which must come to life in us, but the inward work of God in the soul, and the inward work of the soul in God. This is that mystic religion, which, though it has nothing in it but that same Spirit, that same truth, and that same life, which always was, and always must be the religion of all God's holy angels and saints in heaven, is by the wisdom of this world accounted to be madness. As wisely done, as to reckon him mad, who says, that the vanity of things temporal cannot be, or give life to the things that are eternal; or that the circumcision of the flesh is but as poor a thing, as the whetting of the knife, in comparison of that inward mystic circumcision of the heart, which can only be done by "that WORD of God, which is sharper than any two edged sword, and pierces to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit," Hebrews 4:1. Now fancy to yourself a rabbi-doctor, laughing at this circumcision of the two edged sword of God, as gospel madness, and then you see that very same Christian orthodoxy, which at this day condemns the inward working life of God in the soul, as mystic madness.

Look at all that is outward, and all that you then see, has no more of salvation in it, than the stars and elements. Look at all the good works you can think of, they have no goodness for you, but when the good Spirit of God is the doer of them in you. For all the outward works of religion may be done by the natural man, he can observe all church-duties, stick close to doctrines, and put on the semblance of every outward virtue; thus high he can go. But no Christian, till led and governed by the Spirit of God, can go any higher than this feigned, outward formality of this natural man; to which he can add nothing, but his own natural fleshly zeal in the defense of it. For all zeal must be of this kind, till it is the zeal of that which is born of God, and calls every creature only to that same new birth from above. "My little children," says St. Paul, "of whom I travail again in birth, till Christ be formed in you." This is the whole labor of an apostle to the end of the world. He has nothing to preach to sinners, but the absolute necessity, the true way, and the certain means, of being born again from above. But if dropping this one thing only necessary and only available, he becomes a disputing reformer about words and opinions, and helps Christians to be zealously separated from one another, for the sake of being saved by different notions of faith, works, justification, or election, he has forgot his errand, and is become a blind leader of all, who are blind enough to follow him. For all that is called faith, works, justification, sanctification, or election are only so many different expressions of that which the restored divine life is, and does in us, and have no existence anywhere, or in anything, but the new creature. And the reason why everything that is, or can be good in us, or to us, is nothing else but this divine birth from above, is because the divine nature dead in Adam, was his entire loss of every divine virtue, and his whole fall under the power of this world, the flesh, and the devil; and therefore the divine nature brought again to life in man, in his faith, his hope, his prayer, his works, his justification, sanctification, election, or salvation. And that ELECTION, which systematical doctors have taken out of its place, and built it into an absolute irreversible decree of God, has no other nature, no other effect, or power of salvation, but that which equally belongs to our faith, hope, prayer, love of God, and love of our neighbor; and just so far as these divine virtues are in us, just so far are we the elect of God, which means nothing else but the beloved of God; and nothing makes us the beloved of God, but his own first image and likeness rising up again in us. Would you plainly know what is meant by being elected of God, the same is plainly meant, as when the scripture says, "God heareth those only who call

upon him"; or that he can only be "found by those who seek him"; so he only elects those and that which elect him. Again, "He that honoreth me, him will I honor," says God: "He that loveth me," says Christ, "shall be beloved of me and my Father." This is the mystery of election (N.B.) as it relates to salvation. At divers times and in sundry manners, God may have, and has had his chosen vessels for particular offices, messages, and appointments; but as to salvation from our fallen state, every son of Adam is his chosen vessel, and this as certainly, as that every son of Adam has the seed of the woman, the incorruptible seed of the WORD born along with him; and this is God's unchangeable universal election, which chooses, or wills the salvation of all men. For the ground of all union, communion, or love between God and the creature, lies wholly in the divine nature. That which is divine in man tends towards God, elects God; and God only and solely elects his own birth, nature, and likeness in man. But seeing his own birth, a seed of his own divine nature is in every man, to suppose God by an arbitrary power, willing and decreeing its eternal happiness in some, and willing and decreeing its eternal misery in others, is a blasphemous absurdity, and supposes a greater injustice in God, than the wickedest creatures can possibly commit against one another. But truth, to the eternal praise and glory of God, will eternally say, that his love is as universal and unchangeable as his being, that his mercy over all his works can no more cease, than his omnipotence can begin to grow weak. God's mark of an universal salvation set upon all mankind, was first given in these words, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent": therefore wherever the serpent is, there his head is to be bruised. This was God's infallible assurance, or omnipresent promise, that all that died in Adam, should have its first birth of glory again. The eternal Son of God came into the world, only for the sake of this new birth, to give God the glory of restoring it to all the dead sons of fallen Adam. All the mysteries of this incarnate, suffering, dying Son of God, all the price that he paid for our redemption, all the washings that we have from his all-cleansing blood poured out for us, all the life that we receive from eating his flesh, and drinking his blood, have their infinite value, their high glory, and amazing greatness in this, because nothing less than these supernatural mysteries of a God-man, could raise that new creature out of Adam's death, which could be again a living temple, and deified habitation of the Spirit of God. That this new birth of the Spirit, or the divine life in man, was the truth, the substance, and sole end of his miraculous mysteries, is plainly told us by Christ himself, who at the end of all his process on earth, tells his disciples, what was to be the blessed, and full effect of it, namely, that the Holy Spirit, the comforter (being now fully purchased for them) should after his ascension, come in the stead of a Christ in the flesh. "If I go not away," says he, "the comforter will not come; but if I go away, I will send him unto you, and he shall guide you into all truth." Therefore all that Christ was, did, suffered, dying in the flesh, and ascending into heaven, was for this sole end, to purchase for all his followers a new birth, new life, and new light, in and by the Spirit of God restored to them, and living in them, as their support, comforter, and guide into all truth. And this was his, "LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD."

FINIS.

07.00 Of Justification by Faith and Works

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6/6/95 OF JUSTIFICATION BY

Faith and Works A D I A L O G U E BETWEEN A METHODIST AND A CHURCHMAN By WILLIAM LAW, M.A.

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A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A Methodist and a Churchman.

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07.01 A DIALOGUE BETWEEN A Methodist and a

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Methodist. Say what you will, sir, I must still stand to it, that almost all the sermons of your bishops and curates, for these last hundred years, have been full of soul-destroying doctrine. {Mr. Berridge's Letters, page 20.} Churchman. Pray, what is that doctrine?

Methodist. It is the doctrine of salvation, "partly by faith, and partly by works; or justification by faith and works." {Ibid. page 13.}

Churchman. Salvation by faith and works, is a plain, and very intelligible scripture-truth. But salvation partly by faith and partly by works, is a false and groundless explication of the matter, proceeding either from art, or ignorance. What sounder gospel-truth, than to say, that we are saved by Jesus Christ, God and man? But, what falser account could be given of it, than to say, that if so, then we are saved, partly by Jesus, and partly by Christ; that Jesus does something, and Christ adds the rest. For is not Jesus Christ, as such, the one undivided savior, with one undivided operation? And who can more endeavor to lose the meaning, and pervert the sense of this gospel-truth, than he, who considers Jesus, as separately, and Christ as separately, doing their parts one after the other, the one making up what was wanting in the other, towards the work of our salvation?

Now to separate faith from works, in this manner, the one partly doing this, and the other partly doing that, is in as full contrariety to scripture, to all truth, and the nature of the thing, as to separate Jesus from Christ. For as the one savior is manifested in and by Jesus Christ, one undivided person; so the one salvation is manifested, when faith is in works, and works are in faith, as Jesus is in Christ, and Christ is in Jesus.

Again, how plain and good a scripture-truth is this, that the loving of God with all the powers of the heart, soul, and spirit, and the loving our neighbor as ourselves, is the one true fulfilling of the whole Law and prophets. But how falsely would this be set forth by him who should say, that it is partly the love of God, and partly the love of our neighbor, the one adding that which the other wanted, and doing that which the other could not do; as if they were two separate things, which with their different powers make up the fulfilling of the Law. For these two loves, or rather the two names of love, are, in the strictest truth, but one thing, one divine spirit of love, from one ground, full of one and the same operation, no more different, or separable from one another, than flame is different, or separable from its flying upwards. Thus St. John, "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar"; but he could not therefore be a liar, if the love of God was a different, or separate thing from the love of our neighbor.

Yet this is your friend's false and mistaken way of setting forth justification, if so be, it is by faith and works; namely, his dividing them asunder from one another, and ascribing his own invented partlys and partlys, first to one, and then to the other; all which is as mere fiction, and full of the same absurdity, as if some other scholar, should with the like partlys set forth the state of a living

creature; viz., that if it is in a living state, it must be so, partly by life, and partly by its living operations, as if life and its living operations were two distinct and separate things, that contributed their separate powers, and joined in their different actions, to make and keep up a living creature. This, and not one jot less, is the absurdity of your partlys and partlys, ascribed to a justification, supposed to be the effect of faith and works. For Christian faith and Christian works, are as much one and the same indivisible thing, as life is one and the same indivisible thing with its living operations.

Methodist. I can call all this nothing else but quibbling about words, and mere running away from the one only thing, which ought to be debated, and that is, whether St. Paul hath not, over and over, placed the whole of justification in and by faith alone?

Churchman. Let me ask you, did you ever hear or read of a dead faith, and a living faith, or do you think the difference between them to be nothing at all, but that the one has as much of justification in it as the other?

Methodist. This is a trifling question, since you know, as well as I do, that our awakened preacher has expressly declared, that there is dead faith, and that it is then dead, when it worketh not by love.

Churchman. Well then, if so, the matter stands thus; works prove faith to be living; want of works prove faith to be dead; and thence you conclude, that it is a soul-destroying doctrine, to teach Christians, that they are to be saved by faith and works. Surely, sir, you are not quite awake.

Methodist. You are growing hot, my friend, but be as hot as you will, I must tell you in the words of Mr. B_____, "That be you ever so sober, serious, just, and devout, you are still under the curse of God, provided you have any allowed reliance on your own good works, and think that they are to do something for you, and Christ to do the rest."

Churchman. In answer to this, I only say, that be you and your friend ever so full of faith, so that you could remove mountains, you are still under the curse of God, provided you have any allowed reliance upon your own faith, and think that it is to do something for you, and Christ to do the rest. For a reliance upon our own faith, and a reliance upon our own works, are just that same good thing, and equally contrary to the truth of faith, and the truth of works.

Methodist. What true Methodist ever called true faith our own faith? Does not the scripture say, it is the gift of God?

Churchman. What true Christian ever called good works our own works? Does not scripture say, "it is God who worketh in us, both to will, and to do?" Now if your faith may be called good and saving, because it is God's gift, and power within you; then a Christian's works may be called good and saving, or such as work out his salvation, because they are all wrought in God, and by his power working in him. But now, suppose one man to rely on his own faith, and another to rely upon his own works, they then are both of them carnally minded, and the faith of the one, and the works of the other, are equally the same worthless, filthy rags. On the other hand, do but (as plain scripture requires you) ascribe good works of the same original, and divine power, as a right faith must be ascribed to, and then faith and works are equally one power of God to salvation, because equally the same saving, redeeming, and sanctifying work of God in our souls.

Methodist. I wonder you should thus strive to puzzle and darken one of the greatest, and most plain truths of the gospel. Can anything be more plain than the case of the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are; I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess," &c.? Here you have works pleading their cause. Now how came the publican without any works, saying only, "God be merciful to me a sinner," to be justified rather than this good working Pharisee? Can anything be more decisive than this?

Churchman. Let it then be supposed that the Pharisee had said, God, I thank thee, that my faith is not like other men's faith, it needs not the help of fasting and praying, &c. I ask you, had this been a better Pharisee than the other? Had this boasting of a faith been better than that boasting of works? Or might not Christ have here justly said, that the publican's "God be merciful to me a sinner," had more of God and goodness in it, than the Pharisee's boasting of his solitary faith? But now, if such a passage as this, of a Pharisee boasting of a faith without works, was to be found in scripture, and condemned by Christ, surely it would be great delusion to appeal to it, as a full and decisive proof of the vanity and insignificancy of faith, and of its being rejected by Christ, as of no avail. Yet this would be full as well, as to appeal to what Christ said of the Pharisee's boasted works, as a full proof that works are rejected by Christ, as worse than nothing.

Methodist. Say what you will, I am fully assured of this great truth, thus expressed by our friend, "That the moment a man seeks to be justified by his own obedience to God's laws, that moment he falls from Christ, and ceases to have an interest in him."

Churchman. Here just the same answer as before will be sufficient, viz., that the moment a man seeks to be saved or justified by his own faith in God, that moment he falls from Christ, and ceases to have an interest in him. This is just as good an argument against faith itself, as your friend's is against works. For own faith and own obedience are at the same distance from God, and are as mere works of the flesh, as self-seeking and self-love. But if your friend would have spoken to the purpose of the matter in hand, he should have expressed himself thus, viz., that the moment a man seeks to be justified, or made acceptable to God, by works wrought by the Spirit of Christ living in him, that moment he falls from Christ, and ceases to have an interest in him. Had he thus expressed himself, you see what an absurdity there had been in it, and yet, without thus expressing himself, his words are quite foreign to the matter, and touch not those works, which are affirmed to be essential to a justifying faith. For the true Christian man never thinks, or talks of being justified by any own obedience, any more than of being washed and saved by his own precious blood. But though he has no own obedience, no own works, any more than he has an own will, and own love, yet he has an obedience and works, and will and love that reach heaven, and unite with God. How so? It is because by the supernatural WORD and SPIRIT of God, come to a fullness of birth in him, his obedience, his works, his will, his love, are that which they are, and do that which they do on earth, to the glory, and by the same Spirit of God, as angels do in heaven. This is the new creature that is justified by faith and works. Suppose faith to be not from Christ, or works not from Christ, and then they are both of them but works of the flesh. But add Christ to faith, and Christ to works, and then they are but one and the same power of God to salvation, and all difference between faith and works is lost, and nothing remaineth, but "Christ in us the hope of glory." But your friend forgetting, or not knowing, that no works, are called salvation works, or pleaded for as such, but those that Christ worketh in us, considers, and confounds all works as own works, and selfish works, and so condemns Christian works, and the necessity of

them, upon no other ground, but because own works, which proceed from self, are false, vain, and unprofitable to our salvation. Whereas our blessed Lord, has in the plainest manner distinguished them from one another, and shown us, when and how works are good and godly, and works of salvation, justification, and sanctification. "When thou dost thine alms," saith he, "do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, to be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward." Here you see what an own work is, and why it has no salvation-goodness in it, it is because it is done only to trumpet forth its own glory. Now where anything like this trumpet goes along, either with that which we call faith, or works, though it should have ever so heavenly an appearance, it has only the nature, and can have only the reward of vainglorious alms. God said to a holy prophet of old, "Cry aloud, and spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet." Here is one kind of a religious trumpet. The Pharisees were learned men, and full of religious zeal, and they also had their religious trumpet, which our Lord condemned. Therefore zeal and trumpeting, are not good, and things to be trusted to, because they pretend religion, but may be as different from one another, as a Pharisee is from a holy prophet. This ought to be well considered by all, who set a trumpet to their mouths in God's cause; for if all that was alive in the trumpeting prophet, be not alive in them, they will begin too soon, and run before they are sent by God, to preach of the true life, and the true death, to a world ignorant, and careless about them. Again, our Lord saith, "when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray, standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward," and can have no better reward, because he that thus prays, makes prayers an own work of own glory, and therefore they are but an abomination before God. But now, will you from hence tell the world, that alms and prayers are soul-destroying things, or at best but mere filthy rags, that signify nothing to him that uses them, because such alms and prayers are said to be so by Christ? For has not Christ in this very place taught you the direct contrary, and said as much of the salvation-power of good works, as he has said of the nothingness of Pharisical works? "When thou dost thine alms," saith he, "let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth." And again, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Why is all this secrecy? It is, that the whole work, may be solely from, and to, and for God, and that self may have neither beginning, nor end, or the least share in it. Now I ask, have these alms and these prayers nothing of salvation-goodness in them, when our Lord therefore commands them, that we may thereby obtain a reward in heaven? Can they help us to a reward in heaven, without helping forward our salvation? If a heavenly reward follows such works as these, must they not on the same ground, in the strictest sense of the words, be called saving alms, saving prayers, as any faith, from Adam or Abraham to this day, can be called saving faith? What are all the promises made to the faith of the fathers, of a "city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"? what is that better and heavenly country, which was to be the reward of their faith, but these very rewards here promised by Christ to the works of Christian alms, and Christian prayers? Our blessed Lord's whole divine sermon on the mount, is nothing else but a continual doctrine of good works, and a continual doctrine of such rewards as belong to the faithful, diligent workers. No blessedness is ascribed to a single faith, but all along to some one or other godly work. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Do good to them that hate you. Give to him that asketh you." But why all this? It is, "that you may be children of your Father, which is in heaven." Surely then such works as make us to be children of our Father, which

is in heaven, may be said to be saving works.

Methodist. Well, now I fully believe, what a very great man has often said, that you have not one right thought or notion about justification. But however for once, I must desire you to say, what, and when, and where justification is.

Churchman. Surely I shall not be much mistaken, if I shall venture to say, it is then and there, where is no condemnation. Now St. Paul saith, "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." If you ask him, who are those that are in Christ Jesus? he tells you in the very next words, they are those "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." But no one doth, or can walk after the flesh, but he who doth the works of the flesh, nor anyone walk after the Spirit, but he who doth the works of the Spirit. So then whether you consider justification, or condemnation, works are the whole of the matter. No condemnation but from our evil works, no justification but from our good works. Evil works are from the spirit of Satan, working and ruling in our animal birth of Adam's poisoned flesh and blood. Good works are from the Spirit of Christ, working in that blessed seed of the woman, or incorruptible seed of the WORD (common to all men) till it comes to a birth of the new creature, created unto good works in Christ Jesus. Thus the works of the devil in us, are our only condemnation, and the works of Christ in us, are our only justification. And by thy works, thou shalt be justified, is just the same scriptural, immutable truth, as by thy works thou shalt be condemned. Would you see the truth of justification, and the truth of condemnation, free from all possibility of mistake, look how the righteous judge of all the world, will proceed at the last day. Mankind is then to be divided into two sorts of people, the one called sheep, the other goats. To the sheep, saith Christ, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Whence now comes this blessedness, or how came they to be the blessed heirs of such a prepared kingdom? The one sole reason of it, is thus given by Christ, namely because of their good works. "For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, naked and ye clothed me, sick and in prison, and ye visited me." Here you have the last, full and final justification, ascribed to nothing else but works, done in and by and for Christ. Is there here any room left for you, or any Christian to ask one single question, or have the least doubtful thought about justification, what it is, and how it comes to pass? Can you be taught by an higher authority, or in plainer words, that works, Christian works, are all the justification that will stand you in stead at the last day?

Again, to the goats saith Christ, "Go ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Whence now have these goats their cursed state, that casts them into the hell of the devil? The one sole reason given by Christ, is because they had not done those works, by which his sheep were justified and blessed, and made to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Here you have the last, full and final condemnation, ascribed to no one thing else, but the want of works. And who is it that teaches you, but he who is the truth itself, and the father of all truth, both in men and angels.

What occasion then for so many labored critical volumes, about faith and works in order to justification? If you hold more or less, or anything else about justification, than that which Christ has here asserted, the spirit of anti-Christ must have helped you to it. For call anything a justifying faith, but good works, and then you have your doctrine as surely from anti-Christ, as if you were to hold, that they were the blessed sheep, whom Christ called goats and cursed. Christ is the one

great infallible teacher about justification, and what he has said in two or three words about it, can no more have anything taken from it, or added to it, or altered in it, than his last sentence on his judgment seat. Deceive not yourself, my friend, with a faith, that hath not all its goodness, its truth and perfection, from works. For what greater deception can you fall under, than to believe, that anything can be your justification, or your condemnation, whilst you are in the body, but that which will be your justification, or condemnation, after you are risen from the dead? Now after this determination of Christ, that nothing but works will pass for justification at the last day, look at the determination made by your friend, saying, in the fullest contradiction of Christ, "that justification by faith and works, is a most pernicious, papistical, and damnable doctrine. Which doctrine," says he, "I am verily assured, no one can hold, and be in a state of salvation." {Letters, page 22.} Is not every word here, in full condemnation of Christ's doctrine of his sheep and their salvation through works, as a most pernicious and damnable doctrine, tending to the destruction of all those who believe it, and walk according to it? For does he who preaches up salvation by faith and works, teach anything else, but that very doctrine which Christ taught, when he said, Come ye blessed, because of the works, which ye have done, and go ye cursed, because wanting the works, which ye should have done. Say no more then, that papists, and popish Protestants, have invented this damnable doctrine of faith and works. Christ is the author of it, and he has sealed it with the same certainty, as the day of judgment. Your friend's "verily assured," is quite as outrageous and frantic, as if he had said, I am verily assured, that damnation will be the state of all preachers and hearers, who do not as fully exclude works from justification now, as Christ will require them for justification hereafter.

Methodist. But pray, sir, if I am to give up my friend's doctrine, must I not give up St. Paul also, as a deceiver and false apostle, for so he must be, if justification is by works? What are his epistles to the Romans, the Galatians, and Ephesians, but so much pains taken, to prove that we are saved, or justified, by faith alone.

Churchman. I am as much for all St. Paul's doctrine, as for any other scripture, and fully believe that he said nothing about faith, but what he said by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. But if you believe that St. Paul ever said one single word about faith, as it signifies a single act, or operation of the mind, or that he ever distinguished, or divided Christian faith from Christian works, you may be said to have read him with eyes that see not, and ears that hear not.

Methodist. Surely your St. Paul and mine cannot be the same person, or you could never talk at this rate.

Churchman. I would ask you whether St. Peter taught a faith without works, when he said to the Jews, "This is the stone, which was set at naught of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved," Acts 4:11-12. Now did it ever come into your head, from reading these words of St. Peter, that he there taught a salvation through Christ (that is, through the gospel religion) by faith without works? See also what Christ himself had spoke before of this very stone, and the builders that rejected it, therefore, saith he, "I say unto you, the kingdom of God," that is, this very stone, "shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof," Matthew 21:43. Now would you from these words of Christ, on which St. Peter's words are grounded, have ever thought of proving that the religion of the gospel, called by St.

Peter the headstone of the corner, and by Christ the kingdom of God bringing forth its fruits, must be a religion of faith without works. What could be more extravagant than this, and yet not more so, than to pretend to prove it from any words of St. Paul. For I defy anyone to show, that he hath ever said any more, or other thing about faith alone, or meant anything else by it, as our salvation, but strictly and to a tittle, that same which St. Peter calls the stone, or that Name alone, by which salvation is to be had. St. Paul's faith alone, is nothing else, means nothing else, but the gospel religion alone, and only attests that divine truth spoke from the beginning to the end of the New Testament, that the gospel dispensation, or religion, alone, can be the salvation of men. When St. Paul speaks of works, as quite unprofitable, nay hurtful to salvation, nothing is meant by them, but Jewish and heathenish works; and by that faith, which he opposes to them, and sets up in the stead of them, he always means the whole system of gospel truths, the whole process of Christ, with all the salvation doctrines that belong to it. This is St. Paul's faith alone, by which we can only be saved, just the same thing as St. Peter's saying, there is no other Name under heaven but this alone, by which we can be saved. The only difference between Peter and Paul is this, that Peter, in his short expression, calls that the Name alone by which we can be saved, which Paul, in his short expression, calls faith alone, and both of them mean the whole of that, which Christ calls the kingdom of God with its fruits thereof; which kingdom of God is neither more nor less, than the whole gospel system of Christ's process, with all the benefits and doctrines essential, or belonging to it.

Away then with your idle fancy of Paul's ever distinguishing Christian faith from Christian works, or ever giving the smallest preference of the one to the other. To the Jews, who said to Christ, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" Christ saith, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in him, whom he hath sent." This St. Paul's sole and whole doctrine about faith alone, it is to believe in Christ, and that belief is the whole Christian work, the whole work that God requires, the whole salvation work. But why so? Because to believe in Christ, is to embrace all and the whole of that, which Christ was, did, suffered, taught, and commanded, as the one only salvation of men.

Methodist. I must confess you have said more than I expected to hear, and more than I can at present answer. But pray show me how it appears, that St. Paul by his faith alone, means nothing else but the Christian religion alone, or the system of gospel doctrines alone.

Churchman. You might as well ask me, how it appears that Paul was an apostle, or witness of Jesus Christ alone; for how could he be an apostle of Christ alone, if he meant anything by his faith alone, but the whole that is meant by the whole gospel religion of Christ? Therefore wherever St. Paul ascribes salvation to faith alone, you have the fullest proof, that he himself could possibly give you, that by faith alone, he means neither more nor less than the whole gospel religion alone. St. Paul has these words, "God forbid, that I should glory in anything, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here you see, all is rejected by the cross of Christ alone, this alone is his glory, and a good glory it was; but would not all that is true and good in this speech of Paul's be perverted and lost, unless by the cross alone, you understand the whole process, doctrines, and precepts, of a crucified savior, that is, the whole Christian religion? Now thus it is with faith alone; and if Paul had said, God forbid that I should glory in anything but in faith alone in Christ, he had said just the same thing, as when he would have no glory but in the cross alone. For where all that is Christian joy, or hope, or comfort, or salvation, is ascribed to any one single thing, whether it be called faith

alone, or the cross alone, there that faith, and that cross, must stand equally, and only for the whole gospel religion. And then to say, that a man is saved by the cross alone, or by faith alone, is the same sound, and good truth. "I know whom I have believed," saith the apostle, and if he had said, I know whom I have followed, whom I have obeyed, the thing had been just the same. For to follow Christ, or to be in the faith of Christ, or to be a disciple of the cross, are three different expressions, but the meaning of them all, is but one and the same.

"I am not ashamed," saith St. Paul, "of the cross of Christ," just the same as if he had said, I am not ashamed of the gospel kingdom of Christ. For that he means by the cross, the whole religion of the gospel, he tells you, in saying, that it is the power of God to salvation; and what is, or can be this power, but that whole process, precepts, and doctrines of Christ, which make the whole religion of the gospel? Again, "I have determined," saith he, "to know nothing among you but Christ, and him crucified." But will you thence infer, that all other knowledge, whether of the birth, life, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, was rejected by him as quite useless and unprofitable? Yet this would be full as well, as to infer, that because he saith, by faith alone ye are saved, therefore no works are to be admitted as saving, but are to be rejected as vain and quite unprofitable to salvation. For the knowledge of Christ crucified alone, and faith alone, are then each of them put for the whole gospel-religion, and not for faith, as signifying a single power of the mind, nor for the cross, as meaning the single crucifixion of Christ.

Further, drop now for a while this consideration of faith, in which St. Paul has used it for the whole gospel-doctrine, and consider faith in the sense, in which our Lord and the whole scripture most frequently speak of it, as a living working power of the mind, that wills, and desires, and hopes, and trusts, and believes, and obeys; and in this sense of the word, it will be absolutely true, that works have just the same salvation in them, that faith hath, because in the very nature of the thing, works are of the same nature with, and inseparable from faith, let the faith or works be what they will, because faith is nothing else, has nothing else, but what its works are. This is equally true of every man, and every faith in the world, he has no works, but the workings of his faith. For as life has no existence but in and by its living operations, so faith hath no existence, but in its own workings. Now if you will have a life alone without its living operations, then you must have a life that is without motion, without will or desire, without hearing, seeing, feeling, or any inclination to anything, and then you have a life, that is just as good as a dead carcass. So if you will have a Christian faith that is alone, and not made up of works, you must have a Christian faith, that has no penitence, no humility, no denial of self, no hunger after righteousness, no striving to enter in at the strait gate, no love of God, or your neighbor. For faith cannot be alone, or without works, till it is without all these workings. And then you have a faith alone, that is just as able to fight St. Paul's good fight of faith, as the dead carcass is to take a city. And let me tell you, that these works are not only the very essence of faith, and inseparable from it, but that faith itself can have no beginning, but from some one, or other of them, nor any further growth, but as these grow more and more. For faith and its works beget, and are begotten of one another, for as it must be said, that humility and penitence are the true fruits, or works of faith, so it may be as truly said, that humility or penitence are the first root, or seed, from whence faith gets its birth--faith, considered as an act or operation of the mind, is like any other faculty or power, it cannot be alone, any more than will, desire, longing, hoping, fearing, wishing, loving, trusting, or rejoicing, can any of them be alone, or in a state of separation from the rest. And to ascribe salvation to any one of these

tempers alone, and by itself, would be as consistent with scripture, and the nature of the thing, as to ascribe it to faith alone, considered as a single thing, and separate from all other works, or working of the mind. But faith, not considered as the working of the will, or an operation of the mind, but as meaning the whole system of gospel- religion, may and must be alone salvation, without anything else but itself, and that for the same reason, as St. Peter says, that Christ alone, is the only stone, or the only Name whereby we can be saved. Would you therefore come out of that thickness of darkness, which a blind Babylonish spirit of dispute, has in these latter ages brought into St. Paul's doctrine of faith without works, this must be your way.

You must take, or put faith for the whole gospel-religion, when he opposes it to, or separates it from works, and then you will rightly understand why he saith, By faith alone ye are saved. You must also put Jewish, or heathenish to the works, which he excludes from faith, and then you will rightly understand what works he declares to have no salvation in them. This is the true, unerring key to all his whole doctrine about faith without works.

Methodist. But where has St. Paul himself told you, that by faith alone, he means the whole gospel-religion alone?

Churchman. He has told it me, as often, and wherever he has said, that by faith alone we are saved. For how could he more show you, that he means neither more nor less by it, than by telling you that it alone is salvation? Would you have salvation to be obtained by something different from the whole of gospel-religion? Fancy now St. Paul explaining himself, and saying, when I ascribe salvation to faith alone, I do not mean by faith, the whole of gospel-doctrine; what greater absurdity could you charge upon him? His doctrine of faith alone, and without works, is nothing else but the gospel-religion alone, in opposition to the religion and works of Jews and heathens, and is solely directed to these two sorts of people, and not, as is blindly imagined, to set Christian faith in opposition to Christian works, which would be no better, than teaching a Christian to be good without goodness. To the Jews he thus speaks, "We have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the Law." Here faith and works stand for the two religions, the one of Christ, and the other of Moses. For what are the works of the Law, but the whole of the Mosaic religion, or what the faith of Christ, but the whole new religion of the gospel? Therefore to tell these people, that they were to be saved by faith alone, and without works, was only telling them, that they were to be saved by leaving or turning from Judaism to Christianity, or that they could not enter into the kingdom of God, or the gospel-faith, or the church of Christ (for they all mean the same thing) till they had done with, and left off all the works of the Law? "I testify," says he, "unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." To the heathens, or Greeks, he preaches the same doctrine with regard to their religious state, namely, that all the works of their religion and lives, must be forsaken and turned from, that by embracing the religion, or faith of Christ, they might be saved. I have, says he, "kept back nothing that was profitable unto you. publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jew and to the Greek, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." Repentance towards God, signified the necessity of their having done with their former religion, works, and manner of life; faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, signified the necessity of their becoming members of a new gospel-church, or kingdom of Jesus Christ. Not a word through all St. Paul, that rejects any works, but those which Jews and heathens were satisfied with, and would not give up for the gospel state of the kingdom of God, which kingdom, is called by Paul, the faith of Christ.

Not a word of the sufficiency of faith alone, but where it stands for the whole of gospel-doctrine.

Again, St. Paul hath himself told me, that by faith alone he means the gospel-religion alone, in the following passages, "I have," says he, "fought the good fight, I have finished my course," and as a proof of this, he adds, "I have kept the faith." Must not faith here stand for the whole gospel-religion? Again, "Before faith came, we were under the Law." Does not faith here as certainly signify the whole religion of the gospel, as the Law signifies the whole religion of Moses? Again, "If they who are under the Law, be heirs, then faith is made void," that is, the whole religion of Jesus Christ, is made needless, and of no use or benefit. Can he more plainly tell you, that by faith, as opposed to the works of the Law, he means nothing else, but the whole of the gospel-doctrine? This is said to the Jews. To the gentiles at another time, he speaks the same truth in these words; "By grace ye are saved through faith in Christ, and that not of yourselves, not of works, lest any man should boast, it is the gift of God," the very self-same gift, of which Christ spoke to the woman at Jacob's well, saying, "if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith, give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." Now what is this gift of God with his living water, but the Christ of God with all his redeeming process, from his birth to his ascension into heaven, freely given by God, that man might thereby be saved. Therefore this faith, or gift of God, by which alone we can be saved, signifies neither more nor less, than the whole gospel-means of salvation. The apostle adds, "and that not of yourselves, not of works, lest any man should boast." Here works are totally excluded. But what works? Why only works of self, and works that man could, or would, boast of. But these works are only therefore excluded from gospel-faith or salvation, that godly works which have nothing of self, or boasting in them, may come up in their stead. This the apostle affirmeth, saying, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained," Eph. ii. How great then is that learned delusion, which opposes Christian faith to Christian works, because Paul opposes it to the unChristian works of Jews and heathens; or because he will not allow their several works to have any salvation in them, therefore will have it, that the true followers of Christ, neither can, nor ought to have any salvation from their doing the works, which Christ has taught and commanded them to do. A believer, or a hearer, without doing, is but one and the same selfdeceived person. In the gospel, we have a father bidding his son go to work in his vineyard. The son consents, and saith, "I go, sir, but he went not." This consenting and not doing, is the perfection of a faith without works.

Methodist. Surely you never minded these words of St. Paul, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him who justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness."

Churchman. Surely you have been deaf to all that has been said, or you could never come now with such a text as this. For no more is said in it against working, or against any other works, but that very single thing, which he saith in these words, "that by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Now if it be the apostle's repeated doctrine, that the deeds or works of the Law, must of all necessity be forborn, or ceased from, must he not for that very reason say, to him that worketh not, that is, to him that ceaseth from working, as the Law, or religion of Moses requires, and turns to the faith of Christ, called the kingdom of God, this faith becometh his righteousness. But how doth it become his righteousness? The apostle tells you, "It is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood." Now what is the redemption through Jesus Christ, but a redemption by and through all

that, which Christ, as God-man, was, did, suffered, obtained, taught, and commanded, that is, through and by the whole of the gospel-religion? How is Christ our propitiation, or peace, but by that which he is, and does in the inward change, and renewal of our nature, in creating us again to good works, in bringing forth a new creature, not born of man, nor of the will of man, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God? What is faith in his blood, but the same thing as faith in his cross, and what is faith in either case, but a hearty willingness, and full desire wholly to cease, or turn away from all heathenish, or Jewish works, and to embrace and give up ourselves to all that is meant, taught, and required by the gospel-faith, or kingdom of God? Would you know the whole of St. Paul's doctrine about faith, and against works, or working, you have it all summed up by himself in the following words, "Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the Law." What room then for one single word about what he means by not working? Faith stands here for the gospel- religion, and the deeds of the Law signify the religion of Moses; no wonder therefore that he saith a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the Law. So sure therefore as you conclude either more or less, or other than St. Paul's own conclusion, so sure you may be, that you abuse the apostle, falsify his doctrine, and sow your own tares amongst his wheat.

Methodist. Let me here ask you, in the elegant words of a last most amiable divine, "Must the efficacy of Christ's obedience be enforced by the accession of our works, maimed and worm-eaten things?"

Churchman. There may, for aught I know, be elegance enough in these words, but truth and sense is quite wanting. For what have our good works to do with the efficacy of Christ's obedience, either as to the lessening, or increasing of it; or how has his obedience anything more added to it by our good works, than it has anything taken from it by the evil works of those who crucified him? What careful doer of good works, ever said or thought after this manner? "I strive to obey thy will, O God, that thereby Christ's obedience may be made more perfect, than it was in him. I lift up my eyes and heart towards heaven, that Christ's sitting there at thy right hand, may be more powerful than it is in itself." On the other hand, what a wise man of faith would he be, who should abstain from prayer, &c., least he should seem by such worm-eaten petitions, to be adding something to Christ's all-sufficient intercession in heaven. Again, fancy another man of faith alone, saying thus, "I cannot have any care about denying myself, taking up my daily cross and following thee. I cannot do these things, as helping forward my salvation, because that would be no better, than presuming to help thee to be a more full and sufficient savior, than thou art in thyself, and without my works." Can anything be more absurd, or irreligious than this? And yet all of it is manifestly contained in the elegant words of your friend. If we walk as Christ walked, and do the works of Christ, we shall on that account be rewarded with him. This is the same good doctrine, as when the apostle saith, "If we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him." Here you see our own sufferings are not only required, but made the ground of our reigning with our suffering savior. But what man, not intoxicated with the elegance of words, would call, or look upon this, as adding our maimed, worm-eaten sufferings, to make the sufferings of Christ, greater and more valuable than they are in themselves? As silly a thought, as to say, that our following of Christ, is helping him to be the Son of God. Our blessed Lord keeps our eye continually upon good works, or things that we ourselves are to do. "Strive," says he, "to enter in at the strait gate; Ask, and ye shall receive; Seek, and ye shall find; Knock, and it shall be opened unto you." He does not say, all is already gained, received, found, and opened, by what he has done and suffered. Now if this striving,

asking, knocking, &c., were but maimed, worm-eaten things, surely it had been better to forbid, than to command them. Or if he had said to his disciples, that this striving and seeking were such maimed, worm-eaten things, surely he had said as much against them, and with the same intention of turning them from them, as when he bid them "beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," and compared their goodness to whited sepulchers, full of stench, corruption, and dead men's bones.

You vehemently accuse the clergy, with acting contrary to the articles of the church, because preaching up justification along with works. But you quite forget, that your making Christian works no better than maimed, worm-eaten things, stands in full contrariety to many of the best prayers in our liturgy. Thus, how many collects are like this, "Grant, O Lord, that by thy holy inspiration, we may think those things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same." Is this prayer in vain; or if God hears us, can no better works come from it, than worm-eaten things? Agreeable to this prayer, St. Paul saith, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me"; the same may everyone say as well as he; but according to your new light, these all things, are but worm-eaten things.

Again, what difference is there between the old man and his deeds, which we are to put off, and the new man in Christ, that is to be put on, if he has no deeds, but what are maimed, wormeaten things? But hear now what Christ saith of the necessity, the excellency, and efficacy of Christian good works, in the following words, "Whosoever heareth my sayings and DOETH them, is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock. And when the floods arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded upon a rock." Here you see the excellence, the power and efficacy of Christian good works, compared by our Lord to the strength and firmness of a house built upon a rock, which floods and tempests cannot overthrow. How could he more fully show you, that they are the beginning, the continual strength and support of the divine life, than by comparing them to a rock on which a house begins, and from which it hath all its power of standing against all floods and tempests? How could he better show you, that this rock of good works, all proceeding from his power within us, is that very rock, on which he builds a church, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail? On the other hand, call anything salvation but Christian works, and then you have Christ's word for it, that you are "like the man that without a foundation built his house upon the sand, against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell, and great was the fall of it." Hear again what our Lord saith of Christian works, "A good man," saith he, "out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good"; but how could this possibly be, if Christian works could be no better than maimed, worm-eaten things? And here by the by, let me desire you well to observe, whence it is, that the good man bringeth forth good things. Not as your orator tells you, because Christ's goodness, or righteousness is outwardly imputed to him, and so made his. No, truth itself tells you the direct contrary, that it proceeds from the good treasure of his heart, and therefore is a goodness born within him. Now, whence has he this good treasure of his heart, and what is it? It is that treasure of a divine life, or nature, which Adam had at first, and to which he died, and which by the free grace and mercy of God, was secured to him and all his posterity, as a seed of the woman, a preserved remains, or power of his first divine nature. Christ in Adam, was his first glory and perfection of life; Christ remaining in fallen Adam, as a preserved seed of his first divine nature, is the only ground and foundation, of his being able to be made again in Christ a

new creature. This divine seed of the woman, is so much of Christ remaining in him; and thence it is, that Christ alone hath power to be the mediator and redeemer of man, because that which is to be raised from death into life in us, is nothing else but the incorruptible seed of himself in us. This, sir, is that good treasure of the heart, out of which the good man bringeth forth good things, and is in itself nothing more or less, than a seed of Adam's first divine life within us, preserved by God's never-ceasing love towards man, as his covenant of grace and redemption within us, which seed, as it comes through the mediation of Christ to a new power of life in us, causes all those different sensibilities, called humility, penitence, fear, prayer, faith, hope, and earnest seeking after God. Will you now ever say a word more, about your fiction of an outwardly imputed goodness, when Christ has so expressly told you, that its birth is from within, from the good treasure of the heart, which is himself within us. And to show, that all must come from this divine root, preserved within us, as good fruit doth from a good tree, he saith, "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good, or make the tree corrupt, and its fruit corrupt." "For (N.B.) the tree is known by its fruit." No, say your imputation-doctors, that need not be; let some good hand only hang good fruit outwardly upon it, and then you will rightly know the tree by its fruits. And it will be more glorious to the tree, to have a variety of good fruit outwardly imputed to it, or hung upon it, than to have good fruit from its own good root.

Methodist. Our present matter is not about the doctrine of imputation. If you will not stick closely to the point of faith alone, I must beg leave to depart.

Churchman. The doctrine of the outward imputation of Christ's righteousness, and the doctrine of faith alone, is but one and the very same individual point; for what is your faith alone, but a faith in that imputed righteousness? The righteousness of Christ we must have, or he can be no savior to us. This is granted on both sides. But you, for the great glory of God, and the great good of man, are for having it only outwardly imputed to us; which is just such a glory to God, and would be such a good to a blind man, as if instead of opening his own eyes, only the good far-seeing eyes of an angel were outwardly imputed to him. On the other hand, we believe, and contend for an inward birth of Christ's righteousness in us, because it was the birth of our first glorious father, and because it is to the eternal glory of God, and the eternal good of man, that his inward sinful nature be quite destroyed, by a birth of his original righteousness rising up in its stead; that so, all that was lost in Adam, may be found again in Christ. Can you possibly be told this in stronger terms, than when Christ saith, "Except a man be born again from above, of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God"? St. John beareth witness to this truth, saying, "Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin"; the same as saying, till a man is born of God, he continueth under the power of his sinful nature. But why does such a man not sin? The apostle tells you, because his seed, that is, the seed of God, remaineth in him. Had St. John the least thought of a righteousness of Christ outwardly imputed, when he places all our freedom from sin, and power over it, to a seed of God remaining in us? Or if he had ever heard of such a thought in other people, how could he more fully condemn it, than in saying, "Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous."

Here you see all is deceit, be they notions, opinions, faiths, hopes, imputed righteousness, or whatever else you can name, all is deceit, till a man by doing righteousness, is righteous even as he is righteous. Then it is, that Christ's righteousness is become his righteousness, and this alone is the righteousness of Christ that is his full and only justification in the sight of God; and that for

this one reason, because it is Christ himself, that is, his divine and righteous nature born within him. Which the apostle thus strongly asserts, "If ye know that he is righteous"; what follows from this knowledge? The apostle adds, then, "ye know, that everyone that doth righteousness (N.B.) is born of him," that is, hath a birth of his divine and righteous nature, brought forth in him; and consequently, he that is not born of him, hath nothing of Christ's righteousness--to be his salvation.

Methodist. I must say again, that you ramble strangely about with multiplicity of words. Our doctrine is, that works have no share in saving us, because, as our friend strongly expresses it, "Christ will either be a whole savior, or none at all."

Churchman. Had your friend said, We can have no salvation but in Christ alone, he had said a good scripture-truth; but this strange unscriptural language of a Christ, who will either be a whole savior, or none at all, has the same bad meaning in it, as if he were to say, Christ will do nothing for us, unless we forbear to concur, or do anything along with him.

Now Christ saith, "Follow me. Take my yoke upon you." But if following of Christ, if taking his yoke upon us, is necessary, then something that is to be done by ourselves, is as necessary to our salvation, as that which is done by Christ for us, and some works are as truly salvation-works, as any acts of faith are saving.

Methodist. Who ever denied, that we are to follow Christ, and take his yoke upon us?

Churchman. But will such works do us any good, or recommend us to God?

Methodist. I will give you no answer, but in the decisive words of our friend; "If," says he, "you think that you have any good service of your own, to recommend you to God, you are certainly without any interest in Christ."

Churchman. Own service is but like own will, and no more good can come from it, than from the natural old man with his deeds. But our savior has assured us, that there is a good man, who out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good. Now these are the good works that are pleaded for as absolutely necessary, and essential to a true and saving faith.

Say now that if we think such good works recommend us to God, we are certainly without any interest in Christ, and then it were better, that you should preach such doctrine to stocks and stones, than to Christian ears. For who can receive it, without giving up the most constant and repeated salvation-doctrines of scripture? What more frequent through all our Bible, than passages of the same nature with this: "To do good, and to communicate, forget not. (N.B.) For with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Now must a man who believes this, and thinks, that such things recommend him to God, be therefore certainly without any interest in Christ?

Hear Christ himself thus calling out for good works, in all those who expect to have any interest in him, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven." Will such a caller upon the Lord, without good works, have his sufficient excuse, by saying, Lord, I thought thou wouldst be my whole savior, or none at all; and therefore, I durst not think of recommending myself to God, by doing his will, lest I should thereby lose all interest in thee.

Methodist. If you do not like my friend's expression, take the same truth in other words of some most excellent divines. Thus says one, "Nothing is required in order to our participation of Christ and his benefits; there is no clogging qualification, no worth to be possessed, no duty to be performed, in order to our full participation of Christ and all his riches"; for all which he gives this solid reason, because, "It is not a matter of bargain, nor the subject of sale, but a deed of gift, the gift of righteousness; and gifts we all know, are not to be purchased, but received."

Churchman. As wild and extravagant words as ever met together, as may thus be fully shown. Christ said to his disciples, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"; and that they might more fully understand the true meaning of that, he said also, "Strait is the gate, and narrow the way that leadeth to life." Now, what Christ here saith of the strait gate and narrow way, is strictly so much said of himself, and how he is the savior of the world; for the way and gate could not lead to life, if they meant anything else but Christ himself. Now Christ and his benefits, considered as the blessed strait gate, and narrow way to life, provided by God, is wholly and solely the free grace and gift of God; here was no bargain, or sale of anything; nothing was done on man's part to obtain it, and that for this very good reason, because Christ was thus given by God before the foundation of the world, and again, before there was a man born of a woman.

See then the miserable delusion of your doctors, who, from this scripture-truth, that God has freely, and out of mere mercy to the fallen state of man, provided, and given a blessed narrow way, and strait gate to eternal life, thence conclude, that no pains, or trouble of striving to get into this narrow way, and through this strait gate, need be taken, (N.B.) because, without any pains of our own, he freely gave it to all mankind; though there could be no blessedness in the gift, but because blessed are they, who with all their powers, works, and endeavors of spirit, soul, and body, strive to walk in this narrow way, and pass through this strait gate. Is not all this as gross a delusion, and in as full contrariety to the nature of the thing, as to conclude, that because God has freely prepared and given us a cup of salvation, therefore there is no need that we should drink it; or think that our own drinking it, need not be added to make his free cup of salvation a benefit to us.

Now, gross as all this is, it is the strong foundation- absurdity, on which alone, your great divines build all their rhetorical flourishes of a salvation that is wholly the gift of God, without any works of man belonging to it. For they have not a word to say against salvation-works, but that works did not produce God's first free gift of a savior to us; and therefore, works can no more belong to this free gift of a savior, after he is given, than they did before he was given to us; being too systematically blind to see, that as a strait gate and narrow way were only given to us, that we might do that which we could not do before they were given, or as the cup of salvation is only given, that we may drink that, which we could not drink before it was given, so Christ was only and solely given for the sake of salvation- works, which we could not do, till in him and by him we became new creatures, created again unto good works.

How easily may you now see the vanity of these, and suchlike flourishing words; "The gift of the great eternal sovereign are intended, not to recognize our imaginary worth, but to aggrandize our views of his mercy and grace."

Just as full of scripture-truth, and good sense, as to say, that God's gifts of five and ten talents, are not given us with this intention, that our good use of them may appear, and that God may have

occasion to say to us, "Well done, good and faithful servant," but to show us how great are the talents and riches of God. Or again, that God's gift of a strait gate and narrow way to life, is not given us, that our well striving in it may appear, but only, that the greatness of God's goodness to us may be shown thereby.

See again, what the same writer says of the man who is in the truth of the gospel; "He labors neither first nor last to acquire any requisite to justification." When Christ himself has told him, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned": surely, this is enough telling him, that from first to last, nothing but works have either justification or condemnation in them. See again what another of your excellent divines saith; "Do not think by any preparatory works, to make yourselves worthy of Christ." What is this but saying, do not believe Christ when he is speaking of worthiness and unworthiness, when he says, "He that taketh not his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me. He that loveth father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me." Do not believe St. Paul, when he exhorteth the Thessalonians, "to walk worthy of God, who hath called them to his kingdom and glory." Again, have a care of these words of Christ, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand"; for you may easily be thereby led to think, that repentance-works have some kind of worthy preparation in them, to make you fit for the kingdom of God. And now let me tell you, that two or three old heresies joined together, would not more abuse and contradict the gospel, than your three doctrines, (1.) of faith without works. (2.) Of a righteousness of Christ only outwardly imputed to us. (3.) Of absolute election and reprobation. These are the scandal and reproach of the reformation, wherever they are found, and have nothing to support them, but that implicit adherence, and systematic obstinacy, which keeps Romish scholars steady to a Trent-creed.

Gospel-salvation, is on God's part, a covenant of free grace and mercy, and cannot possibly be anything else; on man's part, it is wholly a covenant of works, and cannot possibly be anything else. For the sake of works, man was that which he was by his creation: for the sake of works, he is all that is, by his redemption. Works are the life of the creature, and he can have no life better or worse than his works that which he does, that he is. THIS DO AND THOU SHALT LIVE, is the Law of Works, which was from the beginning, is now, and always will be, the one Law of Life. And whether you consider the Adamical, patriarchal, legal, prophetic, or gospel-state of the church, DOING is ALL. Nothing makes any change in this. Nay, it is not only the one law of all men on earth, but of all angels in heaven. And this as certainly, as our best and highest prayer is this, "thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

"This do, and thou shalt live," was the only Law of Life given to Adam in paradise. Adam could not have been capable of this law, but because the divine nature, or a birth of Christ within him, was his first created state. No law of doing God's will could have been given to, or received by any of his posterity, but because a seed of the first divine life, or Christ in man, was by God's free grace and mercy, preserved and continued in Adam, and secured to all his posterity, as a redeeming seed of the woman, which through all ages of the church, should continue bruising the head of the serpent, till this first seed of life became a God incarnate, with all power in heaven and on earth, to restore original righteousness, and to raise again in fallen man, that first birth of himself, which was in Adam before he fell; this was the one power that he gave them to become sons of God.

Methodist. Nothing more need be said against all your doctrine, but that it is direct Arminianism.

Churchman. Do you think then, that no more need be said in defense of your doctrine, than that it is true Calvinism? I have appealed to nothing for what I have asserted, but to the words of Christ and his apostles, and would no more consult a Calvin, an Arminius, or a Zinzendorf, how I was to understand them, than I would pray to God to be led by their spirit, instead of the Spirit of Christ. Nor is the one a wit better or worse than the other. Christ said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." And again, "He that is of God, heareth God's words." If therefore you want hearing ears, or are not of God, to consult a grammarian how you are to understand the words of Christ, is as sure a way as you can take, to be content with spiritual deafness and blindness, and never to be taught of God, so long as you live.

If I have called the Law of Works, the one Law of Life, it is because Christ hath said the same, to the lawyer, who asked him, what he should do to inherit eternal life. Christ asked him, "What is written in the Law?" He answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, spirit and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself." To which Christ said, "Thou hast answered right, THIS DO AND THOU SHALT LIVE." Here you have just the same thing said of works, as is said of faith; "The just shall live by faith." Therefore you can have no fuller proof given you, that faith and works mean but one and the same thing, whenever life is sometimes ascribed to one, and sometimes to the other, and therefore faith and works can no more be two things, than eternal life can be two things. Again, hear how St. Paul asserteth the Law of Works, to be the one Law of Life. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things DONE in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Now if you have your senses so exercised to discern between good and evil, as to think, that the Law of Works asserted by Christ and his apostle to be the Law of Life, is fitter to be received, or not received, just as a Calvin, or an Arminius, are with it, or against it, where must you look for the people, who have eyes and see not, ears and hear not?

Methodist. I am quite tired with disputing in this manner, but yet will add one thing, which you will not be so able to puzzle, as you have the scripture, and which must be acknowledged to be decisive, at least with regard to our awakened preacher. He heard a voice (as he really thought from heaven) saying unto him, "Cease from thine own works."

Churchman. Whencesoever the voice came, it spoke well, and might have been just as beneficial to him, as if it had said, "Cease from thine own wisdom, thine own faith, or thine own projects in religion"; for these are not only alike, but the very same thing. But if he took an advice to cease from his own works, to be an advice to cease from works, that were not his own, it is much to be feared, he misunderstood his adviser.

If the voice had said, "Cease from thine own faith," would he have taken this to be a sufficient divine authority, to call the Christian world to a religion of works without faith, and to have told them of the damnable doctrine of adding faith to works? Yet this would be full as well, as to preach against good works, as having no salvation -goodness in them, because he was bid to cease from his own works.

If you knew a minister, so full of experience from his own works, as to be quite uneasy at their insignificancy for many years, both with regard to himself, and his hearers, such a man might well be said to have his eye too much upon his own works, to mistake the nature of them, and to expect that from them, which can only be done by quite another power. To such a man as this,

how wholesome would the advice be, "Cease from thine own works." And why so? Because thou canst neither be thine own savior, nor the savior of them that hear thee, by anything that can be called thine own work. If therefore your fruitless preacher, instead of making a division between faith and works, in order to preach with divine success, had said to himself, and to his hearers, we have hitherto lived and labored in vain, because (as the prophet speaks) "we have committed two evils; we have forsaken the fountain of living water, and hewed out to ourselves, broken cisterns that can hold no water"; now when, or how may we be said to have "forsaken the fountain of living water"? It is when we expect or seek for good in anything, but that, which God is, and does by his own WORD, LIGHT, and SPIRIT within us. Look after anything but this, have any trust in, or dependence upon anything else but this divine operation, and then be as full of religious zeal, as you will, you have forsaken the fountain of living water. Collect, divide, distinguish, and new model all doctrines, notions, and opinions, as nicely as ever you can, you are only making a new-fashioned, cracked cistern that can hold no living water in it. What is the reason that sin and wickedness overflow, like a flood, the whole Christian world? It is because popish, and Protestant churches, have been age after age, wholly taken up in hewing out of the gospel-rock their several opinion-cisterns. The pope has his infallibility, and therefore his cisterns can have no failure, or crack in them. Protestants have a Luther, a Calvin, an Arminius, a Beza, a Socinus, a Zinzendorf, &c. And if their cisterns are free from cracks, it is because they have nouns and pronouns, verbs and adverbs, prepositions and conjunctions, to cement and strengthen them. What infallibility does in popish, that criticism does in Protestant countries, and so (sad truth!) the one fountain of living water is everywhere forsaken, and quite out of date. What wonder then, if Christianity is but an empty name, a vain battle of opinions, instead of the life and power of God, born, dwelling, and manifested in our fallen nature. And here let me tell you, that all that you see, or hear, or read of the best notions, truths, or doctrines, whilst you place anything in them, as considered in themselves, are to you only broken cisterns, that afford no water of life. Eugenius said one day, how charmed he was at first with the doctrines of the spiritual life, and the glories of a new birth; but that now, after some years striving to be good by the knowledge of such things, he found himself to be but just where he was, before he knew anything of them. But did anyone ever tell Eugenius, that these doctrines were the fountain of living water, and that by drinking of them he would have eternal life? How good are these words of Christ, "Unless a man be born again from above, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."? But how useless are they to him, who is not thereby turned to seek and expect it all from God? How good is it to know that abyss of death, into which our father Adam has plunged us; but how unprofitable is this knowledge, unless it makes us all hunger and thirst after that essential operation of the divine nature in us, which lived in Adam before he fell? All scripture-doctrines whether of life or death, are nothing in themselves, nor have any power of godliness in them, but are only to show us, again and again, this great truth, that the departure from God into whatever it be, is the death of deaths; and the cleaving wholly and solely to God, is eternal life.

Think of anything but God, as the cause of goodness; or that his goodness can be your good, but by being born in you, as it was in Adam and holy angels, and then, though you have all the three Christian creeds, you have turned your Christian-God into an outward idol. For a God, not living and working within in you all that is, or can be called your good life, is but an outward idol of a God. And be assured of this, that as is the birth and working life within you, so are you, and can neither here, nor hereafter, be anything else, but that which is born within you. Righteousness imputed

from without, is but like such imputed wickedness. And you may as well frighten yourself with fearing, that the devil's wickedness should be outwardly imputed to you as to think of having any righteousness of Christ, but that which of him and by him, is born in you. But to return to Eugenius; let it be supposed, that having found himself, not sanctified by his former notions, that he had recourse to others quite contrary to them; as faith without works; Christ's righteousness, not as a new birth in us, but only outwardly imputed to us: The number of saved and damned to all eternity, neither greater or less than God's absolute decrees had made it. Suppose him now so charmed with the sweet sound of these doctrines, to be under such a sense of their saving power, as to be forced to come forth as a preacher of eternal death and damnation to all, that would not seek to be saved by them. Could Eugenius possibly give fuller proof, that he had forgotten and forsaken the one fountain of living water, and was calling the Christian world to a rotten cistern instead of it?

Methodist. This kind of reasoning comes too late; God has already set his seal to the truth and goodness of our friend's preaching; thousands from far and near flock about him. Sighs, groans, swoonings, screamings of young and old, proclaim the two-edged sword, that is in his mouth. If you will not allow this to be proof enough, it is in vain to talk any further with you.

Churchman. All this is so far from being proof enough of the truth and goodness of his doctrine, that it is not proof at all. If it will do for him, it will do for Mahomet, and every successful deceiver.

Zinzendorf has plenty of this proof. Not only these kingdoms, but great part of Europe and America, bear witness to it. And yet of these Moravians, carrying conviction wherever they go, and gaining such awakened converts out of every part of the reformation, as are ready to sell lands and houses, and lay the price at their feet, of these, your friend says, he bears a "preaching testimony against their corrupt principles and practices, and might as well be called a murderer, as a Moravian." What becomes now of your success, as being God's seal set to the truth of your doctrine?

If Rome was allowed to send her preaching missionaries amongst us, to attack with full liberty of speech every Protestant form of religion, to travel from place to place, daily telling all the men and women they could get together, on hills, in churchyards, or elsewhere, that dreadful soul-destroying doctrines had been constantly preached to them ever since the reformation; that they had lost all interest in Christ every since they left the pope; that church and sects, however setting themselves above one another, were all equally in a certain state of damnation, and must be so, till they had true priests and true sacraments, nowhere to be had, but in the one ancient, infallible mother -church of Rome. If I should say, that damnation thus thundered out, to awaken people from their reformation-dream of safety, would soon have converts ten times more numerous, and much greater crowds of various followers, than you have yet to boast of, who could have any show of reason to deny it?

Methodist. Poor man! Can you not see the miserable and wretched state of Christendom, that heathen wickedness reigns everywhere, that nothing of Christianity is left amongst us, but an outward profession, destitute of every goodness but that of words and doctrines? How then ought you to rejoice, that the mercy of God has here and there raised up awakened preachers, to shake the hardened hearts of such apostate Christians? Who that has any spark of goodness in him, would endeavor to stop their course?

Churchman. Whoever would, I am sure I would not. I wish from my heart, that not only every parish, but every house had such a divine preacher in it. Nay, though some should preach Christ out of envy, and others through strife, yet I would rejoice, if such contentious preachers, did but preach the truth as it is in Jesus. But now supposing (as is but too true) that we have only the words and doctrines, but not the spirit of Christianity, they are in the state of those that never had it, and must be called to that same change of life, as they were, before they can be Christians in spirit and in truth. The gospel thus began, "REPENT, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This kingdom was God's free gift; his own love was the sole cause of it; but it was only given to repentance, because nothing else could possibly receive it. This "repent," in order to the kingdom of God, was the only preaching which Christ set on foot, and sent into every city and village. But what do your preachers now say? Do they call the present unChristian world, as Christ ordered the unChristian world to be called, to the kingdom of God? Do they say to Christians become workers of iniquity, that have long resisted God's Holy Spirit, long abused all gospel-blessings, trampled all its pearls under their feet, and ever since their baptism, been wallowing in the mire of their sensual lusts; do they cry aloud to these miserable sinners, repent, and bring forth works meet for repentance, or it will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah at the day of judgment than for you? So far from this, that they teach and affirm with vehemence to all these sinners that no repentance, no qualifications, no requisite, no preparation, is necessary to put them in full possession of Christ and all his riches; and all for this absurd reason, because righteousness, that is, the means of righteousness is the free gift of God, and was not procured, or obtained by any works of men, therefore salvation can require no works of man. Who can be blinder than he, who sees not the difference between a savior prepared and given, and that salvation which is to be from him? Or who can more confound the most distinct things, than he who affirms that of salvation, which is only true of the savior alone. It is true of the savior to say, that he is freely given of God, to be the savior of all men; but it is not true to say of salvation, that it is freely given to all men. The works of man, do no more towards making Christ to be the all-sufficient savior of the world, than towards making him to be God and man; but to have salvation from this free-given, perfect savior, all is requisite, all is to be worked, labored, and done, which he commands us to have, and do, and be. Therefore saith St. Paul of this perfect savior, "that he is the author of salvation (N.B.) to all that obey him." Here you see what an error it is, to speak of savior and salvation, as one and the same thing, equally free and independent on man's works. The perfect, all-sufficient savior, is the free gift of God, that all men might be saved: but salvation is no free gift, but stands in the utmost contrariety to it; it is to be purchased. A savior you cannot, you need not buy, he is already given you without price and without money; but all the salvation that you can have, must be bought of this savior, there is nothing gratis here. But what are you to give for it? All that you have from fallen Adam, all that the world, the flesh, and the devil have treasured up in you; nay, houses, lands, fathers, mothers, brethren, &c., are all to be forsaken, they must all of them lose that place and power, that they had in you, or you have no salvation, though you never wanted a free-given savior. Think of coming to Christ without these requisites, these qualifications, these preparation-works, and then you will be just as welcome as the prodigal son would have been, had he come to his heavenly Father with his harlots in his arms, that he and they might have rings and the best robes put on them, without their giving or doing anything for them. What now is the parable of all that penitence of the prodigal, his renunciation of himself, his forsaking his way of life, his sense of his great unworthiness to have his first sonship, his begging to be admitted to the

labor and obedience of an hired servant, what is all this for, but to tell every son of fallen Adam, that he is this very prodigal, this keeper of harlots, living with, and like swine in a strange country, till he thinks of going to Christ with all those qualifications, preparations, and changes of life and manners, with which the prodigal son went to his father? May it not now be justly said with St. Paul, "Who hath bewitched you," ye foolish preachers, to come forth with zeal and vehemence against qualifications, preparations, and requisites to fit us for the grace and favor of Christ? Did the heavenly Father send the ring and the best robe to his wicked son, whilst he was content with his harlots, his husks, and his swine? Was his eye of goodness turned towards him, till he saw him upon the road, a sorrowful seeker of his father, with penitential works, and full change of life?

Now if Christ in his parable hath set forth a sinner come to his right senses, how can you more show, that you have lost yours, than by cautioning sinners against qualifications, penitential requisites and preparations to be received by Christ? What is the whole gospel, but one continual doctrine of all that is to be done, denied, renounced, and suffered, in order to have any interest in God's free gift of Christ, as a savior of the world? Hear what the savior, who came to save all men, saith to those who forgot, that repentance and good works were the qualifications, and requisites to have any share of salvation, "I know ye not, depart from me all ye workers of iniquity." Is this a savior, that calls for no salvation-works, but will himself, be our whole savior, or none at all? Had Christ begun his gospel, with saying, I am come to save you all, without putting you to any pains or labor to be saved; I bring no terms with me, nor have any demands upon you; I look for no requisites, no preparatory, no repentance, and self-denying works; I and all my riches are freely yours; inward, inborn goodness cannot belong to you, but ye shall be the children of God, not because ye are led by the Spirit of God, but because my righteousness shall be outwardly imputed to you; had this been the gospel of Christ, your preachers of no requisites, no qualifications to have interest in Christ, might well be received as faithful apostles.

You all complain that Christianity is become a mere outward profession, without the inward spirit of the gospel. This just and true complaint, how vain is it in your mouths? For how can your Christianity in its best state, be anything else but bare outward profession, if Christians neither have nor can have any righteousness, but that which is outwardly imputed to them? Can you complain, or accuse them of not being inwardly of the spirit and life of the gospel, if gospel-goodness cannot be a birth within them, but only the goodness of another, that is to be accounted as theirs? Either therefore, give up your outwardly imputed righteousness, or complain no more that Christians are mere formalists; for both you and all your preachers, however awakened, can only be formalists yourselves, and can awaken nothing but formality in others, unless the righteous Spirit of Christ hath its fullness of a birth in the inmost spirit, both of preachers and hearers.

St. Paul saith, "Circumcision is not that which is outward, but of the heart." Is it not as necessary to say of righteousness, that it cannot be an outwardly imputed thing, but must be the righteousness of the heart? Had Paul told them, that the circumcision of the heart could only be outwardly imputed to the circumcisers of the flesh, he had preached the Law, as you do the gospel. Again, "He is not a Jew," saith he, "that is one outwardly." How unlike is this to your doctrine, which will not allow the Christian to be one inwardly, but solely by that which is outwardly imputed to him? Again, "the Spirit," saith he, "beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." But how could this be, but because the spirit that is within us, is a birth of that Holy Spirit, whose

witness agreeth with it? For suppose no birth of the Spirit within us, and then we have only that "natural old man, that knoweth not the things of the Spirit, because they are foolishness to him."

Methodist. Let me before we part, only ask you these two questions. Would you be glad to see Christianity continued in its present, poor, blind, and apostate state from the truth and life of the gospel? Or can you show me, how it can return to its first purity and perfection of godliness, unless preachers go forth in such a spirit of zeal, calling the world to Christ, as ours do?

Churchman. Take this for a full answer to every question of this kind.

There are but two spirits that govern every rational and intelligent life. The one is the Spirit of God, the other is that spirit that is fallen from God, and works contrary to him. Nothing is good in any creature, but because the good Spirit of God is the doer of it; nothing is evil, but that which is done by the spirit of the creature fallen off from God, and working in self-will. Here you have the infallible touchstone for the trial of all spirits, which never can deceive you. Every spirit that calls you to be delivered from anything, but the evil that is in your own spirit, or that turns you to anything, as a deliverance from it, but to the Spirit and power of God within you, is not of God, but is an agent under that spirit, that is fallen off from God. The Christian religion has no ground, or foundation, but because the spirit of man has lost its first state of union with God, and is unable of itself to recover it. Hence it is, that Christ, God and man united, is the one only possible restorer of man's first union with God. Therefore the whole of our redemption consists in our being made one with Christ, essentially born of him, that having his whole redeeming nature come to life in us, we may be in him, as he is in God, one spirit, one life to all eternity. "God was in Christ Jesus," saith Paul, "reconciling the world to himself." But Christ was the reconciler between God and man, only and solely by that which he was, did, suffered, and obtained by and through his whole process. This is his mediation-work. Are you in this process, you are in the arms of your mediator; his mediation-work is like a new creation within you, and what God saw in his beloved Son, that he sees in you; and you must belong to God, as he does, because his nature, life, and Spirit, are in you. Therefore, is anyone reconciled to God, it is because Christ is born in him; but the seed of Christ, which is in every son of Adam, never comes to the fullness of the birth of the new creature, but through the process of Christ. This is the one strait gate, and narrow way, out of which, there is nothing but sin, death, and hell, to every man. Without Christ, we are without God; but who is without Christ, is told you in the following words, "Unless a man deny himself, take up his cross," &c., "and follow me, he cannot be my disciple." This is the one term of union with Christ.

Suppose now a preacher comes to you from Rome, with his invented doctrines about saints, images, sacraments, and transubstantiation, &c., threatening certain damnation to all that do not receive them; suppose another coming from Geneva, as full of damnation for all those, who will not receive his invented doctrines of saving faith without works; of the righteousness of Christ, not inwardly born, but only outwardly imputed to you; of a salvation and damnation, equally the one sole work or gift of God, neither of which you can any more help, or hinder, than you can help or hinder the duration of the world, or add one cubit to your own stature; what gospel-eyes must he have, who did not see as many marks of the beast, the whore, and the false prophet in one of these preachers, as in the other? Or can you think, if St. Paul was again in the world, he would give a heartier God-speed to the one, than to the other? Had the apostle been a preacher of your imputation-doctrine, he would never have said, "What fellowship hath righteousness with

unrighteousness?" as knowing that this was the very fellowship which Christ had with the sons of fallen Adam; his righteousness being only outwardly imputed to their unrighteousness. And how could he have cried out, as of an impossible thing, "What communion hath light with darkness, or what concord hath Christ with Belial?" For had your imputation-doctrine been his, he would have known, that if light was but outwardly imputed to darkness, then the darkness would be in communion with light; and if Christ's righteousness was but outwardly imputed to the sons of Belial, then there would be concord between Christ and Belial. This is the blasphemous absurdity of your imputation-doctrine; for unless the whole fallen nature of man be born again from above, the righteousness of Christ outwardly imputed to it, is but like the same imputed to the unchanged sons of Belial.

"Without me," saith Christ, "ye can do nothing," that is, all is in vain without my process; for Christ is that, which his process is. St. Paul saith, "No one can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." In these two short texts, you have the whole nature and substance of Christian redemption, namely, that it all consists in the process of Christ, and the coming of the Holy Ghost. Christ's process in the flesh, is the only way of dying to all that fleshly evil, that Adam brought to life in us; Christ came in the Spirit, is the one only quickening of that divine life, to which Adam died. Trust to anything else, seek to anything else, but this process of Christ, and this power of the Holy Ghost, and then all your leaning upon the gospel, will be no better than leaning upon a broken reed. These two fundamental truths plainly show, why the first preaching of the gospel began, and must ever go on, saying nothing but what is implied in these words, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." "Repent," shows the necessity of making Christ's process the one way to the kingdom of God; for repentance-works are in his process, and nowhere else. "For the kingdom of God is at hand," shows that Christ's coming in the Spirit, is the one thing sought for by his process; for the kingdom of God come amongst men, is nothing else but Christ come in the power of the Spirit; and where this power is not come in the likeness of a kingdom, wherever plenty there may be of preachers, the kingdom of God is yet afar off. The Law ended with Christ come in the flesh; his process was the fulfilling of all its types, figures, and sacrifices. The coming of Christ in the Spirit, is just the same one only fulfilling of all the gospel- dispensation. And as the Law would have been all in vain, without Christ's coming in the flesh; so would the gospel also, without Christ's coming in the Spirit. And the Jew with his Old Testament, rejecting Christ come in the flesh, is just as true to the Law, as the Christian is to the gospel, who does not own Christ as come in the Spirit, to be the one only fulfilling of all its doctrines. For as all the types, figures, and sacrifices of the Law, were in themselves but empty shadows, without Christ being the life of them, so all things written in the gospel, are but dead letters, till Christ coming in the Spirit quickens a new creature, to be the reader, the rememberer, and doer of them. Therefore, where the Holy Spirit is not sought after, trusted to, and rested in, as the end, the substance, and living power of the whole gospel, it is no marvel, that Christians, high or low, learned or unlearned, Churchman or dissenter, should have no more of gospel-virtues, than the Jews have of patriarchal holiness; or that the same lusts, vices, and worldly craft, which prosper among apostate Jews, should break forth with as much strength in a fallen Christendom.

See here then your work, ye awakened preachers, if God has sent you forth, you can have no other errand but that, on which Christ sent his apostles. Do you preach anything but the process of Christ, as the way to the kingdom of God, or call men to any power of walking in it, but that of the

Holy Spirit, you are strangers to, or deserters from the truth, as it is in Jesus, for neither Christ, nor his apostles, ever taught anything else but this. The old man must die, or the new man can never be made alive in Christ. But nothing brings death upon the old man, but that one self-denying process of Christ; nothing gives life to the new man, but the one Spirit of Christ born in it. This is the gospel-language from the beginning to the end. With this language in your mouths, the whole gospel is with you, you may cry aloud and spare not; be as zealous here as you will or can; go out into the streets and lanes, the highways and hedges; compel hypocrites, sensualists, worldlings, and hardened sinners to tremble at their ways, to dread everything that is contrary to Christ's salvation- process; preach certain damnation to every sinful lust of the flesh, and no possible power to be delivered from it, but by Christ coming in the Spirit, to set up his own kingdom of God within you; and then, everyone who has the least spark of goodness living in his soul, will call you the sent of God, will wish prosperity to all your labors of love; and no one will be against you, but he that is not with Christ. But if you come forth with the new-fangled un-gospel doctrines of a Calvin, a Zinzendorf, &c., be your zeal as great as it will, it only unites you with the brick and mortar-builders of that anti- Christian Babel, which the prince of the power of the air has set up, in full opposition to that rock, on which Christ has built his one, catholic, universal salvation-church. And now, my dear friend, wishing you, from the bottom of my heart, all that blessing which Christ bestowed upon his apostles when he said, "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you," I bid you farewell.

FINIS

08.00 Spirit of Love

The Spirit of Love P A R T the F I R S T. In a Letter to a Friend By W I L L I A M ~ L A W. M.A.

L O N D O N :

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08.01 Part 1. In a Letter to a Friend

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE My Dear Friend,

You had no Occasion to make any Apology for the Manner of your Letter to me, for though you very well know that I have as utter an aversion to waste my Time and Thoughts in Matters of theological Debate as in any Contentions merely of a worldly Nature, as knowing that the Former are generally as much, if not more, hurtful to the Heart of Man than the Latter; yet as your Objections rather tend to stir up the Powers of Love than the wrangle of a rational Debate, so I consider them only as Motives and Occasions of edifying both you and myself with the Truth, the Power and Divine Blessedness of the Spirit of Love.

You say 'There is nothing in all my Writings that has more affected you than that Spirit of Love that breathes in them, and that you wish for nothing so much as to have a living Sensibility of the Power, Life, and Religion of Love. But you have these two Objections often rising in your Mind: First, that this Doctrine of pure and universal Love may be too refined and imaginary, because you find that however you like it, yet you cannot attain to it, or overcome all That in your Nature which is contrary to it, do what you can; and so are only able to be an Admirer of that Love which you cannot lay hold of. Secondly, Because you find so much said in Scripture of a Righteousness and Justice, a Wrath and Vengeance of God that must be atoned and satisfied, &c., that though you are in Love with that Description of the Deity which I have given, as a Being that is all Love, yet you have some Doubt whether the Scripture will allow of it.'

Thus stand your Objections, which will fall into nothing as soon as you look at them from a right Point of View, Which will then be, as soon as you have found the true Ground of the Nature, Power, and Necessity of the blessed Spirit of Love.

Now the Spirit of Love has this Original. God, as considered in himself in his Holy Being, before any thing is brought forth by him or out of him, is only an eternal Will to all Goodness. This is the one eternal immutable God, that from Eternity to Eternity changeth not, that can be neither more nor less nor any thing else but an eternal Will to all the Goodness that is in himself, and can come from him. The Creation of ever so many Worlds or Systems of Creatures adds nothing to, nor takes any thing from this immutable God. He always was and always will be the same immutable Will to all Goodness. So that as certainly as he is the Creator, so certainly is he the Blessor of every created Thing, and can give nothing but Blessing, Goodness, and Happiness from himself because he has in himself nothing else to give. It is much more possible for the Sun to give forth Darkness, than for God to do, or be, or give forth anything but Blessing and Goodness. Now this is the Ground and Original of the Spirit of Love in the Creature; it is and must be a Will to all Goodness, and you have not the Spirit of Love till you have this Will to all Goodness at all Times and on all Occasions. You may indeed do many Works of Love and delight in them, especially at such Times as they are not inconvenient to you, or contradictory to your State or Temper or Occurrences in Life. But the Spirit of Love is not in you till it is the Spirit of your Life, till you live freely, willingly, and universally according to it. For every Spirit acts with Freedom and Universality

according to what it is. It needs no command to live its own Life, or be what it is, no more than you need bid Wrath be wrathful. And therefore when Love is the Spirit of your Life, it will have the Freedom and Universality of a Spirit; it will always live and work in Love, not because of This or That, Here or There, but because the Spirit of Love can only love, wherever it is or goes or whatever is done to it. As the Sparks know no Motion but that of flying upwards, whether it be in the Darkness of the Night or in the Light of the Day, so the Spirit of Love is always in the same Course; it knows no Difference of Time, Place, or Persons, but whether it gives or forgives, bears or forbears, it is equally doing its own delightful Work, equally blessed from itself. For the Spirit of Love, wherever it is, is its own Blessing and Happiness because it is the Truth and Reality of God in the Soul, and therefore is in the same Joy of Life and is the same Good to itself, everywhere and on every Occasion.

Oh Sir! Would you know the Blessing of all Blessings? It is this God of Love dwelling in your Soul and killing every Root of Bitterness which is the Pain and Torment of every earthly, selfish Love. For all Wants are satisfied, all Disorders of Nature are removed, no Life is any longer a Burden, every Day is a Day of Peace, every thing you meet becomes a Help to you because every thing you see or do is all done in the sweet, gentle Element of Love. For as Love has no By-Ends, wills nothing but its own Increase, so every thing is as Oil to its Flame. It must have that which it wills and cannot be disappointed, because every thing naturally helps it to live in its own Way and to bring forth its own Work. The Spirit of Love does not want to be rewarded, honoured, or esteemed. Its only Desire is to propagate itself and become the Blessing and Happiness of every thing that wants it. And therefore it meets Wrath and Evil and Hatred and Opposition with the same one Will as the Light meets the Darkness, only to overcome it with all its Blessings. Did you want to avoid the Wrath and Ill-will or to gain the Favour of any Persons, you might easily miss of your Ends; but if you have no Will but to all Goodness, everything you meet, be it what it Will, must be forced to be assistant to you. For the Wrath of an Enemy, the Treachery of a Friend, and every other Evil only helps the Spirit of Love to be more triumphant, to live its own Life and find all its own Blessings in a higher Degree. Whether therefore you consider Perfection or Happiness, it is all included in the Spirit of Love and must be so for this Reason, because the infinitely perfect and happy God is mere Love, an unchangeable Will to all Goodness; and therefore every Creature must be corrupt and unhappy, so far as it is led by any other Will than the one Will to all Goodness. Thus you see the Ground, the Nature, and Perfection of the Spirit of Love. Let me now in a Word or two show you the Necessity of it. Now the Necessity is absolute and unchangeable. No Creature can be a Child of God but because the Goodness of God is in it; nor can it have any Union or Communion with the Goodness of the Deity till its Life is a Spirit of Love. This is the one only Band of Union betwixt God and the Creature. All besides this, or that is not this, call it by what Name you Will, is only so much Error, Fiction, Impurity, and Corruption got into the Creature, and must of all Necessity be entirely separated from it before it can have that Purity and Holiness which alone can see God or find the Divine Life. For as God is an immutable Will to all Goodness, so the Divine Will can unite or Work with no creaturely Will but that which willeth with him only that which is good. Here the Necessity is absolute; nothing will do instead of this Will; all Contrivances of Holiness, all Forms of religious Piety, signify nothing without this Will to all Goodness. For as the Will to all Goodness is the whole Nature of God, so it must be the whole Nature of every Service or Religion that can be acceptable to him. For nothing serves God or worships and adores him but that which wills and worketh with him. For God can Delight in nothing but his own Will and his own

Spirit, because all Goodness is included in it and can be nowhere else. And therefore every thing that followeth an own Will or an own Spirit forsaketh the one Will to all Goodness, and whilst it doth so, hath no Capacity for the Light and Spirit of God. The Necessity therefore of the Spirit of Love is what God himself cannot dispense with in the Creature, no more than he can deny himself or act contrary to his own holy Being. But as it was his Will to all Goodness that brought forth Angels and the Spirits of Men, so he can Will nothing in their Existence but that they should live and work and manifest that same Spirit of Love and Goodness which brought them into Being. Every thing therefore but the Will and Life of Goodness is an Apostasy in the Creature and is Rebellion against the whole Nature of God.

There is no Peace, nor ever can be for the Soul of Man but in the Purity and Perfection of its first created Nature; nor can it have its Purity and Perfection in any other Way than in and by the Spirit of Love. For as Love is the God that created all Things, so Love is the Purity, the Perfection, and Blessing of all created Things; and nothing can live in God but as it lives in Love. Look at every Vice, Pain, and Disorder in human Nature; it is in itself nothing else but the Spirit of the Creature turned from the Universality of Love to some self-seeking or own Will in created Things. So that Love alone is, and only can be, the Cure of every Evil, and he that lives in the Purity of Love is risen out of the Power of Evil into the Freedom of the one Spirit of Heaven. The Schools have given us very accurate Definitions of every Vice, whether it be Covetousness, Pride, Wrath, Envy, &c., and shown us how to conceive them as notionally distinguished from one another. But the Christian has a much shorter Way of knowing their Nature and Power and what they all are and do in and to himself. For call them by what Names you will, or distinguish them with ever so much Exactness, they are all, separately and jointly, just that same one Thing, and all do that same one Work as the Scribes, the Pharisees, Hypocrites, and Rabble of the Jews who crucified Christ were all but one and the same Thing and all did one and the same Work, however different they were in outward Names. If you would therefore have a true Sense of the Nature and Power of Pride, Wrath, Covetousness, Envy, &c., they are in their whole Nature nothing else but the Murderers and Crucifiers of the true Christ of God; not as the High-Priests did many hundred Years ago, nailing his outward Humanity to an outward Cross, but crucifying afresh the Son of God, the holy Immanuel, who is the Christ that every Man crucifies as often as he gives way to Wrath, Pride, Envy, or Covetousness, &c. For every Temper or Passion that is contrary to the new Birth of Christ and keeps the holy Immanuel from coming to Life in the Soul is, in the strictest Truth of the Words, a Murderer and Killer of the Lord of Life. And where Pride and Envy and Hatred, &c., are suffered to live, there the same Thing is done as when Christ was killed and Barrabas was saved alive. The Christ of God was not then first crucified when the Jews brought him to the Cross but Adam and Eve were his first real Murderers; for the Death which happened to them in the Day that they did eat of the earthly Tree was the Death of the Christ of God or the Divine Life in their Souls. For Christ had never come into the World as a second Adam to redeem it had he not been originally the Life and Perfection and Glory of the First Adam. And he is our Atonement and Reconciliation with God, because by and through him brought to Life in us, we are set again in that first State of Holiness, and have Christ again in us as our first Father had at his Creation. For had not Christ been in our first Father as a Birth of Life in him, Adam had been created a mere Child of Wrath, in the same Impurity of Nature, in the same Enmity with God, and in the same Want of an atoning Saviour as we are at this Day.— For God can have no Delight or Union with any Creature but because his well-beloved Son, the express Image of his Person, is found in it.— This is as true of

all unfallen as of all fallen Creatures; the one are redeemed and the other want no Redemption, only through the Life of Christ dwelling in them. For as the Word, or Son of God, is the Creator of all Things, and by him every Thing is made that was made, so every Thing that is good and holy in unfallen Angels is as much through his living and dwelling in them as every Thing that is good and holy in redeemed Man is through him. And he is just as much the preserver, the Strength, and Glory, and Life of all the Thrones and Principalities of Heaven as he is the Righteousness, the Peace, and Redemption of fallen Man. This Christ of God hath many Names in Scripture, but they all mean only this, that he is, and alone can be, the Light and Life and Holiness of every Creature that is holy, whether in Heaven or on Earth. Wherever Christ is not, there is the Wrath of Nature or Nature left to itself and its own tormenting Strength of Life, to feel nothing in itself but the vain, restless Contrariety of its own working Properties. This is the one only Origin of Hell, and every kind of Curse and Misery in the Creature. It is Nature without the Christ of God or the Spirit of Love ruling over it. And here you may observe that Wrath has in itself the Nature of Hell, and that it can have no Beginning or Power in any Creature but so far as it has lost the Christ of God. And when Christ is everywhere, Wrath and Hatred Will be nowhere. Whenever therefore you willingly indulge Wrath or let your Mind work in Hatred, you not only work without Christ, but you resist him and withstand his redeeming Power over you. You do in Reality what those Jews did when they said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." For Christ never was, nor can be, in any Creature but purely as a Spirit of Love. In all the Universe of Nature nothing but Heaven and heavenly Creatures ever had, or could have, been known, had every created Will continued in that State in which it came forth out of and from God. For God can will nothing in the Life of the Creature but a creaturely Manifestation of his own Goodness, Happiness and Perfection. And therefore, where this is wanted, the Fact is certain that the Creature hath changed and lost its first State that it had from God. Every Thing therefore which is the Vanity, the Wrath, the Torment and Evil of Man or any intelligent Creature is solely the Effect of his Will turned from God and can come from nothing else. Misery and Wickedness can have no other Ground or Root, for whatever wills and works with God must of all Necessity partake of the Happiness and Perfection of God. This therefore is a certain Truth, that Hell and Death, Curse and Misery, can never cease or be removed from the Creation till the Will of the Creature is again as it came from God and is only a Spirit of Love that willeth nothing but Goodness. All the whole fallen Creation, stand it never so long, must groan and travail in Pain; this must be its Purgatory till every Contrariety to the Divine Will is entirely taken from every Creature. Which is only saying that all the Powers and Properties of Nature are a Misery to themselves, can only Work in Disquiet and Wrath till the Birth of the Son of God brings them under the Dominion and Power of the Spirit of Love.

Thus Sir, you have seen the Original, immutable Ground and Necessity of the Spirit of Love. It is no imaginary Refinement or speculative Curiosity, but is of the highest Reality and most absolute Necessity. It stands in the Immutability and Perfection of God, and not only every intelligent Creature, be it what and where it will, but every inanimate Thing must work in Vanity and Disquiet till it has its State in and works under, the Spirit of Love. For as Love brought forth all Things, and all Things were what they were and had their Place and State under the working Power of Love, so every Thing that has lost its first-created State must be in restless Strife and Disquiet till it finds it again. There is no sort of Strife, Wrath, or Storm in outward Nature, no Fermentation, Vegetation, or Corruption in any Elementary Things but what is a full Proof and real Effect of this Truth, viz., That Nature can have no Rest but must be in the Strife of Fermentation, Vegetation,

and Corruption, constantly doing and undoing, building and destroying, till the Spirit of Love has rectified all outward Nature and brought it back again into that glassy Sea of Unity and Purity in which St. John beheld the Throne of God in the Midst of it. For this glassy Sea, which the beloved Apostle was blessed with the Sight of, is the transparent, heavenly Element in which all the Properties and Powers of Nature move and work in the Unity and Purity of the one Will of God, only known as so many endless Forms of triumphing Light and Love. For the Strife of Properties, of Thick against Thin, Hard against Soft, Hot against Cold, &c., had no Existence till Angels fell, that is till they turned from God to Work with Nature. This is the Original of all the Strife, Division, and Materiality, in the fallen World. No Fluid in this World ferments but because there is some Thickness and Contrariety in it which it would not have. And it ferments only for this Reason, to have a Unity and Clearness in itself which its Nature wants to have. Now when you see this in any Fluid, you see the Work of all fallen Nature and the same, that every Thing else is doing, as well as it can, in its own Way; it is in a restless Working and Strife after a Unity and Purity which it can neither have nor forbear to seek. And the Reason why all Things are doing thus is this, because all the Elements of this World, before they were brought down into their present State, had their Birth and Existence in the Unity and Purity of the heavenly glassy Sea, and therefore must be always in some Sort of Strife and Tendency after their first State, and doomed to Disquiet till it is found. This is the Desire of all fallen Nature in this World. It cannot be separated from it but every Part must work in Fermentation, Vegetation, and Corruption, till it is restored to its first Unity and Purity under the Spirit of Love.

Every Son of fallen Adam is under this same Necessity of working and striving after something that he neither is nor hath, and for the same Reason, because the Life of Man has lost its first Unity and Purity and therefore must be in a working Strife till all Contrariety and Impurity is separated from it and it finds its first State in God. All evil as well as good Men, all the Wisdom and Folly of this Life, are equally Proof of this. For the Vanity of wicked Men in their various Ways, and the Labours of good Men in Faith and Hope, &c., proceed from the same Cause, viz., from a Want and Desire of having and being something that they neither are nor have. The Evil seek Wrong and the Good seek Right, but they both are Seekers, and for the same Reason, because their present State has not That which it wants to have. And this must be the State of human Life and of every Creature that has fallen from its first State or has something in it that it should not have. It must do as the polluted Fluid does; it must ferment and work, either right or wrong, to mend its State. The muddled Wine always works right to the utmost of its Power because it works according to Nature, but if it had an intelligent free Will it might work as vainly as Man does; it might continually thicken itself, be always stirring up its own Dregs, and then it would seek for its Purity, just as well as the Soul of Man seeks its Happiness, in the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life. All which must of the same Necessity fall away from the Heart of Man before it can find its Happiness in God, as the Dregs must separate from the Wine before it can have its Perfection and Clearness.

Purification therefore is the one Thing necessary, and nothing will do in the stead of it. But Man is not purified till every earthly, wrathful, sensual, selfish, partial, self-willing Temper, is taken from him. He is not dying to himself, till he is dying to these Tempers; and he is not alive in God, till he is dead to them. For he wants Purification only because he has these Tempers, and therefore he has not the Purification which he wants till they are all separated from him. It is the Purity and

Perfection of the Divine Nature that must be brought again into him; because in that Purity and Perfection he came forth from God, and could have no less, as he was a Child of God, that was to be blessed by a Life in him, and from him. For nothing impure or imperfect in its Will and Working, can have any Union with God. Nor are you to think that these Words, the Purity and Perfection of God, are too high to be used on this Occasion; for they only mean, that the Will of the Creature, as an Offspring of the Divine Will, must will and work with the Will of God, for then it stands and lives truly and really in the Purity and Perfection of God; and whatever does not thus, is at Enmity with God, and cannot have any Union of Life and Happiness with him, and in him.

Now, nothing wills and works with God but the Spirit of Love, because nothing else Works in God himself. The Almighty brought forth all Nature for this only End, that boundless Love might have its Infinity of Height and Depth to dwell and work in, and all the striving and working Properties of Nature are only to give Essence and Substance, Life and Strength, to the invisible hidden Spirit of Love, that it may come forth into outward Activity and manifest its blessed Powers, that Creatures born in the Strength, and out of the Powers of Nature, might communicate the Spirit of Love and Goodness, give and receive mutual Delight and Joy to and from one another. All below this State of Love is a Fall from the one Life of God, and the only Life in which the God of Love can dwell. Partiality, Self, Mine, Thine, &c., are Tempers that can only belong to Creatures that have lost the Power, Presence, and Spirit of the universal Good. They can have no Place in Heaven, nor can be anywhere but because Heaven is lost. Think not, therefore, that the Spirit of pure, universal Love, which is the one Purity and Perfection of Heaven, and all heavenly Natures, has been, or can be carried too high, or its absolute Necessity too much asserted. For it admits of no Degrees of higher or lower, and is not in Being till it is absolutely pure and unmixed, no more than a Line can be straight till it is absolutely free from all Crookedness.

All the design of Christian Redemption is, to remove every Thing that is unheavenly, gross, dark, wrathful, and disordered, from every Part of this fallen World. And when you see Earth and Stones, Storms and Tempests, and every kind of Evil, Misery, and Wickedness, you see that which Christ came into the World to remove, and not only to give a new Birth to fallen Man, but also to deliver all outward Nature from its present Vanity and Evil and set it again in its first heavenly State. Now, if you ask, How came all Things into this Evil and Vanity? It is because they have lost the blessed Spirit of Love, which alone makes the Happiness and Perfection of every Power of Nature. Look at Grossness, Coldness, Hardness, and Darkness; they never could have had any Existence, but because the Properties of Nature must appear in this manner when the Light of God is no longer dwelling in them.

Nature is at first only spiritual; it has in itself nothing but the spiritual Properties of the Desire, which is the very Being and Ground of Nature. But when these spiritual Properties are not filled and blessed, and all held in one Will by the Light and Love of God ruling in them, then something is found in Nature which never should have been found; viz., the Properties of Nature, in a State of visible, palpable Division and Contrariety to each other. And this new State of the Properties of Nature is the first Beginning and Birth, and Possibility of all that Contrariety that is to be found betwixt Hot and Cold, Hard and Soft, Thick and Thin, &c., all which could have had no Existence, till the Properties of Nature lost their first Unity, and Purity under the Light and Love of God, manifested and working in them. And this is the one true Origin of all the Materiality of this earthly System, and of every Struggle and Contrariety, found in material Things. Had the Properties of

Nature been kept by the Creature, in their first State, blessed and overcome with the Light and Love of Heaven dwelling and working in them, no Wrath or Contrariety could ever have been known by any Creature; and had not Wrath and Contrariety entered into the Properties of Nature, nothing Thick or Hard or Dark, &c., could ever have been found or known in any Place. Now every Thing that you see and know of the Things of this World, shows you, that Matter began only in and from the Change of the spiritual Properties of Nature; and that Matter is changed and altered, just as the Light and Purity of Heaven is more or less in it. How comes the Flint to be in such a State of hard, dark Compaction? It is because the Meekness and Fluidity of the Light, and Air, and Water of this World have little or no Existence in it. And therefore, as soon as the Fire has unlocked its hard Compaction and opened in it the Light, and Air, and Water of this World, it becomes transparent Glass, and is brought so much nearer to that first glassy Sea in which it once existed. For the Light, and Air, and Water, of this World, though all of them in a material State, yet have the most of the first heavenly Nature in them; and as these are more, or less, in all material Things, so are they nearer, or farther from, their first heavenly State. And as Fire is the first Deliverer of the Flint from its hard Compaction, so the last universal Fire must begin the Deliverance of this material System and fit every Thing to receive that Spirit of Light and Love, which will bring all Things back again to their first glassy Sea, in which the Deity dwelleth, as in his Throne. And thus, as the earthly Fire turns Flint into Glass, so Earth will become Heaven, and the Contrariety of four divided Elements Will become one transparent Brightness of Glory, as soon as the last Fire shall have melted every Grossness into its first undivided Fluidity, for the Light and Love, and Majesty, of God to be all in all in it. How easy and natural is it to suppose all that is Earth, and Stones, to be dissolved in Water, the Water to be changed into Air, the Air into Aether, and the Aether rarefied into Light? Is there any Thing here impossible to be supposed? And how near a Step is the next, to suppose all this changed or exalted into that glassy Sea, which was everywhere, before the Angels fell? What now is become of hard, heavy, dead, divisible, corruptible Matter? Is it annihilated? No; And yet nothing of it is left; all that you know of it is gone, and nothing but its shadowy Idea will be known in Eternity. Now as this shows you, how Matter can lose all its material Properties, and go back to its first spiritual State, so it makes it very intelligible to you, how the Sin of Angels, which was their sinful Working in and with the Properties of Nature, could bring them out of their first Spirituality into that Darkness, Grossness, and Chaos out of which God raised this material System. See now, Sir, how unreasonably you once told me, that our Doctrine must suppose the Eternity of Matter; for throughout the Whole you might easily have seen, that it neither does nor can suppose it, but demonstrates the Impossibility of it; shows the true Origin of Matter, that it is no older than Sin; could have no Possibility of beginning to be, but from Sin, and therefore must entirely vanish when Sin is entirely done away.

If Matter, said you, be not made out of nothing then it must be eternal. Just as well concluded, as if you had said, If Snow and Hail and Ice are not made out of nothing, then they must be eternal. And if your Senses did not force you to know, how these things are created out of something, and are in themselves only the Properties of Light, and Air, and Water, brought out of their first State into such a Compaction and Creation, as is called Snow, Hail, and Ice, your rational Philosophy would stand to its noble Conclusion, that they must be made out of Nothing. Now every time you see Snow or Hail or Ice, you see in Truth and Reality the Creation of Matter, or how this World came to be of such a material Nature as it is. For Earth and Stones, and every other Materiality of this World, came from some antecedent Properties of Nature by that same creating Power or Fiat

of God as turns the Properties of Light, and Air, and Water, into the different Materialities of Snow, Hail, and Ice. The first Property of Nature, which is in itself a constringing, attracting, compressing, and coagulating Power, is that working Power from whence comes all Thickness, Darkness, Coldness, and Hardness; and this is the Creator of Snow and Hail and Ice out of something that before was only the Fluidity of Light, Air, and Moisture. Now this same Property of Nature, directed by the Will of God, was the Fiat and creating Power which, on the first Day of this World, compacted, coagulated, or created the wrathful Properties of fallen Nature in the Angelic Kingdom into such a new State as to become Earth and Stones and Water and a visible Heaven. And the new State of the created Heaven and Earth and Stones and Water, &c., came forth by the Fiat of God, or the Working of the first Property of Nature, from the Properties of fallen Nature; just as Snow and Ice and Hail, come forth by the same Fiat from the Properties of Light, Air, and Water. And the created Materiality of Heaven, Earth, Stones, and Water, have no more Eternity in them, than there is in Snow or Hail or Ice, but are only held for a time in their compacted or created State, by the same first astringing Property of Nature, which for a time holds Snow and Hail and Ice in their compacted State.

Now here you see with the utmost Certainty that all the Matter or Materiality of this World is the Effect of Sin, and could have its Beginning from nothing else. For as Thickness, Hardness, and Darkness (which is the Essence of Matter) is the Effect of the wrathful predominant Power of the first Property of Nature, and as no Property of Nature can be predominant, or known as it is in itself, till Nature is fallen from its harmonious Unity under the Light and Love of God dwelling in it, so you have the utmost Certainty, that where Matter, or which is the same Thing, where Thickness, Darkness, Hardness, &c., are found, there the Will of the Creature has turned from God and opened a disorderly Working of Nature without God.

Therefore as sure as the Materiality of this World standeth in the predominant Power of the first attracting, astringing Property of Nature, or in other Words, is a Thickness, Darkness, Hardness, &c., so sure is it that all the Matter of this World has its Beginning from Sin and must have its End as soon as the Properties of Nature are again restored to their first Unity and blessed Harmony under the Light and Spirit of God.

It is no Objection to all this, that Almighty God must be owned to be the true Creator of the Materiality of this World. For God only brought or created it into this Materiality out of the fallen sinful Properties of Nature, and in order to stop their sinful Working, and to put them into a State of Recovery. He created the confused Chaos of the darkened, divided, contrary Properties of spiritual Nature into a further, darker, harder Coagulation and Division, that so the fallen Angels might thereby lose all Power over them, and that this new Materiality might become a Theatre of Redemption and stand its Time under the Dominion of the Lamb of God till all the Wrath and Grossness and Darkness, born of the Sin of the Angels, was fitted to return to its first heavenly Purity. And thus, though God is the Creator of the Materiality of this World, yet seeing he created it out of that Wrath, Division, and Darkness which Sin had opened in Nature, this Truth stands firm, that Sin alone is the Father, first Cause, and Beginner of all the Materiality of this World; and that when Sin is removed from Nature all its Materiality must vanish with it. For when the Properties of Nature are again in the Unity of the one Will of Light and Love, then Hot and Cold, Thick and Thin, Dark and Hard, with every Property of Matter, must give up all their Distinction, and all the divided Elements of this World lose all their Materiality and Division in that first heavenly Spirituality of a

glassy Sea from whence they fell.

Now as all the whole Nature of Matter, its Grossness, Darkness, and Hardness, is owing to the unequal, predominant Working of the first Property of Nature which is an attracting, astringing, and compressing Desire; so every spiritual Evil, every wicked Working and disorderly State of any intelligent Being is all owing to the same disorderly, predominant Power of the first Property of Nature, doing all that inwardly in the Spirit of the Creature, which it does in an outward Grossness, Darkness, and Hardness. Thus, when the Desire (the first Property of Nature) in any intelligent Creature, leaves the Unity and Universality of the Spirit of Love and contracts or shuts up itself in an own Will, own Love, and Self-seeking, then it does all that inwardly and spiritually in the Soul, which it does in outward Grossness, Hardness, and Darkness. And had not own Will, own Love, and Self-seeking come into the Spirit of the Creature, it never could have found or felt any outward Contrariety, Darkness or Hardness: For no Creature can have any other outward Nature but that which is in the same State with its inward Spirit, and belongs to it as its own natural Growth.

Modern Metaphysics has no Knowledge of the Ground and Nature either of Spirit or Body, but supposes them not only without any natural Relation, but essentially contrary to one another, and only held together in a forced Conjunction by the arbitrary Will of God. Nay, if you were to say that God first creates a Soul out of nothing, and when that is done, then takes an understanding Faculty and puts it into it, after that adds a Will and then a Memory, all is independently made, as when a Tailor first makes the Body of a Coat and then adds Sleeves or Pockets to it, were you to say This, the Schools of Descartes, Malebranche, or Locke could have nothing to say against it. And the Thing is unavoidable, for all these Philosophers were so far from knowing the Ground of Nature, how it is a Birth from God, and all Creatures a Birth from Nature, through the working Will of God in and by the Powers of Nature, as they were so far from knowing this, as to hold a Creation out of nothing, so they were necessarily excluded from every fundamental Truth concerning the Origin either of Body or Spirit and their true Relation to one another. For a Creation out of nothing leaves no room for accounting why any Thing is as it is.— Now every wise Man is supposed to have Respect to Nature in every Thing that he would have joined together; he cannot suppose his Work to succeed unless this be done. But to suppose God to create Man with a Body and Soul, not only not naturally related but naturally impossible to be united by any Powers in either of them, is to suppose God acting and creating Man into an unnatural State, which yet he could not do, unless there was such a Thing as Nature antecedent to the Creation of Man. And how can Nature be, or have any Thing but what it is and has from God? Therefore to suppose God to bring any Creature into an unnatural State is to suppose him acting contrary to himself and to that Nature which is from him.

Yet all the Metaphysics of the Schools does this. It supposes God to bring a Soul and a Body together which have the utmost natural Contrariety to each other and can only affect or act upon one another by an arbitrary Will of God, willing that Body and Soul, held together by Force, should seem to do that to one another which they have no natural or possible Power to do. But the true Philosophy of this Matter, known only to the Soul, that by a new Birth from above has found its first State in and from God is this: Namely, that Nature is a Birth or Manifestation of the triune invisible Deity. And as it could only come into Existence as a Birth from God, so every Creature or beginning Thing can only come forth as a Birth from and out of Nature by the Will of God, willing it to come forth in such a Birth. And no Creature can have, or be, any Thing, but by and according to

the working Powers of Nature; and therefore, strictly speaking, no Creature can be, or be put into an unnatural State. It may indeed lose or fall from its natural Perfection by the wrong Use or Working of its Will; but then its fallen State is the natural Effect of the wrong Use of its Will, and so it only has that which is natural to it. The Truth of the Matter is this: There neither is, nor can be, any Thing, nor any Effect in the whole Universe of Things but by the Way of Birth. For as the working Will is the first Cause or Beginner of every Thing, so nothing can proceed further than as it is driven by the Will and is a Birth of it. And therefore nothing can be in any Thing but what is natural to its own working Will and the true Effect of it. Every Thing that is outward in any Being is only a Birth of its own Spirit, and therefore all Body, whether it be heavenly or earthly or hellish, has its whole Nature and Condition from its own inward Spirit, and no Spirit can have a Body of any other Properties but such as are natural to it as being its own true outward State. For Body and Spirit are not two separate, independent Things, but are necessary to each other, and are only the inward and outward conditions of one and the same Being.

Every creaturely Spirit must have its own Body and cannot be without it, for its Body is that which makes it manifest to itself. It cannot be said to exist as a Creature till in a Body, because it can have no Sensibility of itself, nor feel nor find either that it is, or what it is, but in and by its own Body. Its Body is its first Knowledge of its Something and Somewhere. And now, Sir, if you ask why I have gone into this Detail of the Origin and Nature of Body and Spirit, when my Subject was only concerning the Spirit of Love, it is to show you, that Grossness, Darkness, Contrariety, Disquiet, and Fermentation must be the State of the Body and Spirit till they are both made pure and luminous by the Light and Love of Heaven manifested in them. All Darkness, Grossness, and Contrariety must be removed from the Body before it can belong to Heaven, or be united with it; but these Qualities must be in the Body till the Soul is totally dead to Self, Partiality, and Contrariety, and breathes only the Spirit of universal Love, because the State of the Body has nothing of its own, or from itself, but is solely the outward Manifestation of nothing else but that which is inwardly in the Soul. Every Animal of this World has nothing in its outward Form or Shape, every Spirit, whether heavenly or hellish, has nothing in the Nature and State of its Body, but that which is the Form and Growth of its own inward Spirit. As no Number can be any Thing else but that which the Unities contained in it make it to be, so no Body of any Creature can be any Thing else but the Coagulation, or Sum total, of those Properties of Nature that are coagulated in it. And when the Properties of Nature are formed into the band of a creaturely Union, then is its Body brought forth, whether the Spirit of the Creature be earthly, heavenly, or hellish.

Nature, or the first Properties of Life, are in a State of the highest Contrariety, and the highest Want of something which they have not. This is their whole Nature and they have nothing else in them. And this is their true Ground and Fitness to become a Life of triumphing Joy and Happiness, viz., when united in the Possession of that which they seek for in their Contrariety. And if Life, in its first Root, was not this Depth of Strife, this Strength of Hunger, and Sensibility of Want, the Fullness of heavenly Joy could not be manifested in it.

You are not a Stranger to the Mystery of the Seven Properties of Nature which we have often spoken of; and therefore I shall shorten the Matter, and only say so much of them as may be of Service to our present Subject.

Nature, whether eternal or temporal, is That which comes not into Being for its own Self or to be That which it is in itself, but for the Sake of Something that it is not, and has not. And this is the Reason why Nature is only a Desire; it is because it is for the Sake of something else; and is also the Reason why Nature in itself is only a Torment, because it is only a strong Desire, and cannot help itself to that which it wants, but is always working against itself.

Now a Desire that cannot be stopped, nor get That which it would have, has a threefold Contrariety, or Working in it, which you may thus conceive as follows: The first and peculiar Property, or the one only Will of the Desire, as such, is to have That which it has not; and all it can do toward having it is to act as if it were seizing it; and this is it which makes the Desire to be a magic Compressing, Inclosing, or Astringing, because that is all that it can do toward Seizing of that which it would have. But the Desire cannot thus magically astringe, compress, or strive to inclose, without Drawing and Attracting: But Drawing is Motion, which is the highest Contrariety and Resistance to compressing or holding together. And thus the Desire, in its magical Working, sets out with two contrary Properties, inseparable from one another and equal in Strength; for the Motion has no Strength but as it is the Drawing of the Desire; and the Desire only draws in the same Degree as it wills to compress and astringe; and therefore the Desire, as astringing, always begets a Resistance equal to itself. Now from this great and equally strong Contrariety of the two first Properties of the Desire, magically pulling, as I may say, two contrary Ways, there arises as a necessary Birth from both of them, a third Property, which is emphatically called a Wheel or whirling Anguish of Life. For a Thing that can go neither inward nor outward, and yet must be and move under the equal Power of both of them, must whirl or turn round; it has no Possibility of doing any Thing else or of ceasing to do that. And that this whirling Contrariety of these inseparable Properties is the great Anguish of Life and may properly be called the Hell of Nature; and every lesser Torment which any Man finds in this mixed World, has all its Existence and Power from the Working of these three Properties: For Life can find no troublesome Motions, or Sensibility of Distress, but so far as it comes under their Power, and enters into their whirling Wheel.

Now here you may observe, that as this whirling Anguish of Life is a third State, necessarily arising from the Contrariety of the two first Properties of the Desire, so in this material System, every whirling or orbicular Motion of any Body is solely the Effect or Product of the Contrariety of these two first Properties. For no material Thing can whirl or move round, till it is under the Power of these two Properties; that is, till it can neither go inwards nor outwards, and yet is obliged to move, just as the whirling Anguish of the Desire then begins when it can neither go inwards nor outwards and yet must be in Motion. And this may be again another strict Demonstration to you, that all the Matter of this World is from spiritual Properties, since all its Workings and Effects are according to them: For if Matter does nothing but according to them, it can be nothing but what it is, and has from them.

Here also, that is, in these three Properties of the Desire, you see the Ground and Reason of the three great Laws of Matter and Motion, lately discovered, and so much celebrated, and need no more to be told, that the illustrious Sir Isaac plowed with Behmen's Heifer, when he brought forth the Discovery of them. In the mathematical System of this great Philosopher these three Properties, Attraction, equal Resistance, and the orbicular Motion of the Planets as the effect of them, &c., are only treated of as Facts and Appearances, whose Ground is not pretended to be known. But in our Behmen, the illuminated Instrument of God, their Birth and Power in Eternity are

opened; their eternal Beginning is shown, and how and why all Worlds, and every Life of every Creature, whether it be heavenly, earthly, or hellish, must be in them, and from them, and can have no Nature either spiritual or material, no kind of Happiness or Misery, but according to the working Power and State of these Properties.

All outward Nature, all inward Life, is what it is, and works as it works, from this unceasing, powerful Attraction, Resistance, and Whirling.

Every Madness and Folly of Life is their immediate Work and every good Spirit of Wisdom and Love has all its Strength and Activity from them. They equally support Darkness and Light: The one could have no Powers of Thickness and Coldness, the other no Powers of Warmth, Brightness, and Activity but by and through these three Properties acting in a different State. Not a Particle of Matter stirs, rises, or falls, separates from or unites with any other, but under their Power. Not a Thought of the Mind, either of Love or Hatred, of Joy or Trouble, of Envy or Wrath, of Pride and Covetousness, can rise in the Spirit of any Creature, but as these Properties act and stir in it. The next and following Properties, viz., the fourth, called Fire; the fifth, called the Form of Light and Love, and the sixth, Sound, or Understanding, only declare the gradual Effects of the Entrance of the Deity into the three first Properties of Nature, changing, or bringing their strong wrathful Attraction, Resistance, and Whirling, into a Life and State of triumphing Joy, and Fullness of Satisfaction; which State of Peace and Joy in one another is called the Seventh Property, or State of Nature. And this is what Behmen means by his Ternarius Sanctus, which he so often speaks of as the only Place from whence he received all that he said and wrote: He means by it the holy Manifestation of the Triune God in the seven Properties of Nature, or Kingdom of Heaven. And from this Manifestation of God in the seven Properties of Nature, or Kingdom of Heaven, he most wonderfully opens, and accounts for all that was done in the six first working Days of the Creation, showing how every one of the six active Properties had its peculiar Day's Work, till the whole ended or rested in the sanctified, paradisiacal Sabbath of the seventh Day, just as Nature doth in its seventh Property. And now, Sir, you may see in the greatest Clearness how every Thing in this World, every Thing in the Soul and Body of Man, absolutely requires the one Redemption of the Gospel. There is but one Nature in all created Things, whether spiritual or material; they all stand and work upon the same Ground, viz., the three first Properties of Nature. That only which can illuminate the Soul, that alone can give Brightness and Purity to the Body. For there is no Grossness, Darkness, and Contrariety in the Body, but what strictly proceeds from the same Cause that makes Selfishness, Wrath, Envy, and Torment in the Soul; it is but one and the same State and Working of the same three first Properties of Nature. All Evil, whether natural or moral, whether of Body or Spirit, is the sole Effect of the Wrath and Disorder of the Spirits of Nature working in and by themselves. And all the Good, Perfection, and Purity of every Thing, whether spiritual or material, whether it be the Body or Spirit of Man or Angel, is solely from the Power and Presence of the supernatural Deity dwelling and working in the Properties of Nature. For the Properties of Nature are in themselves nothing else but a mere Hunger, Want, Strife, and Contrariety, till the Fullness and Riches of the Deity entering into them unites them all in one Will and one Possession of Light and harmonious Love; which is the one Redemption of the Gospel, and the one Reason why nothing else but the Heart, or Son, or Light of God, can purify Nature and Creature from all the Evil they are fallen into. For nothing can possibly deliver the Soul from its selfish Nature and earthly Passions but that one Power that can deliver Matter from its present

material Properties and turn Earth into Heaven: And that for this plain Reason, because Soul and Body, outward Nature and inward Life, have but one and the same Evil in them, and from one and the same Cause. The Deist, therefore, who looks for Life and Salvation through the Use of his Reason, acts contrary to the whole Nature of every Thing that he sees and knows of himself and of the Nature and State of this World. For from one End of it to the other, all its material State, all its gross divided Elements, declare that they are what they are, because the Light and Love of Heaven is not working and manifest in them, and that nothing can take Darkness, Materiality, Rage, Storms, and Tempests from them, but that same heavenly Light and Love which was made Flesh to redeem the fallen Humanity first, and after that the whole material System. Can the Deist with his Reason bring the Light of this World into the Eyes of his Body? If not, how comes it to be less absurd, or more possible, for Reason to bring heavenly Light into the Soul? Can Reason hinder the Body from being heavy, or remove Thickness and Darkness from Flesh and Blood? Yet nothing less than such a Power can possibly help the Soul out of its fallen and earthly State. For the Grossness of Flesh and Blood is the natural State of the fallen Soul; and therefore nothing can purify the Soul, or raise it out of its earthly, corrupt State, but that which hath all Power over all that, that is earthy and material in Nature. To pretend, therefore, that Reason may have sufficient Power to remove all hellish Depravity and earthly Lusts from the Soul, whilst it has not the least Power over Sweet or Sour in any one Particle of Matter in the Body, is as highly absurd, as if a Man should pretend that he has a full Power to alter the inward, invisible, vegetable Life of a Plant, but none at all over its outward State, Colour, Leaves, or Fruit. The Deist therefore, and not the Christian, stands in need of continual Miracles to make good his Doctrine. For Reason can have no Pretence to amend or alter the Life of the Soul, but so far as it can show that it has Power to amend and alter the Nature and State of the Body. The unbelieving Jews said of our Lord, "How can this Man forgive Sins?" Christ showed them how by appealing to that Power which they saw he had over the Body: "Whether," says he, "is it easier to say, Thy Sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise, take up thy Bed, and walk?" But the Delusion of the unbelieving Deist is greater than that of the Jew. For the Deist sees, that his Reason has no Power over his Body, can remove no Disease, Blindness, Deafness, or Lameness, from it, and yet will pretend to have Power enough from his Reason to help the Soul out of all its Evil; not knowing that Body and Soul go hand in hand, and are nothing else but the inward and outward State of one and the same Life; and that therefore he only, who can say to the dead Body of Lazarus, "Come forth," can say to the Soul, "Be thou clean." The Deist therefore, if he pleases, may style himself a natural or a moral Philosopher, but with no more Truth than he can call himself a Healer of all the Maladies of the Body. And for a Man to think himself a moral Philosopher, because he has made a choice Collection of Syllogisms, in order to quicken and revive a Divine Goodness in the Soul, or that no Redeemer need come from Heaven, because human Reason, when truly left to itself, has great Skill in chopping of Logic; may justly be deemed such an Ignorance of the Nature of Things as is seldom found in the Transactions of illiterate and vulgar Life. But this by the by. To return to our chief subject: The Sum of all that has been said is this: All Evil, be it what it will, all Misery of every kind, is in its Birth, Working and Extent, nothing else but Nature left to itself, and under the divided Workings of its own Hunger, Wrath, and Contrariety; and therefore no Possibility for the natural, earthly Man to escape eternal Hunger, Wrath, and Contrariety, but solely in the Way as the Gospel teacheth, by denying and dying to Self. On the other hand, all the Goodness and Perfection, all the Happiness, Glory, and Joy that any intelligent, Divine Creature can be possessed of, is, and can

be, from nothing else, but the invisible uncreated Light and Spirit of God manifesting itself in the Properties of the creaturely Life, filling, blessing, and uniting them all in one Love and Joy of Life. And thus again: no Possibility of Man's attaining to any heavenly Perfection and Happiness, but only in the Way of the Gospel, by the Union of the Divine and human Nature, by Man's being born again from above of the Word and Spirit of God. There is no Possibility of any other Way, because there is nothing that can possibly change the first Properties of Life into an heavenly State, but the Presence, and working Power, of the Deity united with, and working in them. And therefore the "Word was made Flesh," and must of all Necessity be made Flesh, if Man is to have a heavenly Nature. Now as all Evil, Sin, and Misery, have no Beginning, nor Power of Working, but in the Manifestation of Nature in its divided, contrary Properties; so it is certain that Man has nothing to turn to, seek or aspire after, but the lost Spirit of Love. And therefore it is, that God only can be his Redeemer, because God only is Love; and Love can be nowhere else but in God, and where God dwelleth and worketh.

Now the Difficulty which you find in attaining to this Purity, and Universality of the Spirit of Love is because you seek for it, as I once told you, in the Way of reasoning: You would be possessed of it only from a rational Conviction of the Fitness and Amiableness of it. And as this clear Idea does not put you immediately into the real Possession of it, your Reason begins to waver, and suggests to you, that it may be only a fine Notion that has no Ground but in the Power of the Imagination. But this, Sir, is all your own Error, and as contrary to Nature, as if you would have your Eyes do That which only your Hands or Feet can do for you. The Spirit of Love is a Spirit of Nature and Life; and all the Operations of Nature and Life are according to the working Powers of Nature; and every Growth and Degree of Life can only arise in its own Time and Place from its proper Cause, and as the genuine Effect of it. Nature and Life do nothing by Chance or accidentally, but every Thing in one uniform Way. Fire, Air, and Light, do not proceed sometimes from one Thing, and sometimes from another; but wherever they are, they are always born in the same Manner, and from the same Working in the Properties of Nature. So in like Manner, Love is an immutable Birth, always proceeding from the same Cause, and cannot be in Existence till its own true Parents have brought it forth.

How unreasonable would it be to begin to doubt whether Strength and Health of Body were real Things, or possible to be had, because you could not by the Power of your Reason take Possession of them? Yet this is as well as to suspect the Purity and Perfection of Love to be only a Notion, because your Reason cannot bring forth its Birth in your Soul. For Reason has no more Power of altering the Life and Properties of the Soul, than of altering the Life and Properties of the Body. That, and That only, can cast Devils and evil Spirits out of the Soul, that can say to the Storm, Be still, and to the Leper, Be thou clean. The Birth of Love is a Form or State of Life, and has its fixed Place in the fifth Form of Nature. The three first Properties or Forms of Nature are the Ground or Band of Life, that is in itself only an extreme Hunger, Want, Strife, and Contrariety. And they are in this State, that they may become a proper Fuel for the fourth Form of Nature, viz., the Fire, to be kindled in them. You will perhaps say, "What is this Fire? What is its Nature? And how is it kindled? And how is it that the Hunger and anguishing State of the Properties, are a Fitness to be a Fuel of this Fire?" It may be answered, This Hunger and Anguish of Nature, in its first Forms, is its Fitness to be changed into a Life of Light, Joy, and Happiness: And that for this Reason, because it is in this Hunger and Anguish only because God is not in it. For as Nature comes from

God, and for this only End, that the Deity may manifest Heaven in it, it must stand in an Hunger and anguishing State till the Deity is manifested in it. And therefore its Hunger and Anguish are its true Fitness to be changed into a better State, and this is its Fitness for the Birth of the Fire: For the Fire means nothing, and is nothing else, but That which changes them into a better State. Not as if Fire was a fourth, distinct Thing that comes into them from without, but is only a fourth State, or Condition into which the same Properties are brought. The Fire then is that which changes the Properties into a new and heavenly State: Therefore the Fire does two things; it alters the State of Nature and brings Heaven into it, and therefore it must Work from a two-fold Power; the Deity and Nature must both be in it. It must have some Strength from Nature, or it could not work in Nature. It must have some Strength from the Deity or it could not overcome and change Nature into a Divine Life. Now all this is only to show you, that the Fire can only be kindled by the Entrance of the Deity, or supernatural God, into a Conjunction or Union with Nature. And this Conjunction of the Deity and Nature maketh, or bringeth forth, that State or Form of Life, which is called and truly is, Fire: First, Because it does that in the spiritual Properties of Nature, which Fire doth in the Properties of material Nature; and Secondly, Because it is that alone, from which every Fire in this World, whether in the Life of animal or vegetable or inanimate Matter, has its Source and Power and Possibility of Burning. The Fire of this World overcomes its Fuel, breaks its Nature, alters its State and changes it into Flame and Light. But why does it do this? Whence has it this Nature and Power? It is because it is a true Outbirth of the eternal Fire, which overcomes the Darkness, Wrath, and Contrariety of Nature, and changes all its Properties into a Life of Light, Joy, and Glory. Not a Spark of Fire could be kindled in this World, nor a Ray of Light come from any material Fire, but because material Nature is, in itself, nothing else but the very Properties of eternal Nature, standing for a Time in a material State or Condition; and therefore they must work in Time as they do in Eternity; and consequently there must be Fire in this World, it must have the same Birth and do the same Work in its material Way, which the eternal Fire hath, and doth in spiritual Nature. And this is the true Ground and Reason why every Thing in this World is delivered as far as it can be from its earthly Impurity, and brought into its highest State of Existence, only by Fire; it is because the eternal Fire is the Purifier of eternal Nature and the Opener of every Perfection, Light, and Glory in it. And if you ask why the eternal Fire is the Purifier of eternal Nature, the Reason is plain; it is because the eternal Fire has its Birth and Nature and Power from the Entrance of the pure, supernatural Deity into the Properties of Nature, which Properties must change their State, and be what they were not before, as soon as the Deity entereth into them. Their Darkness, Wrath, and Contrariety, is driven out of them, and they work and give forth only a Life and Strength of Light, and Joy, and Glory. And this two-fold Operation, viz., on one hand taking from Nature its wrathful Workings, and on the other hand opening a glorious Manifestation of the Deity in them, is the whole Nature and Form of the Fire, and is the Reason why from Eternity to Eternity it is and must be the Purifier of eternal Nature; namely, as from Eternity to Eternity changing Nature into a Kingdom of Heaven. Now every Fire in this World does, and must do, the same Thing in its low Way, to the utmost of its Power, and can do nothing else. Kindle Fire where, or in what you will, it acts only as from and by the Power of this eternal purifying Fire; and therefore it breaks and consumes the Grossness of every Thing, and makes all that is pure and spirituous to come forth out of it; and therefore Purification is its one only Work through all material Nature, because it is a real Out-birth of that eternal Fire which purifies eternal Nature, and changes it into a mere Heaven of Glory. The eternal Fire is called a fourth Form, or State of Nature; because it cannot exist but

from the first Three and hath its Work in the fourth Place in the Midst of the seven Forms, changing the three first into the three last Forms of Nature, that is, changing them from their natural into a heavenly State. So that, strictly speaking, there are but three Forms of Nature in answerableness to the threefold Working of the Triune Deity. For the three last are not three new or different Properties, but are only the three first brought into a new State by the Entrance of the Triune Deity into Conjunction with them. Which Entrance of the supernatural Deity into them is the consuming of all that is bad in them, and turning all their Strength into a working Life of Light, Joy, and heavenly Glory; and therefore has the justest Title to be called Fire, as having no other Nature and Operation in it but the known Nature of Fire, and also as being That from which every Fire in this World has all its Nature and Power of doing as it doth.

You once, as I remember, objected to my speaking so much in the Appeal, &c., of the Fire of Life, as thinking it too gross an Expression to be taken in its literal Meaning, when mention is made of the eternal Fire, or the Fire in animal Life. But, Sir, Fire has but one Nature through the whole Universe of Things, and material Fire has not more or less of the Nature of Fire in it, than that which is in eternal Nature; because it has nothing, works nothing, but what it has, and works from thence. How easy was it for you to have seen, that the Fire of the Soul and the Fire of the Body had but one Nature? How else could they unite in their Heat? How easy also to have seen that the Fire of animal Life was the same Fire that burns in the Kitchen? How else could the Kitchen Fire be serviceable to animal Life? What Good could it do you to come to a Fire of Wood where you wanted to have the Heat of your own Life increased? In animal Life the Fire is kindled and preserved in such a Degree, and in such Circumstances, as to be Life, and the Preservation of Life; and this is its Difference from Fires kindled in Wood and burning it to Ashes. It is the same Fire, only in a different State, that keeps up Life and consumes Wood; and has no other Nature in the Wood than in the Animal. Just as in Water that has only so much Fire in it as to make it warm, and Water that is by Fire made boiling hot, the same Nature and Power of Fire is in both, but only in a different State. Now will you say, that Fire is not to be literally understood, when it only makes Water to be warm, because it is not red and flaming as you see it in a burning Coal? Yet this would be as well as to say, that Fire is not literally to be understood in the animal Life, because it is so different from that Fire which you see burning in a Piece of Wood. And thus, Sir, there is no Foundation for any Objection to all that has been said of Fire in the Appeal, &c. It is one and the same great Power of God in the spiritual and material World; it is the Cause of every Life and the Opener of every Power of Nature; and its one great Work through all Nature and Creature, animate and inanimate, is Purification and Exaltation; it can do nothing else, and that for this plain Reason, because its Birth is from the Entrance of the pure Deity into Nature, and therefore must in its various State and Degrees be only doing that which the Entrance of the Deity into Nature does. It must bring every natural Thing into its highest State. But to go back now to the Spirit of Love and show you the Time and Place of its Birth before which it can have no Existence in your Soul, do what you will to have it. The Fire, you see, is the first Overcomer of the hungry, wrathful, self-tormenting State of the Properties of Nature; and it only overcomes them, because it is the Entrance of the pure Deity into them; and therefore That which overcomes them is the Light of the Deity. And this is the true Ground and Reason why every right-kindled Fire must give forth Light, and cannot do otherwise. It is because the eternal Fire is only the Effect or Operation of the supernatural Light of the Deity entering into Nature; and therefore Fire must give forth Light, because it is itself only a Power of the Light, and Light can be nowhere in Nature but as a fifth

Form or State of Nature, brought forth by the Fire. And as Light thus brought forth is the first State that is lovely and delightful in Nature, so the Spirit of Love has only its Birth in the Light of Life, and can be nowhere else. For the Properties of Life have no common Good, nothing to rejoice in, till the Light is found; and therefore no possible Beginning of the Spirit of Love till then. The Shock that is given to the three first Properties of Nature by the amazing Light of the Deity breaking in upon them, is the Operation of the Fire, that consumes, or takes away, the wrathful Strength and Contrariety of the Properties, and forces each of them to shrink, as it were, away from itself, and come under the Power of this new-risen Light. Here all Strife of Enmity and wrathful Contrariety in the Properties must cease, because all are united in the Love of the Light, and all equally helping one another to a higher Enjoyment and Delight in it. They are all one Triune Will, all doing the same Thing, viz., all rejoicing in the one Love of the Light. And here it is, in this delightful Unity of Operation, that the Spirit of Love is born, in the fifth Property or Light of Life; and cannot possibly rise up in any Creature till the Properties of its Life are brought into this fifth State, thus changed and exalted into a new Sensibility of Life. Let me give you this Similitude of the Matter: Fancy to yourself a Man shut up in a deep Cave underground, without ever having seen a Ray of the Light, his Body all over tortured with Pain, his Mind distracted with Rage, himself whirling and working with the utmost Fury and Madness, he knows not what; and then you have an Image of the first Properties of Life as they are in themselves before the Fire had done its Work in them.

Fancy this Man suddenly struck, or all surrounded, with such a Glare of Light as in the Twinkling of an Eye stopped or struck dead, every Working of every Pain and Rage, both in his Body and Mind; and then you have an Image of the Operation of the Fire, and what it does to the first Properties of Nature. Now as soon as the first Terror of the Light has had its fiery Operation, and struck nothing dead but every working Sensibility of Distress, fancy this Man, as you now well may, in the sweetest Peace of Mind and bodily Sensations, blessed in a new Region of Light, giving Joy to his Mind, and Gratification to every Sense; and then the Transports, the Overflowings of Love and Delight in this new State may give you an Image how the Spirit of Love is, and must be born, when Fire and Light have overcome and changed the State of the first Properties of Nature; and never till then, can have any Existence in any Creature, nor proceed from any other Cause. Thus, Sir, you may sufficiently see, how vainly you attempt to possess yourself of the Spirit of Love by the Power of your Reason; and also what a Vanity of all Vanities there is in the Religion of the Deists, who will have no other Perfection, or Divine Life, but what they can have from their Reason: as great a Contradiction to Nature, as if they would have no Life or Strength of Body, but that which can be had from their Faculty of Reasoning. For Reason can no more alter or exalt any one Property of Life in the Soul, and bring it into its perfect State, than it can add one Cubit to the Stature of the Body. The Perfection of every Life is no way possibly to be had, but as every Flower comes to its Perfection, viz., from its own Seed and Root and the various Degrees of Transmutation which must be gone through before the Flower is found: It is strictly thus with the Perfection of the Soul: All its Properties of Life must have their true natural Birth and Growth from one another. The first, as its Seed and Root, must have their natural change into an higher State; must, like the Seed of the Flower, pass through Death into Life and be blessed with the Fire and Light and Spirit of Heaven, in their Passage to it; just as the Seed passes through Death into Life, blessed by the Fire, and Light, and Air of this World, till it reaches its last Perfection, and becomes a beautiful sweet-smelling Flower. And to think that the Soul can attain its Perfection any other Way, than by the Change and Exaltation of its first Properties of Life, just as the Seed has its first

Properties changed and exalted till it comes to have its Flower, is a total Ignorance of the Nature of Things. For as whatever dies cannot have a Death particular to itself, but the same Death in the same Way, and for the same Reasons, that any other Creature, whether Animal or vegetable, ever did or can die; so every Life and Degree of Life, must come into its State and Condition of Life in the same Way, and for the same Reasons as Life, and the Perfection of Life, comes into every other living Creature, whether in Heaven or on Earth. Therefore the Deists' Religion or Reason, which is to raise the Soul to its true Perfection, is so far from being the Religion of Nature, that it is quite unnatural and declared to be so by every Working in Nature. For since Reason can neither give Life nor Death to any one Thing in Nature, but every Thing lives, or dies, according to the Working of its own Properties, every Thing, dead and alive, gives forth a Demonstration, that Nature asks no Counsel of Reason, nor stays to be directed by it. Hold it therefore for a certain Truth, that you can have no Good come into your Soul, but only by the one Way of a Birth from above, from the Entrance of the Deity into the Properties of your own soulish Life. Nature must be set right, its Properties must enter into the Process of a new Birth, it must work to the Production of Light, before the Spirit of Love can have a Birth in it. For Love is Delight, and Delight cannot arise in any Creature till its Nature is in a delightful State, or is possessed of that in which it must rejoice. And this is the Reason why God must become Man; it is because a Birth of the Deity must be found in the Soul, giving to Nature all that it wants, or the Soul can never find itself in a delightful State and only Working with the Spirit of Love. For whilst the Soul has only its natural Life, it can only be in such a State, as Nature, without God, is in, viz., a mere Hunger, Want, Contrariety, and Strife for it knows not what. Hence is all that Variety of blind, restless, contrary Passions, which govern and torment the Life of fallen Man. It is because all the Properties of Nature must Work in Blindness, and be doing they know not what, till the Light of God is found in them. Hence also it is, that That which is called the Wisdom, the Honour, the Honesty, and the Religion of the natural Man, often does as much Hurt to himself, and others, as his Pride, Ambition, Self-Love, Envy, or Revenge, and are subject to the same Humour and Caprice; it is because Nature is no better in one Motion than in another, nor can be so, till something supernatural is come into it. We often charge Men, both in Church and State, with changing their Principles; but the Charge is too hasty; for no Man ever did, or can change his Principles, but by a Birth from above. The natural, called in Scripture, the old Man, is steadily the same in Heart and Spirit in every Thing he does, whatever Variety of Names may be given to his Actions. For Self can have no Motion but what is selfish, which Way soever it goes, or whatever it does, either in Church or State. And be assured of this, that Nature in every Man, whether he be learned or unlearned, is this very Self, and can be nothing else, till a Birth of the Deity is brought forth in it. There is therefore no Possibility of having the Spirit of Love, or any Divine Goodness, from any Power of Nature or Working of Reason. It can only be had in its own Time and Place; and its Time and Place is nowhere, but where Nature is overcome by a Birth of the Life of God in the Properties of the Soul. And thus you see the infallible Truth, and absolute Necessity, of Christian Redemption; it is the most demonstrable Thing in all Nature.— The Deity must become Man, take a Birth in the fallen Nature, be united to it, become the Life of it, or the natural Man must of all Necessity be forever and ever in the Hell of his own Hunger, Anguish, Contrariety, and Self-Torment; and all for this plain Reason, because Nature is, and can be, nothing else, but this Variety of Self-Torment, till the Deity is manifested and dwelling in it. And now, Sir, you see also the absolute Necessity of the Gospel-Doctrine of the Cross, viz., of dying to Self, as the one only Way to Life in God. This Cross, or Dying to Self, is the one

Morality that does Man any Good. Fancy as many Rules as you will of modeling the moral Behaviour of Man, they all do nothing, because they leave Nature still alive, and therefore can only help a Man to a feigned, hypocritical Art of concealing his own inward Evil, and seeming to be not under its Power. And the Reason why it must be so is plain; it is because Nature is not possible to be reformed; it is immutable in its Workings and must be always as it is, and never any better or worse, than its own untaught Workings are. It can no more change from Evil to Good, than Darkness can Work itself into Light. The one Work therefore of Morality is the one Doctrine of the Cross, viz., to resist and deny Nature, that a supernatural Power or Divine Goodness, may take Possession of it, and bring a new Light into it. In a Word, there are, in all the Possibility of Things, but two States, or Forms of Life; the one is Nature, and the other is God manifested in Nature; and as God and Nature are both within you, so you have it in your Power to live and work with which you will; but are under a Necessity of doing either the one or the other. There is no standing still, Life goes on, and is always bringing forth its Realities, which Way soever it goeth. You have seen, that the Properties of Nature are, and can be, nothing else in their own Life, but a restless Hunger, Disquiet, and blind Strife for they know not what, till the Property of Light and Love has got Possession of them. Now when you see this, you see the true State of every natural Man, whether he be Caesar or Cato, whether he gloriously murders others or only stabs himself; blind Nature does all the Work, and must be the Doer of it, till the Christ of God is born in him. For the Life of Man can be nothing else but a Hunger of Covetousness, a Rising up of Pride, Envy, and Wrath, a medley of contrary Passions, doing and undoing it knows not what because these Workings are essential to the Properties of Nature; they must be always hungering, and working one against another, striving to be above one another, and all this in Blindness, till the Light of God has helped them to one common Good, in which they all willingly unite, rest, and rejoice. In a Word, Goodness is only a Sound and Virtue a mere Strife of natural Passions, till the Spirit of Love is the Breath of every Thing that lives and moves in the Heart. For Love is the one only Blessing and Goodness, and God of Nature; and you have no true Religion, are no Worshiper of the one true God, but in and by that Spirit of Love, which is God himself living and working in you. But here I take off my Pen and shall leave the remaining Part of your Objection to another Opportunity.

I am, &c.

King's Cliff,

June 16, 1752

08.02 Part 2

THE

SPIRIT OF

LOVE PART the S E C O N D. In DIALOGUES By W I L L I A M ~ L A W. M.A.

L O N D O N :

Printed for M. Richardson, in Pater-noster-Row.

1754

08.02.01 Part 2 1-First Dialogue

THE

FIRST DIALOGUE

BETWEEN Theogenes, Eusebius, and Theophilus.

Theogenes. Dear Theophilus, this Gentleman is Eusebius, a very valuable and worthy Curate in my Neighbourhood; he would not let me wait any longer for your second Letter of the Spirit of Love, nor be content till I consented to our making you this Visit. And indeed, we are both on the same Errand and in equal Impatience to have your full Answer to that Part of my Objection, which you reserved for a second Letter.

Theophilus. My Heart embraces you both with the greatest Affection, and I am much pleased at the Occasion of your Coming which calls me to the most delightful Subject in the World, to help both you and myself to rejoice in that adorable Deity whose infinite Being is an Infinity of mere Love, an unbeginning, never-ceasing, and forever overflowing Ocean of Meekness, Sweetness, Delight, Blessing, Goodness, Patience, and Mercy, and all this as so many blessed Streams breaking out of the Abyss of universal Love, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, a Triune Infinity of Love and Goodness, for ever and ever giving forth nothing but the same Gifts of Light and Love, of Blessing and Joy, whether before or after the Fall, either of Angels or Men.

Look at all Nature, through all its Height and Depth, in all its Variety of working Powers; it is what it is for this only End, that the hidden Riches, the invisible Powers, Blessings, Glory, and Love of the unsearchable God, may become visible, sensible, and manifest in and by it.

Look at all the Variety of Creatures; they are what they are for this only End, that in their infinite Variety, Degrees, and Capacities, they may be as so many speaking Figures, living Forms of the manifold Riches and Powers of Nature, as so many Sounds and Voices, Preachers, and Trumpets, giving Glory and Praise and Thanksgiving to that Deity of Love which gives Life to all Nature and Creature. For every Creature of unfallen Nature, call it by what name you Will, has its Form, and Power, and State, and Place in Nature, for no other End, but to open and enjoy, to manifest and rejoice in some Share of the Love, and Happiness, and Goodness of the Deity, as springing forth in the boundless Height and Depth of Nature.

Now this is the one Will and Work of God in and through all Nature and Creature. From Eternity to Eternity he can will and intend nothing toward them, in them, or by them, but the Communication of various Degrees of his own Love, Goodness, and Happiness to them, according to their State, and Place, and Capacity in Nature. This is God's unchangeable Disposition toward the Creature; He can be nothing else but all Goodness toward it, because he can be nothing toward the Creature but that which he is, and was, and ever shall be in Himself.

God can no more begin to have any Wrath, Rage, or Anger in Himself, after Nature and Creature are in a fallen State, than He could have been infinite Wrath and boundless Rage everywhere, and

from all Eternity. For nothing can begin to be in God, or to be in a new State in Him; every Thing that is in Him is essential to Him, as inseparable from Him, as unalterable in Him as the triune Nature of his Deity.

Theogenes. Pray, Theophilus, let me ask you, does not Patience and Pity and Mercy begin to be in God, and only then begin, when the Creature has brought itself into Misery? They could have no Existence in the Deity before. Why then may not a Wrath and Anger begin to be in God, when the Creature has rebelled against him, though it neither had nor could have any Existence in God before?

Theophilus. 'Tis true, Theogenes, that God can only then begin to make known his Mercy and Patience, when the Creature has lost its Rectitude and Happiness, yet nothing then begins to be in God or to be found in him, but that which was always in him in the same infinite State, viz., a Will to all Goodness, and which can will nothing else. And his Patience and Mercy, which could not show forth themselves till Nature and Creature had brought forth Misery, were not new Tempers, or the Beginning of some new Disposition that was not in God before, but only new and occasional Manifestations of that boundless eternal Will to all Goodness, which always was in God in the same Height and Depth. The Will to all Goodness, which is God himself, began to display itself in a new Way when it first gave Birth to Creatures. The same Will to all Goodness began to manifest itself in another new Way, when it became Patience and Compassion toward fallen Creatures. But neither of these Ways are the Beginning of any new Tempers or Qualities in God, but only new and occasional Manifestations of that true eternal Will to all Goodness, which always was, and always will be, in the same Fullness of Infinity in God. But to suppose that when the Creature has abused its Power, lost its Happiness and plunged itself into a Misery, out of which it cannot deliver itself, to suppose that then there begins to be something in the holy Deity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that is not of the Nature and Essence of God, and which was not there before, viz., a Wrath, and Fury, and vindictive Vengeance, breaking out in Storms of Rage and Resentment because the poor Creature has brought Misery upon itself, is an Impiety and Absurdity that cannot be enough abhorred. For nothing can be in God, but that which He is and has from Himself, and therefore no Wrath can be in the Deity itself, unless God was in Himself, before all Nature, and from all Eternity, an Infinity of Wrath.

Why are Love, Knowledge, Wisdom, and Goodness said to be infinite and eternal in God, capable of no Increase or Decrease, but always in the same highest State of Existence? Why is his Power eternal and omnipotent, his Presence not here, or there, but everywhere the same? No Reason can be assigned, but because nothing that is temporary, limited, or bounded, can be in God. It is his Nature to be that which He is, and all that He is, in an infinite, unchangeable Degree, admitting neither higher, nor lower, neither here nor there, but always, and everywhere, in the same unalterable State of Infinity. If therefore Wrath, Rage, and Resentment could be in the Deity itself, it must be an unbeginning, boundless, never-ceasing Wrath, capable of no more, or less, no up or down, but always existing, always working, and breaking forth in the same Strength, and everywhere equally burning in the Height and Depth of the abyssal Deity. There is no medium here; there must be either all or none, either no Possibility of Wrath, or no Possibility of its having any Bounds. And therefore, if you would not say, that every Thing that has proceeded, or can, or ever shall proceed from God, are and can be only so many Effects of his eternal and omnipotent Wrath, which can never cease, or be less than infinite; if you will not hold this monstrous

Blasphemy, you must stick close to the absolute Impossibility of Wrath having any Existence in God. For nothing can have any Existence in God, but in the Way and Manner as his Eternity, Infinity, and Omnipotence have their Existence in him. Have you any Thing to object to this?

Theogenes. Indeed, Theophilus, both Eusebius and myself have been from the first fully satisfied with what has been said of this Matter in the Book of Regeneration, the Appeal, and the Spirit of Prayer, &c. We find it impossible to think of God as subject to Wrath, or capable of being inflamed by the Weakness, and Folly, and Irregularity of the Creature. We find ourselves incapable of thinking any otherwise of God, than as the one only Good, or, as you express it, an eternal immutable Will to all Goodness, which can will Nothing else to all Eternity, but to communicate Good, and Blessing, and Happiness, and Perfection to every Life, according to its Capacity to receive it. Had I an hundred Lives, I could with more Ease part with them, all by suffering an hundred Deaths, than give up this lovely idea of God. Nor could I have any Desire of Eternity for myself, if I had not Hopes, that, by partaking of the Divine Nature, I should be eternally delivered from the Burden and Power of my own Wrath, and changed into the blessed Freedom of a Spirit, that is all Love, and a mere Will to Nothing but Goodness. An Eternity without this, is but an Eternity of Trouble. For I know of no Hell, either here or hereafter, but the Power and Working of Wrath, nor any Heaven, but where the God of Love is all in all, and the working Life of all. And therefore, that the holy Deity is all Love, and Blessing, and Goodness, willing and working only Love and Goodness to every Thing, as far as it can receive it, is a Truth as deeply grounded in me as the feeling of my own Existence. I ask you for no Proof of this; my only Difficulty is how to reconcile this Idea of God to the Letter of Scripture. First, Because the Scripture speaks so much and so often of the Wrath, and Fury, and vindictive Vengeance of God. Secondly, Because the whole Nature of our Redemption is so plainly grounded on such a supposed Degree of Wrath and Vengeance in God, as could not be satisfied, appeased and atoned by any Thing less than the Death and Sacrifice of the only begotten Son of God.

Theophilus. I will do more for you, Theogenes, in this Matter than you seem to expect. I will not only reconcile the Letter of Scripture with the foregoing Description of God, but will show you, that every Thing that is said of the Necessity of Christ's being the only possible Satisfaction and Atonement of the vindictive Wrath of God is a full and absolute Proof that the Wrath of God spoken of never was, nor is, or possibly can be in God.

Eusebius. Oh! Theophilus, you have forced me now to speak, and I cannot contain the Joy that I feel in this Expectation which you have raised in me. If you can make the Scriptures do all that which you have promised to Theogenes, I shall be in Paradise before I die. For to know that Love alone was the Beginning of Nature and Creature, that nothing but Love encompasses the whole Universe of Things, that the governing Hand that overrules all, the watchful Eye that sees through all, is nothing but omnipotent and omniscient Love, using an Infinity of Wisdom, to raise all that is fallen in Nature, to save every misguided Creature from the miserable Works of its own Hands, and make Happiness and Glory the perpetual Inheritance of all the Creation is a Reflection that must be quite ravishing to every intelligent Creature that is sensible of it. Thus to think of God, of Providence, and Eternity, whilst we are in this Valley and Shadow of Death, is to have a real Foretaste of the Blessings of the World to come. Pray, therefore, let us hear how the Letter of Scripture is a Proof of this God of Love.

Theophilus. Before I do this, Eusebius, I think it requisite to show you, in a Word or two, the true Ground and Nature of Wrath in all its Kinds, what it is in itself, whence it has its Birth, Life, and Manner of Existence. And then you will see with your own Eyes why, and how, and where Wrath or Rage can, or cannot be. And until you see this fundamentally in the Nature of things, you cannot be at all qualified to judge of the Matter in Question, but must only think and speak at random, merely as your Imagination is led by the Sound of Words. For until we know, in the Nature of the Thing, what Wrath is in itself, and why, and how it comes into Existence, wherever it is, we cannot say, where it can enter or where it cannot. Nor can we possibly know what is meant by the Satisfaction, Appeasement, or Atonement of Wrath in any Being but by knowing how, and why, and for what Reason Wrath can rise and Work in any Being; and then only can we know how any Wrath, wherever raised, can be atoned or made to cease.

Now there are two Things, both of them visible to your outward Senses, which entirely open the true Ground and Nature of Wrath, and undeniably show what it is in itself, from whence it arises, and wherein its Life, and Strength, and Being consist. And these two Things are, a Tempest in the Elements of this World, and a raging Sore in the Body of Man, or any other Animal. Now that a Tempest in the Elements is Wrath in the Elements, and a Sore in the Body of an Animal a Wrath in the State of the Juices of the Body, is a Matter, I think, that needs no Proof or Explication. Consider, then, how or why a Tempest arises in the Elements, or an inflamed Sore in the Body, and then you have the true Ground and Nature of Wrath. Now a Tempest does not, cannot arise in the Elements whilst they are in their right State, in their just Mixture or Union with one another. A Sore does not, cannot break forth in the Body, whilst the Body is altogether in its true State and Temperature of its Juices. Hence you plainly see, that Wrath has its whole Nature, and only Ground of its Existence, in and by the Disorder or bad State of the Thing in which it exists and works. It can have no Place of Existence, no Power of breaking forth, but where the Thing has lost its proper Perfection, and is not as it ought to be. And therefore no good Being, that is in its proper State of Goodness, can, whilst it is in such a State, have any Wrath or Rage in it. And therefore, as a Tempest of any kind in the Elements, is a sure Proof that the Elements are not in their right State, but under Disorder, as a raging Sore in the Body is a certain Indication that the Body is impure and corrupt, and not as it should be; so in whatever Mind, or intelligent Being, Wrath or Rage works and breaks forth, there, there is Proof enough, that the Mind is in that same impure, corrupt, and disordered State, as those Elements that raise a Tempest, and that Body which gives forth an inflamed Sore. And now, Gentlemen, what think you of a supposed Wrath, or Rage in God? Will you have such Things to be in the Deity itself as cannot have Place or Existence even in any Creature, until it is become disordered and impure and has lost its proper State of Goodness?

Eusebius. But pray, Theophilus, let me observe, that it does not yet appear to me, that there is but one Wrath possible to be in Nature and Creature. I grant there is such a Likeness in the Things you have appealed to, as is sufficient to justify Poets, Orators, or popular Speakers, in calling a Tempest Wrath, and Wrath a Tempest. But this will not do in our present Matter; for all that you have said depends upon this, whether, in a philosophic Strictness in the Nature of the Thing, there can be only one Wrath, wherever it is, proceeding strictly from the same Ground, and having everywhere the same Nature. Now if you can prove this Identity or Sameness of Wrath, be it where it Will, either in an intelligent Mind, the Elements of this World, or the Body of an Animal, then your Point is absolutely gained, and there can be no Possibility for Wrath to have any

Existence in the Deity. But as Body and Spirit are generally held to be quite contrary to each other in their most essential Qualities, I do not know how you can sufficiently prove, that they can only have one Kind of Wrath, or that Wrath must have one and the same Ground and Nature, whether it be in Body or Spirit.

Theophilus. Wrath can have no better or other Ground and Nature in Body, than it has in Spirit, for this Reason, because it can have no Existence or Manner of working in the Body, but what it has directly from Spirit. And therefore, in every Wrath that is visible in any Body whatever, you have a true Manifestation of the Ground and Nature of Wrath, in whatever Spirit it is. And therefore, as there is but one Ground and Nature of Wrath in all outward Things, whether they be animate or inanimate, so you have Proof enough, that so it is with all Wrath in the Spirit or Mind. Because Wrath in any Body or outward Thing, is nothing else but the inward working of that Spirit, which manifests itself by an outward Wrath in the Body. And what we call Wrath in the Body, is truly and strictly speaking, the Wrath of the Spirit in the Body. For you are to observe, that Body begins not from itself, nor is any Thing of itself, but is all that it is, whether pure or impure, has all that it has, whether of Light or Darkness, and works all that it works, whether of Good or Evil, merely from Spirit. For nothing, my Friend, acts in the whole Universe of Things but Spirit alone. And the State, Condition, and Degree of every Spirit, is only and solely opened by the State, Form, Condition, and Qualities of the Body that belongs to it. For the Body can have no Nature, Form, Condition, or Quality but that which the Spirit that brings it forth, gives to it. Was there no eternal, universal Spirit, there could be no eternal or universal Nature; that is, was not the Spirit of God everywhere, the Kingdom of Heaven, or the visible Glory of God, in an outward Majesty of Heaven, could not be everywhere. Now the Kingdom of Heaven is that to the Deity, which every Body is to the Spirit, which liveth, worketh, and manifesteth itself in it. But the Kingdom of Heaven is not God, yet all that it is, and has, and does, is only an outward Manifestation of the Nature, Power, and Working of the Spirit of God.

It is thus with every creaturely Spirit and its Body, which is the Habitation or Seat of its Power; and as the Spirit is in its Nature, Kind and Degree, whether heavenly, earthly, or hellish, so is its Body. Were there not creaturely Spirits, there could be no creaturely Bodies. And the Reason why there are creaturely Bodies of such various Forms, Shapes, and Powers, is because Spirits come forth from God in various Kinds and Degrees of Life, each manifesting its own Nature, Power, and Condition, by that Body which proceeds from it as its own Birth, or the Manifestation of its own Powers.

Now the Spirit is not Body, nor is the Body Spirit; they are so essentially distinct, that they cannot possibly lose their Difference, or be changed into one another; and yet all that is in the Body is from the Nature, Will, and Working of its Spirit. There is therefore no possible Room for a Supposition of two Kinds of Wrath, or that Wrath may have two Natures, the one as it is in Spirit, and the other as it is in Body; first, because nothing can be wrathful but Spirit, and secondly, because no Spirit can exert, or manifest Wrath but in and by its Body. The kindling its own Body is the Spirit's only Wrath. And therefore, through the whole Universe of Things, there is and can be but one possible Ground and Nature of Wrath, whether it be in the Sore of an animal Body, in a Tempest of the Elements, in the Mind of a Man, in an Angel, or in Hell.

Eusebius. Enough, enough, Theophilus. You have made it sufficiently plain, that Wrath can be no more in God Himself than Hell can be Heaven. And therefore we ask no more of you, but only to reconcile this with the Language and Doctrine of the holy Scriptures.

Theogenes. You are in too much Haste, Eusebius; it would be better to let Theophilus proceed further in this Matter. He has told us what Wrath is in itself, be it where it will; I should be glad to know its one true Original, or how, and where, and why it could possibly begin to be.

Theophilus. To inquire or search into the Origin of Wrath, is the same Thing as to search into the Origin of Evil and Sin: For Wrath and Evil are but two Words for one and the same Thing. There is no Evil in any Thing, but the Working of the Spirit of Wrath. And when Wrath is entirely suppressed, there can be no more Evil, or Misery, or Sin in all Nature and Creature. This therefore is a firm Truth, that nothing can be capable of Wrath, or be the Beginning of Wrath, but the Creature, because nothing but the Creature can be the Beginner of Evil and Sin.

Again, the Creature can have no Beginning, or Sensibility of Wrath in itself, but by losing the living Power, the living Presence, and governing Operation of the Spirit of God within it; or in other Words, by its losing that heavenly State of Existence in God, and Influence from Him which it had at its Creation.

Now no intelligent Creature, whether Angel or Man, can be good and happy but by partaking of, or having in itself, a two-fold Life. Hence so much is said in the Scripture of an inward and outward, an old and a new Man.— For there could be no Foundation for this Distinction, but because every intelligent Creature, created to be good and happy, must of all Necessity have a two-fold Life in it, or it cannot possibly be capable of Goodness and Happiness, nor can it possibly lose its Goodness and Happiness, or feel the least Want of them, but by its breaking the Union of this two-fold Life in itself. Hence so much is said in the Scripture of the quickening, raising, and reviving the inward, new Man, of the new Birth from above, of Christ being formed in us, as the one only Redemption and Salvation of the Soul. Hence also the Fall of Adam was said to be a Death, that he died the Day of his Sin, though he lived so many hundred Years after it: it was because his Sin broke the Union of his two-fold Life and put an End to the heavenly Part of it, and left only one Life, the Life of this bestial, earthly World in him.

Now there is, in the Nature of the Thing, an absolute Necessity of this two-fold Life in every Creature that is to be good and happy; and the two-fold Life is this, it must have the Life of Nature, and the Life of God in it. It cannot be a Creature, and intelligent, but by having the Life and Properties of Nature; that is, by finding itself to be a Life of various Sensibilities, that hath a Power of Understanding, Willing, and Desiring: This is its creaturely Life, which, by the creating Power of God, it hath in and from Nature.

Now this is all the Life that is, or can be creaturely, or be a Creature's natural, own Life; and all this creaturely natural Life, with all its various Powers and Sensibilities, is only a Life of various Appetites, Hungers, and Wants, and cannot possibly be any Thing else. God Himself cannot make a Creature to be in itself, or as to its own Nature, any Thing else but a State of Emptiness, of Want, of Appetite, &c. He cannot make it to be good and happy, in and from its natural State: This is as impossible as for God to cease to be the one only Good. The highest Life, therefore, that is natural and creaturely, can go no higher than this; it can only be a bare Capacity for Goodness and

Happiness, and cannot possibly be a good and happy Life, but by the Life of God dwelling in, and in Union with it. And this is the two-fold Life, that of all Necessity must be united in every good and perfect and happy Creature.

See here the greatest of all Demonstrations of the absolute Necessity of the Gospel Redemption and Salvation, and all proved from the Nature of the Thing. There can be no Goodness and Happiness for any intelligent Creature, but in and by this two-fold Life; and therefore the Union of the Divine and human Life, or the Son of God incarnate in Man, to make Man again a Partaker of the Divine Nature, is the one only possible Salvation for all the Sons of fallen Adam, that is, of Adam dead to, or fallen from his first Union with the Divine Life.

Deism, therefore, or a Religion of Nature, pretending to make Man good and happy without Christ, or the Son of God entering into Union with the human Nature, is the greatest of all Absurdities. It is as contrary to the Nature and Possibilities of Things as for mere Emptiness to be its own Fullness, mere Hunger to be its own Food, and mere Want to be its Possession of all Things. For Nature and Creature, without the Christ of God or the Divine Life in Union with it, is and can be nothing else but this mere Emptiness, Hunger, and Want of all that which can alone make it good and happy. For God himself, as I said, cannot make any Creature to be good and happy by any Thing that is in its own created Nature; and however high and noble any Creature is supposed to be created, its Height and Nobility can consist in nothing, but its higher Capacity and Fitness to receive a higher Union with the Divine Life, and also a higher and more wretched Misery, when left to itself, as is manifest by the hellish State of the fallen Angels. Their high and exalted Nature was only an enlarged Capacity for the Divine Life; and therefore, when this Life was lost, their whole created Nature was nothing else but the Height of Rage, and hellish Distraction. A plain Demonstration, that there can be no Happiness, Blessing, and Goodness for any Creature in Heaven, or on Earth, but by having, as the Gospel saith, Jesus Christ made unto it, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Peace with God. And the Reason is this; it is because Goodness and Happiness are absolutely inseparable from God, and can be nowhere but in God. And on the other Hand, Emptiness, Want, Insufficiency, &c., are absolutely inseparable from the Creature, as such; its whole Nature cannot possibly be any Thing else, be it what or where it will, an Angel in Heaven, or a Man on Earth; it is and must be, in its whole creaturely Nature and Capacity, a mere Hunger and Emptiness, &c. And therefore all that we know of God, and all that we know of the Creature, fully proves, that the Life of God in Union with the creaturely Life (which is the Gospel Salvation) is the one only Possibility of Goodness and Happiness in any Creature, whether in Heaven or on Earth.

Hence also it is enough certain, that this two-fold Life must have been the original State of every intelligent Creature, at its first coming forth from God. It could not be brought forth by God, to have only a creaturely Life of Nature, and be left to that; for that would be creating it under a Necessity of being in Misery, in Want, in Wrath, and all painful Sensibilities. A Thing more unworthy of God, and more impossible for Him to do, than to create numberless earthly Animals under a Necessity of being perpetually pained with Hunger and Thirst, without any Possibility of finding any Thing to eat or to drink. For no creaturely Life can in itself be any higher, or better, than a State of Want, or a seeking for something that cannot be found in itself; and therefore, as sure as God is good, as sure as He would have intelligent Beings live a Life of Goodness and Happiness, so sure it is, that such Beings must of all Necessity, in their first Existence, have been blessed with a two-fold Life,

viz., the Life of God dwelling in, and united with, the Life of Nature or created Life.

Eusebius. What an important Matter have you here proved, in the Necessity and Certainty of this two-fold Life in every intelligent Being that is to be good and happy: For this great Truth opens and asserts the certain and substantial Ground of the spiritual Life, and shows, that all Salvation is, and can be nothing else, but the Manifestation of the Life of God in the Soul. How clearly does this give the solid Distinction between inward Holiness, and all outward, creaturely Practices. All that God has done for Man by any particular Dispensations, whether by the Law, or the Prophets, by the Scriptures, or Ordinances of the Church, are only as Helps to a Holiness which they cannot give, but are only suited to the Death and Darkness of the earthly, creaturely Life, to turn it from itself, from its own Workings, and awaken in it a Faith and Hope, a Hunger and Thirst after that first Union with the Life of the Deity, which was lost in the Fall of the first Father of Mankind.

How unreasonable is it, to call perpetual Inspiration Fanaticism and Enthusiasm, when there cannot be the least Degree of Goodness or Happiness in any intelligent Being, but what is in its whole Nature, merely and truly the Breathing, the Life, and the Operation of God in the Life of the Creature? For if Goodness can only be in God, if it cannot exist separate from Him, if He can only bless and sanctify, not by a creaturely gift, but by Himself becoming the Blessing and Sanctification of the Creature, then it is the highest Degree of Blindness, to look for any Goodness and Happiness from any Thing, but the immediate Indwelling Union, and Operation of the Deity in the Life of the Creature. Perpetual Inspiration, therefore, is in the Nature of the Thing as necessary to a Life of Goodness, Holiness, and Happiness, as the perpetual Respiration of the Air is necessary to Animal Life. For the Life of the Creature, whilst only creaturely, and possessing nothing but itself, is Hell; that is, it is all Pain and Want and Distress. Now nothing, in the Nature of the Thing, can make the least Alteration in this creaturely Life, nothing can help it to be in Light and Love, in Peace and Goodness, but the Union of God with it, and the Life of God working in it, because nothing but God is Light, and Love, and heavenly Goodness. And, therefore, where the Life of God is not become the Life and Goodness of the Creature, there the Creature cannot have the least Degree of Goodness in it.

What a mistake is it, therefore, to confine Inspiration to particular Times and Occasions, to Prophets and Apostles, and extraordinary Messengers of God, and to call it Enthusiasm, when the common Christian looks, and trusts to be continually led and inspired by the Spirit of God! For though all are not called to be Prophets or Apostles, yet all are called to be holy, as He who has called them is holy, to be perfect as their heavenly Father is perfect, to be like-minded with Christ, to will only as God wills, to do all to his Honour and Glory, to renounce the Spirit of this World, to have their Conversation in Heaven, to set their Affections on Things above, to love God with all their Heart, Soul, and Spirit, and their Neighbour as themselves.

Behold a Work as great, as Divine and supernatural, as that of a Prophet and an Apostle. But to suppose that we ought, and may always be in this Spirit of Holiness, and yet are not, and ought not to be always moved and led by the Breath and Spirit of God within us, is to suppose that there is a Holiness and Goodness which comes not from God; which is no better than supposing that there may be true Prophets and Apostles who have not their Truth from God.

Now the Holiness of the common Christian is not an occasional Thing, that begins and ends, or is only for such a Time, or Place, or Action, but is the Holiness of that, which is always alive and

stirring in us, namely, of our Thoughts, Wills, Desires, and Affections. If therefore these are always alive in us, always driving or governing our Lives, if we can have no Holiness or Goodness, but as this Life of Thought, Will, and Affection works in us, if we are all called to this inward Holiness and Goodness, then a perpetual, always-existing Operation of the Spirit of God within us, is absolutely necessary. For we cannot be inwardly led and governed by a Spirit of Goodness, but by being governed by the Spirit of God himself. For the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Goodness are not two Spirits, nor can we be said to have any more of the one, than we have of the other.

Now if our Thoughts, Wills, and Affections, need only be now and then holy and good, then, indeed, the moving and breathing Spirit of God need only now and then govern us. But if our Thoughts and Affections are to be always holy and good, then the holy and good Spirit of God is to be always operating, as a Principle of Life within us. The Scripture saith, "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think a good Thought." If so, then we cannot be chargeable with not thinking, and willing that which is good, but upon this Supposition, that there is always a supernatural Power within us, ready and able to help us to the Good which we cannot have from ourselves. The Difference then of a good and a bad Man does not lie in this, that the one wills that which is good, and the other does not, but solely in this, that the one concurs with the living inspiring Spirit of God within him and the other resists it, and is and can be only chargeable with Evil, because he resists it.

Therefore whether you consider that which is good or bad in a Man, they equally prove the perpetual Indwelling and Operation of the Spirit of God within us, since we can only be bad by resisting, as we are good by yielding to the Spirit of God; both which equally suppose a perpetual Operation of the Spirit of God within us.

How firmly our established Church adheres to this Doctrine of the Necessity of the perpetual Operation of the Holy Spirit, as the one only Source and Possibility of any Degree of Divine Light, Wisdom, Virtue, and Goodness in the Soul of Man, how earnestly she wills and requires all her Members to live in the most open Profession of it, and in the highest Conformity to it, may be seen by many such Prayers as these, in her common, ordinary, public Service.

"O God, forasmuch as without Thee we are not able to please Thee, grant that thy Holy Spirit may in all Things direct and rule our Hearts." Again, "We pray Thee, that thy Grace may ALWAYS prevent and follow us, and make us CONTINUALLY to be given to all good Works." Again, "Grant to us, Lord, we beseech Thee, the Spirit to think and do ALWAYS such things as be rightful, that we, who cannot do anything that is good without Thee, may by Thee be enabled to live according to thy Will." Again, "Because the Frailty of Man, without Thee cannot but Fall, keep us ever, by thy Help from all Things hurtful, and lead us to all Things profitable to our Salvation," &c. Again, "O God, from whom all good Things do come, grant to us thy humble Servants, that by thy holy inspiration we may think those Things that be good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same."— But now the true Ground of all this Doctrine of the Necessity of the perpetual Guidance and Operation of the Holy Spirit, lies in what has been said above, of the Necessity of a two-fold Life in every intelligent Creature that is to be good and happy. For if the creaturely Life, whilst alone, or left to itself, can only be Want, Misery, and Distress, if it cannot possibly have any Goodness or Happiness in it, till the Life of God is in Union with it, as one Life, then every Thing that you read in the Scripture of the Spirit of God, as the only Principle of Goodness, opens itself to

you as a most certain and blessed Truth, about which you can have no doubt.

Theophilus. Let me only add, Eusebius, to what you have said, that from this absolute Necessity of a two-fold Life, in every Creature, that is, to be good and happy, we may, in a still greater Clearness see the Certainty of that which we have so often spoken of at other Times, namely, that the inspoken Word in Paradise, the Bruiser of the Serpent, the Seed of the Woman, the Immanuel, the holy Jesus (for they all mean the same Thing) is, and was the only possible Ground of Salvation for fallen Man. For if the two-fold Life is necessary, and Man could not be restored to Goodness and Happiness but by the restored Union of this two-fold Life into its first State, then there was an absolute Necessity in the Nature of the Thing, that every Son of Adam should have such a Seed of Heaven in the Birth of his Life, as could, by the Mediation of Christ, be raised into a Birth and Growth of the first perfect Man. This is the one Original Power of Salvation, without which, no external Dispensation could have done any Thing towards raising the fallen State of Man. For nothing could be raised, but what there was to be raised, nor Life be given to any Thing but to that which was capable of Life. Unless, therefore, there had been a Seed of Life, or a smothered Spark of Heaven in the Soul of Man, which wanted to come to the Birth, there had been no Possibility for any Dispensation of God, to bring forth a Birth of Heaven in fallen Man. The Faith of the first Patriarchs could not have been in Being; Moses and the Prophets had come in vain, had not the Christ of God lain in a State of Hiddenness in every Son of Man. For Faith, which is a Will and Hunger after God, could not have begun to be, or have any Life in Man, but because there was something of the Divine Nature existing and hid in Man. For nothing can have any longing Desire but after its own Likeness, nor could any Thing be made to Desire God, but that which came from Him, and had the Nature of Him. The whole mediatorial Office of Christ, from his Birth to his sitting down in Power at the right Hand of God, was only for this End, to help Man to a Life that was fallen into Death and Insensibility in him. And therefore his mediatorial Power was to manifest itself by Way of a new Birth. In the Nature of the Thing nothing else was to be done, and Christ had no other Way to proceed, and that for this plain Reason, because Life was the Thing that was lost, and Life, wherever it is, must be raised by a Birth, and every Birth must, and can only come from its own Seed. But if Christ was to raise a new Life like his own in every Man, then every Man must have had originally, in the inmost Spirit of his Life, a Seed of Christ, or Christ as a Seed of Heaven, lying there as in a State of Insensibility or Death, out of which it could not arise but by the mediatorial Power of Christ, who, as a second Adam, was to regenerate that Birth of his own Life, which was lost in all the natural Sons of Adam the first. But unless there was this Seed of Christ, or Spark of Heaven hidden in the Soul, not the least Beginning of Man's Salvation, or of Christ's mediatorial Office could be made. For what could begin to deny Self, if there was not something in Man different from Self? What could begin to have Hope and Faith and Desire of an heavenly Life, if there was not something of Heaven hidden in his Soul, and lying therein, as in a State of Inactivity and Death, till raised by the Mediation of Christ into its first Perfection of Life, and set again in its true Dominion over Flesh and Blood?

Eusebius. You have, Theophilus, sufficiently proved the Certainty and Necessity of this Matter. But I should be glad if you knew how to help me to some more distinct Idea and Conception of it.

Theophilus. An Idea is not the Thing to be here sought for; it would rather hinder, than help your true Knowledge of it. But perhaps the following Similitude may be of some Use to you. The Ten Commandments, when written by God on Tables of Stone, and given to Man, did not then first

begin to belong to Man; they had their Existence in Man, were born with him, they lay as a Seed and Power of Goodness, hidden in the Form and Make of his Soul, and altogether inseparable from it, before they were shown to Man on Tables of Stone. And when they were shown to Man on Tables of Stone, they were only an outward Imitation of that which was inwardly in Man, though not legible because of that Impurity of Flesh and Blood, in which they were drowned and swallowed up. For the earthly Nature, having overcome the Divinity that was in Man, it gave Commandments of its own to Man, and required Obedience to all the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life.

Hence it became necessary, that God should give an outward Knowledge of such Commandments as were become inwardly unknown, unfelt, and, as it were, shut up in Death in the Soul. But now, had not all that is in these Commandments been really and antecedently in the Soul, as its own Birth and Nature, had they not still lain therein, and, although totally suppressed, yet in such a Seed or Remains, as could be called forth into their first living State, in vain had the Tables of Stone been given to Man; and all outward Writing, or Teaching of the Commandments, had been as useless, as so many Instructions given to Beasts or Stones. If therefore you can conceive, how all that is good and holy in the Commandments, lay hid as an unfelt, unactive Power or Seed of Goodness, till called into Sensibility and stirring by Laws written on Tables of Stone, this may help your Manner of conceiving, and believing, how Christ as a Seed of Life or Power of Salvation, lies in the Soul as its unknown, hidden Treasure, till awakened and called forth into Life by the mediatorial Office and Process of the holy Jesus.

Again, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, and with all thy Strength, and thy Neighbour as thyself." Now these two Precepts, given by the written Word of God, are an absolute Demonstration of the first original Perfection of Man, and also a full and invincible Proof, that the same original Perfection is not quite annihilated, but lies in him as a hidden, suppressed Seed of Goodness, capable of being raised up to its first Perfection. For had not this Divine Unity, Purity, and Perfection of Love toward God and Man, been Man's first natural State of Life, it could have nothing to do with his present State. For had any other Nature, or Measure, or kind of Love begun in the first Birth of his Life, he could only have been called to that. For no Creature has, or can have a Call to be above, or act above its own Nature. Therefore, as sure as Man is called to this Unity, Purity, and Perfection of Love, so sure is it, that it was, at first, his natural, heavenly State, and still has its Seed, or Remains within him, as his only Power and Possibility of rising up to it again. And therefore, all that Man is called to, every Degree of a new and perfect Life, every future Exaltation and Glory he is to have from the Mediation of Christ, is a full Proof, that the same Perfection was originally his natural State, and is still in him in such a Seed or Remains of Existence, as to admit of a perfect Renewal. And thus it is, that you are to conceive of the holy Jesus, or the Word of God, as the hidden Treasure of every human Soul, born as a Seed of the Word in the Birth of the Soul, immured under Flesh and Blood, till as a Day-Star, it arises in our Hearts, and changes the Son of an earthly Adam into a Son of God. And was not the Word and Spirit of God in us all, antecedent to any Dispensation or written Word of God, as a real Seed of Life in the Birth of our own Life, we could have no more Fitness for the Gospel-Redemption, than the Animals of this World, which have nothing of Heaven in them. And to call us to Love God with all our Hearts, to put on Christ, to walk according to the Spirit, if these Things had not their real Nature and Root within us, would be as vain and useless, as to make

Rules and Orders how our Eyes should smell and taste, or our Ears should see.

Now this Mystery of an inward Life hidden in Man, as his most precious Treasure, as the Ground of all that can be great or good in him, and hidden only since his Fall, and which only can be opened and brought forth in its first Glory by Him to whom all Power in Heaven and on Earth is given, is a Truth to which almost every Thing in Nature bears full Witness. Look where you will, nothing appears, or works outwardly in any Creature, or in any Effect of Nature, but what is all done from its own inward invisible Spirit, not a Spirit brought into it, but its own inward Spirit, which is an inward invisible Mystery, till made known, or brought forth by outward Appearances. The Sea neither is, nor can be moved and tossed by any other Wind, than that which hath its Birth, and Life, and Strength, in and from the Sea itself, as its own Wind. The Sun in the Firmament gives Growth to every Thing that grows in the Earth, and Life to every Thing that lives upon it, not by giving or imparting a Life from without, but only by stirring up in every Thing its own Growth, and its own Life, which lay as in a Seed or State of Death, till helped to come out of it by the Sun, which, as an Emblem of the Redeemer of the spiritual World, helps every earthly Thing out of its own Death into its own highest State of Life. That which we call our Sensations, as seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling, are not Things brought into us from without, or given unto us by any external Causes, but are only so many inborn, secret States of the Soul, which lie in their State of Hiddenness till they are occasionally awakened, and brought forth into Sensibility by outward Occurrences. And were they not antecedently in the Soul, as States and Forms of its own Life, no outward Objects could bring the Soul into a Sensibility of them. For nothing can have, or be in any State of Sensation, but that which it is, and hath from itself, as its own Birth. This is as certain as that a Circle hath only its own Roundness. The stinking Gum gives nothing to the Soul, nor brings any Thing into Sensibility but that which was before in the Soul; it has only a Fitness to awaken, and stir up that State of the Soul, which lay dormant before, and which when brought into Sensibility, is called the Sensation of bad Smelling. And the odoriferous Gum hath likewise but the same Power, viz., a Fitness to stir up that State of Sensation in the Soul, which is called its delightful Smelling. But both these Sensations are only internal States of the Soul, which appear, or disappear, are found, or not found, just as Occasions bring them into Sensibility.

Again, the greatest Artist in Music can add no Sound to his Instrument, nor make it give forth any other Melody, but that which lieth silently hidden in it, as its own inward State.

Look now at what you will, whether it be animate, or inanimate: All that it is, or has, or can be, it is and has in and from itself, as its own inward State; and all outward Things can do no more to it, than the Hand does to the Instrument, make it show forth its own inward State, either of Harmony or Discord.

It is strictly thus with ourselves. Not a Spark of Joy, of Wrath, of Envy, of Love or Grief, can possibly enter into us from without, or be caused to be in us by any outward Thing. This is as impossible, as for the Sound of Metals to be put into a Lump of Clay. And as no Metal can possibly give forth any other, or higher Sound, than that which is enclosed within it, so we, however struck, can give forth no other or higher Sound either of Love, Hatred, Wrath, &c., than that very Degree which lay before shut up within us. The natural State of our Tempers has Variety of Covers, under which they lie concealed at Times, both from ourselves and others; but when this or that Accident happens to displace such or such a Cover, then that which lay hid under it breaks forth. And then

we vainly think, that this or that outward Occasion has not shown us how we are within, but has only infused or put into us a Wrath, or Grief, or Envy, which is not our natural State or of our own Growth, or has all that it has from our own inward State. But this is mere Blindness and Self-Deceit, for it is as impossible for the Mind to have any Grief, or Wrath, or Joy, but what it has all from its own inward State, as for the Instrument to give forth any other Harmony, or Discord, but that which is within and from itself.

Persons, Things, and outward Occurrences may strike our Instrument improperly, and variously, but as we are in ourselves, such is our outward Sound, whatever strikes us.

If our inward State is the renewed Life of Christ within us, then every Thing and Occasion, let it be what it will, only makes the same Life to sound forth, and show itself; then if one Cheek is smitten, we meekly turn the other also. But if Nature is alive and only under a religious Cover, then every outward Accident that shakes or disturbs this Cover, gives Leave to that bad State, whether of Grief, or Wrath, or Joy that lay hid within us, to show forth itself. But nothing at any Time makes the least Show, or Sound outwardly, but only that which lay ready within us, for an outward Birth, as Occasion should offer.

What a miserable Mistake is it therefore, to place religious Goodness in outward Observances, in Notions, and Opinions, which good and bad Men can equally receive and practise, and to treat the ready real Power and Operation of an inward Life of God in the Birth of our Souls as Fanaticism and Enthusiasm, when not only the whole Letter and Spirit of Scripture, but every Operation in Nature and Creature demonstrates that the Kingdom of Heaven must be all within us, or it never can possibly belong to us. Goodness, Piety, and Holiness, can only be ours, as thinking, willing, and desiring are ours, by being in us, as a Power of Heaven in the Birth and Growth of our own Life. And now, Eusebius, how is the great controversy about Religion and Salvation shortened. For since the one only Work of Christ as your Redeemer is only this, to take from the earthly Life of Flesh and Blood its usurped Power, and to raise the smothered Spark of Heaven out of its State of Death, into a powerful governing Life of the whole Man, your one only Work also under your Redeemer is fully known. And you have the utmost Certainty, what you are to do, where you are to seek, and in what you are to find your Salvation. All that you have to do, or can do, is to oppose, resist, and, as far as you can, to renounce the evil Tempers, and Workings of your own earthly Nature. You are under the Power of no other Enemy, are held in no other Captivity, and want no other Deliverance, but from the Power of your own earthly Self. This is the one Murderer of the Divine Life within you. It is your own Cain that murders your own Abel. Now every Thing that your earthly Nature does, is under the Influence of Self-will, Self-love, and Self-seeking, whether it carries you to laudable or blamable Practices, all is done in the Nature and Spirit of Cain and only helps you to such Goodness, as when Cain slew his Brother. For every Action and Motion of Self has the Spirit of Anti-christ and murders the Divine Life within you.

Judge not therefore of your Self, by considering how many of those Things you do, which Divines and Moralists call Virtue and Goodness, nor how much you abstain from those Things, which they call Sin and Vice. But daily and hourly, in every Step that you take, see to the Spirit that is within you, whether it be Heaven, or Earth that guides you. And judge every Thing to be Sin and Satan, in which your earthly Nature, own Love, or Self-seeking has any Share of Life in you; nor think that any Goodness is brought to Life in you, but so far as it is an actual Death to the Pride, the Vanity,

the Wrath, and selfish Tempers of your fallen, earthly Life.

Again, here you see, where and how you are to seek your Salvation, not in taking up your traveling Staff, or crossing the Seas to find out a new Luther or a new Calvin, to clothe yourself with their Opinions. No. The Oracle is at Home, that always and only speaks the Truth to you, because nothing is your Truth, but that Good and that Evil which is yours within you. For Salvation or Damnation is no outward Thing, that is brought into you from without, but is only That which springs up within you, as the Birth and State of your own Life. What you are in yourself, what is doing in yourself, is all that can be either your Salvation or Damnation. For all that is our Good and all that is our Evil, has no Place nor Power but within us. Again, nothing that we do is bad, but for this Reason, because it resists the Power and working of God within us; and nothing that we do can be good but because it conforms to the Spirit of God within us. And therefore, as all that can be Good, and all that can be Evil in us, necessarily supposes a God working within us, you have the utmost Certainty that God, Salvation, and the Kingdom of Heaven, are nowhere to be sought, or found, but within you, and that all outward Religion from the Fall of Man to this Day, is not for itself, but merely for the Sake of an inward and Divine Life, which was lost when Adam died his first Death in Paradise. And therefore it may well be said, that Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, because nothing is wanted, and therefore nothing can be available, but the new Creature called out of its Captivity under the Death and Darkness of Flesh and Blood, into the Light, Life, and Perfection of its first Creation. And thus also, you have the fullest Proof in what your Salvation precisely consists. Not in any historic Faith, or Knowledge of any Thing absent or distant from you, not in any Variety of Restraints, Rules, and Methods of practising Virtues, not in any Formality of Opinion about Faith and Works, Repentance, Forgiveness of Sins, or Justification and Sanctification, not in any Truth or Righteousness, that you can have from yourself, from the best of Men or Books, but wholly and solely in the Life of God, or Christ of God quickened and born again in you, or in other Words, in the Restoration and perfect Union of the first two-fold Life in the Humanity.

Theogenes. Though all that has passed betwixt you and Eusebius, concerns Matters of the greatest Moment, yet I must call it a Digression, and quite useless to me. For I have not the least Doubt about any of these Things you have been asserting. It is visible enough, that there can be no Medium in this Matter; either Religion must be all spiritual or all carnal; that is, we must either take up with the Grossness of the Sadducees, who say there is neither Angel nor Spirit, or with such Purification as the Pharisees had from their washing of Pots and Vessels, and tithing their Mint and Rue; we must, I say, either acquiesce in all this Carnality, or we must profess a Religion that is all Spirit and Life, and merely for the sake of raising up an inward spiritual Life of Heaven that fell into Death in our first Father.

I consent also to every Thing that you have said of the Nature and Origin of Wrath. That it can have no Place, nor Possibility of Beginning, but solely in the creaturely Nature, nor even any Possibility of Beginning there, till the Creature has died to, or lost its proper State of Existence in God; that is, till it has lost that Life, and Blessing, and Happiness, which it had in and from God at its first Creation. But I still ask, what must I do with all those Scriptures, which not only make God capable of being provoked to Wrath and Resentment, but frequently inflamed with the highest Degrees of Rage, Fury, and Vengeance, that can be expressed by Words?

Theophilus. I promised, you know, to remove this Difficulty, and will be as good as my Word. But I must first tell you, that you are in much more Distress about it than you need to be. For in the little Book of Regeneration, in the Appeal, in the Spirit of Prayer, &c., which you have read with such entire Approbation, the whole Matter is cleared up from its true Ground, how Wrath in the Scriptures is ascribed to God, and yet cannot belong to the Nature of the Deity.

Thus you are told in the Appeal, After these two Falls of two orders of Creatures (that is, of Angels and Man), the Deity itself came to have new and strange Names, new and unheard of Tempers and Inclinations of Wrath, Fury, and Vengeance ascribed to it. I call them new, because they began at the Fall; I call them strange because they were foreign to the Deity, and could not belong to God in Himself. Thus, God is said to be a consuming Fire. But to whom? To the fallen Angels and lost Souls. But why, and how, is He so to them? It is because those Creatures have lost all that they had from God but the Fire of their Nature, and therefore God can only be found and manifested in them as a consuming Fire. Now, is it not justly said, that God, who is nothing but infinite Love, is yet in such Creatures only a consuming Fire? And though God be nothing but Love, yet they are under the Wrath and Vengeance of God because they have only that Fire in them which is broken off from the Light and Love of God and so can know or feel nothing of God but his Fire of Nature in them. As Creatures, they can have no Life but what they have in and from God; and therefore that wrathful Life which they have, is truly said to be a Wrath or Fire of God upon them. And yet it is still strictly true that there is no Wrath in God Himself, that He is not changed in his Temper toward the Creatures, that he does not cease to be one and the same infinite Fountain of Goodness, infinitely flowing forth in the Riches of his Love upon all and every Life. (Now, Sir, mind what follows, as the true Ground, how Wrath can and cannot be ascribed to God.) God is not changed from Love to Wrath, but the Creatures have changed their own State in Nature, and so the God of Nature can only be manifested in them, according to their own State in Nature. And, N.B., this is the true Ground of rightly understanding all that is said of the Wrath and Vengeance of God in and upon the Creatures. It is only in such a Sense, as the Curse of God may be said to be upon them, not because any Thing cursed can be in or come from God, but because they have made that Life, which they must have in God, to be a mere Curse to themselves. For every Creature that lives must have its Life in and from God, and therefore God must be in every Creature. This is as true of Devils, as of holy Angels. But how is God in them? N.B. Why, only as He is manifested in Nature. Holy Angels have the Triune Life of God, as manifested in Nature, so manifested also in them, and therefore God is in them all Love, Goodness, Majesty, and Glory, and theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.

Devils have nothing of this Triune Life left in them, but the Fire, or Wrath of eternal Nature, broken off from all Light and Love; and therefore the Life that they can have in and from God is only and solely a Life of Wrath, Rage, and Darkness, and theirs is the Kingdom of Hell. And because this Life, (though all Rage and Darkness), is a Strength and Power of Life, which they must have in and from God, and which they cannot take out of his Hands, therefore is their cursed, miserable, wrathful Life, truly and justly said to be the Curse and Misery, and Wrath, and Vengeance of God upon them, though God Himself can no more have Curse, Misery, Wrath, and Vengeance than He can have Mischief, Malice, or any fearful Tremblings in his holy Triune Deity.

See now, Theogenes, what little Occasion you had for your present Difficulty. For here, in the above cited Words, which you have been several Years acquainted with, the true Ground and

Reason is plainly shown you, how and why all the Wrath, Rage, and Curse that is anywhere stirring in Nature, or breaking forth in any Creature, is and must be in all Truth called by the Scriptures the Wrath, and Rage, and Vengeance of God, though it be the greatest of all Impossibilities for Rage and Wrath to be in the Holy Deity itself. The Scriptures therefore are literally true in all that they affirm of the Wrath, &c., of God. For is it not as literally true of God, that Hell and Devils are his, as that Heaven and holy Angels are his? Must not therefore all the Wrath and Rage of the one, be as truly his Wrath and Rage burning in them, as the Light and Joy and Glory of the other, is only his Goodness opened and manifested in them, according to their State in Nature?

Take notice of this fundamental Truth.

Every Thing that works in Nature and Creature, except Sin, is the working of God in Nature and Creature. The Creature has nothing else in its Power but the free Use of its Will; and its free Will hath no other Power, but that of concurring with, or resisting the Working of God in Nature. The Creature with its free Will can bring nothing into Being, nor make any Alteration in the working of Nature, it can only change its own State or Place in the working of Nature, and so feel and find something in its State, that it did not feel or find before.

Thus God, in the Manifestation of himself in and by Nature, sets before every Man Fire and Water, Life and Death; and Man has no other Power, but that of entering into and uniting with either of these States, but not the least Power of adding to, or taking any Thing from them, or of making them to be otherwise than he finds them. For this Fire and Water, this Life and Death, are Nature, and have their unchangeable State in the uniform Working of God in Nature. And therefore, whatever is done by this Fire and Water, this Life and Death in any Creature, may, nay, must, in the strictest Truth, be affirmed of God as done by Him. And consequently, every breathing forth of Fire, or Death, or Rage, or Curse, wherever it is, or in whatever Creature, must be said, in the Language of Scripture, to be a provoked Wrath, or fiery Vengeance of God, poured forth upon the Creature. And yet, every Thing that has been said in Proof of the Wrath of God shows, and proves to you at the same Time, that it is not a Wrath in the Holy Deity itself. For you see, as was said above, that God sets before Man Fire and Water, Life and Death; now these Things are not God, nor existent in the Deity itself; but they are that which is, and is called Nature, and as they are the only Things set before Man, so Man can go no further, reach no further, nor find, nor feel, nor be sensible of any Thing else, but that which is to be felt or found in this Nature, or Fire and Water, Life and Death, which are set before him. And therefore all that Man can find or feel of the Wrath and Vengeance of God, can only be in this Fire and this Death, and not in the Deity itself.

Theogenes. Oh Theophilus, you have given me the utmost Satisfaction on this Point, and in a much better Way than I imagined. I expected to have seen you glossing and criticizing away the literal Expression of Scriptures that affirm the Wrath of God, in order to make good your Point, that the Deity is mere Love. But you have done the utmost Justice to the Letter of Scripture, you have established it upon a firm and solid Foundation, and shown that the Truth of Things require it to be so, and that there can be no Wrath anywhere, but what is and must be called the Wrath and Vengeance of God, and yet is only in Nature.

What you have here said, seems as if it would clear up many Passages of Scripture that have raised much Perplexity. Methinks I begin to see how the Hardness of Pharaoh's Heart, how Eyes

that see not, and Ears that hear not, may, in the strictest Truth, be said to be of or from God, though the Deity, in itself, stands in the utmost Contrariety to all these Things, and in the utmost Impossibility of willing or causing them to be. But I must not draw you from our present Matter. You have shown, from the Letter of Scripture, that nothing else is set before Man but Fire and Water, Life and Death; and therefore, no Possibility of Wrath or Love, Joy or Sorrow, Curse or Happiness to be found by Man, but in this State of Nature set before him, or into which at his Creation he is introduced as into a Region of various Sensibilities, where all that he finds or feels, is truly God's, but not God himself, who has his supernatural Residence above, and distinct from every Thing that is Nature, Fire or Water, Life or Death. But give me Leave to mention one Word of a Difficulty that I yet have. You have proved that Wrath, Rage, Vengeance, &c., can only exist, or be found in Nature, and not in God; and yet you say, that Nature is nothing else but a Manifestation of the hidden, invisible Powers of God. But if so, must not that which is in Nature be also in God? How else could Nature be a Manifestation of God?

Theophilus. Nature is a true Manifestation of the hidden, invisible God. But you are to observe, that Nature, as it is in itself, in its own State, cannot have the least possible Spark, or Stirring of Wrath, or Curse, or Vengeance in it: But, on the contrary, is from Eternity to Eternity, a mere Infinity of heavenly Light, Love, Joy, and Glory; and thus it is a true Manifestation of the hidden Deity, and the greatest of Proofs that the Deity itself can have no Wrath in it, since Wrath only then begins to be in Nature, when Nature has lost its first State.

Theogenes. This is Answer enough. But now another Thing starts up in my Mind. For if the Deity in itself, in its supernatural State, is mere Love, and only a Will to all Goodness, and if Nature in itself is only a Manifestation of this Deity of Love in heavenly Light and Glory, if neither God nor Nature have, or can give forth Wrath, how then can Fire and Water, Life and Death be set before Man? What can they come from, or where can they exist, since God in himself is all Love; and Nature, which is the Kingdom of Heaven, is an Infinity of Joy, Blessing, and Happiness?

Theophilus. I will open to you all this Matter to the Bottom in as few Words as I can.

Before God began any Creation, or gave Birth to any Creature, He was only manifested, or known to himself in his own Glory and Majesty; there was nothing but Himself beholding Himself in his own Kingdom of Heaven, which was, and is, and ever will be, as unlimited as Himself.

Nature, as well as God, is and must be antecedent to all Creature. For as no seeing Eye could be created, unless there was antecedently to it, a natural Visibility of Things, so no Creature could come into a Sensibility of any natural Life, unless such a State of Nature was antecedent to it. For no Creature can begin to be in any World or State of Nature, but by being created out of that World, or State of Nature, into which it is brought to have its Life. For to live in any World, is the same Thing as for a Creature to have all that it is, and has, in and from that World. And, therefore, no Creature can come into any other Kind of Existence and Life, but such as can be had out of that World in which it is to live. Neither can there possibly be any other Difference between created Beings, whether animate or inanimate, but what arises from that out of which they were created. Seeing then, that before the Existence of the first Creatures, there was nothing but God and his Kingdom of Heaven, the first Creatures could receive no other Life but that which was in God, because there was nothing living but God, nor any other Life but his, nor could they exist in any other Place or outward State, but the Kingdom of Heaven, because there was none else in

Existence; and therefore, the first Creatures must, of all Necessity, be Divine and heavenly, both in their inward Life and outward State.

Theogenes. Here then, Theophilus, comes my Question. Where is that Fire and Water, that Life and Death, that is set before the Creature? For as to these first Creatures, nothing is set before them, nothing is within them, or without them, but God and the Kingdom of Heaven.

Theophilus. You should not have said, There is nothing within them, but God and the Kingdom of Heaven. For that which is their own creaturely Nature within them, is not God, nor the Kingdom of Heaven.

It has been already proved to your Satisfaction, that no Creature can be Divine, good, and happy, but by having a two-fold Life united in it. And in this two-fold Life of the Creature, is Fire and Water, Life and Death unavoidably set before it. For as its Will worketh with either of these Lives, so will it find either Fire or Water, Life or Death. If its Will turneth from the Life of God, into the creaturely Life, then it enters into a Sensibility of that which is meant by Death and Fire, viz., a wrathful Misery. But if the Will keeps steadily given up to the Deity, then it lives in Possession of that Life and Water, which was its first, and will be its everlasting heavenly Joy and Happiness. But to explain this Matter something deeper to you, according to the Mystery of all Things opened by God in his chosen Instrument, Jacob Behmen.

You know we have often spoken of eternal Nature, that so sure as there is an eternal God, so sure is it, that there is an eternal Nature, as universal, as unlimited as God Himself, and everywhere working where God is, and therefore, everywhere equally existent, as being his Kingdom of Heaven, or outward Manifestation of the invisible Riches, Powers, and Glories of the Deity.

Before, or without Nature, the Deity is an entire hidden, shut up, unknown, and unknowable Abyss. For Nature is the only Ground, or Beginning of something; there is neither this nor that, no Ground for Conception, no Possibility of Distinction or Difference; there cannot be a Creature to think, nor any Thing to be thought upon, till Nature is in Existence. For all the Properties of Sensibility and sensible Life, every Mode and Manner of Existence, all Seeing, Hearing, Tasting, Smelling, Feeling, all Inclinations, Passions, and Sensations of Joy, Sorrow, Pain, Pleasure, &c., are not in God, but in Nature. And therefore, God is not knowable, not a Thought can begin about Him, till He manifests himself in, and through, and by the Existence of Nature; that is, till there is something that can be seen, understood, distinguished, felt, &c. And this eternal Nature, or the Out-Birth of the Deity, called the Kingdom of Heaven, viz., an Infinity, or boundless Opening of the Properties, Powers, Wonders, and Glories of the hidden Deity, and this not once done, but ever doing, ever standing in the same Birth, for ever and ever breaking forth and springing up in new Forms and Openings of the abyssal Deity, in the Powers of Nature. And out of this Ocean of manifested Powers of Nature, the Will of the Deity, created Hosts of heavenly Beings, full of the heavenly Wonders introduced into a Participation of the Infinity of God, to live in an eternal Succession of heavenly Sensations, to see and feel, to taste and find new Forms of Delight in an inexhaustible Source of ever-changing and never-ceasing Wonders of the Divine Glory.

Oh Theogenes! What an Eternity is this, out of which, and for which thy eternal Soul was created? What little, crawling Things are all that an earthly Ambition can set before Thee? Bear with Patience for a while the Rags of thy earthly Nature, the Veil and Darkness of Flesh and Blood, as

the Lot of thy Inheritance from Father Adam, but think nothing worth a Thought, but that which will bring thee back to thy first Glory, and land thee safe in the Region of Eternity. But to return. Nothing is before this eternal Nature, but the holy, supernatural Deity; and every Thing that is after it, is Creature, and has all its creaturely Life and State in it, and from it, either mediately or immediately. This eternal Nature hath seven chief or fountain Properties, that are the Doers, or Workers of every Thing that is done in it, and can have neither more nor less, because it is a Birth from, or a Manifestation of the Deity in Nature. For the Perfection of Nature (as was before said of every Divine and happy Creature) is an Union of two Things, or is a two-fold State. It is Nature, and it is God manifested in Nature. Now God is Triune, and Nature is Triune, and hence there arises the Ground of Properties, three and three; and that which brings those three and three into Union, or manifests the Triune God in the Triune Nature, is another Property; so that the glorious Manifestation of the Deity in Nature can have neither more nor less than seven chief or fountain Properties from which every Thing that is known, found, and felt, in all the Universe of Nature, in all the Variety of Creatures either in Heaven or on Earth, hath its only Rise, or Cause, either mediately or immediately.

Theogenes. You say, Theophilus, that the Triune Deity is united or manifested in Triune Nature, and that thence comes the glorious Manifestation of God in seven heavenly Properties called the Kingdom of Heaven. But how does it appear that this Nature, antecedently to the Entrance of the Deity into it, is Triune? Or what is this Triune Nature, before God is supposed to be in Union with it?

Theophilus. It is barely a Desire. It neither is, nor has, nor can be any Thing else but a Desire. For Desire is the only Thing in which the Deity can work and manifest itself; for God can only come into That which wants and desires him. The Deity is an infinite Plenitude, or Fullness of Riches and Powers, in and from itself; and it is only want and Desire, that is excluded from It, and can have no Existence in it. And here lies the true, immutable Distinction between God and Nature, and shows why neither can ever be changed into the other; it is because God is a universal all; and Nature or Desire is a universal want, viz., to be filled with God.

Now as Nature can be nothing but a Desire, so nothing is in, or done in any natural Way, but as Desire does it, because Desire is the All of Nature. And, therefore, there is no Strength or Substance, no Power or Motion, no Cause or Effect in Nature, but what is in itself a Desire, or the Working and Effect of it. This is the true Origin of Attraction, and all its Powers, in this material World. It gives Essence and Substance to all that is Matter and the Properties of Matter; it holds every Element in its created State; and not only Earth and Stones, but Light and Air and Motion are under its Dominion. From the Centre to the Circumference of this material System, every Motion, Separation, Union, Vegetation, or Corruption begins no sooner, goes on no further, than as Attraction Works.

Take away Attraction from this material System, and then it has all the Annihilation it can ever possibly have.

Whence now has Attraction this Nature?

It is solely from hence; because all Nature from its Eternity, hath been, is, and for ever can be only a Desire, and hath nothing in it but the Properties of Desire.

Now the essential, inseparable Properties of Desire are the three, and can be neither more nor less; and in this you have that Tri-Unity of Nature which you asked after, and in which the Triune Deity manifesteth itself. I shall not now prove these three Properties of the Desire, because I have done it at large, and plainly enough elsewhere. { Way to Divine Knowledge; Spirit of Love, Part I } But to go back now to your Question, Where, or how this Fire and Water, &c., can be found, since God is all Love and Goodness, and his Manifestation in Nature is a mere Kingdom of Heaven. They are to be found in the two-fold State of Heaven, and the two-fold State of every heavenly Creature. For seeing that the Perfection of Nature, and the Perfection of the intelligent Creature, consists in one and the same two-fold State, you have here the plainest Ground and Reason why and how every good and happy and new created Being, must of all Necessity, have Fire and Water, Life and Death set before it, or put into its Choice.

Because it has it in its Power to turn and give up its Will to either of these Lives, it can turn either to God, or Nature, and therefore must have Life and Death, Fire or Water in its Choice.

Now this two-fold Life, which makes the Perfection of Nature and Creature, is, in other Words, signified by the seven heavenly Properties of Nature; for when God is manifested in Nature, all its seven Properties are in a heavenly State. But in these seven Properties, though all heavenly, lieth the Ground of Fire and Water, &c., because a Division or Separation can be made in them by the Will of the Creature. For the three first Properties are as distinct from the four following ones, as God is distinct from That which wants God. And these three first Properties are the Essence or whole Being of that Desire, which is, and is called Nature, or that which wants God.

When, therefore, the Will of the Creature turns from God into Nature, it breaks, or looses the Union of the seven heavenly Properties; because Nature, as distinct from God, has only the three first Properties in it. And such a Creature, having broken or lost the Union of the seven Properties, is fallen into the three first, which is meant by Fire and Death. For when the first three Properties have lost God, or their Union with the four following ones, then they are mere Nature, which, in its whole Being, is nothing else but the Strength and Rage of Hunger, an Excess of Want, of Self-Torment, and Self-Vexation. Surely now, my friend, this Matter is enough explained.

Theogenes. Indeed, Theophilus, I am quite satisfied; for by this Account which you have given of the Ground of Nature, and its true and full Distinction from God, you have struck a most amazing Light into my Mind. For if Nature is mere Want, and has nothing in it but a Strength of Want, generated from the three self-tormenting Properties of a Desire, if God is all Love, Joy, and Happiness, an infinite Plenitude of all Blessings, then the Limits and Bounds of Good and Evil, of Happiness and Misery, are made as visibly distinct and as certainly to be known, as the Difference between a Circle and a straight Line. To live to Desire, that is, to Nature, is unavoidably entering into the Region of all Evil and Misery; because Nature has nothing else in it. But on the other Hand, to die to Desire, that is, to turn from Nature to God, is to be united with the infinite Source of all that is good, and blessed, and happy.

All that I wanted to know, is now cleared up in the greatest Plainness. And I have no Difficulty about those passages of Scripture, which speak of the Wrath, and Fury, and Vengeance of God. Wrath is his, just as all Nature is his, and yet God is mere Love, that only rules and governs Wrath, as He governs the foaming Waves of the Sea, and the Madness of Storms and Tempests. The following Propositions are as evidently true, as that two and two are four.

First, That God in his holy Deity is as absolutely free from Wrath and Rage, and as utterly incapable of them as He is of Thickness, Hardness, and Darkness; because Wrath and Rage belong to nothing else, can exist in nothing else, have Life in nothing else, but in Thickness, Hardness, and Darkness.

Secondly, That all Wrath is Disorder, and can be nowhere but in Nature and Creature, because nothing else is capable of changing from Right to Wrong.

Thirdly, That Wrath can have no Existence even in Nature and Creature, till they have lost their first Perfection which they had from God, and are become that which they should not have been.

Fourthly, That all the Wrath, and Fury, and Vengeance, that ever did, or can break forth in Nature and Creature is, according to the strictest Truth, to be called and looked upon as the Wrath and Vengeance of God, just as the Darkness, as well as the Light is, and is to be called his.

Oh! Theophilus, what a Key have you given me to the right understanding of Scripture! For when Nature and Creature are known to be the only Theater of Evil and Disorder, and the holy Deity as that governing Love, which wills nothing but the Removal of all Evil from every Thing, as fast as infinite Wisdom can find Ways of doing it, then whether you read of the raining of Fire and Brimstone, or only Showers of heavenly Manna falling upon the Earth, it is only one and the same Love, working in such different Ways and Diversity of Instruments, as Time, and Place, and Occasion, had made wise, and good, and beneficial.

Pharaoh with his hardened Heart, and St Paul with his Voice from Heaven, though so contrary to one another, were both of them the chosen Vessels of the same God of Love, because both miraculously taken out of their own State, and made to do all the Good to a blind and wicked World, which they were capable of doing. And thus, Sir, are all the Treasures of the Wisdom and Goodness of God, hidden in the Letter of Scripture, made the Comfort and Delight of my Soul, and every Thing I read turns itself into a Motive, of loving and adoring the wonderful Working of the Love of God over all the various Changings of Nature and Creature, till all Evil shall be extinguished, and all Disorder go back again to its first harmonious State of Perfection.

Depart from this Idea of God, as an Infinity of mere Love, Wisdom, and Goodness, and then every Thing in the System of Scripture, and the System of Nature, only helps the reasoning Mind to be miserably perplexed, as well with the Mercies, as with the Judgments of God. But when God is known to be omnipotent Love, that can do nothing but Works of Love, and that all Nature and Creature are only under the Operation of Love, as a distempered Person under the Care of a kind and skillful Physician, who seeks nothing but the perfect Recovery of his Patient, then whatever is done, whether a severe Caustic, or a pleasant Cordial is ordered, that is, whether because of its Difference, it may have the different Name of Mercy or Judgment, yet all is equally well done, because Love is the only Doer of both, and does both, from the same Principle, and for the same End.

Theophilus. Oh Theogenes, Now you are according to your Name, you are born of God. For when Love is the Triune God that you serve, worship, and adore, the only God, in whom you desire to live and move and have your Being, then of a Truth God dwelleth in you, and you in God.

I shall now only add this one Word more, to strengthen and confirm your right understanding of all that is said of the Wrath, or Rage of God in the Scriptures. The Psalmist, you know, saith thus of God, "He giveth forth his Ice like Morsels, and who is able to abide his Frosts?" Now, Sir, if you know how to explain this Scripture, and can show how Ice and Frost can truly be ascribed to God, as His, though absolutely impossible to have any Existence in Him, then you have an easy and unerring Key, how the Wrath, and Fury, and Vengeance, that anywhere falls upon any Creature is, and may be truly ascribed to God, as his, though Fury and Vengeance are as inconsistent with, and as impossible to have any Existence in the Deity, as lumps of Ice, or the Hardness of intolerable Frosts.

Now in this Text, setting forth the Horror of God's Ice and Frost, you have the whole Nature of Divine Wrath set before you. Search all the Scriptures, and you will nowhere find any Wrath of God, but what is bounded in Nature, and is so described, as to be itself a Proof, that it has no Existence in the holy supernatural Deity.

Thus says the Psalmist again, "The Earth trembled and quaked, the very Foundations also of the Hills shook, and were removed, because he was wrath." No Wrath here but in the Elements.

Again, "There went a Smoke out in his Presence, and a consuming Fire out of his Mouth, so that Coals were kindled at it. The Springs of Water were seen, and the Foundations of the round World were discovered at thy chiding, O Lord, at the blasting of the Breath of thy Displeasure."

Now every Working of the Wrath of God, described in Scripture, is strictly of a Piece with this, it relates to a Wrath solely confined to the Powers and working Properties of Nature, that lives and moves only in the Elements of the fallen World, and no more reaches the Deity, than Ice or Frost do. The Apostle saith, "Avenge not yourselves, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I Will repay, saith the Lord." This is another full Proof, that Wrath or Vengeance is not in the holy Deity itself, as a Quality of the Divine Mind; for if it was, then Vengeance would belong to every Child of God, that was truly born of Him, or he could not have the Spirit of his Father, or be perfect as his Father in Heaven is perfect. But if Vengeance only belongs to God, and can only be so affirmed of Him, as Ice and Frost are His, and belong to Him, if it has no other Manner of Working, than as when it is said, "He sent out his Arrows and scattered them, He cast forth Lightnings and destroyed them"; then it is certain, that the Divine Vengeance is only in fallen Nature, and its disordered Properties, and is no more in the Deity itself, than Hailstones and Coals of Fire. And here you have the true Reason, why Revenge or Vengeance is not allowed to Man; it is because Vengeance can only work in the evil, or disordered Properties of fallen Nature. But Man being Himself a Part of fallen Nature, and subject to its disordered Properties, is not allowed to work with them, because it would be stirring up Evil in himself, and that is his Sin of Wrath, or Revenge.

God therefore reserves all Vengeance to Himself, not because wrathful Revenge is a Temper or Quality that can have any Place in the Holy Deity, but because the holy supernatural Deity, being free from all the Properties of Nature, whence partial Love and Hatred spring, and being in Himself nothing but an Infinity of Love, Wisdom, and Goodness, He alone knows how to over-rule the Disorders of Nature, and so to repay Evil with Evil, that the highest good may be promoted by it. To say, therefore, that Vengeance is to be reserved to God, is only saying in other Words, that all the Evils in Nature are to be reserved and turned over to the Love of God, to be healed by his Goodness. And every Act of what is called Divine Vengeance, recorded in Scripture, may, and

ought, with the greatest strictness of Truth, be called an Act of the Divine Love.

If Sodom flames and smokes with stinking Brimstone, it is the Love of God that kindled it, only to extinguish a more horrible Fire. It was one and the same infinite Love, when it preserved Noah in the Ark, when it turned Sodom into a burning Lake, and overwhelmed Pharaoh in the Red Sea. And if God commanded the Waters to destroy the old World, it was as high an Act of the same infinite Love toward that Chaos, as when it said to the first Darkness upon the Face of the Deep, "Let there be Light, and there was Light." Not a Word in all Scripture concerning the Wrath or Vengeance of God but directly teaches you these two infallible truths. First, that all the Wrath spoken of worketh nowhere but in the wrathful, disordered Elements and Properties of fallen Nature. Secondly, that all the Power that God exercises over them, all that he doth at any Time or on any Occasion with or by them is only and solely the one Work of his unchangeable Love toward Man.

Just as the good Physician acts from only one and the same good Will toward his Patient, when he orders bitter and sour, as when he gives the pleasant Draughts.

Now, suppose the good Physician to have such intense Love for you, as to disregard your Aversion toward them, and to force such Medicines down your Throat, as can alone save your Life; suppose he should therefore call himself your severe Physician, and declare himself so rigid toward you, that he would not spare you, nor suffer you, go where you would, to escape his bitter Draughts, till all Means of your Recovery were tried, then you would have a true and just, though low Representation of those bitter Cups, which God in his Wrath forceth fallen Man to drink.

Now as the bitter, sour, hot, &c., in the Physician's Draughts, are not Declarations of any the like Bitterness, Heat, or Sourness in the Spirit of the Physician that uses them, but are Things quite distinct from the State and Spirit of his Mind, and only manifest his Care and Skill in the right Use of such Materials toward the Health of his Patient; so in like Manner, all the Elements of fallen Nature are only so many outward Materials in the Hands of God, formed and mixed into Heat and Cold, into fruitful and pestilential Effects, into Serenity of Seasons, and blasting Tempests, into Means of Health and Sickness, of Plenty and Poverty, just as the Wisdom and Goodness of Providence sees to be the fittest to deliver Man from the miserable Malady of his earthly Nature and help him to become heavenly-minded.

If, therefore, it would be great Folly to suppose Bitterness, or Heat, &c., to be in the Spirit of the Physician, when he gives a hot or bitter Medicine, much greater Folly surely must it be, to suppose that Wrath, Vengeance, or any pestilential Quality, is in the Spirit of the holy Deity, when a Wrath, a Vengeance, or Pestilence is stirred up in the fallen Elements by the Providence of God, as a proper Remedy for the Evil of this, or that Time or Occasion.

Hear these decisive words of Scripture, viz., "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth." What a Grossness therefore of Mistake is it to conclude, that Wrath must be in the Deity, because He chastens and threatens Chastisement, when you have God's own Word for it, that nothing but his Love chasteneth? Again, Thus saith the Lord, "I have smitten you with Blasting and Mildew. Your Vineyards, and your Fig Trees, and your Olive Yards, did the Palmer-Worm devour," and then the Love that did this makes this Complaint, "Yet ye have not returned to me." Again, "Pestilence have I sent amongst you; I have made the Stink of your Tents come up even into your Nostrils," &c. And

then the same Love that did this, that made this Use of the disordered Elements, makes the same Complaint again, "Yet have ye not returned to me" (Amos 4:9-10).

Now, Sir, How is it possible for Words to give stronger Proof, that God is mere Love, that he has no Will toward fallen Man but to bless him with Works of Love, and this as certainly, when he turns the Air into a Pestilence, as when he makes the same Air rain down Manna upon the Earth, since neither the one nor the other are done, but as Time, and Place, and Occasion, render them the fittest Means to make Man return and adhere to God, that is, to come out of all the Evil and Misery of his fallen State? What can infinite Love do more, or what can it do to give greater Proof, that all that it does proceeds from Love? And here you are to observe, that this is not said from human Conjecture, or any imaginary Idea of God, but is openly asserted, constantly affirmed, and repeated in the plainest Letter of Scripture. But this Conversation has been long enough. And I hope we shall meet again To-morrow. The End of the First D I A L O G U E

08.02.02 Part 2 2-Second Dialogue

THE

SECOND DIALOGUE

BETWEEN Theogenes, Eusebius, and Theophilus.

Eusebius. There is no Occasion to resume any Thing of our Yesterday's Discourse. The following Propositions are sufficiently proved.

First, That God is an abyssal Infinity of Love, Wisdom, and Goodness; that He ever was, and ever will be one and the same unchangeable Will to all Goodness and Works of Love, as incapable of any Sensibility of Wrath, or acting under it, as of falling into Pain or Darkness, and acting under their Direction.

Secondly, That all Wrath, Strife, Discord, Hatred, Envy, or Pride, &c., all Heat and Cold, all Enmity in the Elements, all Thickness, Grossness, and Darkness are Things that have no Existence but in and from the Sphere of fallen Nature.

Thirdly, That all the Evils of Contrariety and Disorder in fallen Nature are only as so many Materials in the Hands of infinite Love and Wisdom, all made to work in their different Ways, as far as is possible, to one and the same End, viz., to turn temporal Evil into eternal Good. So that whether you look at Light or Darkness, at Night or Day, at Fire or Water, at Heaven or Earth, at Life or Death, at Prosperity or Adversity, at blasting Winds or heavenly Dews, at Sickness or Health, you see nothing but such a State of Things, in and through which, the supernatural Deity wills and seeks the Restoration of fallen Nature and Creature to their first Perfection.

It now only remains, that the Doctrine of Scripture concerning the Atonement, necessary to be made by the Life, Sufferings, and Death of Christ be explained, or in other Words, the true Meaning of that Righteousness or Justice of God, that must have Satisfaction done to it, before Man can be reconciled to God. For this Doctrine is thought by some to favour the Opinion of a Wrath and Resentment in the Deity itself.

Theophilus. This Doctrine, Eusebius, of the Atonement made by Christ, and the absolute Necessity and real Efficacy of it, to satisfy the Righteousness, or Justice of God, is the very Ground and Foundation of Christian Redemption, and the Life and Strength of every Part of it. But then, this very Doctrine is so far from favouring the Opinion of a Wrath in the Deity itself, that it is an absolute full Denial of it, and the strongest of Demonstrations, that the Wrath, or Resentment, that is to be pacified or atoned, cannot possibly be in the Deity itself. For this Wrath that is to be atoned and pacified is, in its whole Nature, nothing else but Sin, or Disorder in the Creature. And when Sin is extinguished in the Creature, all the Wrath that is between God and the Creature is fully atoned. Search all the Bible, from one End to the other, and you will find, that the Atonement of that which is called the Divine Wrath or Justice, and the extinguishing of Sin in the Creature, are only different Expressions for one and the same individual Thing. And therefore, unless you will

place Sin in God, that Wrath, that is to be atoned or pacified, cannot be placed in Him. The whole Nature of our Redemption has no other End, but to remove or extinguish the Wrath that is between God and Man. When this is removed, Man is reconciled to God. Therefore, where the Wrath is, or where that is which wants to be atoned, there is that which is the blamable Cause of the Separation between God and Man; there is that which Christ came into the World to extinguish, to quench, or atone. If, therefore, this Wrath, which is the blamable Cause of the Separation between God and Man, is in God Himself, if Christ died to atone, or extinguish a Wrath that was got into the holy Deity itself, then it must be said, that Christ made an Atonement for God, and not for Man; that He died for the Good and Benefit of God, and not of Man; and that which is called our Redemption, ought rather to be called the Redemption of God, as saving and delivering Him, and not Man, from his own Wrath. This Blasphemy is unavoidable, if you suppose that Wrath, for which Christ died, to be a Wrath in God Himself.

Again, The very Nature of Atonement absolutely shows, that that which is to be atoned cannot possibly be in God, nor even in any good Being. For Atonement implies the Alteration, or Removal of something that is not as it ought to be. And therefore, every Creature, so long as it is good, and has its proper State of Goodness, neither wants, nor can admit of any Atonement, because it has nothing in it that wants to be altered or taken out of it. And therefore, Atonement cannot possibly have any Place in God, because nothing in God either wants, or can receive Alteration; neither can it have Place in any Creature, but so far as it has lost, or altered that which it had from God, and is fallen into Disorder; and then, that which brings this Creature back to its first State, which alters that which is wrong in it, and takes its Evil out of it, is its true and proper Atonement.

Water is the proper Atonement of the Rage of Fire; and that which changes a Tempest into a Calm is its true Atonement. And, therefore, as sure as Christ is a Propitiation and Atonement, so sure is it, that that which he does, as a Propitiation and Atonement, can have no Place, but in altering that Evil and Disorder which, in the State and Life of the fallen Creature, wants to be altered.

Suppose the Creature not fallen, and then there is no Room nor Possibility for Atonement; a plain and full Proof, that the Work of Atonement is nothing else but the altering or quenching that which is Evil in the fallen Creature.

Hell, Wrath, Darkness, Misery, and eternal Death, mean the same Thing through all Scripture, and these are the only Things from which we want to be redeemed; and where there is nothing of Hell, there, there is nothing of Wrath, nor any Thing that wants, or can admit of the Benefits of the Atonement made by Christ.

Either, therefore, all Hell is in the Essence of the holy Deity, or nothing that wants to be atoned by the Merits and Death of Christ, can possibly be in the Deity itself. The Apostle saith, that "we are by Nature Children of Wrath"; the same Thing as when the Psalmist saith, "I was shapen in Wickedness, and in Sin hath my Mother conceived me." And therefore, that Wrath which wants the Atonement of the Sufferings, Blood, and Death of Christ, is no other than that Sin, or sinful State, in which we are naturally born. But now, if this Wrath could be supposed to be in the Deity itself, then it would follow, that by being by Nature Children of Wrath, we should thereby be the true Children of God; we should not want any Atonement, or new Birth from above, to make us Partakers of the Divine Nature, because that Wrath that was in us would be our dwelling in God and he in us.

Again, All Scripture teaches us, That God wills and desires the Removal, or Extinction of that Wrath, which is betwixt God and the Creature; and therefore, all Scripture teaches, that the Wrath is not in God; for God cannot will the Removal, or Alteration of any Thing that is in Himself; this is as impossible, as for him to will the Extinction of his own Omnipotence. Nor can there be any Thing in God, contrary to, or against his own Will; and yet, if God wills the Extinction of a Wrath that is in Himself, it must be in Him, contrary to, or against his own Will.

This, I presume, is enough to show you, that the Atonement made by Christ is itself the greatest of all Proofs, that it was not to atone or extinguish any Wrath in the Deity itself; nor, indeed, any Way to affect, or alter any Quality, or Temper in the Divine Mind, but purely and solely to overcome and remove all that Death and Hell, and Wrath, and Darkness, that had opened itself in the Nature, Birth, and Life of fallen Man.

Eusebius. The Truth of all this is not to be denied. And yet it is as true, that all our Systems of Divinity give quite another Account of this most important Matter. The Satisfaction of Christ is represented as a Satisfaction made to a wrathful Deity; and the Merits of the Sufferings and Death of Christ, as that which could only avail with God, to give up his own Wrath, and think of Mercy toward Man. Nay, what is still worse, if possible, the Ground, and Nature, and Efficacy of this great Transaction between God and Man, is often explained by Debtor and Creditor: Man, as having contracted a Debt with God that he could not pay, and God, as having a Right to insist upon the Payment of it; and therefore, only to be satisfied by receiving the Death and Sacrifice of Christ, as a valuable Consideration, instead of the Debt that was due to Him from Man.

Theophilus. Hence you may see, Eusebius, how unreasonably Complaint has been sometimes made against the Appeal, the Spirit of Prayer, &c., as introducing a Philosophy into the Doctrines of the Gospel, not enough supported by the Letter of Scripture; though every Thing there asserted has been over and over shown to be well grounded on the Letter of Scripture, and necessarily included in the most fundamental Doctrines of the Gospel.

Yet they who make this Complaint, blindly swallow a Vanity of Philosophy, in the most important part of Gospel Religion, which not only has less Scripture for it than the Infallibility of the Pope, but is directly contrary to the plain Letter of every single Text of Scripture that relates to this Matter: as I will now show you.

First, The Apostle saith, "God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that all who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting Life." What becomes now of the Philosophy of Debtor and Creditor, of a Satisfaction made by Christ to a Wrath in God? Is it not the grossest of all Fictions, and in full Contrariety to the plain written Word of God? "God so loved the World"; behold the Degree of it? But when did He so love it? Why, before it was redeemed, before He sent or gave his only Son to be the Redeemer of it. Here you see, that all Wrath in God, antecedent to our Redemption, or the Sacrifice of Christ for us, is utterly excluded; there is no Possibility for the Supposition of it, it is as absolutely denied as Words can do it. And therefore the infinite Love, Mercy, and Compassion of God toward fallen Man, are not purchased, or procured for us by the Death of Christ, but the Incarnation and Sufferings of Christ come from, and are given to us by the infinite antecedent Love of God for us, and are the gracious Effects of his own Love and Goodness toward us.

It is needless to show you, how constantly this same Doctrine is asserted and repeated by all the Apostles.

Thus says St. John again, "In this was manifested the Love of God toward us, because he sent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him." Again, "this is the Record, that God hath given unto us eternal Life; and this Life is in his Son." Again, "God," saith St. Paul, "was in Christ, reconciling the World unto Himself, not imputing their Trespases to them." Which is repeated, and further opened in these Words, "Giving Thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, who hath delivered us from the Power of Darkness, and hath translated us into the Kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:12-13). And again, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual Blessings in heavenly Places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

How great therefore, Eusebius, is the Error, how total the Disregard of Scripture, and how vain the Philosophy, which talks of a Wrath in God antecedent to our Redemption, or of a Debt which he could not forgive us, till he had received a Valuable Consideration for it, when all Scriptures from Page to Page tells us, that all the Mercy and Blessing and Benefits of Christ, as our Saviour, are the free antecedent Gift of God Himself to us, and bestowed upon us for no other Reason, from no other Motive, but the Infinity of his own Love toward us, agreeable to what the Evangelical Prophet saith of God, "I am He that blotteth out Transgressions for my own sake" (Isaiah 43:25), that is, not for any Reason or Motive that can be laid before me but because I am Love itself, and my own Nature is my immutable Reason why nothing but Works of Love, Blessing, and Goodness, can come from me.

Look we now at the Scripture Account of the Nature of the Atonement and Satisfaction of Christ, and this will further show us, that it is not to atone, or alter any Quality or Temper in the Divine Mind, nor for the Sake of God, but purely and solely to atone, to quench, and overcome that Death, and Wrath, and Hell, under the Power of which Man was fallen.

"As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." This is the whole Work, the whole Nature, and the sole End of Christ's Sacrifice of Himself; and there is not a Syllable in Scripture, that gives you any other account of it. It all consists, from the Beginning to the End, in carrying on the one Work of Regeneration; and therefore the Apostle saith, "The first Adam was made a living Soul, but the last or Second Adam was made a Quickening Spirit," because sent into the World by God to quicken and revive that Life from above which we lost in Adam. And he is called our Ransom, our Atonement, &c., for no other Reason, but because that which He did and suffered in our fallen Nature, was as truly an efficacious Means of our being born again to a new heavenly Life, of Him, and from Him, as that which Adam did, was the true and natural Cause of our being born in Sin, and the Impurity of bestial Flesh and Blood. And as Adam, by what He did, may be truly said to have purchased our Misery and Corruption, to have bought Death for us, and to have sold us into a Slavery under the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, though all that we have from him, or suffer by him, is only the inward working of his own Nature and Life within us, so, according to the plain meaning of the Words, Christ may be said to be our Price, our Ransom, and Atonement; though all that He does for us, as Buying, Ransoming, and Redeeming us, is done wholly and solely by a Birth of his own Nature and Spirit brought to Life in us. The apostle saith, "Christ died for our Sins." Thence it is, that He is the great Sacrifice for Sin and its true Atonement. But how and why is he

so? The Apostle tells you in these Words, "The Sting of Death is Sin;— but Thanks be to God, who giveth us the Victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"; and therefore Christ is the Atonement of our Sins when, by and from Him, living in us, we have Victory over our sinful Nature. The Scriptures frequently say, Christ gave himself for us. But what is the full Meaning, Effect, and Benefit, of his thus giving Himself for us? The Apostle puts this out of all Doubt, when he says, "Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purify to Himself a peculiar People;—that He might deliver us from this present World,—from the Curse of the Law,—from the Power of Satan,— from the Wrath to come"; or as the Apostle saith in other Words, "that He might be made unto us, Wisdom, Righteousness, and Sanctification." The whole Truth therefore of the Matter is plainly this. Christ given for us, is neither more nor less, than Christ given into us. And he is in no other Sense, our full, perfect, and sufficient Atonement, than as his Nature and Spirit are born, and formed in us, which so purgeth us from our Sins, that we are thereby in Him, and by Him dwelling in us, become new Creatures, having our Conversation in Heaven. As Adam is truly our Defilement and Impurity, by his Birth in us, so Christ is our Atonement and Purification, by our being born again of Him, and having thereby quickened and revived in us that first Divine Life, which was extinguished in Adam. And therefore, as Adam purchased Death for us, just so in the same Manner, in the same Degree, and in the same Sense, Christ purchases Life for us. And each of them only, and solely by their own inward Life within us. This is the one Scripture Account of the whole Nature, the sole End, and full Efficacy of all that Christ did, and suffered for us. It is all comprehended in these two Texts of Scripture: (1) "That Christ was manifested to destroy the Works of the Devil; (2) That as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." From the Beginning to the End of Christ's atoning Work, no other Power is ascribed to it, nothing else is intended by it, as an Appeaser of Wrath, but the destroying of all that in Man which comes from the Devil; no other Merits, or Value, or infinite Worth, than that of its infinite Ability, and Sufficiency to quicken again in all human Nature, that Heavenly Life that died in Adam.

Eusebius. Though all that is here said seems to have both the Letter and the Spirit of Scripture on its Side, yet I am afraid it will be thought not enough to assert the infinite Value and Merits of our Saviour's Sufferings. For it is the common Opinion of Doctors that the Righteousness or Justice of God must have Satisfaction done to it; And that nothing could avail with God, as a Satisfaction, but the infinite Worth and Value of the Sufferings of Christ.

Theophilus. It is true, Eusebius, that this is often, and almost always thus asserted in human Writers, but it is neither the Language nor the Doctrine of Scripture. Not a Word is there said of a Righteousness or Justice as an Attribute in God, that must be satisfied; or that the Sacrifice of Christ, is that which satisfies the Righteousness that is in God Himself.

It has been sufficiently proved to you, that God wanted not to be reconciled to fallen Man; that He never was anything else toward him but Love; and that his Love brought forth the whole Scheme of his Redemption. Thence it is, that the Scriptures do not say that Christ came into the World to procure us the Divine Favour and good Will, in order to put a Stop to antecedent righteous Wrath in God toward us. No, the Reverse of all this is the Truth, viz., that Christ and his whole mediatorial Office came purely and solely from God, already so reconciled to us, as to bestow an Infinity of Love upon us. "The God of all Grace," saith the Apostle, "who hath called us to his eternal Glory by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 5:10). Here you see, Christ is not the Cause or Motive of God's Mercy toward fallen Man, but God's own Love for us, his own Desire of our eternal Glory and Happiness

hath for that End given us Christ, that we may be made Partakers of it. The same as when it is again said, "God was in Christ reconciling the World to Himself," that is, calling, and raising it out of its ungodly and miserable State.

Thus all the Mystery of our Redemption proclaims nothing but a God of Love toward fallen Man. It was the Love of God, that could not behold the Misery of fallen Man, without demanding and calling for his Salvation. It was Love alone, that wanted to have full Satisfaction done to it, and such a Love as could not be satisfied, till all that Glory and Happiness that was lost by the Death of Adam, was fully restored and regained again by the Death of Christ.

Eusebius. But is there not some good Sense, in which Righteousness or Justice may be said to be satisfied by the Atonement and Sacrifice of Christ?

Theophilus. Yes, most certainly there is. But then it is only that Righteousness or Justice that belongs to Man, and ought to be in him. Now Righteousness, wherever it is to be, has no Mercy in itself; it makes no Condescensions; it is inflexibly rigid; its Demands are inexorable; Prayers, Offerings, and Entreaties have no Effect upon it; it will have nothing but itself, nor will it ever cease its Demands, or take any Thing in lieu of them, as a Satisfaction instead of itself. Thus, "Without Holiness," saith the Apostle, "no Man shall see the Lord." And again, "Nothing that is defiled, or impure, can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." And this is meant by Righteousness being rigid and having no Mercy; it cannot spare, or have Pity, or hear Entreaty, because all its Demands are righteous, and good, and therefore must be satisfied, or fulfilled.

Now Righteousness has its absolute Demands upon Man, because Man was created righteous, and has lost that original Righteousness, which he ought to have kept in its first Purity. And this is the one, only Righteousness, or Justice, which Christ came into the World to satisfy, not by giving some highly valuable Thing as a Satisfaction to it, but by bringing back, or raising up again in all human Nature, that Holiness or Righteousness, which originally belonged to it. For to satisfy Righteousness, means neither more nor less than to fulfill it. Nor can Righteousness want to have Satisfaction in any Being, but in that Being, which has fallen from it; nor can it be satisfied, but in restoring or fulfilling Righteousness in that Being, which had departed from it. And therefore the Apostle saith, that "we are created again unto Righteousness in Christ Jesus." And this is the one and only Way of Christ's expiating, or taking away the Sins of the World, namely, by restoring to Man his lost Righteousness. For this End, saith the Scripture, "Christ gave Himself for the Church, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, that he might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having Spot, or Wrinkle, or any such Thing, but that it should be holy and without Blemish" (Ephesians 5:25-27). This is the one Righteousness, which Christ came into the World to satisfy, by fulfilling it himself, and enabling Man by a new Birth from him to fulfill it. And when all Unrighteousness is removed by Christ from the whole human Nature, then all that Righteousness is satisfied, for the doing of which, Christ poured out his most precious, availing, and meritorious Blood.

Eusebius. Oh Theophilus, the Ground on which you stand must certainly be true. It so easily, so fully solves all Difficulties and Objections, and enables you to give so plain and solid an Account of every Part of our Redemption. This great Point is so fully cleared up to me, that I do not desire another Word about it.

Theophilus. However, Eusebius, I will add a Word or two more upon it, that there may be no Room left, either for misunderstanding, or denying what has been just now said of the Nature of that Righteousness, which must have full Satisfaction done to it by the Atoning and Redeeming Work of Christ. And then you will be fully possessed of these two great Truths. First, That there is no righteous Wrath in the Deity itself, and therefore none to be atoned there. Secondly, That though God is in Himself a mere Infinity of Love, from whom nothing else but Works of Love and Blessing and Goodness can proceed, yet sinful Men are hereby not at all delivered from That which the Apostle calls the Terrors of the Lord, but that all the Threatenings of Woe, Misery, and Punishment, denounced in Scripture against Sin and Sinners, both in this World, and that which is to come, stand all of them in their full Force, and are not in the least Degree weakened, or less to be dreaded because God is all Love.

Every Thing that God hath created, is right and just and good in its Kind, and hath its own Righteousness within itself. The Rectitude of its Nature is its only Law; and it hath no other Righteousness, but that of continuing in its first State. No Creature is subject to any Pain, or Punishment, or Guilt of Sin, but because it has departed from its first right State, and only does, and can feel the painful Loss of its own first Perfection. And every intelligent Creature, that departs from the State of its Creation, is unrighteous, evil, and full of its own Misery. And there is no Possibility for any disordered, fallen Creature to be free from its own Misery and Pain, till it is again in its first State of Perfection. This is the certain and infallible Ground of the absolute Necessity, either of a perfect Holiness in this Life, or of a further Purification after Death, before Man can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now this Pain and Misery, which is inseparable from the Creature that is not in that State in which it ought to be, and in which it was created, is nothing else but the painful State of the Creature for Want of its own proper Righteousness, as Sickness is the painful State of the Creature for Want of its own proper Health. No other Righteousness, or other Justice, no other severe Vengeance, demands Satisfaction, or torments the Sinner, but that very Righteousness, which once was in him, which still belongs to him, and therefore will not suffer him to have any Rest or Peace, till it is again in him as it was at the first. All, therefore, that Christ does as an Atonement for Sin, or as a Satisfaction to Righteousness, is all done in, and to, and for Man, and has no other Operation but that of renewing the fallen Nature of Man, and raising it up into its first State of original Righteousness. And if this Righteousness, which belongs solely to Man, and wants no Satisfaction, but that of being restored and fulfilled in the human Nature, is sometimes called the Righteousness of God, it is only so called, because it is a Righteousness which Man had originally from God, in and by his Creation; and, therefore, as it comes from God, has its whole Nature and Power of Working as it does from God, it may very justly be called God's Righteousness.

Agreeably to this Way of ascribing that to God, which is only in the State and Condition of Man, the Psalmist saith of God, "Thine Arrows stick fast in me, and thy Hand presseth me sore." And yet nothing else, or more is meant by it, than when he saith, "My Sins have taken such Hold of me that I am not able to look up—My Iniquities are gone over my Head, and are like a sore Burden too heavy for me to bear."

Now, whether you call this State of Man the Burden of his Sins and Wickednesses, or the Arrows of the Almighty, and the Weight of God's Hand, they mean but one and the same Thing, which can

only be called by these different Names, for no other Reason but this, because Man's own original Righteousness, which he had from God, makes his sinful State a Pain and Torment to him, and lies heavy upon him in every Commission of Sin. And when the Psalmist again saith, "Take thy Plague away from me, I am even consumed by means of thy heavy Hand," it is only praying to be delivered from his own Plague, and praying for the same Thing as when he saith, in other Words, "Make me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within me."

Now this Language of Scripture, which teaches us to call the Pains and Torments of our Sins, the Arrows, Darts, and Strokes of God's Hand upon us, which calls us to own the Power, Presence, and Operation of God, in all that we feel and find in our own inward State, is the Language of the most exalted Piety, and highly suitable to that Scripture which tells us, "That in God we live, and move, and have our Being". For by teaching us to find, and own the Power and Operation of God in every Thing that passes within us, it keeps us continually turned to God for all that we want, and by all that we feel within ourselves, and brings us to this best of all Confessions, that Pain, as well as Peace of Mind, is the Effect and Manifestation of God's infinite Love and Goodness toward us. For we could not have this Pain and Sensibility of the Burden of Sin, but because the Love and Goodness of God made us originally righteous and happy; and therefore, all the Pains and Torments of Sin come from God's first Goodness toward us, and are in themselves merely and truly the Arrows of his Love, and his blessed Means of drawing us back to that first righteous State in and for which his first and never ceasing Love created us.

Eusebius. The Matter, therefore, plainly stands thus. There is no righteous Wrath, or vindictive Justice in the Deity itself, which, as a Quality or Attribute of Resentment in the Divine Mind, wants to be contented, atoned, or satisfied; but Man's Original Righteousness, which was once his Peace, and Happiness, and Rest in God, is by the Fall of Adam become his Tormentor, his Plague, that continually exercises its good Vengeance upon him, till it truly regains its first State in him.

Secondly, Man must be under this Pain, Punishment, and Vengeance to all Eternity; there is no Possibility, in the Nature of the Thing, for it to be otherwise, though God be all Love, unless Man's lost Righteousness be fully again possessed by him. And, therefore, the Doctrine of God's being all Love, of having no Wrath in Himself, has nothing in it to abate the Force of those Scriptures which threaten Punishment to Sinners, or to make them less fearful of living and dying in their Sins.

Theophilus. What you say, Eusebius, is very true; but then it is but half the Truth of this Matter. You should have added, that this Doctrine is the one Ground, and only Reason, why the Scriptures abound with so many Declarations of Woe, Misery, and Judgments, sometimes executed, and sometimes only threatened by God, and why all Sinners to the End of the World must know and feel "that the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness, and that Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, must be upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil" (Romans 1:18, Romans 2:8-9). For all these Things, which the Apostle elsewhere calls "the Terrors of the Lord", have no Ground, nothing that calls for them, nothing that vindicates the Fitness and Justice of them, either with Regard to God or Man, but this one Truth, viz., That God is in Himself a mere Infinity of Love, from whom nothing but outflowings of Love and Goodness can come forth from Eternity to Eternity. For if God is all Love, if he wills nothing toward fallen Man but

his full Deliverance from the blind Slavery and Captivity of his earthly, bestial Nature, then every kind of Punishment, Distress, and Affliction, that can extinguish the Lusts of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of this Life, may and ought to be expected from God, merely because he is all Love and good Will toward fallen Man. To say, therefore, as some have said, If God is all Love toward fallen Man, how can he threaten or chastise Sinners? This is no better than saying, If God is all Goodness in Himself, and towards Man, how can He do that in and to Man, which is for his Good? As absurd as to say, If the able Physician is all Love, Goodness, and good Will toward his Patients, how can he blister, purge, or scarify them, how can he order one to be trepanned, and another to have a Limb cut off? Nay, so absurd is this Reasoning, that if it could be proved, that God had no Chastisement for Sinners, the very Want of this Chastisement would be the greatest of all Proofs, that God was not all Love and Goodness toward Man. The meek, merciful, and compassionate Jesus, who had no Errand in this World but to bless and save Mankind, said, "If thy right Eye or thy right Hand offend thee, pluck out the one, cut off the other, and cast them from thee." And that He said all this from mere Love, he adds, It is better for thee to do this, than that thy whole Body should be cast into Hell". Therefore, if the Holy Jesus had been wanting in this Severity, he had been wanting in true Love toward Man. And therefore, the pure, mere Love of God, is that alone from which Sinners are justly to expect from God, that no Sin will pass unpunished, but that his Love will visit them with every Calamity and Distress, that can help to break and purify the bestial Heart of Man, and awaken in him true Repentance and Conversion to God. It is Love alone in the holy Deity, that Will allow no Peace to the wicked, nor ever cease its Judgments, till every Sinner is forced to confess, That it is good for him that he has been in Trouble, and thankfully own, That not the Wrath, but the Love of God, has plucked out that right Eye, cut off that right Hand, which he ought to have done, but would not do, for himself and his own Salvation.

Again, this Doctrine that allows of no Wrath in the Divine Mind, but places it all in the Evil State of fallen Nature and Creature, has every Thing in it that can prove to Man the dreadful Nature of Sin, and the absolute Necessity of totally departing from it. It leaves no Room for Self-Delusion, but puts an End to every false Hope, or vain seeking for Relief in any Thing else, but the total Extinction of Sin. And this it effectually does, by showing, that Damnation is no foreign, separate, or imposed State, that is brought in upon us, or adjudged to us by the Will of God, but is the inborn, natural, essential State of our own disordered Nature, which is absolutely impossible, in the Nature of the Thing, to be any Thing else but our own Hell, both here and hereafter, unless all Sin be separated from us, and Righteousness be again made our natural State, by a Birth of itself in us. And all this, not because God will have it so, by an arbitrary Act of his sovereign Will, but because he cannot change his own Nature, or make any Thing to be happy and blessed, but only that which has its proper Righteousness, and is of one Will and Spirit with Himself.

If then every Creature that has lost, or is without the true Rectitude of its Nature, must as such, be of all Necessity, absolutely separated from God, and necessarily under the Pain and Misery of a Life that has lost all its own natural Good; if no Omnipotence or Mercy, or Goodness of God, can make it to be otherwise, or give any Relief to the Sinner, but by a total Extinction of Sin by a Birth of Righteousness in the Soul, then it fully appears, that according to this Doctrine, every Thing in God, and Nature, and Creature, calls the Sinner to an absolute Renunciation of all Sin, as the one only possible Means of Salvation, and leaves no Room for him to deceive himself with the Hopes

that any Thing else will do instead of it. Vainly therefore is it said, That if God be all Love, the Sinner is let loose from the dreadful Apprehensions of living and dying in his Sins. On the other Hand, deny this Doctrine, and say, with the current of scholastic Divines, That the Sinner must be doomed to eternal Pain and Death, unless a supposed Wrath, in the Mind of the Deity, be first atoned and satisfied; and that Christ's Death was that valuable Gift, or Offering made to God, by which alone he could be moved to lay aside, or extinguish his own Wrath toward fallen Man; say this, and then you open a wide Door for Licentiousness and Infidelity in some, and superstitious Fears in others. For if the Evil, the Misery, and sad Effects of Sin, are placed in a Wrath in the Divine Mind, what can this beget in the Minds of the pious, but superstitious Fears about a supposed Wrath in God which they can never know when it is, or is not, atoned? Every Kind of Superstition has its Birth from this Belief, and cannot well be otherwise. And as to the Licentious, who want to stifle all Fears of gratifying all their Passions, this Doctrine has a natural Tendency to do this for them. For if they are taught, that the Hurt and Misery of Sin, is not its own natural State, not owing to its own Wrath and Disorder, but to a Wrath in the Deity, how easy is it for them to believe, either that God may not be so full of Wrath as is given out, or that he may overcome it himself, and not keep the Sinner eternally in a Misery that is not his own, but wholly brought upon him from without, by a Resentment in the Divine Mind.

Again, this Account which the Schools give of the Sacrifice of Christ, made to atone a Wrath in the Deity by the infinite Value of Christ's Death, is that alone which helps Socinians, Deists, and Infidels of all Kinds, to such Cavils and Objections to the Mystery of our Redemption, as neither have, nor can be silenced by the most able Defenders of that scholastic Fiction. The Learning of a Grotius or Stillingfleet, when defending such an Account of the Atonement and Satisfaction, rather increases than lessens the Objections to this Mystery: But if you take this Matter as it truly is in itself, viz., That God is in Himself all Love and Goodness, therefore can be nothing else but all Love and Goodness toward fallen Man, and that fallen Man is subject to no Pain or Misery, either present or to come, but what is the natural, unavoidable, essential Effect of his own evil and disordered Nature, impossible to be altered by himself, and that the infinite, never ceasing Love of God, has given Jesus Christ in all his Process, as the highest, and only possible Means, that Heaven and Earth can afford, to save Man from himself, from his own Evil, Misery, and Death, and restore to him his original Divine Life. When you look at this Matter in this true Light, then a God, all Love, and an Atonement for Sin by Christ, not made to pacify a Wrath in God, but to bring forth, fulfill, and restore Righteousness in the Creature that had lost it, has every Thing in it that can make the Providence of God adorable, and the State of Man comfortable.

Here all Superstition and superstitious Fears are at once totally cut off, and every Work of Piety is turned into a Work of Love. Here every false Hope of every Kind is taken from the Licentious; they have no Ground left to stand upon: Nothing to trust to, as a Deliverance from Misery, but the one total Abolition of Sin. The Socinian and the Infidel are here also robbed of all their Philosophy against this Mystery; for as it is not founded upon, does not teach an infinite Resentment, that could only be satisfied by an infinite Atonement, as it stands not upon the Ground of Debtor and Creditor, all their Arguments which suppose it to be such, are quite beside the Matter and touch nothing of the Truth of this blessed Mystery. For it is the very Reverse of all this, it declares a God that is all Love; and the Atonement of Christ to be nothing else in itself, but the highest, most natural, and efficacious Means through all the Possibility of Things, that the infinite Love and

Wisdom of God could use, to put an End to Sin, and Death, and Hell, and restore to Man his first Divine State or Life. I say, the most natural, efficacious Means through all the Possibilities of Nature; for there is nothing that is supernatural, however mysterious, in the whole System of our Redemption; every Part of it has its Ground in the Workings and Powers of Nature, and all our Redemption is only Nature set right, or made to be that which it ought to be.

There is nothing that is supernatural, but God alone; every Thing besides Him is from and subject to the State of Nature. It can never rise out of it, or have anything contrary to it. No Creature can have either Health or Sickness, Good or Evil, or any State either from God, or itself, but strictly according to the Capacities, Powers, and Workings of Nature. The Mystery of our Redemption, though it comes from the supernatural God, has nothing in it but what is done, and to be done, within the Sphere, and according to the Powers of Nature. There is nothing supernatural in it, or belonging to it, but that supernatural Love and Wisdom which brought it forth, presides over it, and will direct it till Christ, as a second Adam, has removed and extinguished all that Evil, which the first Adam brought into the human Nature. And the whole Process of Jesus Christ, from his being the inspoken Word or Bruiser of the Serpent given to Adam, to his Birth, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven, has all its Ground and Reason in this, because nothing else in all the Possibilities of Nature, either in Heaven or on Earth, could begin, carry on, and totally effect Man's Deliverance from the Evil of his own fallen Nature.

Thus is Christ the one, full, sufficient Atonement for the Sin of the whole World, because He is the one only natural Remedy, and possible Cure of all the Evil that is broken forth in Nature, the one only natural Life, and Resurrection of all that Holiness and Happiness that died in Adam. And seeing all this Process of Christ is given to the World, from the supernatural, antecedent, infinite Love of God, therefore it is, that the Apostle saith, "God was in Christ reconciling the World to Himself." And Christ in God, is nothing else in his whole Nature, but that same, certain, and natural Parent of a Redemption to the whole human Nature, as fallen Adam was the certain and natural Parent of a miserable Life to every Man that is descended from him: With this only Difference, that from fallen Adam we are born in Sin, whether we will or no, but we cannot have the new Birth which Christ has all Power to bring forth in us, unless the Will of our Heart closes with it. But as nothing came to us from Adam, but according to the Powers of Nature, and because he was that which he was with Relation to us; so it is with Christ and our Redemption by Him: All the Work is grounded in, and proceeds according to the Powers of Nature, or in a Way of natural Efficacy or Fitness to produce its Effects; and every Thing that is found in the Person, Character, and Condition of Christ, is only there as his true and natural Qualification to do all that He came to do, in us, and for us. That is to say, Christ was made to be that which He was; He was a Seed of Life in our first fallen Father; He lived as a Blessing of Promise in the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Israel of God; He was born as a Man of a pure Virgin; He did all that He did, whether as suffering, dying, conquering, rising, and ascending into Heaven, only as so many Things, which as naturally and as truly, according to the Nature of Things, qualified Him to be the Producer, or Quickener of a Divine Life in us, as the State and Condition of Adam qualified him to make us the slavish Children of earthly, bestial Flesh and Blood. This is the comfortable Doctrine of our Redemption; nothing in God but an Infinity of Love and Goodness toward our fallen Condition; nothing in Christ, but that which had its Necessity in the Nature of Things, to make Him able to give, and us to receive, our full Salvation from Him.

I will now only add, That from the Beginning of Deism, and from the Time of Socinus, to this Day, not a Socinian or Deist has ever seen or opposed this Mystery in its true State, as is undeniably plain from all their Writings. A late Writer, who has as much Knowledge, and Zeal, and Wit in the Cause of Deism, as any of his Predecessors, is forced to attack our Redemption by giving this false Account of it.

"That a perfectly innocent Being, of the highest Order among intelligent Natures, should personate the Offender, and suffer in his Place and Stead, in order to take down the Wrath and Resentment of the Deity against the Criminal, and dispose God to show Mercy to him,—the Deist conceives to be both unnatural, and improper, and therefore not to be ascribed to God without Blasphemy." And again, "The common Notion of Redemption among Christians seems to represent the Deity in a disagreeable Light, as implacable and revengeful," &c.

What an Arrow is here, I will not say, shot beside the Mark, but shot at nothing! Because nothing of that, which he accuses is to be found in our Redemption. The God of Christians is so far from being, as he says, implacable and revengeful, that you have seen it proved from Text to Text, that the whole Form and Manner of our Redemption comes wholly from the free, antecedent, infinite Love and Goodness of God towards fallen Man. That the innocent Christ did not suffer, to quiet an angry Deity, but merely as co-operating, assisting, and uniting with that Love of God, which desired our Salvation. That He did not suffer in our Place or Stead, but only on our Account, which is a quite different Matter. And to say, that He suffered in our Place or Stead, is as absurd, as contrary to Scripture, as to say, that He rose from the Dead, and Ascended into Heaven in our Place and Stead, that we might be excused from it. For his Sufferings, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension are all of them equally on our Account, for our Sake, for our Good and Benefit, but none of them possible to be in our Stead. And as Scripture and Truth affirm, that He ascended into Heaven for us, though neither Scripture nor Truth will allow it to be in our Place and Stead, so for the same Reasons, it is strictly true, that He suffered, and died for us, though no more in our Place or Stead, nor any more desirable to be so, than his Ascension into Heaven for us should be in our Place and Stead.

I have quoted the above Passage, only to show you, that a Defender of Deism, however acute and ingenious, has not one Objection to the Doctrine of our Redemption, but what is founded on the grossest Ignorance, and total Mistake of the whole Nature of it. But when I lay this gross Ignorance to the Deists' Charge, I do not mean any natural Dullness, Want of Parts, or Incapacity in them to judge aright, but only that something or other, either Men or Books, or their own Way of Life, has hindered their seeing the true Ground and real Nature of Christianity, as it is in itself.

Eusebius. I would fain Hope, Theophilus, that from all that has been said in the Demonstration of the Fundamental Errors of the Plain Account, the Appeal to all that doubt, &c., and the rest that follow, to these Dialogues; in all which, Christianity and Deism, with their several Merits, are so plainly, and with so much good Will and Affection toward all Unbelievers, represented to them, all that are serious and well-minded amongst the Deists will be prevailed upon to reconsider the Matter. For though some People have been hasty enough to charge those Writings with Fanaticism, or Enthusiasm, as disclaiming the Use of our Reason in Religious Matters, yet this Charge can be made by none, but those who, having not read them, take up with hearsay Censures. For in those Books, from the Beginning to the End, nothing is appealed to but the

natural Light of the Mind, and the plain, known Nature of Things; no one is led, or desired to go one Step further. The Use of Reason is not only allowed, but asserted, and proved to be of the same Service to us in Things of Religion, as in Things that relate to our Senses in this World {Demonstration of Errors of the Plain Account} The true Ground, Nature, and Power of Faith is opened, by fully proving, that this Saying of Christ, "According to thy Faith, so be it done unto Thee," takes in every Individual of human Nature; and that all Men, whether Christians, Deists, Idolaters, or Atheists, are all of them equally Men of Faith, all equally, and absolutely governed by it, and therefore must have all that they have, Salvation or Damnation, strictly and solely according to their Faith {Way to Divine Knowledge} . All this is so evidently proved, that I can't help thinking, but that every considerate Reader must be forced to own it.

Theogenes. All this is well said. But let us now return to the finishing of our main Point, which was to show, that the Doctrine of a God all Love, does not only not destroy the Necessity of Christ's Death and the infinite Value and Merits of it, but is itself the fullest Proof and strongest Confirmation of both.

Theophilus. How it could enter into anyone's Head, to charge this Doctrine with destroying the Necessity and Merits of Christ's Death, is exceeding strange. For look where you will, no other Cause, or Reason of the Death of Christ, can be found but in the Love of God toward fallen Man. Nor could the Love of God will or accept of the Death of Christ, but because of its absolute Necessity, and availing Efficacy to do all that for fallen Man, which the Love of God would have to be done for him.

God did not, could not, love or like or desire the Sufferings and Death of Christ, for what they were in themselves, or as Sufferings of the highest Kind. No, the higher and greater such Sufferings had been, were they only considered in themselves, the less pleasing they had been to a God, that wills nothing but Blessing and Happiness to every Thing capable of it. But all that Christ was and did and suffered was infinitely prized, and highly acceptable to the Love of God, because all that Christ was, and did, and suffered in his own Person, was That which gave him full Power, to be a common Father of Life to all that died in Adam. Had Christ wanted anything that he was, or did, or suffered in his own Person, he could not have stood in that Relation to all Mankind as Adam had done. Had he not been given to the first fallen Man, as a Seed of the Woman, as a Light of Life, enlightening every Man that comes into the World, He could not have had his Seed in every Man, as Adam had, nor been as universal a Father of Life, as Adam was of Death. Had he not in the Fitness, or Fullness of Time, become a Man, born of a pure Virgin, the first Seed of Life in every Man, must have lain only as a Seed, and could not have come to the Fullness of the Birth of a new Man in Christ Jesus. For the Children can have no other State of Life, but that which their Father first had. And therefore Christ, as the Father of a regenerated human Race, must first stand in the Fullness of that human State, which was to be derived from him into all his Children. This is the absolute Necessity of Christ's being all that he was, before he became Man; a Necessity arising from the Nature of the Thing. Because he could not possibly have had the Relation of a Father to all Mankind, nor any Power to be a Quickener of a Life of Heaven in them, but because He was both God in himself, and a Seed of God in all of them.

Now all that Christ was, and did, and suffered, after He became Man, is from the same Necessity founded in the Nature of the Thing. He suffered on no other Account, but because that which he

came to do in, and for the human Nature, was and could be nothing else in itself, but a Work of Sufferings and Death. A crooked Line cannot become straight, but by having all its Crookedness given up, or taken from it. And there is but one Way possible in Nature for a crooked Line to lose its Crookedness.

Now the Sufferings and Death of Christ stand in this kind of Necessity. He was made Man for our Salvation, that is, He took upon Him our fallen Nature, to bring it out of its evil crooked State, and set it again in that Rectitude in which it was created.

Now there was no more two Ways of doing this, than there are two Ways of making a crooked Line to become straight.

If the Life of fallen Nature, which Christ had taken upon Him, was to be overcome by Him, then every Kind of suffering and dying, that was a giving up, or departing from the Life of fallen Nature, was just as necessary, in the Nature of the Thing, as that the Line to be made straight must give up, and Part with every Kind and Degree of its own Crookedness. And therefore the Sufferings and Death of Christ were, in the Nature of the Thing, the only possible Way of his acting contrary to, and overcoming all the Evil that was in the fallen State of Man. The Apostle saith, "The Captain of our Salvation was to be made perfect through Sufferings." This was the Ground and Reason of his Sufferings. Had he been without them, He could not have been perfect in Himself, as a Son of Man, nor the Restorer of Perfection in all Mankind. But why so? Because his Perfection, as a Son of Man, or the Captain of human Salvation, could only consist in his acting in, and with a Spirit suitable to the first created State of perfect Man; that is, He must in his Spirit be as much above all the Good and Evil of this fallen World, as the first Man was. But now, He could not show that He was of this Spirit, that He was under no Power of fallen Nature, but lived in the Perfection of the first created Man; He could not do this, but by showing, that all the Good of the earthly Life was renounced by Him, and that all the Evil which the World, the Malice of Men and Devils, could bring upon Him, could not hinder his living wholly and solely to God, and doing his Will on Earth with the same Fullness, as Angels do it in Heaven. But had there been any Evil in all fallen Nature, whether in Life, Death, or Hell, that had not attacked Him, with all its Force, He could not have been said to have overcome it. And therefore so sure as Christ, the Son of Man, was to overcome the World, Death, Hell, and Satan, so sure is it, that all the Evils which they could possibly bring upon Him, were to be felt and suffered by Him, as absolutely necessary in the Nature of the Thing, to declare his Perfection, and prove his Superiority over them. Surely, my Friend, it is now enough proved to you, how a God all Love toward fallen Man, must love, like, desire, and delight in all the Sufferings of Christ, which alone could enable Him, as a Son of Man, to undo, and reverse all that Evil, which the first Man had done to all his Posterity.

Eusebius. Oh, Sir, in what an adorable Light is this Mystery now placed. And yet in no other Light than that in which in the plain Letter of all Scripture sets it. No Wrath in God, no fictitious Atonement, no Folly of Debtor and Creditor, no suffering in Christ for Sufferings' sake, but a Christ suffering and dying, as his same Victory over Death and Hell, as when He rose from the Dead and ascended into Heaven.

Theophilus. Sure now, Eusebius, you plainly enough see wherein the infinite Merits, or the availing Efficacy, and glorious Power of the Sufferings and Death of Christ consist; since they were that, in and through which Christ himself came out of the State of fallen Nature, and got Power to give the

same Victory to all his Brethren of the human Race.

Wonder not, therefore, that the Scriptures so frequently ascribe all our Salvation to the Sufferings and Death of Christ, that we are continually referred to them, as the Wounds and Stripes by which we are healed, as the Blood by which we are washed from our Sins, as the Price (much above Gold and precious Stones) by which we are bought.

Wonder not also that in the Old Testament, its Service Sacrifices, and Ceremonies were instituted to typify, and point at the great Sacrifice of Christ, and to keep up a continual Hope, strong Expectation, and Belief of it. And that in the New Testament, the Reality, the Benefits, and glorious Effects of Christ our Passover being actually sacrificed for us, are so joyfully repeated by every Apostle.

It is because Christ, as suffering and dying, was nothing else but Christ conquering and overcoming all the false Good, and the hellish Evil, of the fallen State of Man. His Resurrection from the Grave, and Ascension into Heaven, though great in themselves, and necessary Parts of our Deliverance, were yet but the Consequences and genuine Effects of his Sufferings and Death. These were in themselves the Reality of his Conquest; all his great Work was done and effected in them and by them, and his Resurrection and Ascension were only his entering into the Possession of that, which his Sufferings and Death had gained for him.

Wonder not then, that all the true Followers of Christ, the Saints of every Age, have so gloried in the Cross of Christ, have imputed such great Things to it, have desired nothing so much, as to be Partakers of it, to live in constant Union with it. It is because his Sufferings, his Death, and Cross, were the Fullness of his Victory over all the Works of the Devil. Not an Evil in Flesh and Blood, not a Misery of Life, not a Chain of Death, not a Power of Hell and Darkness, but were all baffled, broken, and overcome by the Process of a suffering, and dying Christ. Well therefore may the Cross of Christ be the Glory of Christians.

Eusebius. This Matter is so solidly and fully cleared up, that I am almost ashamed to ask you any Thing further about it. Yet explain a little more, if you please, how it is, that the Sufferings and Death of Christ, gave Him Power to become a common Father of Life to all that died in Adam. Or how it is, that we, by Virtue of them, have Victory over all the Evil of our fallen State.

Theophilus. You are to know, Eusebius, that the Christian Religion is no arbitrary System of Divine worship, but is the one true, real, and only Religion of Nature; that is, it is wholly founded in the Nature of Things, has nothing in it supernatural or contrary to the Powers and Demands of Nature; but all that it does, is only in, and by, and according to the Workings and Possibilities of Nature. A Religion that is not founded in Nature, is all Fiction and Falsity, and as mere a nothing as an Idol. For as no Creature can be, or have any Thing, but what it is and has from the Nature of Things, nor have any Thing done to it, Good or Harm, but according to the unalterable Workings of Nature, so no Religion can be of any Service, but that which works with and according to the Demands of Nature. Nor can any fallen Creature be raised out of its fallen State, even by the Omnipotence of God, but according to the Nature of Things, or the unchangeable Powers of Nature; for Nature is the Opening and Manifestation of the Divine Omnipotence; it is God's Power-world; and therefore all that God doth, is and must be done in and by the Powers of Nature. God, though omnipotent, can give no Existence to any Creature, but it must have that Existence in Space and Time.— Time

cometh out of the Eternity, and Space cometh out of the Infinity of God—God hath an omnipotent Power over them, in them, and with them, to make both of them set forth and manifest the Wonders of his supernatural Deity. Yet Time can only be subservient to the Omnipotence of God, according to the Nature of Time; and Space can only obey his Will, according to the Nature of Space; but neither of them can, by any Power, be made to be in a supernatural State, or be any Thing but what they are in their own Nature.

Now Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, True and False, Happiness and Misery, are as unchangeable in Nature, as Time, and Space. And every State and Quality that is creaturely, or that can belong to any Creature, has its own Nature, as unchangeably as Time and Space have theirs.

Nothing therefore can be done to any Creature supernaturally, or in a Way that is without, or contrary to the Powers of Nature; but every Thing or Creature that is to be helped, that is to have any Good done to it, or any Evil taken out of it, can only have it done so far, as the Powers of Nature are able and rightly directed to effect it. And this is the true Ground of all Divine Revelation, or that Help which the supernatural Deity vouchsafes to the fallen State of Man. It is not to appoint an arbitrary System of religious Homage to God, but solely to point out, and provide for Man, blinded by his fallen State, that one only Religion, that, according to the Nature of Things, can possibly restore to him his lost Perfection. This is the Truth, the Goodness, and the Necessity of the Christian Religion; it is true, and good, and necessary, because it is as much the one only natural and possible Way of overcoming all the Evil of fallen Man, as Light is the one only natural, possible Thing that can expel Darkness. And therefore it is, that all the Mysteries of the Gospel, however high, are yet true and necessary Parts of the one Religion of Nature; because they are no higher, nor otherwise, than the natural State of fallen Man absolutely stands in Need of. His Nature cannot be helped, or raised out of the Evils of its present State, by any Thing less than these Mysteries; and therefore, they are in the same Truth and Justness to be called his natural Religion, as that Remedy which alone has full Power to remove all the Evil of a Disease, may be justly called its natural Remedy. For a Religion is not to be deemed natural, because it has nothing to do with Revelation; but then is it the one true Religion of Nature, when it has every Thing in it that our natural State stands in need of; every Thing that can help us out of our present Evil, and raise and exalt us to all the Happiness which our Nature is capable of having. Supposing, therefore, the Christian scheme of Redemption to be all that, and nothing else in itself, but that which the Nature of Things absolutely requires it to be, it must, for that very Reason, have its Mysteries. For the fallen, corrupt, mortal State of Man, absolutely requires these two Things as its only Salvation. First, the Divine Life, or the Life of God, must be revived in the Soul of Man. Secondly, there must be a Resurrection of the Body in a better State after Death. Now nothing in the Power of Man, or in the Things of this World, can effect this Salvation. If, therefore, this is to be the Salvation of Man, then some Interposition of the Deity is absolutely necessary, in the Nature of the Thing, or Man can have no Religion that is sufficiently natural; that is to say, no Religion that is sufficient, or equal to the Wants of his Nature.

Now this necessary Interposition of the Deity, though doing nothing but in a natural Way, or according to the Nature of Things, must be mysterious to Man, because it is doing something more and higher than his Senses or Reason ever saw done, or possible to be done, either by himself, or any of the Powers of this World. And this is the true Ground and Nature of the Mysteries of

Christian Redemption. They are, in themselves, nothing else but what the Nature of Things requires them to be, as natural, efficacious Means of our Salvation, and all their Power is in a natural Way, or true Fitness of Cause for its Effect; but they are mysterious to Man, because brought into the Scheme of our Redemption by the Interposition of God, to work in a Way and manner above, and superior to all that is seen and done in the Things of the World. The Mysteries, therefore, of the Gospel are so far from showing the Gospel not to be the one true Religion of Nature, that they are the greatest Proof of it, since they are that alone which can help Man to all that good which his natural State wants to have done to it. For instance, if the Salvation of Man absolutely requires the Revival or Restoration of the Divine Life in the human Nature, then nothing can be the one, sufficient, true Religion of Nature, but that which has a natural Power to do this.

What a Grossness of Error is it, therefore, to blame that Doctrine which asserts the Incarnation of the Son of God, or the Necessity of the Word being made Flesh, when in the Nature of the Thing, nothing else but this very Mystery can be the natural, efficacious Cause of the Renewal of the Divine Life in the human Nature, or have any natural Efficacy to effect our Salvation?

Having now, Eusebius, established this Ground, that nothing is, or can be a Part of true, natural Religion, or have any real Efficacy, as a Means of Salvation, but only that which has its Efficacy in and from the Nature of Things, or in the natural Fitness of Cause to produce its Effect, you are brought into the clear View of this Truth, viz., That the Religion of Deism is false, and vain, and visionary, and to be rejected by every Man as the mere enthusiastic, fanatic Product of pure Imagination; and all for this plain Reason, because it quite disregards the Nature of Things, stands wholly upon a supernatural Ground, and goes as much above and as directly contrary to the Powers of Nature, as that Faith that trusts in, and prays to a wooden God.

I say not this (as is too commonly done) in the Spirit of Accusation, or to raise an Odium. No, by no Means. I have the utmost Aversion to such a Procedure; I would no more bring a false Charge against the Deist, than I would bear false Witness against an Apostle. And I desire to have no other Temper, Spirit or Behaviour toward them, but such as the loving God with all my Heart, and loving them as I Love myself, requires of me. And in this Spirit of Love, I charge them with visionary Faith, and enthusiastic Religion; and only so far, as I have from Time to Time proved, that they trust to be saved by that, which according to the unchangeable Nature of Things can have no Power of Salvation in it. For a Religion, not grounded in the Power and Nature of Things, is unnatural, supernatural, superrational, and is rightly called either Enthusiasm, Vision, Fanaticism, Superstition, or Idolatry, just as you please. For all these are but different Names for one and the same religious Delusion. And every Religion is this Delusion, but that one Religion which is required by, and has its Efficacy in and from the unchangeable Nature of Things. And thus stands the Matter betwixt the Deists and myself. If I knew how to do them or the Subject more Justice, I would gladly do it; having no Desire, either for them or myself, but that we may all of us be delivered from every Thing that separates us from God, all equal Sharers of every Blessing that He has for human Nature, all united in that Spirit of Love and Goodness for which he created us, and all blessed with that Faith and Hope to which the God of Love has called us, as the one, only, possible, natural, and full Means of ever finding ourselves saved, and redeemed from all the Evils both of Time and Eternity. And now, Eusebius, upon this Ground, viz., (1) That there is but one true Religion, and that it is the Religion of Nature. (2) That a Religion has no Pretense to be considered as the Religion of Nature, because it rejects Divine Revelation, and has only human

Reason for its Guide, but wholly and solely because it has every Good in it that the natural State of Man wants, and can receive from Religion. (3) That nothing can be any religious Good, or have any real Efficacy, as a Means of Salvation, but only that which has its Efficacy in and from the natural Power of Things, or the Fitness and Sufficiency of Cause to produce its Effect. (4) That the Religion of the Gospel, in all its Mysteries and Doctrines, is wholly grounded in the natural Powers of Things, and their Fitness to produce their Effects. Upon this Ground I come to answer your Question, viz., How it is that the Sufferings and Death of Christ gave Him full Power to become a common Father of Life to all those that died in Adam? Or how it is that we, by Virtue of them, are delivered out of all the Evils of our fallen State? The Sufferings and Death of Christ have no supernatural Effect that is above, or contrary to Nature; because the Thing itself is impossible. For a Thing is only therefore impossible, because the Nature of Things will not allow it. The Fall of all Mankind in Adam is no supernatural Event or Effect, but the natural and necessary Consequence of our Relation to him. Could Adam at his Fall into this earthly Life have absolutely overcome every Power of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, in the same Spirit as Christ did, he had been his own Redeemer, had risen out of his Fall, and ascended into Paradise, and been the Father of a paradisiacal Offspring, just as Christ, when He had overcome them all, rose from the Dead, and ascended into Heaven. But Adam did not do this, because it was as impossible, in the Nature of the Thing, as for a Beast to raise itself into an Angel. If therefore Man is to come out of his fallen State, there must be something found out that, according to the Nature of Things, hath Power to effect it. For it can no more be done supernaturally by any Thing else, than it could by Adam.

Now the Matter stood thus: The Seed of all Mankind was in the Loins of fallen Adam. This was unalterable in the Nature of the Thing, and therefore all Mankind must come forth in his fallen State.

Neither can they ever be in any State whatever, whether earthly or heavenly, but by having an earthly Man, or a heavenly Man for their Father. For Mankind, as such, must of all Necessity be born of, and have that Nature which it hath from a Man. And this is the true Ground, and absolute Necessity of the one Mediator, the Man Christ Jesus. For seeing Mankind, as such, must have that Birth and Nature which they have from Man; seeing they never could have had any Relation to Paradise, or any Possibility of partaking of it, but because they had a paradisiacal Man for their Father, nor could have had any Relation to this earthly World, or any Possibility of being born earthly, but because they had an earthly Man for their Father; and seeing all this must be unalterably so forever, it plainly follows, that there was an utter Impossibility for the Seed of Adam ever to come out of its fallen State, or ever have another or better Life, than they had from Adam, unless such a Son of Man could be brought into Existence, as had the same Relation to all Mankind as Adam had, was as much in them all as Adam was, and had as full Power according to the Nature of Things, to give a heavenly Life to all the Seed in Adam's loins, as Adam had to bring them forth in earthly Flesh and Blood. And now, Sir, that Christ was this very Son of Man, standing in the same Fullness of Relation to all Mankind as Adam did, having his Seed as really in them all, as Adam had, and as truly and fully qualified, according to the Nature of Things, to be a common and universal Father of Life, as Adam was of Death to all the human Race, shall in a Word or two be made as plain and undeniable, as that two and two are four. The Doctrine of our Redemption absolutely asserts, that the Seed of Christ was sown into the first fallen Father of Mankind, called the Seed of the Woman, the Bruiser of the Serpent, the ingrafted Word of Life, called again in the

Gospel, that Light which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World. Therefore Christ was in all Men, in that same Fullness of Relation of a Father to all Mankind, as the first Adam was. Secondly, Christ was born of Adam's Flesh and Blood, took the human Nature upon him, and therefore stood as a human Creature in the same Relation to Mankind, as Adam did. Nothing therefore was further wanting in Christ, to make him as truly a natural Father of Life to all Mankind, as Adam was at first, but God's Appointment of him to that End. For as Adam could not have been the natural Father of Mankind, but because God created and appointed him for that End, so Christ could not have been the natural Regenerator, or Redeemer of a heavenly Life that was lost in all Mankind, but because God had appointed and brought him into the World for that End. Now that God did this, that Christ came into the World by Divine Appointment, to be the Saviour, the Resurrection and Life of all Mankind, is a Truth as evident from Scripture, as that Adam was the first Man. And thus it appears, in the utmost degree of Plainness and Certainty, that Christ in his single Person was, according to the Nature of Things, as fully qualified to be a common Redeemer, as Adam was, in his single Person, to be a common Father of all Mankind. He had his Seed in all Mankind, as Adam had. He had the human Nature, as Adam had. And He had the same Divine Appointment as Adam had. But Christ, however qualified to be our Redeemer, could not be actually such, till He had gone through, and done all that, by which our Redemption was to be effected.

Adam, however qualified, yet could not be the Father of a paradisiacal Offspring, till he had stood out his Trial, and fixed Himself victorious over every Thing that could make Trial of Him. In like manner, Christ, however qualified, could not be the Redeemer of all Mankind, till he had also stood out his Trial, had overcome all That by which Adam was overcome, and had fixed Himself triumphantly in that Paradise which Adam had lost.

Now as Adam's Trial was, Whether he would keep Himself in his paradisiacal State, above and free from all that was Good and Evil in this earthly World? So Christ's trial was, Whether, as a Son of Man, and loaded with the Infirmities of fallen Adam, sacrificed to all that which the Rage and Malice of the World, Hell, and Devils could possibly do to him; whether He in the midst of all these Evils, could live and die with his Spirit as contrary to them, as much above them, as unhurt by them, as Adam should have lived in Paradise? And then it was, that every Thing which had overcome Adam, was overcome by Christ; and Christ's Victory did, in the Nature of the Thing, as certainly and fully open an Entrance for Him, and all his Seed into Paradise, as Adam's Fall cast him and all his Seed into the Prison and Captivity of this earthly, bestial World.

Nothing supernatural came to pass in either Case, but Paradise lost, and Paradise regained, according to the Nature of Things, or the real Efficacy of Cause to produce its Effects.

Thus is your Question fully answered; viz., How and why the Sufferings and Death of Christ enabled him to be the Author of Life to all that died in Adam? Just as the Fall of Adam into this World, under the Power of Sin, Death, Hell, and the Devil, enabled him to be the common Father of Death, or was the natural, unavoidable Cause of our being born under the same Captivity; just so, that Life, and Sufferings, and Death of Christ, which declared his breaking out from them, and Superiority over them, must in the Nature of the Thing as much enable Him to be the common Author of Life, that is, must as certainly be the full, natural, efficacious Cause of our inheriting Life from Him. Because, by what Christ was in Himself, by what He was in us, by his whole State, Character, and the Divine Appointment, we all had that natural Union with Him, and Dependence

upon Him, as our Head in the Way of Redemption, as we had with Adam as our Head in the Way of our natural Birth. So that as it must be said, that because Adam fell, we must of all Necessity be Heirs of his fallen State, so with the same Truth and from the same Necessity of the Thing, it must be said, that because Christ our Head is risen victorious out of our fallen State, we as his Members, and having his Seed within us, must be and are made Heirs of all his Glory. Because in all Respects we are as strictly, as intimately connected with, and related to Him as the one Redeemer, as we are to Adam as the one Father of all Mankind. So that Christ by his Sufferings and Death become in all of us our Wisdom, our Righteousness, our Justification and Redemption, is the same sober and solid Truth, as Adam by his Fall become in all of us our Foolishness, our Impurity, our Corruption, and Death. And now, my Friends, look back upon all that has been said, and then tell me, Is it possible more to exalt or magnify the infinite Merits, and availing Efficacy of the Sufferings and Death of Christ, than is done by this doctrine? Or whether every Thing that is said of them in Scripture, is not here proved, from the very Nature of the Thing, to be absolutely true? And again, Whether it is not sufficiently proved to you, that the Sufferings and Death of Christ are not only consistent with the Doctrine of a God all Love, but are the fullest and most absolute Proof of it?

Eusebius. Indeed, Theophilus, you have so fully done for us all that we wanted to have done, that we are now ready to take Leave of you. As for my Part, I want to return Home to enjoy my Bible, and delight myself with reading it in this comfortable Light, in which you have set the whole Ground and Nature of our Redemption. I am now in full Possession of this glorious Truth, that God is mere Love, the most glorious Truth that can possess and edify the Heart of Man. It drives every Evil out of the Soul, and gives Life to every Spark of Goodness that can possibly be kindled in it. Everything in Religion is made amiable, by being a Service of Love to the God of Love. No Sacrifices, Sufferings, and Death, have any Place in Religion, but to satisfy and fulfill that Love of God, which could not be satisfied without our Salvation. If the Son of God is not spared, if He is delivered up to the Rage and Malice of Men, Devils, and Hell, it is because, had we not had such a Captain of our Salvation made perfect through Sufferings, it never could have been sung, "Oh Death, where is thy Sting, Oh Grave, where is thy Victory!" It never could have been true, that "as by one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, so by one Man came the Resurrection of the Dead." It never could have been said " that as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Therefore, dear Theophilus, adieu. God is Love, and He that hath learnt to live in the Spirit of Love, hath learnt to live and dwell in God. Love was the Beginner of all the Works of God, and from Eternity to Eternity nothing can come from God, but a Variety of Wonders, and Works of Love, over all Nature and Creature.

Theophilus. God prosper, Eusebius, this Spark of Heaven in your Soul. May it, like the Seraphim's Coal taken from the Altar, purify your Heart from all its Uncleaness. But before you leave me, I beg one more Conversation to be on the practical Part of the Spirit of Love, that so Doctrine and Practice, hearing and doing, may go Hand in Hand. The End of the Second DIALOGUE

08.02.03 Part 2 3-Third Dialogue

THE

THIRD DIALOGUE

BETWEEN Theogenes, Eusebius, and Theophilus.

Eusebius. You have shown great Good-will toward us, Theophilus, in desiring another Meeting before we leave you. But yet I seem to myself to have no Need of that which you have proposed by this Day's Conversation. For this Doctrine of the Spirit of Love cannot have more Power over me, or be more deeply rooted in me; than it is already. It has so gained and got Possession of my whole Heart, that every Thing else must be under its Dominion. I can do nothing else but love; it is my whole Nature. I have no Taste for any Thing else. Can this Matter be carried higher in Practice?

Theophilus. No higher, Eusebius. And was this the true State of your Heart, you would bid fair to leave the World as Elijah did; or like Enoch to have it said of you, that you lived wholly to love, and was not. For was there nothing but this Divine Love alive in you, your fallen Flesh and Blood would be in Danger of being quite burnt up by it. What you have said of yourself, you have spoken in great Sincerity, but in a total Ignorance of yourself, and the true Nature of the Spirit of Divine Love. You are as yet only charmed with the Sight, or rather the Sound of it; its real Birth is as yet unfelt, and unfound in you. Your natural Complexion has a great deal of the animal Meekness and Softness of the Lamb and the Dove, your Blood and Spirit are of this Turn; and therefore a God all Love, and a Religion all Love, quite transport you; and you are so delighted with it, that you fancy you have nothing in you but this God and Religion of Love. But, my Friend, bear with me, if I tell you, that all this is only the good Part of the Spirit of this bestial World in you, and may be in any unregenerate Man, that is of your Complexion. It is so far from being a genuine Fruit of Divine Love, that if it be not well looked to, it may prove a real Hindrance of it, as it oftentimes does, by its appearing to be that which it is not.

You have quite forgot all that was said in the Letter to you on the Spirit of Love, that it is a Birth in the Soul, that can only come forth in its proper Time and Place, and from its proper Causes. Now nothing that is a Birth can be taken in, or brought into the Soul by any notional Conception, or delightful Apprehension of it. You may love it as much as you please, think it the most charming Thing in the World, fancy everything but Dross and Dung in Comparison of it, and yet have no more of its Birth in you, than the blind Man has of that Light, of which he has got a most charming Notion. His Blindness still continues the same; he is at the same Distance from the Light, because Light can only be had by a Birth of itself in seeing Eyes. It is thus with the Spirit of Love; it is nowhere, but where it rises up as a Birth.

Eusebius. But if I am got no further than this, what Good have I from giving in so heartily to all that you have said of this Doctrine? And to what End have you taken so much Pains to assert and establish it?

Theophilus. Your Error lies in this; you confound two Things, which are entirely distinct from each other. You make no Difference betwixt the Doctrine that only sets forth the Nature, Excellence, and Necessity of the Spirit of Love, and the Spirit of Love itself; which yet are two Things so different, that you may be quite full of the former, and at the same Time quite empty of the latter. I have said every Thing that I could, to show you the Truth, Excellence, and Necessity of the Spirit of Love. It is of infinite Importance to you to be well established in the Belief of this Doctrine. But all that I have said of it, is only to induce and encourage you to buy it, at its own Price and to give all that for it, which alone can purchase it. But if you think (as you plainly do) that you have got it, because you are so highly pleased with that which you have heard of it, you only embrace the Shadow, instead of the Substance, of that which you ought to have.

Eusebius. What is the Price that I must give for it?

Theophilus. You must give up all that you are, and all that you have from fallen Adam; for all that you are and have from him is that Life of Flesh and Blood, which cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.

Adam, after his Fall, had nothing that was good in him, nothing that could inherit an eternal Life in Heaven, but the Bruiser of the Serpent, or the Seed of the Son of God that was reserved, and treasured up in his Soul. Every Thing else in him was devoted to Death, that this incorruptible Seed of the Word might grow up into a new Name in Christ Jesus.

All the Doctrine of God's Reprobation and Election relates wholly and solely to these two Things, viz., the earthly bestial Nature from Adam, and the incorruptible Seed of the Word, or Immanuel in every Man.

Nothing is elected, is foreseen, predestinated, or called according to the Purpose of God, but this Seed of the new Man, because the one eternal, unchangeable Purpose of God towards Man is only this, namely, that Man should be a heavenly Image, or Son of God. And therefore nothing can be elected, or called according to the Purpose of God, but this Seed of a heavenly Birth, because nothing else is able to answer, and fulfill the Purpose of God. But every Thing else that is in Man, his whole earthly, bestial Nature, is from Sin and is quite contrary to God's Purpose in the Creation of Man. On the other Hand, nothing is reprobated, rejected, or cast out by God, but the earthly Nature which came from the Fall of Adam. This is the only Vessel of Wrath, the Son of Perdition, that can have no Share in the Promises and Blessings of God.

Here you have the whole unalterable Ground of Divine Election and Reprobation; it relates not to any particular Number of People or Division of Mankind, but solely to the two Natures that are, both of them, without Exception, in every Individual of Mankind. All that is earthly, serpentine, and devilish in every Man, is reprobated and doomed to Destruction; and the heavenly Seed of the new Birth in every Man, is That which is chosen, ordained, and called to eternal Life.

Election therefore and Reprobation, as respecting Salvation, equally relate to every Man in the World; because every Man, as such, hath That in him which only is elected, and that in him which only is reprobated, namely, the earthly Nature, and the heavenly Seed of the Word of God.

Now all this is evident, from the very Nature of the Thing. As soon as you but suppose Man at his Fall to have a Power of Redemption, or Deliverance from the Evil of his fallen Nature, engrafted

into him, you then have the first unchangeable Ground of Election and Reprobation; you are infallibly shown what it is that God elects and reprobates, and the absolute Impossibility of any Thing else being reprobated by God, but that fallen, evil Nature from which he is to be redeemed, or of any Thing else being elected by God, but that Seed of a new Birth, which is to bring forth his Redemption.

Here therefore you have a full Deliverance from all Perplexity upon this Matter, and may rest yourself upon this great, comfortable, and most certain Truth, that no other Election or Reprobation, with regard to Salvation, ever did, or can belong to any one individual Son of Adam, but that very same Election and Reprobation, which both of them happened to, and took Place in Adam's individual Person. For all that which was in Adam, both as fallen and redeemed, must of all Necessity be in every Son of Adam; and no Man can possibly stand in any other Relation to God than Adam did, and therefore cannot have either more or less, or any other Divine Election and Reprobation than Adam had. For from the Moment of Man's Redemption, which began at the Fall, when the incorruptible Seed of the Word was given into Adam, every Son of Adam, to the End of the World, must come into it, under one and the same Election and Reprobation with Regard to God. Because the whole earthly Nature, from which Man was to be redeemed, and the Seed of the Word, by which he was to be redeemed, were both of them in every Man, one as certainly as the other.

Now this being the inward, essential State of every Man born into the World, having in himself all that is elected and all that is reprobated by God, hence it is that in order to publish the Truth and Certainty of such Election and Reprobation, and the Truth and Certainty of that two-fold Nature in Man, on which it is grounded, hence it is that the Spirit of God in holy Scripture, represents this Matter to us by such outward Figures, as are yet in themselves not figurative, but real Proofs of it. This is first of all done under the Figures of Cain and Abel, the two first Births from Adam, where the one is murdered by the other, hereby demonstrating to us, by this Contrariety and Difference of these two first Births, the inward real State of the Father of them, namely, that the same two-fold Nature was in him, that discovered itself in these two first Births from him. The same Thing is, age after age set forth in Variety of Figures, more especially Ishmael and Isaac, in Esau and Jacob. And all this, only further to confirm and establish this great Truth, viz., That such Strife and Contrariety as appeared in the Sons of the same Father, were not only outward Representations, but full Proofs of that inward Strife and Contrariety, which not only existed in their Fathers, but universally in every human Creature. For Cain and Abel had not come from Adam, but because both their Natures were antecedently in him, and in the same State of Opposition and Contrariety to each other. And as Cain and Abel were no other than the genuine Effects of the two-fold State, which Adam as fallen and redeemed, was then in, so every Man, descended from Adam, is in himself infallibly all that which Adam was, and has as certainly his own Cain and Abel within himself as Adam had. And from the Beginning to the End of the human Race, all that which came to pass so remarkably in the Births of Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, all that same, some Way or other, more or less, comes to pass in every Individual of Mankind. In one Man, his own Abel is murdered by his own Cain, and in another, his own Jacob overcomes his own Esau that was born with him. And all the Good or the Evil that we bring forth in our Lives, is from nothing else, but from the Strife of these two Natures within us, and their Victory over one another. Which Strife, no Son of Adam could ever have known anything of, had not the free Grace

and Mercy of God chosen and called all Mankind to a new Birth of Heaven within them, out of their corrupt and fallen Souls. No possible War, or Strife of Good against Evil, could be in fallen Man, but by his having from God a Seed of Life in him, ordained and predestinated to overcome his earthly Nature. For that which is put into him by God, as the Power of his Redemption, must be contrary to that from which he is to be redeemed. And thus a War of Good against Evil, set up within us, by the free Grace and Mercy of God to us, is the greatest of all Demonstrations, that there is but one Election, and but one Reprobation, and that all that God rejects and reprobates, is nothing else but that corrupt Nature which every individual Man, Abel as well as Cain, has in himself from Adam as fallen; and that all that God elects, predestinates, calls, justifies, and glorifies, is nothing else but that heavenly Seed, which every individual Man, Pharaoh as well as Moses, has in himself from Adam, as redeemed. And thus you have an unerring Key to all that is said in Scripture of the Election falling upon Abel, Isaac, and Jacob, &c., and of the Reprobation falling upon Cain, Ishmael, and Esau; not because God has Respect to Persons, or that all Men did not stand before him in the same Covenant of Redemption; but the Scriptures speak thus, that the true Nature of God's Election and Reprobation may thereby be made manifest to the World. For the earthly Nature, which God only reprobates, having broke forth in Predominance in Cain, Ishmael, and Esau, they became proper Figures of that which God reprobates, and were used by God as such. And the heavenly Seed, which is alone elected to eternal Glory, having broken forth in Predominance in Abel, Isaac, Jacob, &c., they became proper Figures of that which God only elects, and were used by God as such.

Nothing is here to be understood personally, or according to the Flesh of these Persons on either Side; but all that is said of them is only as they are Figures of the earthly Nature, and heavenly Seed in every Man. For nothing is reprobated in Cain, but that very same which is reprobated in Abel, viz., the earthly Nature; nor is anything elected in Jacob but that very same which is equally elected in Esau, viz., the heavenly Seed. And now, Gentlemen, you may easily apprehend, how and why a God, in whose holy Deity no Spark of Wrath or Partiality can possibly arise, but who is from Eternity to Eternity only flowing forth in Love, Goodness, and Blessing to every Thing capable of it, could yet say of the Children, before they were born, or had done either Good or Evil, 'Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated. It is because Esau signifies the earthly, bestial Nature, that came from Sin; and Jacob signifies the incorruptible Seed of the Word that is to overcome Esau and change his Mortal into Immortality. But now I stop, for you may perhaps think that I have here made a Digression from our proposed Subject.

Eusebius. A Digression you may call it, if you please, Theophilus, but it is such a Digression, as has entirely prevented my ever having one more anxious Thought about God's Decrees of Election and Reprobation. The Matter now stands in open Daylight, notwithstanding that Thickness of learned Darkness, under which it has been hidden, from the Time of St. Austin to this Day. And now, Sir, proceed as you please, to lay open all my Defects, in the Spirit of Love; for I am earnestly desirous of being set right in so important a Matter.

Theogenes. Let me first observe to Theophilus, that I am afraid the Matter is much worse with me, than it is with you. For though this Doctrine seems to have got all my Heart, as it is a Doctrine, yet I am continually thrown out of it in Practice, and find myself as daily under the Power of my old Tempers and Passions, as I was before I was so full of this Doctrine.

Theophilus. You are to know, my Friends, that every Kind of Virtue and Goodness may be brought into us by two different Ways. They may be taught us outwardly by Men, by Rules and Precepts; and they may be inwardly born in us, as the genuine Birth of our own renewed Spirit. In the former Way, as we learn them only from Men, by Rules and Documents of Instruction, they at best only change our outward Behaviour and leave our Heart in its natural State, and only put our Passions under a forced Restraint, which will occasionally break forth in spite of the dead Letter of Precept and Doctrine. Now this Way of Learning and attaining Goodness, though thus imperfect, is yet absolutely necessary, in the Nature of the Thing, and must first have its Time, and Place, and Work in us; yet it is only for a Time, as the Law was a Schoolmaster to the Gospel. We must first be Babes in Doctrine, as well as in Strength, before we can be Men. But of all this outward Instruction, whether from good Men, or the Letter of Scripture, it must be said, as the Apostle saith of the Law, "that it maketh nothing perfect;" and yet is highly necessary in order to Perfection. The true Perfection and Profitableness of the holy written Word of God is fully set forth by St. Paul to Timothy: "From a Child," saith he, "thou hast known the Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto Salvation, which is by Faith in Christ Jesus." Now these Scriptures were the Law and the Prophets, for Timothy had known no other from his Youth. And as they, so all other Scriptures since, have no other Good or Benefit in them, but as they lead and direct us to a Salvation, that is not to be had in themselves, but from Faith in Christ Jesus. Their Teaching is only to teach us, where to seek and to find the Fountain and Source of all Light and Knowledge. Of the Law, saith the Apostle, "it was a Schoolmaster to Christ:" Of the Prophets, he saith the same. "Ye have," says he, "a more sure Word of Prophecy, whereunto you do well, that ye take Heed, as unto a Light that shineth in a dark Place, until the Day dawn, and the Day-Star ariseth in your Hearts." The same Thing is to be affirmed of the Letter of the New Testament; it is but our Schoolmaster unto Christ, a Light like that of Prophecy, to which we are to take great Heed, until Christ, as the Dawning of the Day, or the Day-Star, ariseth in our Hearts. Nor can the Thing possibly be otherwise; no Instruction that comes under the Form of Words can do more for us, than Sounds and Words can do; they can only direct us to something that is better than themselves, that can be the true Light, Life, Spirit, and Power of Holiness in us.

Eusebius. I cannot deny what you say, and yet it seems to me to derogate from Scripture.

Theophilus. Would you then have me to say, that the written Word of God is that Word of God which liveth and abideth forever; that Word, which is the Wisdom and Power of God; that Word, which was with God, which was God, by whom all Things were made; that Word of God, which was made Flesh for the Redemption of the World; that Word of God, of which we must be born again; that Word which lighteth every Man, that cometh into the World; that Word, which in Christ Jesus is become Wisdom, and Righteousness, and Sanctification in us; would you have me say, that all this is to be understood of the written Word of God? But if this cannot possibly be, then all that I have said is granted, namely, that Jesus is alone that Word of God, that can be the Light, Life, and Salvation of fallen Man. Or how is it possible more to exalt the Letter of Scripture, than by owning it to be a true, outward, verbal Direction to the one only true Light, and Salvation of Man?

Suppose you had been a true Disciple of John the Baptist, whose only Office was to prepare the Way to Christ, how could you have more magnified his Office, or declared your Fidelity to him, than by going from his Teaching, to be taught by that Christ to whom he directed you? The Baptist was indeed a burning and a shining Light, and so are the holy Scriptures; "but he was not that

Light, but was sent to bear Witness to that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every Man, that cometh into the World."

What a Folly would it be, to say that you had undervalued the Office and Character of John the Baptist, because he was not allowed to be the Light itself, but only a true Witness of it, and Guide to it? Now if you can show, that the written Word in the Bible can have any other, or higher Office, or Power, than such a ministerial one as the Baptist had, I am ready to hear you.

Eusebius. There is no Possibility of doing that.

Theophilus. But if that is not possible to be done, then you are come to the full Proof of this Point, viz., that there are two Ways of attaining Knowledge, Goodness, Virtue, &c., the one by the Ministry of outward, verbal Instruction, either by Men or Books, and the other by an inward Birth of Divine Light, Goodness, and Virtue, in our own renewed Spirit: and that the former is only in order to the latter, and of no Benefit to us, but as it carries us further than itself, to be united in Heart and Spirit with the Light, and Word, and Spirit of God. Just as the Baptist had been of no Benefit to his Disciples, unless he had been their Guide from himself to Christ. But to come now closer to our Subject in Hand. From this two-fold Light, or Teaching, there necessarily arises a two-fold State of Virtue and Goodness. For such as the Teacher, or Teaching is, such is the State and Manner of the Goodness, that can be had from it. Every Effect must be according to the Cause that produces it. If you learn Virtue and Goodness only from outward Means, from Men, or Books, you may be virtuous and good according to Time, and Place, and outward Forms; you may do Works of Humility, Works of Love and Benevolence, use Times and Forms of Prayer; all this Virtue and Goodness is suitable to this Kind of Teaching, and may very well be had from it. But the Spirit of Prayer, the Spirit of Love, and the Spirit of Humility, or of any other Virtue, are only to be attained by the Operation of the Light and Spirit of God, not outwardly teaching, but inwardly bringing forth a new-born Spirit within us. And now let me tell you both, that it is much to be feared that you as yet stand only under this outward Teaching; your good Works are only done under Obedience to such Rules, Precepts, and Doctrines, as your Reason assents to, but are not the Fruits of a new-born Spirit within you. But till you are thus renewed in the Spirit of your Minds, your Virtues are only taught Practices, and grafted upon a corrupt Bottom. Every-thing you do will be a mixture of good and bad; your Humility will help you to Pride, your Charity to others will give Nourishment to your own Self-Love; and as your Prayers increase, so will the Opinion of your own Sanctity. Because, till the Heart is purified to the Bottom, and has felt the Axe at the Root of its Evil (which cannot be done by outward Instruction) every Thing that proceeds from it partakes of its Impurity and Corruption.

Now that Theogenes is only under the Law, or outward Instruction, is too plain from the Complaint that he made of himself. For notwithstanding his Progress in the Doctrine of Love, he finds all the Passions of his corrupt Nature still alive in him, and himself only altered in Doctrine and Opinion. The same may well be suspected of you, Eusebius, who are so mistaken in the Spirit of Love, that you fancy yourself to be wholly possessed of it, from no other Ground, but because you embrace it, as it were, with open Arms, and think of nothing but living under the Power of it. Whereas, if the Spirit of Love was really born in you from its own Seed, you would account for its Birth, and Power in you, in quite another Manner than you have here done; you would have known the Price that you had paid for it, and how many Deaths you had suffered, before the Spirit of Love came to Life

in you.

Eusebius. But surely, Sir, imperfect as our Virtues are, we may yet, I hope, be truly said to be in a State of Grace; and if so, we are under something more than mere outward Instruction. Besides, you very well know, that it is a Principle with both of us, to expect all our Goodness from the Spirit of God dwelling and working in us. We live in Faith and Hope of the Divine Operation; and therefore I must needs say, that your Censure upon us seems to be more severe than just.

Theophilus. Dear Eusebius, I censure neither of you, nor have I said one Word by Way of Accusation. So far from it, that I love and approve the State you are both in. It is good and happy for Theogenes, that he feels and confesses, that his natural Tempers are not yet subdued by Doctrine and Precept. It is good and happy for you also, that you are so highly delighted with the Doctrine of Love, for by this means each of you have your true Preparation for further Advancement. And though your State has this Difference, yet the same Error was common to both of you. You both of you thought, you had as much of the Spirit of Love as you could, or ought to have; and therefore Theogenes wondered he had no more Benefit from it; and you wondered that I should desire to lead you further into it. And therefore, to deliver you from this Error, I have desired this Conference upon the practical Ground of the Spirit of Love, that you may neither of you lose the Benefit of that good State in which you stand.

Eusebius. Pray therefore proceed as you please. For we have nothing so much at Heart, as to have the Truth and Purity of this Divine Love brought forth in us. For as it is the highest Perfection that I adore in God, so I can neither wish nor desire any Thing for myself, but to be totally governed by it. I could as willingly consent to lose all my Being, as to find the Power of Love lost in my Soul. Neither Doctrine, nor Mystery, nor Precept has any Delight for me, but as it calls forth the Birth, and Growth, and Exercise of that Spirit, which doth all that it doth, toward God and Man, under the one Law of Love. Whatever therefore you can say to me, either to increase the Power, manifest the Defects, or remove the Impediments of Divine Love in my Soul, will be heartily welcome to me.

Theophilus. I apprehend that you don't yet know what Divine Love is in itself, nor what is its Nature and Power in the Soul of Man. For Divine Love is perfect Peace and Joy, it is a Freedom from all Disquiet, it is all Content and mere Happiness; and makes every Thing to rejoice in itself. Love is the Christ of God; wherever it comes, it comes as the Blessing and Happiness of every natural Life, as the Restorer of every lost Perfection, a Redeemer from all Evil, a Fulfiller of all Righteousness, and a Peace of God which passeth all Understanding. Through all the Universe of Things, nothing is uneasy, unsatisfied, or restless, but because it is not governed by Love, or because its Nature has not reached or attained the full Birth of the Spirit of Love. For when that is done, every Hunger is satisfied, and all complaining, murmuring, accusing, resenting, revenging, and striving are as totally suppressed and overcome as the Coldness, Thickness, and Horror of Darkness are suppressed and overcome by the breaking forth of the Light. If you ask, why the Spirit of Love cannot be displeased, cannot be disappointed, cannot complain, accuse, resent, or murmur? It is because Divine Love desires nothing but itself; it is its own Good, it has all when it has itself, because nothing is good but itself, and its own working; for Love is God, and he that dwelleth in God, dwelleth in Love. Tell me now, Eusebius, are you thus blessed in the Spirit of Love?

Eusebius. Would you have me tell you that I am an Angel, and without the Infirmities of human Flesh and Blood?

Theophilus. No, but I would have you judge of your State of Love by these Angelic Tempers, and not by any Fervour or Heat that you find in yourself. For just so much, and so far as you are freed from the Folly of all earthly Affections, from all Disquiet, Trouble, and Complaint about this, or that, just so much, and so far is the Spirit of Love come to Life in you. For Divine Love is a new Life, and new Nature, and introduces you into a new World; it puts an End to all your former Opinions, Notions, and Tempers; it opens new Senses in you, and makes you see high to be low, and low to be high; Wisdom to be Foolishness, and Foolishness Wisdom; it makes Prosperity and Adversity, Praise and Dispraise, to be equally nothing. "When I was a Child," saith the Apostle, "I thought as a Child, I spake as a Child, but when I became a Man, I put away childish Things." Whilst Man is under the Power of Nature, governed only by worldly Wisdom, his Life (however old he may be) is quite childish; every Thing about him only awakens childish Thoughts, and Pursuits in him; all that he sees and hears, all that he desires or fears, likes or dislikes, that which he gets, and that which he loses, that which he hath, and that which he hath not, serve only to carry him from this Fiction of Evil to that Fiction of Good, from one Vanity of Peace to another Vanity of Trouble. But when Divine Love is born in the Soul, all childish Images of Good and Evil are done away, and all the Sensibility of them is lost, as the Stars lose their Visibility when the Sun is risen.

Theogenes. That this is the true Power of the Spirit of Divine Love, I am fully convinced from my own Uneasiness at finding, that my natural Tempers are not overcome by it. For whence could I have this Trouble, but because that little Dawning that I have of the Spirit of Love in me, maketh just Demands to be the one Light, Breath, and Power of my Life, and to have all that is within me overcome and governed by it. And therefore I find, I must either silence this small Voice of new-risen Love within me, or have no Rest from Complaints and Self-condemnation, till my whole Nature is brought into Subjection to it.

Theophilus. Most rightly judged, Theogenes. And now we are fairly brought to the one great practical Point, on which all our Proficiency in the Spirit of Love entirely depends, namely, that all that we are, and all that we have from Adam, as fallen, must be given up, absolutely denied and resisted, if the Birth of Divine Love is to be brought forth in us. For all that we are by Nature is in full Contrariety to this Divine Love, nor can it be otherwise; a Death to itself is its only Cure, and nothing else can make it subservient to Good; just as Darkness cannot be altered, or made better in itself, or transmuted into Light; it can only be subservient to the Light, by being lost in it and swallowed up by it.

Now this was the first State of Man; all the natural Properties of his creaturely Life, were hid in God, united in God, and glorified by the Life of God manifested in them, just as the Nature and Qualities of Darkness are lost and hid, when enlightened and glorified by the Light. But when Man fell from, or died to the Divine Life, all the natural Properties of his creaturely Life, having lost their Union in and with God, broke forth in their own natural Division, Contrariety, and War against one another, just as the Darkness, when it has lost the Light, must show forth its own Coldness, Horror, and other uncomfortable Qualities. And as Darkness, though in the utmost Contrariety to Light, is yet absolutely necessary to it, and without which no Manifestation or Visibility of Light could possibly be, so it is with the natural Properties of the creaturely Life; they are in themselves

all Contrariety to the Divine Life, and yet the Divine Life cannot be communicated but in them and by them.

Eusebius. I never read, or heard of the Darkness being necessary to Light: It has been generally considered as a negative Thing, that was nothing in itself, and only signified an Absence of Light. But your Doctrine not only supposes Darkness to be something positive, that has a Strength and Substantiality in itself, but also to be antecedent to the Light, because necessary to bring it into Manifestation. I am almost afraid to hear more of this Doctrine. It Sounds harsh to my Ears.

Theophilus. Don't be frightened, Eusebius. I will lead you into no Doctrine, but what is strictly conformable to the Letter of Scripture, and the most orthodox Piety. The Scripture saith, "God is Light, and in Him is no Darkness at all"; therefore the Scripture affirmeth Light to be superior, absolutely separate from, and eternally antecedent to Darkness; and so do I. In this Scripture you have a noble and true Account of Light, what it is, where it is, and was, and always must be. It can never change its State or Place, be altered in itself, be anywhere, or in another Manner, than as it was, and will be, from and to all Eternity. When God said, "Let there be Light, and there was Light," no Change happened to eternal Light itself, nor did any Light then begin to be; but the Darkness of this World then only began to receive a Power, or Operation of the eternal Light upon it, which it had not before; or Eternity then began to open some Resemblance of its own Glory in the dark Elements, and Shadows of Time, and thus it is, that I assert the Priority and Glory of Light, and put all Darkness under its Feet, as impossible to be any Thing else but its Footstool.

Eusebius. I am quite delighted with this. But tell me now, how it is that Light can only be manifested in, and by Darkness.

Theophilus. The Scripture saith that "God dwelleth in the Light, to which no Man can approach": Therefore the Scripture teacheth, that Light in itself is, and must be invisible to Man, that it cannot be approached, or made manifest to him, but in and by something that is not Light. And this is all that I said, and the very same Thing that I said, when I affirmed that Light cannot be manifested, or have any Visibility to created Eyes, but in and through and by Darkness.

Light, as it is in itself, is only in the Supernatural Deity; and that is the Reason, why no Man or any created Being, can approach to it, or have any Sensibility of it, as it is in itself. And yet no Light can come into this World, but that in which God dwelt before any World was created. No Light can be in Time, but that which was the Light of Eternity. If therefore the Supernatural Light is to manifest something of its incomprehensible Glory, and make itself, in some Degree, sensible and visible to the Creature, this supernatural Light must enter into Nature, it must put on Materiality. Now Darkness is the one only Materiality of Light, in and through which it can become the Object of creaturely Eyes; and till there is Darkness, there is no possible Medium, or Power, through which the Supernatural Light can manifest something of itself, or have any of its Glory visible to created Eyes. And the Reason why Darkness can only be the Materiality of Light, is this, it is because Darkness is the one only Ground of all Nature, and of all Materiality, whether in Heaven or on Earth. And therefore every Thing that is creaturely in Nature, that has any Form, Figure, or Substance, from the highest Angel in Heaven to the lowest Thing upon Earth, hath all that it hath of Figure, Form, or Substantiality only and solely from Darkness. Look at the glittering Glory of the Diamond and then you see the one Medium, through which the Glory of the incomprehensible Light can make some Discovery or Manifestation of itself. It matters not, whether you consider

Heaven or Earth, eternal or temporal Nature, nothing in either State can be capable of visible Glory, Brightness, or Illumination, but that which standeth in the State of the Diamond, and has its own Thickness of Darkness. And if the Universe of eternal and temporal Nature is everywhere Light, it is because it has Darkness everywhere for its Dwelling Place. Light, you know, is by variety of modern Experiments declared to be material; the Experiments are not to be disputed. And yet all these Experiments are only so many Proofs, not of the Materiality of Light, but of our Doctrine, viz., that Materiality is always along with visible Light, and also that Light can only open, and display something of itself, in and by Darkness, as its Body of Manifestation and Visibility. But Light cannot possibly be material, because all Materiality, as such, be it what and where it will, is nothing else but so much Darkness. And therefore to suppose Light to be material, is the same Absurdity, as to suppose it to be Darkness; for so much Materiality is so much Darkness, and it is impossible to be otherwise. Again, All Matter has but one Nature; it admits of neither more nor less, but wherever it is, all that is material is equally there. If therefore Light was material, all the Materiality in the World must be Light, and equally so. For no Materiality could be Light, unless Light was essential to Matter, as such, no more than any Materiality could be extended, unless Extension was essential to Matter as such.

Eusebius. What is it then, that you understand by the Materiality of Light?

Theophilus. No more than I understand by the Materiality of the Wisdom, Mercy, and Goodness of God, when they are made intelligible and credible to me, by the Materiality of Paper and Ink, &c. For Light is as distinct from, and superior to all that Materiality, in and by which it gives forth some Visibility of itself, as the Wisdom, Mercy, and Goodness of God, are distinct from and superior to all that written Materiality, in and through which they are made in some Degree intelligible, and credible to human Minds. The incomprehensible Deity can make no outward Revelation of his Will, Wisdom, and Goodness, but by articulate Sounds, Voices, or Letters written on Tables of Stone, or such-like Materiality. Just so, the invisible, inaccessible, supernatural Light can make no outward Visibility of itself, but through such Darkness of Materiality, as is capable of receiving its Illumination. But as the Divine Will, Wisdom, and Goodness, when making outward Revelation of themselves, by the Materiality of Things, are not therefore material, so neither is the Light material when it outwardly reveals something of its invisible, incomprehensible Splendour and Glory, by and through the Materiality of Darkness.

All Light then, that is natural, and visible to the Creature, whether in Heaven, or on Earth, is nothing else but so much Darkness illuminated; and that which is called the Materiality of Light, is only the Materiality of Darkness, in which the Light incorporateth itself. For Light can be only that same invisible, unapproachable Thing, which it always was in God, from all Eternity. And that which is called the Difference of Light, is only the Difference of that Darkness, through which the Light gives forth different Manifestations of itself. It is the same, whether it illuminates the Air, Water, a Diamond, or any other Materiality of Darkness. It has no more Materiality in itself, when it enlightens the Earth, than when it enlightens the Mind of an Angel, when it gives Colour to Bodies, than when it gives Understanding to Spirits.

Sight and Visibility is but one Power of Light, but Light is all Power; it is Life and every joyful Sensibility of Life is from it. "In Him," says the Apostle, "was Light, and the Light was the Life of Men." Light is all Things, and Nothing. It is Nothing, because it is supernatural; it is all Things,

because every good Power and Perfection of every Thing is from it. No Joy, or Rejoicing in any Creature, but from the Power and Joy of Light. No Meekness, Benevolence, or Goodness, in Angel, Man, or any Creature, but where Light is the Lord of its Life. Life itself begins no sooner, rises no higher, has no other Glory than as the Light begins it and leads it on. Sounds have no Softness, Flowers and Gums have no Sweetness, Plants and Fruits have no Growth, but as the Mystery of Light opens itself in them.

Whatever is delightful and ravishing, sublime and glorious, in Spirits, Minds or Bodies, either in Heaven, or on Earth, is from the Power of the supernatural Light, opening its endless Wonders in them. Hell has no Misery, Horror, or Distraction, but because it has no Communication with the supernatural Light. And did not the supernatural Light stream forth its Blessings into this World, through the Materiality of the Sun, all outward Nature would be full of the Horror of Hell. And hence are all the Mysteries and Wonders of Light, in this material System, so astonishingly great and unsearchable; it is because the natural Light of this World is nothing else but the Power and Mystery of the supernatural Light, breaking forth, and opening itself, according to its Omnipotence, in all the various Forms of elementary Darkness which constitute this temporary World.

Theogenes. I could willingly hear you, Theophilus, on this Subject till Midnight, though it seems to lead us away from our proposed Subject.

Theophilus. Not so far out of the Way, Theogenes, as you may imagine; for Darkness and Light are the two Natures that are in every Man, and do all that is done in him. The Scriptures, you know, make only this Division: The Works of Darkness are Sin, and they who walk in the Light are the Children of God. Therefore Light and Darkness do every Thing, whether good or evil, that is done in Man.

Theogenes. What is this Darkness in itself, or where is it?

Theophilus. It is everywhere, where there is Nature and Creature. For all Nature, and all that is natural in the Creature, is in itself nothing else but Darkness, whether it be in Soul or Body, in Heaven or on Earth. And therefore, when the Angels (though in Heaven) had lost the supernatural Light, they became imprisoned in the Chains of their own natural Darkness. If you ask, Why Nature must be Darkness? It is because Nature is not God, and therefore can have no Light as it is Nature. For God and Light are as inseparable, as God and Unity are inseparable. Every Thing, therefore, that is not God, is and can be nothing else in itself but Darkness, and can do nothing but in, and under, and according to the Nature and Powers of Darkness.

Theogenes. What are the Powers of Darkness?

Theophilus. The Powers of Darkness are the Workings of Nature or Self: For Nature, Darkness, and Self are but three different Expressions for one and the same Thing.

Now every evil, wicked, wrathful, impure, unjust Thought, Temper, Passion, or Imagination, that ever stirred or moved in any Creature; every Misery, Discontent, Distress, Rage, Horror, and Torment, that ever plagued the Life of fallen Man or Angel are the very Things that you are to understand by the Powers or Workings of Darkness, Nature, or Self. For nothing is evil, wicked, or tormenting, but that which Nature or Self doth.

Theogenes. But if Nature is thus the Seat and Source of all Evil, if every Thing that is bad is in it and from it, how can such a Nature be brought forth by God who is all Goodness?

Theophilus. Nature has all Evil, and no Evil in itself. Nature, as it comes forth from God, is Darkness without any Evil of Darkness in it; for it is not Darkness without, or separate from Light, nor could it ever have been known to have any Quality of Darkness in it, had it not lost that State of Light in which it came forth from God, only as a Manifestation of the Goodness, Virtues, and Glories of Light. Again, it is Nature, viz., a Strife and Contrariety of Properties for this only End, that the supernatural Good might thereby come into Sensibility, be known, found and felt, by its taking all the Evil of Strife and Contrariety from them, and becoming the Union, Peace, and Joy of them all. Nor could the Evil of Strife, and Contrariety of Will, ever have had a Name in all the Universe of Nature and Creature, had it all continued in that State in which it came forth from God. Lastly, it is Self, viz., an own Life, that so, through such an own Life, the universal, incomprehensible Goodness, Happiness, and Perfections of the Deity, might be possessed as Properties and Qualities of an own Life in creaturely finite Beings. And thus, all that is called Nature, Darkness, or Self, has not only no Evil in it, but is the only true Ground of all possible Good. But when the intelligent Creature turns from God to Self or Nature, he acts unnaturally, he turns from all that which makes Nature to be good, he finds Nature only as it is in itself, and without God. And then it is, that Nature, or Self, hath all Evil in it. Nothing is to be had from it, or found in it, but the Work and Working of every Kind of Evil, Baseness, Misery, and Torment, and the utmost Contrariety to God and all Goodness. And thus also you see the Plainness and Certainty of our Assertion, that Nature or Self hath all Evil, and no Evil in it.

Theogenes. I plainly enough perceive, that Nature or Self, without God manifested in it, is all Evil and Misery. But I would, if I could, more perfectly understand the precise Nature of Self, or what it is that makes it to be so full of Evil and Misery.

Theophilus. Covetousness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath, are the four Elements of Self, or Nature, or Hell, all of them inseparable from it. And the Reason why it must be thus, and cannot be otherwise, is because the natural Life of the Creature is brought forth for the Participation of some high supernatural Good in the Creator. But it could have no Fitness or possible Capacity to receive such Good, unless it was in itself both an Extremity of Want, and an extremity of Desire of some high Good. When, therefore, this natural Life is deprived of, or fallen from God, it can be nothing else in itself but an Extremity of Want, continually desiring, and an Extremity of Desire, continually wanting. And hence it is, that its whole Life can be nothing else but a Plague and Torment of Covetousness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath, all which is precisely Nature, Self, or Hell.

Now Covetousness, Pride, and Envy, are not three different Things, but only three different Names, for the restless Workings of one and the same Will or Desire, which, as it differently torments itself, takes different Names; for nothing is in any of them, but the working of a restless Desire, and all this because the natural Life of the Creature can do nothing else but work as a Desire. And therefore, when fallen from God, its three first Births, and which are quite inseparable from it, are Covetousness, Envy, and Pride. It must covet, because it is a Desire proceeding from Want; it must envy, because it is a Desire turned to Self; it must assume and arrogate, because it is a Desire founded on a real Want of Exaltation, or a higher State.

Now Wrath, which is a fourth Birth from these three, can have no Existence, till some or all of these three are contradicted, or have something done to them that is contrary to their Will; and then it is that Wrath is necessarily born, and not till then. And thus you see in the highest Degree of Certainty, what Nature or Self is, as to its essential, constituent Parts. It is the three forementioned, inseparable Properties of a Desire thrown into a fourth of Wrath, that can never cease, because their Will can never be gratified. For these four Properties generate one another, and therefore generate their own Torment. They have no outward Cause, nor any inward Power of altering themselves. And therefore, all Self, or Nature, must be in this State till some supernatural Good comes into it, or gets a Birth in it. And therefore, every Pain or Disorder, in the Mind or Body of any intelligent Creature, is an undeniable Proof that it is in a fallen State, and has lost that supernatural Good for which it was created. So certain a Truth is the fallen State of all Mankind. And here lies the absolute, indispensable Necessity of the one Christian Redemption. Till fallen Man is born again from above, till such a supernatural Birth is brought forth in him, by the eternal Word and Spirit of God, he can have no possible Escape or Deliverance from these four Elements of Self or Hell.

Whilst Man indeed lives amongst the Vanities of Time, his Covetousness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath, may be in a tolerable State, may help him to a Mixture of Peace and Trouble; they may have at Times their Gratifications, as well as their Torments. But when Death has put an End to the Vanity of all earthly Cheats, the Soul that is not born again of the supernatural Word and Spirit of God, must find itself unavoidably devoured, or shut up in its own, insatiable, unchangeable, self-tormenting Covetousness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath. Oh! Theogenes, that I had Power from God to take those dreadful Scales from the Eyes of every Deist, which hinder him from seeing and feeling the infinite importance of this most certain Truth!

Theogenes. God give a Blessing, Theophilus, to your good Prayer. And then let me tell you, that you have quite satisfied my Question about the Nature of Self. I shall never forget it, nor can I ever possibly have any Doubt of the Truth of it.

Theophilus. Let me however go a little deeper in the Matter. All Life, and all Sensibility of Life, is a Desire; and nothing can feel or find itself to exist, but as it finds itself to have and be a Desire; and therefore, all Nature is a Desire; and all that Nature does, or works, is done by the Working of Desire. And this is the Reason why all Nature, and the natural Life of every Creature, is a State of Want, and therefore must be a State of Misery and Self-Torment, so long as it is mere Nature, or left to itself. For every Desire, as such, is and must be made up of Contrariety, as is sufficiently shown elsewhere. { Way to Divine Knowledge; Spirit of Love. } And its essential Contrariety, which it has in itself, is the one only possible Beginning or Ground of its Sensibility. For nothing can be felt, but because of Contrariety to that which feels. And therefore no creaturely Desire can be brought into Existence, or have any possible Sensibility of itself, but because Desire, as such, is unavoidably made up of that Contrariety, whence comes all Feeling, and the Capacity of being felt.

Again, All natural Life is nothing else but a mere Desire founded in Want; now Want is contrary to Desire; and, therefore every natural Life, as such, is in a State of Contrariety and Torment to itself. It can do nothing but work in, and feel its own Contrariety, and so be its own unavoidable, incessant Tormentor.

Hence we may plainly see, that God's bringing a sensible Creature into Existence is his bringing the Power of Desire into a creaturely State; and the Power and Extent of its own working Desire is the Bounds or Limits of its own creaturely Nature. And, therefore every intelligent Creature, of whatever Rank in the Creation, is and can be nothing else, in its creaturely or natural State, but a State of Want; and the higher its natural State is supposed to be, the higher is its Want, and the greater its Torment, if left only in its natural State. And this is the Reason of the excessive Misery and Depravity of the fallen Angels.

Now the Contrariety that is in Desire, and must be in it, because it is a Desire, and the only Ground of all Sensibility, is plainly shown you by the most undeniable Appearance in outward or material Nature. All that is done in outward Nature is done by the working of Attraction. And all Attraction is nothing else but an inseparable Combination and incessant Working of three contrary Properties, or Laws of Motion. It draws, it resists its own Drawing; and from this Drawing and Resisting, which are necessarily equal to one another, it becomes an orbicular, or whirling Motion, and yet draws and resists, just as it did before.

Now this threefold Contrariety in the Motions, or Properties of Attraction, by which all the Elements of this material World are held and governed, and made to bring forth all the Wonders in all Kinds of animate and inanimate Things, this Contrariety, being the only possible Ground of all material Nature, is a full Demonstration, (1) That Contrariety is the one only possible Ground of Nature and all natural Life, whether it be eternal or temporal, spiritual or material; (2) That no other Contrariety is, or can be in the Properties or Laws of Attraction in this material Nature, but that one and the same Contrariety, which was from Eternity in spiritual Nature, is inseparable from it, and can be nowhere but in it. For Time can only partake of Eternity, it can have nothing in it but the Working of Eternity, nor be any Thing but what it is by the Working of Eternity in it. It can have nothing that is its own, or peculiar to it, but its transitory State, and Form, and Nature. It is a mere Accident, has only an occasional Existence; and whatever is seen, or done in it, is only so much of the Working of Eternity seen and done in it. For Attraction, in the material World, has not only nothing material in it, but is impossible to be communicated to Matter; or rather Matter has no possible Capacity to receive Attraction. It can no more receive or obey the Laws of Attraction, than it can make Laws for Angels. It is as incapable of moving, or stirring itself, as it is of making Syllogisms. For Matter is, in itself, only Death, Darkness, and Inactivity, and is as utterly incapable of moving itself, as it is of illuminating or creating itself; nothing can be done in it, and by it, but that which is done by something that is not material.

Therefore, that which is called the Attraction of Materiality, is in itself nothing else but the Working of the spiritual Properties of Desire, which has in itself those very three inseparable Contrarieties, which make the three Contrarieties in the Motions of Attraction. Material Nature, being an accidental, temporary, transitory Out-Birth from eternal Nature, and having no Power of existing, but under it and in Dependence upon it, the spiritual Properties of eternal Nature do, as it were, materialize themselves for a Time, in their temporary Out-Birth and force Matter to work as they work, and to have the same contradictory Motions in it, which are essential to eternal Nature. And thus the three inseparable, contrary Motions of Matter, are in the same Manner, and for the same Reason, a true Ground of a material Nature in Time, as the three inseparable, contrary, contradictory Workings of Desire, are a true Ground of spiritual Nature in Eternity. And you are to observe, that all that is done in Matter and Time, is done by the same Agents, or spiritual

Properties, which do all that is naturally done in Eternity, in Heaven or in Hell. For nothing is the Ground of Happiness and Glory in Heaven, nothing is the Ground of Misery, Woe and Distraction in Hell, but the Working of these same contrary Properties of Desire, which work Contrariety in the Attraction of Matter and bring forth all the Changes of Life and Death in this material System. They are unchangeable in their Nature, and are everywhere the same; they are spiritual in Hell, and on Earth, as they are in Heaven. Considered as in themselves, they are everywhere equally good and equally bad; because they are everywhere equally the Ground and only the Ground for either Happiness or Misery. No possible Happiness, or Sensibility of Joy for any Creature, but where these contrary Properties work, nor any Possibility of Misery but from them.

Now Attraction, acting according to its three invariable, inseparable Contrarieties of Motion, stands in this material Nature, exactly in the same Place and for the same End, and doing the same Office, as the three first Properties of Desire do in eternal or spiritual Nature. For they can be, or do nothing with Regard to Earth and Time, but that same which they are, and do in Heaven and Eternity. In eternal Nature, the three contrary Properties of Desire, answering exactly to the three contrary Motions of material Attraction, are in themselves only Resistance, Rage, and Darkness, and can be nothing else, till the supernatural Deity kindles its Fire of Light and Love in them; and then all their raging Contrarieties are changed into never-ceasing Sensibilities of Unity, Joy, and Happiness.

Just so, in this material System, suppose there to be nothing in it but the contrary Motions of Attraction, it could be nothing else but Rage against Rage in the Horror of Darkness. But when the same supernatural Light, which turns the first fighting Properties of Nature into a Kingdom of Heaven, gives forth something of its Goodness into this World, through the kindled Body of the Sun, then all the fighting, contradictory Motions of Attraction, serve only to bring new Joys into the World, and open every Life, and every Blessing of Life, that can have Birth in a System of transitory Matter.

Theogenes. Oh Theophilus, you quite surprise me by thus showing me, with so much Certainty, how the Powers of Eternity work in the Things of Time. Nothing is done on Earth, but by the unchangeable Workings of the same spiritual Powers, which work after the same Manner, both in Heaven and in Hell. I now sufficiently see how Man stands in the midst of Heaven and Hell, under an absolute Necessity of belonging wholly to the one, or wholly to the other, as soon as this Cover of Materiality is taken off from him. For Matter is his only Wall of Partition between them, he is equally nigh to both of them; and as Light and Love make all the Difference there is between Heaven and Hell, so nothing but a Birth of Light and Love in the Properties of his Soul, can possibly keep Hell out of it, or bring Heaven into it.

I now also see the full Truth and Certainty of what you said of the Nature and Power of Divine Love, viz., "that it is perfect Peace and Joy, a Freedom from all Disquiet, making every Thing to rejoice in itself; that it is the Christ of God, and wherever it comes, it comes as the Blessing and Happiness of every natural Life; as the Restorer of every lost Perfection; a Redeemer from all Evil; a Fulfiller of all Righteousness; and a Peace of God, which passes all Understanding." So that I am now, a thousand Times more than ever, athirst after the Spirit of Love. I am willing to sell all, and buy it; its Blessing is so great, and the Want of it so dreadful a State, that I am even afraid of lying down in my Bed, till every working Power of my Soul is given up to it, wholly possessed and

governed by it.

Theophilus. You have Reason for all that you say, Theogenes; for were we truly affected with Things, as they are our real Good or real Evil, we should be much more afraid of having the Serpents of Covetousness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath, well nourished and kept alive within us, than of being shut up in a Pest-house, or cast into a Dungeon of venomous Beasts. On the other Hand, we should look upon the lofty Eloquence, and proud Virtue of a Cicero, but as the Blessing of Storm and Tempest, when compared with the heavenly Tranquillity of that meek and lowly Heart, to which our Redeemer has called us.

I said the Serpents of Covetousness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath, because they are alone the real, dreadful, original Serpents; and all earthly Serpents are but transitory, partial, and weak Out-Births of them. All evil, earthly Beasts, are but short-lived Images, or creaturely Eruptions of that hellish Disorder, that is broken out from the fallen spiritual World; and by their manifold Variety, they show us that Multiplicity of Evil, that lies in the Womb of that Abyss of dark Rage, which (N.B.) has no Maker, but the three first Properties of Nature, fallen from God, and working in their Darkness. So that all evil, mischievous, ravenous, venomous Beasts, though they have no Life, but what begins in and from this material World, and totally ends at the Death of their Bodies, yet have they no Malignity in their earthly, temporary Nature, but from those same wrathful Properties of fallen Nature, which live and work in our eternal fallen Souls. And therefore, though they are as different from us, as Time from Eternity, yet wherever we see them, we see so many infallible Proofs of the Fall of Nature, and the Reality of Hell. For was there no Hell broken out in spiritual Nature, not only no evil Beast, but no bestial Life, could ever have come into Existence. For the Origin of Matter, and the bestial, earthly Life, stands thus. When the Fall of Angels had made their Dwelling-Place to be a dark Chaos of the first Properties of Nature left to themselves, the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of God created, or compacted this spiritual Chaos into a material Heaven, and a material Earth, and commanded the Light to enter into it. Hence this Chaos became the Ground, or the Materiality of a new and temporary Nature, in which the heavenly Power of Light, and the Properties of Darkness, each of them materialized, could work together, carrying on a War of Heaven against Earth; so that all the evil Workings of fallen spiritual Nature, and all the Good that was to overcome it, might be equally manifested both by the good and bad State of outward Nature, and by that Variety of good and bad living Creatures, that sprung up out of it; to stand in this State, viz., of a spiritual Chaos changed into a Materiality of Light striving against Darkness, till the omnipotent Wisdom and Goodness of God, through the Wonders of a first and second Adam, shall have made this Chaotic Earth to send as many Angels into the highest Heaven, as fell with Lucifer into the hellish Chaos. But to return. I have, I hope, sufficiently opened unto you the malignant Nature of that Self, which dwells in, and makes up the working Life of every Creature that has lost its right State in God; viz., that all the Evil that was in the first Chaos of Darkness, or that still is in Hell and Devils, all the Evil that is in material Nature and material Creatures, whether animate, or inanimate, is nothing else, works in, and with nothing else, but those first Properties of Nature, which drive on the Life of fallen Man in Covetousness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath.

Theogenes. I could almost say, that you have shown me more than enough of this Monster of Self, though I would not be without this Knowledge of it for half the World. But now, Sir, what must I do to be saved from the Mouth of this Lion, for he is the Depth of all Subtlety, the Satan that deceiveth the whole World. He can hide himself under all Forms of Goodness, he can watch and fast, write

and instruct, pray much, and preach long, give Alms to the Poor, visit the Sick, and yet often gets more Life and Strength, and a more immovable Abode, in these Forms of Virtue, than he has in Publicans and Sinners.

Enjoin me therefore whatever you please; all Rules, Methods, and Practices, will be welcome to me, if you judge them to be necessary in this Matter.

Theophilus. There is no need of a Number of Practices, or Methods in this Matter. For to die to Self, or to come from under its Power, is not, cannot be done by any active Resistance we can make to it by the Powers of Nature. For Nature can no more overcome or suppress itself, than Wrath can heal Wrath. So long as Nature acts, nothing but natural Works are brought forth; and therefore the more Labour of this Kind, the more Nature is fed and strengthened with its own Food. But the one true Way of dying to Self is most simple and plain, it wants no Arts or Methods, no Cells, Monasteries, or Pilgrimages, it is equally practicable by every Body, it is always at Hand, it meets you in every Thing, it is free from all Deceit, and is never without Success.

If you ask, What is this one true, simple, plain, immediate and unerring Way? It is the Way of Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God. This is the Truth and Perfection of dying to Self; it is nowhere else, nor possible to be in any Thing else, but in this State of Heart.

Theogenes. The Excellence and Perfection of these Virtues I readily acknowledge; but alas, Sir, how will this prove the Way of overcoming Self to be so simple, plain, immediate, and unerring, as you speak of? For is it not the Doctrine of almost all Men, and all Books, and confirmed by our own woeful Experience, that much Length of Time, and Exercise and Variety of Practices and Methods are necessary, and scarce sufficient to the Attainment of any one of these four Virtues?

Theophilus. When Christ our Saviour was upon Earth, was there any Thing more simple, plain, immediate, unerring, than the Way to Him? Did Scribes, Pharisees, Publicans, and Sinners, want any Length of Time, or Exercise of Rules and Methods, before they could have Admission to him, or have the Benefit of Faith in him?

Theogenes. I don't understand why you put this Question; nor do I see how it can possibly relate to the Matter before us.

Theophilus. It not only relates to, but is the very Heart and Truth of the Matter before us: It is not appealed to, by Way of Illustration of our Subject, but is our Subject itself, only set in a truer and stronger Light. For when I refer you to Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God, as the one simple, plain, immediate, and unerring Way of dying to Self, or being saved from it, I call it so for no other Reason, but because you can as easily and immediately, without Art or Method, by the mere Turning and Faith of your Mind, have all the Benefit of these Virtues, as Publicans and Sinners, by their turning to Christ, could be helped and saved by him.

Theogenes. But, good Sir, would you have me then believe, that my turning and giving up myself to these Virtues is as certain and immediate a Way of my being directly possessed and blessed by their good Power, as when Sinners turned to Christ to be helped and saved by him? Surely this is too short a Way, and has too much of Miracle in it, to be now expected.

Theophilus. I would have you strictly to believe all this, in the fullest Sense of the Words, and also to believe, that the Reasons why you, or any others are for a long Time vainly endeavouring after,

and hardly ever attaining these First-rate Virtues, is because you seek them in the Way they are not to be found, in a Multiplicity of human Rules, Methods, and Contrivances, and not in that Simplicity of Faith, in which, those who applied to Christ, immediately obtained that which they asked of Him.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you." How short and simple and certain a Way to Peace and Comfort, from the Misery and Burden of Sin! What becomes now of your Length of Time and Exercise, your Rules and Methods, and round-about Ways, to be delivered from Self, the Power of Sin, and find the redeeming Power and Virtue of Christ? Will you say, that turning to Christ in Faith was once indeed the Way for Jews and Heathens to enter into Life, and be delivered from the Power of their Sins, but that all this Happiness was at an End, as soon as Pontius Pilate had nailed this good Redeemer to the Cross, and so broken off all immediate Union and Communion between Faith and Christ?

What a Folly would it be to suppose, that Christ, after his having finished his great Work, overcome Death, ascended into Heaven, with all Power in Heaven and on Earth, was become less a Saviour and gave less certain and immediate Helps to those, that by Faith turn to him now, than when he was clothed with the Infirmary of our Flesh and Blood upon Earth? Has He less Power, after he has conquered, than whilst he was only resisting and fighting our Enemies? Or has He less good Will to assist his Church, his own Body, now he is in Heaven, than he had to assist Publicans, Sinners, and Heathens before he was glorified, as the Redeemer of the World? And yet this must be the Case, if our simply turning to Him in Faith and Hope, is not as sure a Way of obtaining immediate Assistance from him now, as when he was upon Earth.

Theogenes. You seem, Sir, to me to have stepped aside from the Point in Question, which was not, Whether my turning or giving myself up to Christ, in Faith in him, would not do me as much Good as it did to them, who turned to him when He was upon Earth? But whether my turning in Faith and Desire, to Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God, would do all that as fully for me now, as Faith in Christ did for those who became his Disciples?

Theophilus. I have stuck closely, my Friend, to the Point before us. Let it be supposed, that I had given you a Form of Prayer in these Words. O Lamb of God, that takest away the Sins of the World; Or, O Thou Bread that camest down from Heaven; Or, Thou that art the Resurrection, and the Life, the Light and Peace of all holy Souls, help me to a living Faith in Thee. Would you say, that this was not a Prayer of Faith in and to Christ, because it did not call Him Jesus, or the Son of God? Answer me plainly.

Theogenes. What can I answer you, but that this is a most true and good Prayer to Jesus, the Son of the living God? For who else but He was the Lamb of God, and the Bread that came down?

Theophilus. Well answered, my Friend. When therefore I exhort you to give up yourself in Faith and Hope, to Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God, what else do I do, but turn you directly to so much Faith and Hope in the true Lamb of God? For if I ask you, what the Lamb of God is, and means, must you not tell me, that it is, and means, the Perfection of Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God? Can you say, it is either more or less than this? Must you not therefore say, that a Faith of Hunger and Thirst, and Desire of these Virtues, is in Spirit and Truth, the one very same Thing, as a Faith of Hunger and Thirst, and Desire of Salvation

through the Lamb of God? And consequently, that every sincere Wish and Desire, every inward Inclination of your Heart, that presses after these Virtues, and longs to be governed by them, is an immediate direct Application to Christ, is worshipping and falling down before him, is giving up yourself unto him, and the very Perfection of Faith in him?

If you distrust my Words, hear the Words of Christ himself. "Learn of me," says He, "for I am meek and lowly of Heart, and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls." Here you have the plain Truth of our two Points fully asserted, First, That to be given up to, or stand in a Desire of, Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God, is strictly the same Thing, as to learn of Christ, or to have Faith in Him. Secondly, That this is the one simple, short, and infallible Way to overcome, or be delivered from all the Malignity and Burden of Self expressed in these Words, "and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls." And all this, because this simple Tendency, or inward Inclination of your Heart to sink down into Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God, is truly giving up all that you are, and all that you have from fallen Adam; it is perfectly leaving all that you have, to follow and be with Christ, it is your highest Act of Faith in him and Love of Him, the most ardent and earnest Declaration of your cleaving to him with all your Heart, and seeking for no Salvation but in him, and from him. And therefore all the Good, and Blessing, Pardon, and Deliverance from Sin that ever happened to anyone from any Kind, or Degree of Faith and Hope, and Application to Christ, is sure to be had from this State of Heart, which stands continually turned to him in a Hunger, and Desire, of being led and governed by his Spirit of Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God. Oh Theogenes, could I help you to perceive or feel what a Good there is in this State of Heart; you would Desire it with more Eagerness, than the thirsty Hart desireth the Water-Brooks, you would think of nothing, desire nothing, but constantly to live in it. It is a Security from all Evil, and all Delusion; no Difficulty, or Trial, either of Body or Mind, no Temptation either within you, or without you, but what has its full Remedy in this State of Heart. You have no Questions to ask of any Body, no new Way that you need inquire after; no Oracle that you need to consult; for whilst you shut up yourself in Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God, you are in the very Arms of Christ, your whole Heart is his Dwelling-Place, and He lives and works in you, as certainly as he lived in, and governed that Body and Soul, which he took from the Virgin Mary.

Learn whatever else you will from Men and Books, or even from Christ Himself, besides, or without these Virtues, and you are only a poor Wanderer in a barren Wilderness, where no Water of Life is to be found. For Christ is nowhere, but in these Virtues, and where they are, there is He in his own Kingdom. From Morning to Night, let this be the Christ that you follow, and then you will fully escape all the religious Delusions that are in the World, and what is more, all the Delusions of your own selfish Heart. For to seek to be saved by Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God, is truly coming to God through Christ; and when these Tempers live and abide in you, as the Spirit and Aim of your Life, then Christ is in you of a Truth, and the Life that you then lead, is not yours, but it is Christ that liveth in you. For this is following Christ with all your Power: You cannot possibly make more Haste after Him, you have no other Way of walking as he walked, no other Way of being like Him, of truly believing in him, of showing your Trust in him, and Dependence upon him, but by wholly giving up yourself to That, which He was, viz., to Patience, Meekness, Humility, and Resignation to God.

Tell me now, have I enough proved to you, the short, simple, and certain Way of destroying that Body of Self, which lives and works in the four Elements of Covetousness, Envy, Pride, and Wrath?

Theogenes. Enough of all Reason. But as to Covetousness, I thank God, I cannot charge myself with it, it has no Power over me, nay I naturally abhor it. And I also now clearly see, why I have been so long struggling in vain against other selfish Tempers.

Theophilus. Permit me, my Friend, to remove your Mistake. Had Covetousness, no Power over you, you could have no other selfish Tempers to struggle against. They are all dead, as soon as Covetousness has done working in you. You take Covetousness to relate only to the Wealth of this World. But this is but one single Branch of it, its Nature is as large as Desire, and wherever selfish Desire is, there is all the evil Nature of Covetousness.

Now Envy, Pride, Hatred, or Wrath, can have no Possibility of Existence in you, but because there is some selfish Desire alive in you, that is not satisfied, not gratified, but resisted or disappointed. And therefore so long as any selfish Tempers, whether of Envy, Uneasiness, Complaint, Pride, or Wrath, are alive in you, you have the fullest Proof, that all these Tempers are born and bred in and from your own Covetousness, that is, from that same selfish bad Desire, which when it is turned to the Wealth of this World is called Covetousness. For all these four Elements of Self, or fallen Nature, are tied together in one inseparable Band, they mutually generate, and are generated from one another, they have but one common Life, and must all of them live, or all die together. This may show you again the absolute Necessity of our one simple and certain Way of dying to Self, and the absolute Insufficiency of all human Means whatever to effect it. For consider only this, that to be angry at our own Anger, to be ashamed of our own Pride, and strongly resolve not to be weak, is the Upshot of all human Endeavours; and yet all this is rather the Life, than the Death of Self. There is no Help, but from a total Despair of all human Help. When a Man is brought to such an inward full Conviction, as to have no more Hope from all human Means, than he hopes to see with his Hands, or hear with his Feet, then it is, that he is truly prepared to die to Self, that is, to give up all Thoughts of having or doing any Thing that is good, in any other Way but that of a meek, humble, patient, total Resignation of himself to God. All that we do before this Conviction, is in great Ignorance of ourselves, and full of Weakness and Impurity. Let our Zeal be ever so wonderful, yet if it begins sooner, or proceeds further, or to any other Matter, or in any other Way, than as it is led and guided by this Conviction, it is full of Delusion. No Repentance, however long or laborious, is Conversion to God, till it falls into this State. For God must do all, or all is nothing; but God cannot do all, till all is expected from Him; and all is not expected from Him, till by a true and good Despair of every human Help, we have no Hope, or Trust, or Longing after any Thing but a patient, meek, humble, total Resignation to God. And now, my dear Friends, I have brought you to the very Place for which I desired this Day's Conversation; which was, to set your Feet upon sure Ground, with Regard to the Spirit of Love. For all that Variety of Matters through which we have passed, has been only a Variety of Proofs, that the Spirit of Divine Love can have no Place, or Possibility of Birth in any fallen Creature, till it wills and chooses to be dead to all Self, in a patient, meek, humble Resignation to the good Power and Mercy of God. And from this State of Heart also it is, that the Spirit of Prayer is born, which is the Desire of the Soul turned to God. Stand, therefore, steadfastly in this Will, let nothing else enter into your Mind, have no other Contrivance, but everywhere, and in every Thing, to nourish and keep up this State of Heart, and

then your House is built upon a Rock; you are safe from all Danger; the Light of Heaven, and the Love of God, will begin their Work in you, will bless and sanctify every Power of your fallen Soul; you will be in a Readiness for every Kind of Virtue and good Work, and will know what it is to be led by the Spirit of God.

Theogenes. But, dear Theophilus, though I am so delighted with what you say, that I am loath to stop you, yet permit me to mention a Fear that rises up in me. Suppose I should find myself so overcome with my own Darkness and selfish Tempers, as not to be able to sink from them into a Sensibility of this meek, humble, patient, full Resignation to God, what must I then do, or how shall I have the Benefit of what you have taught me?

Theophilus. You are then at the very Time and Place of receiving the fullest Benefit from it, and practicing it with the greatest Advantage to yourself. For though this patient, meek Resignation is to be exercised with Regard to all outward Things, and Occurrences of Life, yet it chiefly respects our own inward State, the Troubles, Perplexities, Weaknesses, and Disorders of our own fallen Souls. And to stand turned to a patient, meek, humble Resignation to God, when your own Impatience, Wrath, Pride, and Irresignation, attack yourself, is a higher and more beneficial Performance of this Duty, than when you stand turned to Meekness and Patience, when attacked by the Pride, or Wrath, or disorderly Passions of other People. I say, stand turned to this patient, humble Resignation, for this is your true Performance of this Duty at that Time; and though you may have no comfortable Sensibility of your performing it, yet in this State you may always have one full Proof of the Truth and Reality of it, and that is, when you seek for Help no other Way, nor in any Thing else, neither from Men nor Books, but wholly leave and give up yourself to be helped by the Mercy of God. And thus, be your State what it will, you may always have the full Benefit of this short and sure Way of resigning up yourself to God. And the greater the Perplexity of your Distress is, the nearer you are to the greatest and best Relief, provided you have but Patience to expect it all from God. For nothing brings you so near to Divine Relief, as the Extremity of Distress; for the Goodness of God hath no other Name or Nature, but the Helper of all that wants to be helped; and nothing can possibly hinder your finding this Goodness of God, and every other Gift and Grace that you stand in Need of; nothing can hinder or delay it, but your turning from the only Fountain of Life and living Water, to some cracked Cistern of your own Making; to this or that Method, Opinion, Division, or Subdivision amongst Christians, carnally expecting some mighty Things either from Samaria, or Jerusalem, Paul or Apollos, which are only and solely to be had by worshipping the Father in Spirit and in Truth, which is then only done, when your whole Heart and Soul and Spirit trusts wholly and solely to the Operation of that God within you, in whom we live, move, and have our Being. And be assured of this, as a most certain Truth, that we have neither more nor less of the Divine Operation within us, because of this or that outward Form, or Manner of our Life, but just and strictly in that Degree, as our Faith, and Hope, and Trust, and Dependence upon God, are more or less in us.

What a Folly then to be so often perplexed about the Way to God? For nothing is the Way to God, but our Heart. God is nowhere else to be found; and the Heart itself cannot find Him, or be helped by any Thing else to find Him, but by its own Love of Him, Faith in Him, Dependence upon Him, Resignation to Him, and Expectation of all from Him.

These are short, but full Articles of true Religion, which carry Salvation along with them, which make a true and full Offering and Oblation of our whole Nature to the Divine Operation, and also a true and full Confession of the Holy Trinity in Unity. For as they look wholly to the Father, as blessing us with the Operation of his own Word, and Spirit, so they truly confess, and worship the holy Trinity of God. And as they ascribe all to, and expect all from this Deity alone, so they make the truest and best of all Confessions, that there is no God but one.

Let then Arians, Semi- Arians, and Socinians, who puzzle their laborious Brains to make Paper-Images of a Trinity for themselves, have nothing from you but your Pity and Prayers; your Foundation standeth sure, whilst you look for all your Salvation through the Father, working Life in your Soul by his own Word, and Spirit, which dwell in Him, and are one Life, both in Him and you.

Theogenes. I can never enough thank you, Theophilus, for this good and comfortable Answer to my scrupulous Fear. It seems now, as if I could always know how to find full Relief in this humble, meek, patient, total Resignation of myself to God. It is, as you said, a Remedy that is always at hand, equally practicable at all Times, and never in greater Reality, than when my own Tempers are making War against it in my own Heart.

You have quite carried your Point with me. The God of Patience, Meekness, and Love, is the one God of my Heart. It is now the whole Bent and Desire of my Soul, to seek for all my Salvation in and through the Merits and Mediation of the meek, humble, patient, resigned, suffering Lamb of God, who alone hath Power to bring forth the blessed Birth of these heavenly Virtues in my Soul. He is the Bread of God, that came down from Heaven, of which the Soul must eat, or perish and pine in everlasting Hunger. He is the Eternal Love and Meekness, that left the Bosom of his Father, to be Himself the Resurrection of Meekness and Love in all the darkened, wrathful Souls of fallen Men. What a Comfort is it, to think that this Lamb of God, Son of the Father, Light of the World, who is the Glory of Heaven, and Joy of Angels, is as near to us, as truly in the midst of us, as he is in the midst of Heaven; and that not a Thought, Look, and Desire of our Heart, that presses toward Him, longing to catch, as it were, one small Spark of his heavenly Nature, but is in as sure a Way of finding Him, touching Him, and drawing Virtue from Him as the Woman who was healed, by longing but to touch the Border of his Garment. This Doctrine also makes me quite weary and ashamed of all my own natural Tempers, as so Many Marks of the Beast upon me; every Whisper of my Soul that stirs up Impatience, Uneasiness, Resentment, Pride, and Wrath within me, shall be rejected with a Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is his, and has its whole Nature from him. To rejoice in a Resentment gratified, appears now to me to be quite frightful. For what is it, in reality, but rejoicing that my own Serpent of Self has new Life and Strength given to it, and that the precious Lamb of God is denied Entrance into my Soul. For this is the strict Truth of the Matter. To give into Resentment, and go willingly to gratify it, is calling up the Courage of your own Serpent, and truly helping it to be more stout and valiant, and successful in you.— On the other Hand, to give up all Resentment of every Kind, and on every Occasion, however artfully, beautifully, outwardly coloured, and to sink down into the Humility of Meekness under all Contrariety, Contradiction, and Injustice, always turning the other Cheek to the Smiter, however haughty, is the best of all Prayers, the surest of all Means to have nothing but Christ living and working in you, as the Lamb of God, that taketh away every Sin that ever had Power over your Soul.

What a Blindness was it in me, to think that I had no Covetousness because the Love of Pelf {money or gain} , was not felt by me! For to covet, is to desire. And what can it signify whether I desire This or That? If I desire any Thing but that which God would have me to be and do, I stick in the Mire of Covetousness, and must have all that Evil and Disquiet living and working in me, which robs Misers of their Peace both with God and Man.

Oh sweet Resignation of myself to God, happy Death of every selfish Desire, blessed Unction of a holy Life, the only Driver of all Evil out of my Soul, be thou my Guide and Governor wherever I go! Nothing but thou can take me from myself, nothing but thou can lead me to God; Hell has no Power where thou art; nor can Heaven hide itself from thee. Oh may I never indulge a Thought, bring forth a Word, or do any Thing for myself or others, but under the Influence of thy blessed Inspiration!

Forgive, dear Theophilus, this Transport of my Soul; I could not stop it. The Sight, though distant, of this heavenly Canaan, this Sabbath of the Soul, freed from the miserable Labour of Self, to rest in Meekness, Humility, Patience, and Resignation under the Spirit of God, is like the joyful Voice of the Bridegroom to my Soul, and leaves no Wish in me, but to be at the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

Theophilus. Thither, Theogenes, you must certainly come, if you keep to the Path of Meekness, Humility, and Patience, under a full Resignation to God. But if you go aside from it, let the Occasion seem ever so glorious, or the Effects ever so wonderful to you, it is only preparing for yourself a harder Death. For die you must to all, and every Thing that you have worked or done under any other Spirit, but that of Meekness, Humility, and true Resignation to God. Every Thing else, be it what it will, hath its Rise from the Fire of Nature, it belongs to nothing else, and must of all Necessity be given up, lost, and taken from you again by Fire, either here or hereafter. For these Virtues are the only Wedding Garment; they are the Lamps and Vessels well furnished with Oil.

There is nothing that will do in the Stead of them; they must have their own full and perfect Work in you, if not before, yet certainly after the Death of the Body, or the Soul can never be delivered from its fallen wrathful State. And all this is no more than is implied in this Scripture Doctrine, viz., that there is no Possibility of Salvation, but in and by a Birth of the meek, humble, patient, resigned Lamb of God in our Souls. And when this Lamb of God has brought forth a real Birth of his own Meekness, Humility, and full Resignation to God in our Souls, then are our Lamps trimmed, and our Virgin-hearts made ready for the Marriage Feast. This Marriage Feast signifies the Entrance into the highest State of Union, that can be between God and the Soul, in this Life. Or in other Words, it is the Birth-Day of the Spirit of Love in our Souls, which whenever we attain it, will feast our Souls with such Peace and Joy in God, as will blot out the Remembrance of every Thing, that we called Peace or Joy before. In the Letter on the Spirit of Love, you have been shown, according to the Mystery of all Things opened by the Goodness of God in the blessed Behmen, the Time and Place of its Birth. That it neither does, nor can possibly begin any sooner, than at the Entrance or Manifestation of the Divine Light, in the three first wrathful, self-tormenting Properties of Nature, which are and must be the Ground of every natural Life, and must be Darkness, Rage, and Torment, till the Light of God, breaking in upon them, changes all their painful working into the strongest Sensibilities of Love, Joy, and Triumph, in the Perception and Possession of a new

Divine Life.

Now all that we have said To-day of the Necessity of the fallen Souls dying to Self, by Meekness, Patience, Humility, and full Resignation to God is strictly the same Thing, and asserted from the same Ground as when it was then said, that the three first Properties of Nature must have their wrathful Activity taken from them, by the Light of God breaking in upon them, or manifesting itself in them. Now this was always the State of Nature, it never was a State of Wrath, because it never was without the Light of God in it. But the natural, creaturely Life, having a Possibility of falling, and having actually fallen from God, has found and felt what never ought to have been found and felt, viz., what Nature is in itself, without the Manifestation of the Deity in it.

Therefore, as sure as the Light of God, or the Entrance of the Deity into the three first Properties of Nature, is absolutely necessary to make Nature to be a heavenly Kingdom of Light and Love, so sure and certain is it, that the creaturely Life, that is fallen from God under the wrathful first Properties of Nature, can have no Deliverance from it, cannot have a Birth of heavenly Light and Love, by any other possible Way, but that of dying to Self, by Meekness, Humility, Patience, and full Resignation to God. And the Reason is this. It is because the Will is the Leader of the creaturely Life, and it can have nothing but that to which its Will is turned. And therefore it cannot be saved from, or raised out of the Wrath of Nature, till its Will turns from Nature, and wills to be no longer driven by it. But it cannot turn from Nature, or show a Will to come from under its Power, any other Way, than by turning and giving up itself to that Meekness, Humility, Patience, and Resignation to God, which so far as it goes, is a leaving, rejecting, and dying to all the Guidance of Nature. And thus you see, that this one simple Way is, according to the immutable Nature of Things, the one only possible and absolutely necessary Way to God. It is as possible to go two contrary Ways at once, as to go to God any other Way than this. But what is best of all, this Way is absolutely infallible; nothing can defeat it. And all this infallibility is fully grounded in the two-fold Character of our Saviour (1) As he is the Lamb of God, a Principle, and Source of all Meekness, and Humility in the Soul, and (2) As he is the Light of Eternity, that blesses eternal Nature, and turns it into a Kingdom of Heaven. For in this two-fold Respect, he has a Power of redeeming us, which nothing can hinder; but sooner or later, he must see all his and our Enemies under his Feet, and all that is fallen in Adam into Death must rise and return to a Unity of an Eternal Life in God.

For, as the Lamb of God, he has all Power to bring forth in us a Sensibility and a Weariness of our own wrathful State, and a Willingness to fall from it into Meekness, Humility, Patience, and Resignation to that Mercy of God which alone can help us. And when we are thus weary and heavy laden, and willing to get Rest to our Souls, in meek, humble, patient Resignation to God, then it is, that He, as the Light of God and Heaven, joyfully breaks in upon us, turns our Darkness into Light, our Sorrow into Joy, and begins that Kingdom of God and Divine Love within us which will never have an End.

Need I say more, Theogenes, to show you how to come out of the Wrath of your evil earthly Nature, into the sweet Peace and Joy of the Spirit of Love? Neither Notions, nor Speculations, nor Heat, nor Fervour, nor Rules, nor Methods can bring it forth. It is the Child of Light, and cannot possibly have any Birth in you, but only and solely from the Light of God rising in your own Soul, as it rises in heavenly Beings. But the Light of God cannot arise, or be found in you, by any Art or Contrivance of your own, but only and solely in the Way of that Meekness, Humility, and Patience,

which waits, trusts, resigns to, and expects all from the inward, living, life-giving Operation of the Triune God within you, creating, quickening, and reviving in your fallen Soul that Birth and Image, and Likeness of the Holy Trinity, in which the first Father of Mankind was created.

Theogenes. You need say no more, Theophilus; you have not only removed that Difficulty which brought us hither, but have, by a Variety of Things, fixed and confirmed us in a full Belief of that great truth elsewhere asserted, namely "That there is but one Salvation for all Mankind, and that is the Life of God in the Soul. And also, that there is but one possible Way for Man to attain this Life of God, not one for a Jew, another for a Christian, and a third for a Heathen. No, God is one, and the Way to it is one, and that is, the Desire of the Soul turned to God."

Therefore, dear Theophilus, adieu. If we see you no more in this Life, you have sufficiently taught us how to seek, and find every kind of Goodness, Blessing, and Happiness, in God alone. The End of the Third DIALOGUE

FINIS.

09.00 Spirit of Prayer

The Spirit of Prayer or The Soul Rising out of the Vanity of Time, into the Riches of Eternity by William Law, M.A.

London: 1749 Table of Contents

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09.01 Part 1 Ch 1

Chapter I Treating of Some Matters preparatory to the Spirit of Prayer The greatest part of mankind, nay of Christians, may be said to be asleep; and that particular way of life, which takes up each man's mind, thoughts, and actions, may be very well called his particular dream. This degree of vanity is equally visible in every form and order of life. The learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, are all in the same state of slumber, only passing away a short life in a different kind of dream. But why so? It is because man has an eternity within him, is born into this world, not for the sake of living here, not for anything this world can give him, but only to have time and place, to become either an eternal partaker of a divine life with God, or to have an hellish eternity among fallen angels: and therefore, every man who has not his eye, his heart, and his hands, continually governed by this twofold eternity, may justly be said to be fast asleep, to have no awakened sensibility of himself. And a life devoted to the interests and enjoyments of this world, spent and wasted in the slavery of earthly desires, may be truly called a dream; as having all the shortness, vanity, and delusion of a dream; only with this great difference, that when a dream is over, nothing is lost but fictions and fancies; but when the dream of life is ended only by death, all that eternity is lost for which we were brought into being. Now there is no misery in this world, nothing that makes either the life or death of man to be full of calamity, but this blindness and insensibility of his state, into which he so willingly, nay obstinately plunges himself. Everything that has the nature of evil and distress in it takes its rise from hence. Do but suppose a man to know himself, that he comes into this world on no other errand, but to rise out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity; do but suppose him to govern his inward thoughts and outward actions by this view of himself, and then to him every day has lost all its evil; prosperity and adversity have no difference, because he receives and uses them both in the same spirit; life and death are equally welcome, because equally parts of his way to eternity. For poor and miserable as this life is, we have all of us free access to all that is great, and good, and happy, and carry within ourselves a key to all the treasures that heaven has to bestow upon us. We starve in the midst of plenty, groan under infirmities, with the remedy in our own hand; live and die without knowing and feeling anything of the one, only good, whilst we have it in our power to know and enjoy it in as great a reality, as we know and feel the power of this world over us: for heaven is as near to our souls, as this world is to our bodies; and we are created, we are redeemed, to have our conversation in it. God, the only good of all intelligent natures, is not an absent or distant God, but is more present in and to our souls, than our own bodies; and we are strangers to heaven, and without God in the world, for this only reason, because we are void of that spirit of prayer, which alone can, and never fails to unite us with the one, only good, and to open heaven and the kingdom of God within us. A root set in the finest soil, in the best climate, and blessed with all that sun, and air, and rain can do for it, is not in so sure a way of its growth to perfection, as every man may be, whose spirit aspires after all that, which God is ready and infinitely desirous to give him. For the sun meets not the springing bud that stretches towards him with half that certainty, as God, the source of all good, communicates himself to the soul that longs to partake of him.

We are all of us, by birth, the offspring of God, more nearly related to him than we are to one another; for in him we live, and move, and have our being. The first man that was brought forth from God had the breath and spirit of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, breathed into him, and so he became a living soul. Thus was our first father born of God, descended from him, and stood in paradise in the image and likeness of God. He was the image and likeness of God, not with any regard to his outward shape or form, for no shape has any likeness to God; but he was in the image and likeness of God, because the Holy Trinity had breathed their own nature and spirit into him. And as the Deity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are always in heaven, and make heaven to be everywhere, so this spirit, breathed by them into man, brought heaven into man along with it; and so man was in heaven, as well as on earth, that is, in paradise, which signifies an heavenly state, or birth of life.

Adam had all that divine nature, both as to an heavenly spirit, and heavenly body, which the angels have. But as he was brought forth to be a lord and ruler of a new world, created out of the chaos or ruins of the kingdom of fallen angels; so it was necessary that he should also have the nature of this new created world in himself, both as to its spirit and materiality. Hence it was, that he had a body taken from this new created earth, not such dead earth as we now make bricks of, but the blessed earth of paradise, that had the powers of heaven in it, out of which the tree of life itself could grow. Into the nostrils of this outward body, was the breath or spirit of this world breathed; and in this spirit and body of this world, did the inward celestial spirit and body of Adam dwell: it was the medium or means through which he was to have commerce with this world, become visible to its creatures, and rule over it and them. Thus stood our first father; an angel both as to body and spirit (as he will be again after the resurrection) yet dwelling in a body and spirit taken from this new created world, which however was as inferior to him, as subject to him, as the earth and all its creatures were. It was no more alive in him, no more brought forth its nature within him, than Satan and the serpent were alive in him at his first creation. And herein lay the ground of Adam's ignorance of good and evil; it was because his outward body, and the outward world (in which alone was good and evil) could not discover their own nature, or open their own life within him, but were kept inactive by the power and life of the celestial man within it. And this was man's first and great trial; a trial not imposed upon him by the mere will of God, or by way of experiment; but a trial necessarily implied in the nature of his state: he was created an angel, both as to body and spirit; and this angel stood in an outward body, of the nature of the outward world; and therefore, by the nature of his state, he had his trial, or power of choosing, whether he would live as an angel, using only his outward body as a means of opening the wonders of the outward world to the glory of his creator; or whether he would turn his desire to the opening of the bestial life of the outward worldling himself, for the sake of knowing the good and evil that was in it. The fact is certain, that he lusted after the knowledge of this good and evil, and made use of the means to obtain it. No sooner had he got this knowledge, by the opening of the bestial life and sensibility within him; but his soul, an immortal fire that could not die, became a poor slave in prison of bestial flesh and blood. See here the nature and necessity of our redemption; it is to redeem the first angelic nature that departed from Adam; it is to make that heavenly spirit and body which Adam lost, to be alive again in all the human nature; and this is called regeneration. See also the true reason why only the Son, or eternal Word of God, could be our redeemer; it is because he alone, by whom all things were at first made, could be able to bring to life again that celestial spirit and body which had departed from Adam. See also why our blessed redeemer said, "Except a man be

born again of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." He must be born again of the spirit, because Adam's first heavenly spirit was lost: he must be born again of water, because that heavenly body which Adam lost, was formed out of the heavenly materiality, which is called water. Thus in the Revelation of St. John, the heavenly materiality, out of which the bodies of angels and also of Adam were formed, is called a glassy sea, as being the nearest and truest representation of it that can be made to our minds. The necessity of our regaining our first heavenly body, is the necessity of our eating the body and blood of Christ. The necessity of having again our first heavenly spirit, is declared by the necessity of our being baptized by the Holy Ghost. Our fall is nothing else, but the falling of our soul from this celestial body and spirit into a bestial body and spirit of this world. Our rising out of our fallen state, or redemption, is nothing else but the regaining our first angelic spirit and body, which in Scripture is called our inward, or new man, created again in Christ Jesus. See here, lastly, the true ground of all the mortifications of flesh and blood, required in the gospel; it is because this bestial life of this outward world should not have been opened in man; it is his separation from God, and death to the kingdom of heaven; and therefore, all its workings, appetites, and desires, are to be restrained and kept under, that the first heavenly life, to which Adam died, may have room to rise up in us. But to return. That Adam was thus an angel at his first creation, dwelling in an outward body and outward world, incapable of receiving any impressions from them, and able to rule them at his pleasure; that all outward nature was a state of life below him, in subjection to him; that neither sun, nor stars, nor fire, nor water, nor earth, nor stones, could act upon him, or hurt him, is undeniably plain from hence; because his first and great sin, which cost him his angelic life, and took from him his crown of glory, consisted in this, that he lusted to know, and took the means of knowing, what good and evil are in the bestial life of this world: for this plainly demonstrates, that before his sin, whilst he stood in the first state of his creation, that he was an angel in nature and power, that neither his own outward body, nor any part of outward nature, had any power in him or upon him; for had his own outward body, or any element of outward nature, had any power to act upon him, to make any impressions, or raise any sensations in him, he could not have been ignorant of good and evil in this world. Therefore, seeing that his eating of the forbidden tree, was that alone which opened this knowledge in him, it is a demonstration, that in his first state he was in this world as an angel, that was put into the possession of it only to rule as a superior being over it; that he was to have no share of its life and nature, no feeling of good or evil from it, but to act in it as a heavenly artist, that had power and skill to open the wonders of God in every power of outward nature. An angel, we read, used at a certain time to come down into a pool at Jerusalem; the water stirred by the angel gave forth its virtues, but the angel felt no impressions of weight, or cold from the water. This is an image of Adam's first freedom from, and power over all outward nature. He could wherever he went, do as this angel did, make every element, and elementary thing, discover all the riches of God that were hidden in it, without feeling any impressions of any kind from it. This was to have been the work both of Adam and his offspring, to make all the creation show forth the glory of God, to spread paradise over all the earth, till the time came, that all the good in this world was to be called back to its first state, and all the evil in every part left to be possessed by the devil and his angels. But since he fell from this first state into an animal of this world, his work is changed, and he must now labor with sweat to till the cursed earth, both for himself and the beasts upon it.

Let us now consider some plain and important truths, that follow from what has been said above.

First, it is plain that the sin and fall of Adam did not consist in this, viz., that he had only committed a single act of disobedience, and so might have been just as he was before, if God had pleased to overlook this single act of disobedience, and not to have brought a curse upon him and his posterity for it. Nothing of this is the truth of the matter, either on the part of God, or on the part of man.

Secondly, it is plain also, that the command of God, not to lust after, and eat of the forbidden tree, was not an arbitrary command of God, given at pleasure, or as a mere trial of man's obedience; but was a most kind and loving information given by the God of love to his new-born offspring, concerning the state he was in, with regard to the outward world: warning him to withdraw all desire of entering into a sensibility of its good and evil; because such sensibility could not be had, without his immediate dying to that divine and heavenly life which he then enjoyed. "Eat not," says the God of love, "of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for in the day thou eatest thereof you will surely die." As if it had been said, "I have brought thee into this paradise, with such a nature as the angels have in heaven. By the order and dignity of thy creation, everything that lives and moves in this world is made subject to thee, as to their ruler. I have made thee in thy outward body of this world, to be for a time a little lower than the angels, till thou hast brought forth a numerous offspring, fit for that kingdom which they have lost. The world around thee, and the life which is newly awakened in it, is much lower than thou art; of a nature quite inferior to thine. It is a gross, corruptible state of things, that cannot stand long before me; but must for a while bear the marks of those creatures, which first made evil to be known in the creation. The angels, that first inhabited this region, where thou art to bring forth a new order of beings, were great and powerful spirits, highly endowed with the riches and powers of their creator. Whilst they stood (as the order of creation requires) in meekness and resignation, under their creator, nothing was impossible to them; there was no end of their glorious powers throughout their whole kingdom. Perpetual scenes of light, and glory, and beauty, were rising and changing through all the height and depth of their glassy sea, merely at their will and pleasure. But finding what wonders of light and glory they could perpetually bring forth; how all the powers of eternity, treasured up in their glassy sea, unfolded themselves, and broke forth in ravishing forms of wonder and delight, merely in obedience to their call; they began to admire and even adore themselves, and to fancy that there was some infinity of power hidden in themselves, which they supposed was kept under, and suppressed, by that meekness, and subjection to God, under which they acted. Fired and intoxicated with this proud imagination, they boldly resolved, with all their eternal energy and strength, to take their kingdom, with all its glories, to themselves, by eternally abjuring all meekness and submission to God. No sooner did their eternal potent desires fly in this direction of a revolt from God, but in the swiftness of a thought heaven was lost; and they found themselves dark spirits, stripped of all their light and glory. Instead of rising up above God (as they hoped) by breaking off from him, there was no end of their eternal sinking into new depths of slavery, under their own self-tormenting natures. As a wheel going down a mountain, that has no bottom, must continually keep on its turning, so are they whirled down by the impetuosity of their own wrong turned wills, in a continual descent from the fountain of all glory, into the bottomless depths of their own dark, fiery, working powers. In no hell, but what their own natural strength had awakened; bound in no chains, but their own unbending, hardened spirits; made such, by their renouncing, with all their eternal strength, all meekness, and subjection to God. In that moment, the beautiful materiality of their kingdom, their glassy sea in which they dwelt, was by the wrathful rebellious workings of these apostate spirits

broken all into pieces, and became a black lake, a horrible chaos of fire and wrath, thickness and darkness, a height and depth of the confused, divided, fighting properties of nature. My creating fiat stopped the workings of these rebellious spirits, by dividing the ruins of their wasted kingdom, into an earth, a sun, stars, and separated elements. Had not this revolt of angels brought forth that disordered chaos, no such materiality as this outward world is made of had ever been known. Gross compacted earth, stones, rocks, wrathful fire here, dead water there, fighting elements, with all their gross vegetables and animals, are things not known in eternity, and will be only seen in time, till the great designs are finished, for which thou art brought forth in paradise. And then, as a fire awakened by the rebel creature, began all the disorders of nature, and turned that glassy sea into a chaos, so a last fire, kindled at my word, shall thoroughly purge the floor of this world. In those purifying flames, the sun, the stars, the air, the earth and water, shall part with all their dross, deadness, and division, and all become again that first, heavenly materiality, a glassy sea of everlasting light and glory, in which thou and thy offspring shall sing hallelujahs to all eternity. Look not therefore, thou child of paradise, thou son of eternity, look not with a longing eye after anything in this outward world. There are the remains of the fallen angels in it; thou hast nothing to do in it, but as a ruler over it. It stands before thee, as a mystery big with wonders; and thou, whilst an angel in paradise, hast power to open and display them all. It stands not in thy sphere of existence; it is, as it were, but a picture, and transitory figure of things; for all that is not eternal, is but as an image in a glass, that seems to have a reality, which it has not. The life which springs up in this figure of a world, in such an infinite variety of kinds and degrees, is but as a shadow; it is a life of such days and years, as in eternity have no distinction from a moment. It is a life of such animals and insects, as are without any divine sense, capacity, or feeling. Their natures have nothing in them, but what I commanded this new modelled chaos, this order of stars and fighting elements, to bring forth.

"Now Adam, observe, I will open to thee a great mystery. The heavenly materiality of the angels' kingdom before their revolt was a glassy sea, a mirror of beauteous forms, figures, virtues, powers, colors, and sounds, which were perpetually springing up, appearing and changing in an infinite variety, to the manifestation of the wonders of the divine nature, and to the joy of all the angelical kingdom. This heavenly materiality had its fruits and vegetables, much more real than any that grow in time, but as different from the grossness of the fruits of this world, as the heavenly body of an angel is different from the body of the grossest beast upon earth. In this angelical kingdom, the one element (which is now in four parts) was then a fruitful mother of wonders, continually bringing forth new forms and figures of life; not animals, beasts, or insects, but beautiful figures, and ideal forms of the endless divisibility, and degrees of life, which only broke forth as delightful wonders of the riches of the divine nature, and to tune the voices of angels with songs of praise to the infinite source of life. And hence, O Adam, is that endless infinite variety both of the animal and vegetable life in this perishable world. For no fruits or vegetables could have sprung up in the divided elements, but because they are the divided parts of that one heavenly materiality, or glassy sea, in which angelical fruits had formerly grown forth. No animal life could have arose from stars, air, and water, but because they are all of them the gross remains of that one element, in which the figures and images of life had once risen up in such an infinite variety of degrees and kinds. Hence it was, that when my creating fiat spoke to these new ranged stars, and elements, and bid life awake in them all according to its kind, they all obeyed my word, and every property of nature strove to bring forth, after the kind and manner as it had done in the region of eternity. This,

my son, is the source and original of all that infinite variety, and degrees of life, both of animals and vegetables, in this world. It is because all outward nature, being fallen from heaven, must yet, as well as it can, do and work as it had done in heaven.

"In heaven, all births and growths, all figures and spiritual forms of life, though infinite in variety, are yet all of a heavenly kind, and only so many manifestations of the goodness, wisdom, beauty, and riches of the divine nature. But in this new modelled chaos, where the disorders that were raised by Lucifer are not wholly removed, but evil and good must stand in strife, till the last purifying fire, here every kind and degree of life, like the world from whence it springs, is a mixture of good and evil in its birth.

"Therefore, my son, be content with thy angelical nature, be content, as an angel in paradise, to eat angels' food, and to rule over this mixed, imperfect, and perishing world, without partaking of its corruptible, impure, and perishing nature. Lust not to know how the animals feel the evil and good which this life affords them; for if thou couldst feel what they feel, thou must be as they are; thou canst not have their sensibility, unless thou hast their nature: thou canst not at once be an angel and an earthly animal. If the bestial life is raised up in thee, the same instant the heavenly birth of thy nature must die in thee. Therefore turn away thy lust and imagination from a tree, that can only help thee to the knowledge of such good and evil, as belongs only to the animals of this outward world; for nothing but the bestial nature can receive good or evil from the stars and elements; they have no power, but over that life which proceeds from them. Eat therefore only the food of paradise; be content with angels' bread; for if thou eatest of this tree, it will unavoidably awaken and open the bestial life within thee; and in that moment, all that is heavenly must die, and cease to have any power in thee. And thou must fall into a slavery for life, under the divided fighting powers of stars and elements. Stripped of any angelical garment, that hid thy outward body under its glory, thou wilt become more naked than any beast upon earth, be forced to seek from beasts a covering, to hide thee from the sight of thine own eyes. A shameful, fearful, sickly, wanting, suffering, and distressed heir of the same speedy death in the dust of the earth, as the poor beasts, whom thou wilt thus have made to be thy brethren." This paraphrase I leave to the reflection of the reader, and proceed to show,

Thirdly, that the misery, distress, and woeful condition, which Adam by his transgression brought upon himself, and all his posterity, was not the effect of any severe vindictive wrath in God, calling for justice to his offended sovereignty, and inflicting pains and punishments suitable to the greatness of his just indignation, and anger at the disobedient creature.

If Adam, contrary to the will of God, and for the sake of some new-fancied knowledge, had broken both his own legs, and put out both his eyes, could it with any show of truth and reason have been said, that God, in the severity of his wrath at so heinous an offense, had punished Adam with lameness and blindness? And if it be further supposed, that God seeing Adam lying in this lame and blind condition, came and spoke kindly to him, informing him of a secret of love, which he had in heaven, which he promised to send him immediately by his highest messenger of love; assuring him, that by the use of this heavenly secret or divine power, his legs and eyes should, in some course of time, be infallibly restored to him, even in a better state than they were in at the first; must it not be still more unreasonable and absurd, to charge anything of this lameness and blindness upon a wrath in God kindled against Adam? Nay, is it not clear, in the highest degree,

that in all this matter Adam had nothing from God, but the overflowings of mere love and goodness, and that he had no lameness and blindness, but from his own voluntary acts upon himself? This is a simple, but clear representation of the case, how matters stood betwixt God and our first father, when by his own act and deed he extinguished that divine life, in which God had created him. Adam had not more hurt, no more evil done to him, at his fall, than the very nature of his own action brought along with it upon himself. He lusted to have the sensibility of that good and evil, which the beasts of this world have. He was told, that it could not be had without the loss of his heavenly life; because such loss was as necessarily implied in the nature of the thing itself, as blindness is implied in the extinction of the eyes. However, he ventured to make the trial, and chose to eat of that, which could and did open this sensibility of earthly good and evil in him. No sooner was this sensibility opened in him, but he found it to be a subjection and slavery to all outward nature, to heat and cold, to pains and sickness, horror of mind, disturbed passions, misery, and fears of death. Which is in other words only saying, that he found it to be an extinction of that divine, angelical nature, which till then had kept him insensible and incapable of any hurtful impressions, from any or all the powers of this world. Therefore, to charge his miserable state, as a punishment inflicted upon him by the severe wrath of an incensed God, is the same absurdity as in the former supposed lameness and blindness. Because the whole nature of all that miserable change, both as to body and soul, which then came upon him, was neither more, nor less, than what was necessarily implied in that which he chose to do to himself. And therefore it had nothing of the nature of a punishment inflicted from without, but was only that which his own action had done in and to himself: just as the man that puts out his own eyes, has only that darkness and blindness, which his own action has brought forth in himself. From this short, yet plain and true account of this matter, we are at once delivered from a load of difficulties that have been raised about the fall of man, and original sin. It has been a great question, how the goodness of God could punish so small and single an act of disobedience in Adam, with so great a punishment? Here the sovereignty of God has been appealed to, and has set the matter right; and from this sovereignty, thus asserted, came forth the systems of absolute election, and absolute reprobation. But for our comfort it appears, that the question here put concerns neither God nor man, that it relates not at all to the matter, and has no existence, but in the brains of those that formed it. For the action in which Adam's sin consisted, was such an act, as in itself implied all that miserable change that came upon him, and so was not a small, or single act of disobedience, nor had the least punishment, of any kind, inflicted by God upon it. All that God did on this transgression was mere love, compassion, and relief administered to it. All the sovereignty that God here showed, was a sovereignty of love to the fallen creature. So that all the volumes on this question may be laid aside, as quite beside the point. Another, and the greatest question of all, and which divines of all sorts have been ever solving, and yet never have solved, is this: how it can consist with the goodness of God, to impute the sin of Adam to all his posterity? But here, to our comfort again, it may be said, that this question is equally a vain fiction with the other, and has nothing to do with the procedure of God towards mankind. For there is no imputation of the sin of Adam to his posterity, and so no foundation for a dispute upon it. How absurd would it be to say, that God imputes the nature, or the body and soul of Adam to his posterity? for have they not the nature of Adam by a natural birth from him, and not by imputation from God? Now this is all the sin that Adam's posterity have from him, they have only their flesh and blood, their body and soul from him, by a birth from him, and not imputed to them from God. Instead therefore of the former

question, which is quite beside the matter, it should have been asked thus, how it was consistent with the goodness of God, that Adam could not generate children of a nature and kind quite superior to himself? This is the only question that can be asked with relation to God; and yet it is a question whose absurdity confutes itself. For the only reason why sin is found in all the sons of Adam, is this, it is because Adam of earthly flesh and blood, cannot bring forth a holy angel out of himself, but must beget children of the same nature and condition with himself. And therefore here again it may be truly said, that all the laborious volumes on God's imputing Adam's sin to his posterity, ought to be considered as waste paper. But further, as it is thus evident from the nature of Adam's transgression, that all his misery came from the nature of his own action, and that nothing was inflicted upon him, from a wrath or anger in God at him, so is it still much more so, from a consideration of the divine nature. For it is a glorious and joyful truth, (however suppressed in various systems of divinity) that from eternity to eternity, no spark of wrath ever was, or ever will be in the holy Triune God. If a wrath of God was anywhere, it must be everywhere, if it burned once, it must burn to all eternity. For everything that is in God himself is boundless, incapable of any increase or diminution, without beginning, and without end. It is as good sense, as consistent with the divine nature, to say that God, moved by a wrath in and from himself, began the creation, as that a wrath in God ever punished any part of it. Nature and creature is the only source from whence, and the seat in which, wrath, pain, and vexation can dwell. Nor can they ever break forth either in nature or creature, but so far as either this, or that, has lost its state in God. This is as certain, as that storms and tempests, thunder and lightnings, have no existence in heaven. God, considered in himself, is as infinitely separate from all possibility of doing hurt, or willing pain to any creature, as he is from a possibility of suffering pain or hurt from the hand of a man. And this, for this plain reason, because he is in himself, in his holy Trinity, nothing else but the boundless abyss of all that is good, and sweet, and amiable, and therefore stands in the utmost contrariety to everything that is not a blessing, in an eternal impossibility of willing and intending a moment's pain or hurt to any creature. For from this unbounded source of goodness and perfection, nothing but infinite streams of blessing are perpetually flowing forth upon all nature and creature, in a more incessant plenty, than rays of light stream from the sun. And as the sun has but one nature, and can give forth nothing but the blessings of light, so the holy Triune God has but one nature and intent towards all the creation, which is, to pour forth the riches and sweetness of his divine perfections, upon everything that is capable of them, and according to its capacity to receive them. The goodness of God breaking forth into a desire to communicate good, was the cause and the beginning of the creation. Hence it follows, that to all eternity, God can have no thought, or intent towards the creature, but to communicate good; because he made the creature for this sole end, to receive good. The first motive towards the creature is unchangeable; it takes its rise from God's desire to communicate good; and it is an eternal impossibility, that anything can ever come from God, as his will and purpose towards the creature, but that same love and goodness which first created it: he must always will that to it, which he willed at the creation of it. This is the amiable nature of God, he is the good, the unchangeable, overflowing fountain of good, that sends forth nothing but good to all eternity. He is the love itself, the unmixed, unmeasurable love, doing nothing but from love, giving nothing but gifts of love, to everything that he has made; requiring nothing of all his creatures, but the spirit and fruits of that love, which brought them into being. Oh, how sweet is this contemplation of the height and depth of the riches of divine love! With what attraction must it draw every thoughtful man, to return love for love to this overflowing fountain of

boundless goodness? What charms has that religion, which discovers to us our existence in, relation to, and dependence upon this ocean of divine love! View every part of our redemption, from Adam's first sin, to the resurrection of the dead, and you will find nothing but successive mysteries of that first love, which created angels and men. All the mysteries of the gospel are only so many marks and proofs of God's desiring to make his love triumph, in the removal of sin and disorder from all nature and creature. But to return, and consider further the nature of Adam's fall, we have seen that it consisted of no arbitrary punishment inflicted on him by a wrath raised in God, but was only such a state of misery, as his own action necessarily brought upon him. Let us now see what happened to his soul, a little more distinctly, and how it differed from what it was before his fall, in its heavenly state. The angels that kept their state, and those that fell from it, were at first of one and the same nature; the angels that fell, did not lose all their nature, for then they must have fallen into nothing; they only lost the heavenly and divine part of it, and therefore there is something still remaining in them, that is also in the holy angels, and which is common to both of them. Now this which they did not lose, because it cannot be lost, is a certain root of life, or ground of their existence, which when once in being, cannot be broken, and in which the unceasing eternity, or immortality of their nature consists, a root or first ground of life, equally capable of a heavenly birth, or of a birth and growth into hell. Now that there is this root of life in angels, and that it is something quite distinct from their heavenly nature, is very plain from hence, that the devils have lost their heavenly, and yet have kept their eternal and immortal nature; therefore that in which their eternity and immortality consists, must be something entirely distinct from their heavenly nature, and must be also the same with that, in which the eternity and immortality of the holy angels consists. For the fallen angels have no other eternal root in them, but that which they had before their fall, and which they brought from heaven; and therefore that which is, and must be eternal and undying their nature, is the same eternal root of life, which is in the angels that kept their state. And consequently, the only difference betwixt an angel and a devil, is this, that in the angel its eternal root of life generates a birth of the Light and Holy Spirit of God in it; and in a devil, this eternal root of life has lost this birth, and the power of bringing it forth again. Now here is to be truly seen the real difference betwixt the soul of Adam before, and after his fall. Before his fall, it had the nature of an angel of God, in which the divine birth of the Light and Holy Spirit of God sprung up, but when contrary to the will, and command of God, a bestial life was awakened in him, the heavenly life was necessarily extinguished. The soul therefore having lost that heavenly birth which made it like an angel of God, had nothing remaining in it, but that eternal and immortal root of life, which is the very essence of a fallen angel. But here we must observe a great and happy difference, betwixt the soul of Adam, though dead to all that was heavenly, and the soul of a devil. The angels that extinguished the birth of heaven in themselves, fell directly into the horrible depths of their own strong self-tormenting nature, or their own hell, and that for these two reasons.

First, because there was nowhere else for them to fall into, but into this tormenting sensibility of their own fiery, wrathful, darkened nature.

Secondly, because their revolt from God was an attempt, and intent to be higher and greater by awakening, and trusting to their own natural powers, than they had hitherto been by submission to God. They would have a greatness that sprung only from themselves, and therefore they found that which they sought, they found themselves left to all the greatness that was in themselves, and that was their hell, viz., a fiery strength of a self-tormenting nature, because separate from the one

source of light and love, of peace and joy. But Adam, though his soul was as entirely dead to heaven, as the souls of the devils were, yet fell not into their hell, for these two reasons.

First, because his angelical man dwelt in a body taken from this outward world, which body did not die at his transgression, therefore his soul that had lost his heavenly light, did not fall directly into the devil's hell, but it fell into a body of earthly flesh and blood, which being capable of the enjoyments and satisfactions of this life, could, whilst it lasted, keep the soul insensible of its own fallen state, and hellish condition.

Secondly, because Adam not aspiring to be above, or without God by his own proud strength, but only lusting to enter in a sensibility of the good and evil of the bestial life of this world, he found only that which he sought, and fell into no other state or misery, than that bestial life, which his own actions and desires had opened in him. And therefore this outward world stood him in great stead, it prevented his immediate falling into the state of fallen angels. But then, as there was nothing that kept him out of the hell of fallen angels, but his body of earthly flesh and blood, and as this was now as mortal in him, as it was in the beasts, and lay at the mercy of a thousand accidents, that could every moment take it from him, so he was in his fallen state, standing as it were on the brink of hell, liable every moment to be pushed into it.

See here the deep ground and absolute necessity of that new birth, of Word, Son, and Spirit of God, which the Scripture speaks so much of. It is because our soul, as fallen, is quite dead to, and separate from the kingdom of heaven, by having lost the Light and Spirit of God in itself; and therefore it is, and must be incapable of entering into heaven, till by this new birth, the soul gets again its first heavenly nature.

If thou hast nothing of this birth when thy body dies, then thou hast only that root of life in thee, which the devils have, thou art as far from heaven, and as incapable of it, as they are; thy nature is their nature, and therefore their habitation must be thine. For nothing can possibly hinder thy union with fallen angels, when thou diest, but a birth of that in thy soul, which the fallen angels have lost.

How pitiable, therefore, or rather how hurtful is that learning, which uses all its art of words, to avoid and lose the true sense of our Savior's doctrine concerning the new birth, which is necessary to fallen man, by holding, that the passages asserting the new birth, are only a figurative, strong form of words concerning something, that is not really a birth, or growth of a new nature, but may, according to the best rules of criticism, signify, either our entrance into the society of Christians, by the rite of baptism, or such new relation, as a scholar may have with his master, who by a conformity to the terms of union, or by copying his ways and manners, may, by a figure of speech, be said to be born again of him.

Now let it here be observed, that no passage of Scripture is to be called, or esteemed as a figurative expression, but where the literal meaning cannot be allowed, as implying something that is either bad in itself, or impossible, or inconsistent with some plain and undeniable doctrines of Scripture. Now that this is not the case here, is very evident. For who will presume to say, that for the soul of fallen man to be born again of the Son, or Light, and Holy Spirit of God, is in the literal sense of the words, a thing bad in itself, or impossible, or inconsistent with any plain and undeniable doctrines of Scripture? The critics therefore, who, in this matter, leave the literal meaning of the words, and have recourse to a figurative sense, are without excuse, and have

nothing they can urge as a reason for so doing, but their own skill in words. But it may be further added as a just charge against these critics, that their fixing these passages to a figurative meaning, is not only without any ground, or reason for so doing, but is also a bad meaning, impossible to be true, and utterly inconsistent with the most plain, and fundamental doctrines of Scripture. Now that this is the case here, may in part be seen by the following instance.

Let it be supposed, that a human body had lost the light, and air of this world, and was in a state of death, because both these were quite extinguished in it. Must it not be said, that this human body cannot see, or enter again into the life of this world, unless the light and air of this world get again a new birth in it: is there here any occasion, or any room to form a doubt, how these words are to be understood, or any possibility to mistake the meaning of them? What a philosopher would he be, who for fear of being called an enthusiast, should here deny the literal meaning of a new birth of light and air, and think himself sufficiently justified in flying from it, because in his great reading, he had seen the words, birth, light and air, sometimes, and upon some occasions, used only in a figurative sense?

Now this is exactly, and to a tittle the case of the soul, as fallen, and lying in the same state of death to the kingdom of God, till a new birth of the Light and Spirit of God be again brought forth in it. And therefore the necessity of understanding these words in their literal meaning, the absurdity of flying to a figurative sense of the new birth, and the impossibility of that being the true one, is equally plain, and certain in both these cases.

Now that the soul, as fallen, is in this real state of death, is a doctrine not only plain from the whole tenor of Scripture, but affirmed in all systems of divinity. For all hold, and teach, that man unredeemed, must at the death of his body have fallen into a state of misery, like that of the fallen angels. But how can this be true, unless it be true, that the life of heaven was extinguished in the soul, and that man had really lost that Light, and Spirit of God, which alone can make any being capable of living in heaven? All therefore that I have here, and elsewhere said, concerning the death of the soul by its fall, and its wanting a real new birth of the Son, and Holy Spirit of God in it, in order to its salvation, cannot be denied, but by giving up this great, fundamental doctrine, namely, "That man in his fallen state, and unredeemed, must have been eternally lost." For it cannot be true, that the fall of man unredeemed, would have kept him forever out of heaven, but because his fall had absolutely put an end to the life of heaven in his soul. On the other hand, it cannot be true that Jesus Christ is his redeemer, and does deliver him from his fallen state, unless it be true, that Jesus Christ helps him to a new birth of that Light and Spirit of God, which was extinguished by his fall. For nothing could possibly be the redemption, or recovery of man, but regeneration alone. His misery was his having lost the life and light of heaven from his soul, and therefore nothing in all the universe of nature, but a new birth of that which he had lost, could be his deliverance from his fallen state. And therefore if angels after angels had come down from heaven to assure him, that God had no anger at him, he would still have been in the same helpless state; nay, had they told him, that God had pity and compassion towards him, he had yet been unhelpt; because in the nature of the thing, nothing could make so much as a beginning of his deliverance, but that which made a beginning of a new birth in him, and nothing could fully effect his recovery, but which perfectly finished the new birth of all that heavenly life which he had lost. The gospel tells us of a certain man who fell among thieves, who stripped him, and wounded him, and left him half dead; that first a priest, then a Levite coming that way, both of them avoided

the poor man, by passing on the other side.

Here it is plain that this priest and Levite left the poor man in the same helpless state in which they found him. Let it now be supposed, that instead of going on the other side of the road, they had come up to him, and poured oil and wine into his wounds, only in a figurative sense of the words, that is, that they had spoken such words to him, words so soft, so oily, and reviving, that in a just figure of speech, they might be called a pouring of wine and oil into his wounds. Now had they done this, must it not still be said, that the poor man's wounds and nakedness were still left in their first helpless state? And all for this plain reason, because the poor man was naked, and wounded, not in a figurative sense of the words, but really and truly, and therefore could have no help or benefit, but from real oil and wine really poured into his wounds. And for the same plain reason, the fallen soul, really dead to the kingdom of heaven, can have no help but by a new birth of the Light and Spirit of heaven, really brought forth again in it. When Adam lay in his death wounds to the kingdom of God, had the highest order of archangels, or seraphims come by that way, they could only have done as the priest and Levite did, go on the other side; or if they had come up to him, and done all they could for him, it could only have been such a good or relief to him, as by a figure of speech might be so called. For as Adam had extinguished the Light and Spirit of God in himself, so no one could be the good Samaritan to him, or pour that wine and oil into his wounds, which they wanted, but he who was the author and source of light and life to every being that lives in heaven.

One would wonder how any persons, that believe the great mystery of our redemption, who adore the depths of the divine goodness, in that the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, became a man himself, in order to make it possible for man by a birth from him to enter again into the kingdom of God, should yet seek to, and contend for, not a real, but a figurative sense of a new birth in Jesus Christ. Is there anything more inconsistent than this? Or can anything strike more directly at the heart of the whole nature of our redemption? God became man, took upon him a birth from the fallen nature. But why was this done? Or wherein lies the adorable depth of this mystery? How does all this manifest the infinity of the divine love towards man? It is because nothing less than this mysterious incarnation (which astonishes angels) could open a way, or begin a possibility, for fallen man to be born again from above, and made again a partaker of the divine nature. It was because man was become so dead to the kingdom of heaven, that there was no help for him through all nature. No powers, no abilities of the highest order of creatures, could kindle the least spark of life in him, or help him to the least glimpse of that heavenly light which he had lost. Now when all nature and creature stood round about Adam as unable to help him, for this reason, because that which he had lost, was the life and light of heaven, how glorious, how adorable is that mystery, which enables us to say, that when man laid thus incapable of any relief from all the powers and possibilities of nature, that then the Son, the Word of God, entered by a birth into this fallen nature, that by this mysterious incarnation all the fallen nature might be born again of him according to the spirit, in the same reality, as they were born of Adam according to the flesh? Look at this mystery in this true light, in this plain sense of Scripture, and then you must be forced to fall down before it, in adoration of it. For all that is glorious and happy with regard to man, is manifestly contained in it. But tell me, I pray, what becomes of all this, what is there left in any part of this mystery, if this new birth, for the sake of which God became man, is not really a new birth in the thing itself, is not, as the Scripture affirms, a real birth of the Son and the Spirit of

God in the soul, but something or other, this or that, which the critics say, may be called a new birth, by a certain figure of speech? Is not this to give up all our redemption at once, and a turning all the mysteries of our salvation into mere empty, unmeaning terms of speech? He that should deny the reality of the resurrection, upon pretense, that by the rules of criticism, it needs not signify a real coming out of a state of natural death, might have more to say for himself both from reason and Scripture, than he that denies the reality of the new birth in Jesus Christ. For this new birth is not a part, but the whole of our salvation. Everything in religion, from the beginning to the end of time, is only for the sake of it. Nothing does us any good, but either as it helps forward our regeneration, or as it is a true fruit or effect of it.

All the glad tidings of the gospel, all the benefits of our Savior, however variously expressed in Scripture, all center in this one point, that he is become our light, our life, our resurrection, our holiness and salvation; that we are in him new creatures, created again into righteousness, born again of him, from above, of the Spirit of God. Everything in the gospel is for the sake of this new creature, this new man in Christ Jesus, and nothing is regarded without it. What excuse therefore can be made for that learning, which, robbing us of the true fruits of the tree of life, leaves us nothing to feed upon, but the dry dust of words?

"I am the vine, ye are the branches." Here Christ, our second Adam, uses this similitude to teach us, that the new birth that we are to have from him is real, in the most strict and literal sense of the words, and that there is the same nearness of relation, betwixt him and his true disciples, that there is betwixt the vine and its branches, that he does all that in us, and for us, which the vine does to its branches. Now the life of the vine must be really derived into the branches, they cannot be branches, till the life of the vine is brought forth in them. And therefore as sure as the life of the vine must be brought forth in the branches, so sure is it, that we must be born again of our second Adam. And that unless the life of the holy Jesus be in us by a birth from him, we are as dead to him, and the kingdom of God, as the branch is dead to the vine, from which it is broken off.

Again our blessed Savior says, "Without me, ye can do nothing." The question is, when, or how a man may be said to be without Christ? Consider again the vine and its branches: a branch can then only be said to be without its vine, when the vegetable life of the vine is no longer in it. This is the only sense, in which he can be said to be without Christ; when he is no longer in us, as a principle of a heavenly life, we are then without him, and so can do nothing, that is, nothing that is good or holy. A Christ not in us, is the same thing as a Christ not ours. If we are only so far with Christ, as to own and receive the history of his birth, person, and character, if this is all that we have of him, we are as much without him, as much left to ourselves, as little helped by him, as those evil spirits which cried out, "We know thee, who thou art, the holy one of God." For those evil spirits, and all the fallen angels, are totally without Christ, have no benefit from him, for this one and only reason, because Christ is not in them; nothing of the Son of God is generated, or born in them. Therefore every son of Adam, that has not something of the Son of God generated, or born within him, is as much without Christ, as destitute of all help from him, as those evil spirits who could only make an outward confession of him.

It is the language of Scripture, that Christ in us is our hope of glory? that Christ formed in us, living, growing, and raising his own life and spirit in us, is our only salvation. And indeed all this is plain from the nature of the thing; for since the serpent, sin, death and hell, are all essentially within us,

the very growth of our nature, must not our redemption be equally inward, an inward essential death to this state of our souls, and an inward growth of a contrary life within us? If Adam was only an outward person, if his whole nature was not our nature, born in us, and derived from him into us, it would be nonsense to say, that his fall is our fall. So in like manner, if Christ, our second Adam, was only an outward person, if he entered not as deeply into our nature as the first Adam does, if we have not as really from him a new inward, spiritual man, as we have outward flesh and blood from Adam, what ground could there be to say, that our righteousness is from him, as our sin is from Adam?

Let no one here think to charge me with disregard to the holy Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, or with setting up an inward Savior in opposition to the outward Christ, whose history is recorded in the gospel. No: it is with the utmost fullness of faith and assurance, that I ascribe all our redemption to that blessed and mysterious person, that was then born of the Virgin Mary, and will assert no inward redemption but what wholly proceeds from, and is effected by that life-giving redeemer, who died on the cross for our redemption. Was I to say, that a plant or vegetable must have the sun within it, must have the life, light, and virtues of the sun incorporated in it, that it has no benefit from the sun, till the sun is thus inwardly forming, generating, quickening, and raising up a life of the sun's virtues in it, would this be setting up an inward sun, in opposition to the outward one? Could anything be more ridiculous than such a charge? For is not all that is here said of an inward sun in the vegetable, so much said of a power and virtue derived from the sun in the firmament? So in like manner, all that is said of an inward Christ, inwardly formed, and generated in the root of the soul, is only so much said of an inward life, brought forth by the power and efficacy of that blessed Christ, that was born of the Virgin Mary.

09.01 Part 1 ch 2

Part I

Chapter II Discovering the true way of turning to God, and of finding the kingdom of heaven, the riches of eternity in our souls

Thou hast seen, dear reader, the nature and necessity of regeneration, be persuaded therefore fully to believe, and firmly to settle in thy mind this most certain truth, that all our salvation consists in the manifestation of the nature, life, and spirit of Jesus Christ, in our inward new man. This alone is Christian redemption, this alone delivers from the guilt and power of sin, this alone redeems, renews, and regains the first life of God in the soul of man. Everything besides this, is self, is fiction, is propriety, is own will, and however colored, is only thy old man, with all his deeds. Enter therefore with all thy heart into this truth, let thy eye be always upon it, do everything in view of it, try everything by the truth of it, love nothing but for the sake of it. Wherever thou goest, whatever thou dost, at home, or abroad, in the field, or at church, do all in a desire of union with Christ, in imitation of his tempers and inclinations, and look upon all as nothing, but that which exercises, and increases the spirit and life of Christ in thy soul. From morning to night keep Jesus in thy heart, long for nothing, desire nothing, hope for nothing, but to have all this within thee changed into the spirit and temper of the holy Jesus. Let this be thy Christianity, thy church, and thy religion. For this new birth in Christ thus firmly believed, and continually desired, will do everything that thou wantest to have done in thee, it will dry up all the springs of vice, stop all the workings of evil in thy nature, it will bring all that is good into thee, it will open all the gospel within thee, and thou wilt know what it is to be taught of God. This longing desire of thy heart to be one with Christ will soon put a stop to all the vanity of thy life, and nothing will be admitted to enter into thy heart, or proceed from it, but what comes from God and returns to God: thou wilt soon be, as it were, tied and bound in the chains of all holy affections and desires, thy mouth will have a watch set upon it, thy ears would willingly hear nothing that does not tend to God, nor thy eyes be open, but to see, and find occasions of doing good. In a word, when this faith has got both thy head and thy heart, it will then be with thee, as it was with the merchant who found a pearl of great price, it will make thee gladly to sell all that thou hast, and buy it. For all that had seized and possessed the heart of any man, whatever the merchant of this world had got together, whether of riches, power, honor, learning, or reputation, loses all its value, is counted but as dung, and willingly parted with, as soon as this glorious pearl, the new birth in Christ Jesus, is discovered and found by him. This therefore may serve as a touchstone, whereby everyone may try the truth of his state; if the old man is still a merchant within thee, trading in all sorts of worldly honor, power, or learning, if the wisdom of this world is not foolishness to thee, if earthly interests, and sensual pleasures, are still the desire of thy heart, and only covered under a form of godliness, a cloak of creeds, observances, and institutions of religion, thou mayest be assured, that the pearl of great price is not yet found by thee. For where Christ is born, or his spirit rises up in the soul, there all self is denied, and obliged to turn out; there all carnal wisdom, arts of advancement, with every pride and glory of this life, are as so many heathen idols all willingly renounced, and the man is not only

content, but rejoices to say, that his kingdom is not of this world. But thou wilt perhaps say, How shall this great work, the birth of Christ, be effected in me? It might rather be said, since Christ has an infinite power, and also an infinite desire to save mankind, how can anyone miss of this salvation, but through his own unwillingness to be saved by him? Consider, how was it, that the lame and blind, the lunatic and leper, the publican and sinner, found Christ to be their savior, and to do all that for them, which they wanted to be done to them? It was because they had a real desire of having that which they asked for, and therefore in true faith and prayer applied to Christ, that his spirit and power might enter into them, and heal that which they wanted, and desired to be healed in them. Everyone of these said in faith and desire, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole." And the answer was always this, "According to thy faith, so be it done unto thee." This is Christ's answer now, and thus it is done to everyone of us at this day, as our faith is, so is it done unto us. And here lies the whole reason of our falling short of the salvation of Christ, it is because we have no will to it. But you will say, Do not all Christians desire to have Christ to be their savior? Yes. But here is the deceit; all would have Christ to be their savior in the next world, and to help them into heaven when they die, by his power, and merits with God. But this is not willing Christ to be thy savior; for his salvation, if it is had, must be had in this world; if he save thee, it must be done in this life, by changing and altering all that is within thee, by helping thee to a new heart, as he helped the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the dumb to speak. For to have salvation from Christ, is nothing else but to be made like unto him; it is to have his humility and meekness, his mortification and self-denial, his renunciation of the spirit, wisdom, and honors of this world, his love of God, his desire of doing God's will, and seeking only his honor. To have these tempers formed and begotten in thy heart, is to have salvation from Christ. But if thou willest not to have these tempers brought forth in thee, if thy faith and desire does not seek, and cry to Christ for them in the same reality, as the lame asked to walk, and the blind to see, then thou must be said to be unwilling to have Christ to be thy savior.

Again, consider, how was it, that the carnal Jew, the deep-read scribe, the learned rabbi, the religious Pharisee, not only did not receive, but crucified their savior? It was because they willed, and desired no such savior as he was, no such inward salvation as he offered to them. They desired no change of their own nature, no inward destruction of their own natural tempers, no deliverance from the love of themselves, and the enjoyments of their passions; they liked their sate, the gratifications of their old man, their long robes, their broad phylacteries, and greetings in the markets. They wanted not to have their pride and self-love dethroned, their covetousness and sensuality to be subdued by a new nature from heaven derived into them. Their only desire was the success of Judaism, to have an outward savior, a temporal prince, that should establish their law and ceremonies over all the earth. And therefore they crucified their dear redeemer, and would have none of his salvation, because it all consisted in a change of their nature, in a new birth from above, and a kingdom of heaven to be opened within them by the Spirit of God.

Oh Christendom, look not only at the old Jews, but see thyself in this glass. For at this day (Oh sad truth to be told!) at this day, a Christ within us, an inward savior raising a birth of his own nature, life and spirit within us, is rejected as gross enthusiasm, the learned rabbis take council against it. The propagation of popery, the propagation of Protestantism, the success of some particular church, is the salvation which priests and people are chiefly concerned about. But to return. It is manifest, that no one can fail of the benefit of Christ's salvation, but through an unwillingness to

have it, and from the same spirit and tempers which made the Jews unwilling to receive it. But if thou wouldst still further know, how this great work, the birth of Christ, is to be effected in thee, then let this joyful truth be told thee, that this great work is already begun in everyone of us. For this holy Jesus, that is to be formed in thee, that is to be the savior and new life of thy soul, that is to raise thee out of the darkness of death into the light of life, and give thee power to become a son of God, is already within thee, living, stirring, calling, knocking at the door of thy heart, and wanting nothing but thy own faith and good will, to have as real a birth and form in thee, as he had in the Virgin Mary. For the eternal Word, or Son of God, did not then first begin to be the savior of the world, when he was born in Bethlehem of Judea; but that Word which became man in the Virgin Mary, did, from the beginning of the world, enter as a Word of life, a seed of salvation, into the first father of mankind, was inspoken into him, as an ingrafted Word, under the name and character of a bruiser of the serpent's head. Hence it is, that Christ said to his disciples, "the kingdom of God is within you"; that is, the divine nature is within you, given unto your first father, into the light of his life, and from him, rising up in the life of every son of Adam. Hence also the holy Jesus is said to be the "Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Not as he was born at Bethlehem, not as he had an human form upon earth; in these respects he could not be said to have been the light of every man that cometh into the world; but as he was that eternal Word, by which all things were created, which was the life and light of all things, and which had as a second creator entered again into fallen man, as a bruiser of the serpent; in this respect it was truly said of our Lord, when on earth, that "He was that Light which lighteth every man, that cometh into the world." For he was really and truly all this, as he was the Immanuel, the God with us, given unto Adam, and in him to all his offspring. See here the beginning and glorious extent of the catholic church of Christ, it takes in all the world. It is God's unlimited, universal mercy to all mankind; and every human creature, as sure as he is born of Adam, has a birth of the bruiser of the serpent within him, and so is infallibly in covenant with God through Jesus Christ. Hence also it is, that the holy Jesus is appointed to be judge of all the world, it is because all mankind, all nations and languages have in him, and through him been put into covenant with God, and made capable of resisting the evil of their fallen nature. When our blessed Lord conversed with the woman at Jacob's well, he said to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that talketh with thee, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." How happy (may anyone well say) was this woman of Samaria, to stand so near this gift of God, from whom she might have had living water, had she but vouchsafed to have asked for it! But, dear Christian, this happiness is thine; for this holy Jesus, the gift of God, first given unto Adam, and in him to all that are descended from him, is the gift of God to thee, as sure as thou art born of Adam; nay, hast thou never yet owned him, art thou wandered from him, as far as the prodigal son from his father's house, yet is he still with thee, he is the gift of God to thee, and if thou wilt turn to him, and ask of him, he has living water for thee.

Poor sinner! consider the treasure thou hast within thee, the savior of the world, the eternal Word of God lies hid in thee, as a spark of the divine nature, which is to overcome sin and death, and hell within thee, and generate the life of heaven again in thy soul. Turn to thy heart, and thy heart will find its savior, its God within itself. Thou seest, hearest, and feelest nothing of God, because thou seekest for him abroad with thy outward eyes, thou seekest for him in books, in controversies, in the church, and outward exercises, but there thou wilt not find him, till thou hast first found him in thy heart. Seek for him in thy heart, and thou wilt never seek in vain, for there he

dwells, there is the seat of his Light and Holy Spirit. For this turning to the Light and Spirit of God within thee, is thy only true turning unto God, there is no other way of finding him, but in that place where he dwelleth in thee. For though God be everywhere present, yet he is only present to thee in the deepest, and most central part of thy soul. Thy natural senses cannot possess God, or unite thee to him, nay thy inward faculties of understanding, will, and memory, can only reach after God, but cannot be the place of his habitation in thee. But there is a root, or depth in thee, from whence all these faculties come forth, as lines from a center, or as branches from the body of the tree. This depth is called the center, the fund or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity, I had almost said, the infinity of thy soul; for it is so infinite, that nothing can satisfy it, or give it any rest, but the infinity of God. In this depth of the soul, the Holy Trinity brought forth its own living image in the first created man, bearing in himself a living representation of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and this was his dwelling in God and God in him. This was the kingdom of God within him, and made paradise without him. But the day that Adam did eat of the forbidden earthly tree, in that day he absolutely died to this kingdom of God within him. This depth or center of his soul having lost its God, was shut up in death and darkness, and became a prisoner in an earthly animal, that only excelled its brethren, the beasts, in an upright form, and serpentine subtlety. Thus ended the fall of man. But from that moment that the God of mercy inspoke into Adam the bruiser of the serpent, from that moment all the riches and treasures of the divine nature came again into man, as a seed of salvation sown into the center of the soul, and only lies hidden there in every man, till he desires to rise from his fallen state, and to be born again from above.

Awake then, thou that sleepest, and Christ, who from all eternity has been espoused to thy soul, shall give thee light. Begin to search and dig in thine own field for this pearl of eternity, that lies hidden in it; it cannot cost thee too much, nor canst thou buy it too dear, for it is all, and when thou has found it, thou wilt know, that all which thou hast sold or given away for it, is as mere a nothing, as a bubble upon the water. But if thou turnest from this heavenly pearl, or tramplest it under thy feet, for the sake of being rich, or great, either in church or state, if death finds thee in this success, thou canst not then say, that though the pearl is lost, yet something has been gained instead of it. For in that parting moment, the things, and the sounds of this world, will be exactly alike; to have had an estate, or only to have heard of it, to have lived at Lambeth twenty years, or only have twenty times passed by the palace, will be the same good, or the same nothing to thee. But I will now show a little more distinctly, what this pearl of eternity is. First, it is the Light and Spirit of God within thee, which has hitherto done thee but little good, because all the desire of thy heart has been after the light and spirit of this world. Thy reason, and senses, thy heart and passions, have turned all their attention to the poor concerns of this life, and therefore thou art a stranger to this principle of heaven, this riches of eternity within thee. For as God is not, cannot be truly found by any worshippers, but those who worship him in spirit and in truth, so this Light and Spirit, though always within us, is not, cannot be found, felt, or enjoyed, but by those whose whole spirit is turned to it. When man first came into being, and stood before God as his own image and likeness, this Light and Spirit of God was as natural to him, as truly the light of his nature, as the light and air of this world is natural to the creatures that have their birth in it. But when man, not content with the food of eternity, did eat of the earthly tree, this Light and Spirit of heaven was no more natural to him, no more rose up as a birth of his nature, but instead thereof, he was left solely to the light and spirit of this world. And this is that death, which God told Adam, he should surely die, in the day that he should eat of the forbidden tree. But the goodness of God would not leave man in this

condition. A redemption from it was immediately granted, and the bruiser of the serpent brought the Light and Spirit of heaven once more into the human nature, not as it was in its first state, when man was in paradise, but as a treasure hidden in the center of our souls, which should discover, and open itself by degrees, in such proportion, as the faith and desires of our hearts were turned to it. This Light and Spirit of God thus freely restored again to the soul, and lying in it as a secret source of heaven, is called grace, free grace, or the supernatural gift, or power of God in the soul, because it was something that the natural powers of the soul could no more obtain. Hence it is, that in the greatest truth, and highest reality, every stirring of the soul, every tendency of the heart towards God and goodness, is justly and necessarily ascribed to the Holy Spirit, or the grace of God. It is because this first seed of life, which is sown into the soul, as the gift or grace of God to fallen man, is itself the Light and Spirit of God, and therefore every stirring, or opening of this seed of life, every awakened thought or desire that arises from it, must be called the moving, or the quickening of the Spirit of God; and therefore that new man which arises from it, must of all necessity be said to be solely the work and operation of God. Hence also we have an easy and plain declaration of the true meaning, solid sense, and certain truth, of all those Scriptures, which speak of the inspiration of God, the operation of the Holy Spirit, the power of the divine light, as the sole and necessary agents in the renewal and sanctification of our souls, and also as being things common to all men. It is because this seed of life, or bruiser of the serpent, is common to all men, and has in all men a degree of life, which is in itself so much of the inspiration, or life of God, the Spirit of God, the Light of God, which is in every soul, and is its power of becoming born again of God. Hence also it is, that all men are exhorted not to quench, or resist, or grieve the Spirit, that is, this seed of the Spirit and Light of God that is in all men, as the only source of good. Again, the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. By the flesh and its lustings, are meant the mere human nature, or the natural man, as he is by the fall; by the spirit is meant the bruiser of the serpent, that seed of the Light and Spirit of God, which lies as a treasure hidden in the soul, in order to bring forth the life that was lost in Adam. Now as the flesh has its life, its lustings, whence all sorts of evil are truly said to be inspired, quickened, and stirred up in us, so the spirit being a living principle within us, has its inspiration, its breathing, its moving, its quickening, from which alone the divine life, or the angel that died in Adam, can be born in us. When this seed of the spirit, common to all men, is not resisted, grieved, and quenched, but its inspirations and motions suffered to grow and increase in us, to unite with God, and get power over all the lusts of the flesh, then we are born again, the nature, spirit, and tempers of Jesus Christ are opened in our souls, the kingdom of God is come, and is found within us. On the other hand, when the flesh, or the natural man has resisted and quenched this spirit or seed of life within us, then the works of the flesh, adultery, fornication, murders, lying, hatred, envy, wrath, pride, foolishness, worldly wisdom, carnal prudence, false religion, hypocritical holiness, and serpentine subtlety, have set up their kingdom within us.

See here in short, the state of man as redeemed. He has a spark of the Light and Spirit of God, as a supernatural gift of God given into the birth of his soul, to bring forth by degrees a new birth of that life which was lost in paradise. This holy spark of the divine nature within him, has a natural, strong and almost infinite tendency, or reaching after that eternal Light and Spirit of God, from whence it came forth. It came forth from God, it came out of God, it partaketh of the divine nature, and therefore it is always in a state of tendency and return to God. And all this is called the breathing, the moving, the quickening of the Holy Spirit within us, which are so many operations of

this spark of life tending towards God. On the other hand, the Deity as considered in itself, and without the soul of man, has an infinite, unchangeable tendency of love, and desire towards the soul of man, to unite and communicate its own riches and glories to it, just as the spirit of the air without man, unites and communicates its riches and virtues to the spirit of the air that is within man. This love, or desire of God towards the soul of man, is so great, that he gave his only begotten Son, the brightness of his glory, to take the human nature upon him, in its fallen state, that by this mysterious union of God and man, all the enemies of the soul of man might be overcome, and every human creature might have a power of being born again according to that image of God, in which he was first created. The gospel is the history of this love of God to man. Inwardly he has a seed of the divine life given into the birth of his soul, a seed that has all the riches of eternity in it, and is always wanting to come to the birth in him, and be alive in God. Outwardly he has Jesus Christ, who as a sun of righteousness, is always casting forth his enlivening beams on this inward seed, to kindle and call it forth to the birth, doing that to this seed of heaven in man, which the sun in the firmament is always doing to the vegetable seeds in the earth.

Consider this matter in the following similitude. A grain of wheat has the air and light of this world enclosed, or incorporated in it: this is the mystery of its life, this is its power of growing, by this it has a strong continual tendency of uniting again with that ocean of light and air, from whence it came forth, and so it helps to kindle its own vegetable life. On the other hand, that great ocean of light and air, having its own offspring hidden in the heart of the grain, has a perpetual strong tendency to unite, and communicate with it again. From this desire of union on both sides, the vegetable life arises, and all the virtues and powers contained in it. But here let it be well observed, that this desire on both sides cannot have its effect, till the husk and gross part of the grain falls into a state of corruption and death, till this begins, the mystery of life hidden in it, cannot come forth. The application here may be left to the reader. I shall only observe, that we may here see the true ground, and absolute necessity, of that dying to ourselves, and to the world, to which our blessed Lord so constantly calls all his followers. An universal self-denial, a perpetual mortification of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not a thing imposed upon us by the mere will of God, is not required as a punishment, is not an invention of dull and monkish spirits, but has its ground and reason in the nature of the thing, and is absolutely necessary to make way for the new birth, as the death of the husk and gross part of the grain, is necessary to make way for its vegetable life. But secondly, this pearl of eternity is the wisdom and love of God within thee. In this pearl of thy serpent bruiser, all the holy nature, spirit, tempers, and inclinations of Christ, lie as in a seed in the center of thy soul, and divine wisdom and heavenly love will grow up in thee, if thou givest but true attention to God present in thy soul. On the other hand, there is hidden also in the depth of thy nature the root, or possibility of all the hellish nature, spirit, and tempers of the fallen angels. For heaven and hell have each of them their foundation within us, they come not into us from without, but spring up in us, according as our will and heart is turned either to the Light of God, or the kingdom of darkness. But when this life, which is in the midst of these two eternities, is at an end, either an angel, or a devil will be found to have a birth in us.

Thou needest not therefore run here, or there, saying, Where is Christ? Thou needest not say, Who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring down Christ from above? Or who shall descend into the deep, to bring Christ from the dead? For behold the Word, which is the wisdom of God, is in

thy heart, it is there as a bruiser of the serpent, as a light unto thy feet and lantern unto thy paths. It is there as an holy oil, to soften and overcome the wrathful fiery properties of thy nature, and change them into the humble meekness of light and love. It is there as a speaking Word of God in thy soul; and as soon as thou art ready to hear, this eternal speaking Word will speak wisdom and love in thy inward parts, and bring forth the birth of Christ, with all his holy nature, spirit, and tempers, within thee. Hence it was (that is, from this principle of heaven, or Christ in the soul) hence I say it was, that so many eminent spirits, partakers of a divine life, have appeared in so many parts of the heathen world; glorious names, sons of wisdom, that shone, as lights hung out by God, in the midst of idolatrous darkness. These were the apostles of a Christ within, that were awakened and commissioned by the inward bruiser of the serpent, to call mankind from the blind pursuits of flesh and blood, to know themselves, the dignity of their nature, the immortality of their souls, and the necessity of virtue to avoid eternal shame and misery. These apostles, though they had not the Law, or written gospel to urge upon their hearers, yet having turned to God, they found, and preached the gospel, that was written in their hearts. Hence one of them could say this divine truth, viz., that such only are priests and prophets, who have God in themselves. Hence also it is, that in the Christian church, there have been in all ages, amongst the most illiterate, both men and women, who have attained to a deep understanding of the mysteries of the wisdom and love of God in Christ Jesus. And what wonder? Since it is not art or science, or skill in grammar or logic, but the opening of divine life in the soul, that can give true understanding of the things of God. This life of God in the soul, which for its smallness at first, and capacity for great growth, is by our Lord compared to a grain of mustard seed, may be, and too generally is suppressed and kept under, either by worldly cares, or pleasures, by vain learning, sensuality, or ambition. And all this while, whatever church, or profession any man is of, he is a mere natural man, unregenerate, unenlightened by the Spirit of God, because this seed of heaven is choked, and not suffered to grow up in him. And therefore his religion is no more from heaven than his fine breeding; his cares have no more goodness in them than his pleasures; his love is worth no more than his hatred; his zeal for this, or against that form of religion, has only the nature of any other worldly contention in it. And thus it is, and must be with every mere natural man, whatever appearances he may put on, he may, if he pleases, know himself to be the slave, and machine of his own corrupt tempers and inclinations, to be enlightened, inspired, quickened and animated by self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, which is the only life, and spirit of the mere natural man, whether he be heathen, Jew, or Christian. On the other hand, wherever this seed of heaven is suffered to take root, to get life and breath in the soul, whether it be in man, or woman, young or old, there this new born inward man is justly said to be inspired, enlightened, and moved by the Spirit of God, because his whole birth and life is a birth from above, of the Light and Spirit of God; and therefore all that is in him, has the nature, spirit, and tempers of heaven in it. As this regenerate life grows up in any man, so there grows up a true and real knowledge of the whole mystery of godliness in himself. All that the gospel teaches of sin and grace, of life and death, of heaven and hell, of the new and old man, of the Light and Spirit of God, are things not got by hearsay, but inwardly known, felt and experienced in the growth of his own new born life. He has then an unction from above which teaches him all things, a spirit that knows what it ought to pray for, a spirit that prays without ceasing, that is risen with Christ from the dead, and has all its conversation in heaven, a spirit that has groans and sighs that cannot be uttered, that travaileth and groaneth with the whole creation, to be delivered from vanity, and have its glorious liberty in that God, from whom it came forth.

Again, thirdly, this pearl of eternity is the church, or temple of God within thee, the consecrated place of divine worship, where alone thou canst worship God in spirit, and in truth. In spirit, because thy spirit is that alone in thee, which can unite, and cleave unto God, and receive the workings of his divine Spirit upon thee. In truth, because this adoration in spirit, is that truth and reality, of which all outward forms and rites, though instituted by God, are only the figure for a time, but this worship is eternal. Accustom thyself to the holy service of this inward temple. In the midst of it is the fountain of living water, of which thou mayest drink, and live forever. There the mysteries of thy redemption are celebrated, or rather opened in life and power. There the supper of the lamb is kept; the bread that came down from heaven, that giveth life to the world, is thy true nourishment: all is done, and known in real experience, in a living sensibility of the work of God on the soul. There the birth, the life, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, are not merely remembered, but inwardly found, and enjoyed as the real states of thy soul, which has followed Christ in the regeneration. When once thou art well grounded in this inward worship, thou wilt have learnt to live unto God above time, and place. For every day will be Sunday to thee, and wherever thou goest, thou wilt have a priest, a church, and an altar along with thee. For when God has all that he should have of thy heart, when renouncing the will, judgment, tempers and inclinations of thy old man, thou art wholly given up to the obedience of the Light and Spirit of God within thee, to will only his will, to love only in his love, to be wise only in his wisdom, then it is, that everything thou doest is as a song of praise, and the common business of thy life is a conforming to God's will on earth, as angels do in heaven.

Fourthly, and lastly, this pearl of eternity is the peace and joy of God within thee, but can only be found by the manifestation of the life and power of Jesus Christ in thy soul. But Christ cannot be thy power and thy life, till in obedience to his call, thou deniest thyself, takest up thy daily cross, and followest him, in the regeneration. This is peremptory, it admits of no reserve or evasion, it is the one way to Christ and eternal life. But be where thou wilt, either here, or at Rome, or Geneva, if self is undenied, if thou livest to thine own will, to the pleasures of thy natural lust and appetites, sense and passions, and in conformity to the vain customs, and spirit of this world, thou art dead whilst thou livest, the seed of the woman is crucified within thee, Christ can profit thee nothing, thou art a stranger to all that is holy and heavenly within thee, and utterly incapable of finding the peace and joy of God in thy soul. And thus thou art poor, and blind, and naked, and empty, and livest a miserable life in the vanity of time; whilst all the riches of eternity, the Light and Spirit, the wisdom and love, the peace and joy of God are within thee. And thus it will always be with thee, there is no remedy, go where thou wilt, do what thou wilt, all is shut up, there is no door of salvation, no awakening out of the sleep of sin, no deliverance from the power of thy corrupt nature, no overcoming of the world, no revelation of Jesus Christ, no joy of the new birth from above, till dying to thy self and the world, thou turnest to the Light, and Spirit, and power of God in thy soul. All is fruitless, and insignificant, all the means of thy redemption are at a stand, all outward forms are but a dead formality, till this fountain of living water is found within thee. But thou wilt perhaps say, How shall I discover this riches of eternity, this Light, and Spirit, and wisdom, and peace of God, treasured up within me? Thy first thought of repentance, or desire of turning to God, is thy first discovery of this Light and Spirit of God within thee. It is the voice and language of the Word of God within thee, though thou knowest it not. It is the bruiser of thy serpent's head, thy dear Immanuel, who is beginning to preach within thee, that same which he first preached in public, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When therefore

but the smallest instinct or desire of thy heart calls thee towards God, and a newness of life, give it time and leave to speak; and take care thou refuse not him that speaketh. For it is not an angel from heaven that speaks to thee, but it is the eternal speaking Word of God in thy heart, that Word which at first created thee, is thus beginning to create thee a second time unto righteousness, that a new man may be formed again in thee in the image and likeness of God. But above all things, beware of taking this desire of repentance to be the effect of thy own natural sense and reason, for in so doing thou lovest the key of all the heavenly treasure that is in thee, thou shuttest the door against God, turnest away from him, and thy repentance (if thou hast any) will be only a vain, unprofitable work of thy own hands, that will do thee no more good, than a well that is without water. But if thou takest this awakened desire of turning to God, to be, as in truth it is, the coming of Christ in thy soul, the working, redeeming power of the Light and Spirit of the holy Jesus within thee, if thou dost reverence and adhere to it, as such, this faith will save thee, will make thee whole; and by thus believing in Christ, though thou wert dead, yet shalt thou live.

Now all depends upon thy right submission and obedience to this speaking of God in thy soul. Stop therefore all self-activity, listen not to the suggestions of thy own reason, run not on in thy own will, but be retired, silent, passive, and humbly attentive to this new risen Light within thee. Open thy heart, thy eyes, and ears, to all its impressions. Let it enlighten, teach, frighten, torment, judge, and condemn thee, as it pleases, turn not away from it, hear all it says, seek for no relief out of it, consult not with flesh and blood, but with a heart full of faith and resignation to God, pray only this prayer, that God's kingdom may come, and his will be done in thy soul. Stand faithfully in this state of preparation, thus given up to the Spirit of God, and then the work of thy repentance will be wrought in God, and thou wilt soon find, that he that is in thee, is much greater than all that are against thee. But that thou mayest do all this the better, and be more firmly assured, that this resignation to, and dependence upon the working of God's Spirit within thee, is right and sound, I shall lay before thee two great, and infallible, and fundamental truths, which will be as a rock for thy faith to stand upon.

First, that through all the whole nature of things, nothing can do, or be a real good to thy soul, but the operation of God upon it. Secondly, that all the dispensations of God to mankind, from the fall of Adam, to the preaching of the gospel, were only for this one end, to fit, prepare, and dispose the soul for the operation of the Spirit of God upon it. These two great truths well and deeply apprehended, put the soul in its right state, in a continual dependence upon God, in a readiness to receive all good from him, and will be a continual source of light in thy mind. They will keep thee safe from all error, and false zeal in things, and forms of religion, from a sectarian spirit, from bigotry, and superstition; they will teach thee the true difference between the means and end of religion; and the regard thou showest to the shell, will be only so far, as the kernel is to be found in it.

Man, by his fall, had broken off from his true center, his proper place in God, and therefore the life and operation of God was no more in him. He was fallen from a life in God into a life of self, into an animal life of self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking in the poor perishing enjoyments of this world. This was the natural state of man by the fall. He was an apostate from God, and his natural life was all idolatry, where self was the great idol that was worshipped instead of God. See here the whole truth in short. All sin, death, damnation, and hell is nothing else but this kingdom of self, or the various operations of self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, which separate the soul from

God, and end in eternal death and hell. On the other hand, all that is grace, redemption, salvation, sanctification, spiritual life, and the new birth, is nothing else but so much of the life and operation of God found again in the soul. It is man come back again into his center or place in God, from whence he had broken off. The beginning again of the life of God in the soul, was then first made, when the mercy of God inspoke into Adam a seed of the divine life, which should bruise the head of the serpent, which had wrought itself into the human nature. Here the kingdom of God was again within us, though only as a seed, yet small as it was, it was yet a degree of the divine life, which if rightly cultivated, would overcome all the evil that was in us, and make of every fallen man a new -born son of God.

All the sacrifices and institutions of the ancient patriarchs, the Law of Moses, with all its types, and rites, and ceremonies, had this only end; they were the methods of divine wisdom for a time, to keep the hearts of men from the wanderings of idolatry, in a state of holy expectation upon God, they were to keep the first seed of life in a state of growth, and make way for the further operation of God upon the soul; or, as the apostle speaks, to be as a schoolmaster unto Christ, that is, till the birth, the death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, should conquer death and hell, open a new dispensation of God, and baptize mankind afresh with the Holy Ghost, and fire of heaven. Then, that is, on the day of Pentecost, a new dispensation of God came forth; which on God's part, was the operation of the Holy Spirit in gifts and graces upon the whole church; and on man's part, it was the adoration of God in spirit and in truth. Thus all that was done by God, from the bruise of the serpent given to Adam, to Christ's sitting down on the right hand of God, was all for this end, to remove all that stood between God and man, and to make way for the immediate and continual operation of God upon the soul; and that man, baptized with the Holy Spirit, and born again from above, should absolutely renounce self, and wholly give up his soul to the operation of God's Spirit, to know, to love, to will, to pray, to worship, to preach, to exhort, to use all the faculties of his mind, and all the outward things of this world, as enlightened, inspired, moved and guided by the Holy Ghost, who by this last dispensation of God, was given to be a comforter, a teacher, and guide to the church, who should abide with it forever. This is Christianity, a spiritual society, not because it has no worldly concerns, but because all its members, as such, are born of the Spirit, kept alive, animated and governed by the Spirit of God. It is constantly called by our Lord the kingdom of God, or heaven, because all its ministry and service, all that is done in it, is done in obedience and subjection to that Spirit, by which angels live, and are governed in heaven. Hence our blessed Lord taught his disciples to pray, that this kingdom might come, that so God's will might be done on earth, as it is in heaven; which could not be, but by that same Spirit, by which it is done in heaven. The short is this: the kingdom of self is the fall of man, or the great apostasy from the life of God in the soul; and everyone wherever he be, that lives unto self, is still under the fall and great apostasy from God. The kingdom of Christ is the Spirit and power of God dwelling and manifesting itself in the birth of a new inward man; and no one is a member of this kingdom, but so far as a true birth of the Spirit is brought forth in him. These two kingdoms take in all mankind, he that is not of one, is certainly in the other; dying to one is living to the other.

Hence we may gather these following truths: first, here is shown the true ground and reason of what was said above, namely, that when the call of God to repentance first arises in thy soul, thou art to be retired, silent, passive, and humbly attentive to this new risen Light within thee, by wholly stopping, or disregarding the workings of thy own will, reason, and judgment. It is because all

these are false counselors, the sworn servants, bribed slaves of thy fallen nature, they are all born and bred in thy kingdom of self; and therefore if a new kingdom is to be set up in thee, if the operation of God is to have its effect in thee, all these natural powers of self are to be silenced and suppressed, till they have learned obedience and subjection to the Spirit of God. Now this is not requiring thee to become a fool, or to give up thy claim to sense and reason, but is the shortest way to have thy sense and reason delivered from folly, and thy whole rational nature strengthened, enlightened, and guided by that Light, which is wisdom itself. A child that obediently denies his own will, and own reason, to be guided by the will and reason of a truly wise and understanding tutor, cannot be said to make himself a fool, and give up the benefit of his rational nature, but to have taken the shortest way to have his own will and reason made truly a blessing to him.

Secondly, hence is to be seen the true ground and necessity of that universal mortification and self-denial with regard to all our senses, appetites, tempers, passions and judgments. It is because all our whole nature, as fallen from the life of God, is in a state of contrariety to the order and end of our creation, a continual source of disorderly appetites, corrupt tempers, and false judgments. And therefore every motion of it is to be mortified, changed and purified from its natural state, before we can enter into the kingdom of God. Thus when our Lord says, "Except a man hateth his father and mother, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple"; it is because our best tempers are yet carnal, and full of the imperfections of our fallen nature. The doctrine is just and good; not as if father and mother were to be hated; but that love, which an unregenerate person, or natural man, has towards them, is to be hated, as being a blind self-love, full of all the weakness and partiality, with which fallen man loves, honors, esteems, and cleaves to himself. This love, born from corrupt flesh and blood, and polluted with self, is to be hated and parted with, that we may love them with a love born of God, with such a love, and on such a motive, as Christ has loved us. And then the disciple of Christ far exceeds all others in the love of parents. Again, our own life is to be hated; and the reason is plain, it is because there is nothing lovely in it. It is a legion of evil, a monstrous birth of the serpent, the world, and the flesh; it is an apostasy from the life and power of God in the soul, a life that is death to heaven, that is pure unmixed idolatry, that lives wholly to self, and not to God; and therefore all this own life is to be absolutely hated, all this self is to be denied and mortified, if the nature, spirit, tempers and inclinations of Christ are to be brought to life in us. For it is as impossible to live to both these lives at once, as for a body to move two contrary ways at the same time. And therefore all these mortifications and self-denials have an absolute necessity in the nature of the thing itself.

Thus when our Lord further says, unless a man forsaketh all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple; the reason is plain, and the necessity absolute. It is because all that the natural man has, is in the possession of self-love, and therefore this possession is to be absolutely forsaken, and parted with. All that he has, is to be put into other hands, to be given to divine love, or this natural man cannot be changed into a disciple of Christ. For self-love in all that it has, is earthly, sensual, and devilish, and therefore must have all taken away from it; and then to the natural man all is lost, he has nothing left, all is laid down at the feet of Jesus. And then all things are common, as soon as self-love has lost the possession of them. And then the disciple of Christ, though having nothing, yet possesseth all things, all that the natural man has forsaken, is restored to the disciple of Christ an hundred-fold. For self-love, the greatest of all thieves, being now cast out, and all that he had stolen and hidden thus taken from him, and put into the hands of divine love, every mite

becomes a large treasure, and mammon opens the door into everlasting habitations. This was the Spirit of the first draft of a Christian church at Jerusalem, a church made truly after the pattern of heaven, where the love that reigns in heaven reigned in it, where divine love broke down all the selfish fences, the locks and bolts of me, mine, my own, &c., and laid all things common to the members of this new kingdom of God on earth.

Now though many years did not pass after the age of the apostles, before Satan and self got footing in the church, and set up merchandise in the house of God, yet this one heart, and one Spirit, which then first appeared in the Jerusalem church, is that one heart and Spirit of divine love, to which all are called, that would be true disciples of Christ. And though the practice of it is lost as to the church in general, yet it ought not to have been lost; and therefore every Christian ought to make it his great care and prayer, to have it restored in himself. And then, though born in the dregs of time, or living in Babylon, he will be as truly a member of the first heavenly church at Jerusalem, as if he had lived in it, in the days of the apostles. This Spirit of love, born of that celestial fire, with which Christ baptizes his true disciples, is alone that Spirit, which can enter into heaven, and therefore is that Spirit which is to be born in us, whilst we are on earth. For no one can enter in heaven, till he is made heavenly, till the Spirit of heaven is entered into him. And therefore all that our Lord has said of denying and dying to self, and of his parting with all that he has, are practices absolutely necessary from the nature of the thing.

Because all turning to self is so far turning from God, and so much as we have of self-love, so much we have of a hellish, earthly weight, that must be taken off, or there can be no ascension into heaven. But thou wilt perhaps say, If all self-love is to be renounced, then all love of our neighbor is renounced along with it, because the commandment is, only to love our neighbor as ourselves. The answer here is easy, and yet no quarter given to self-love. There is but one only love in heaven, and yet the angels of God love one another in the same manner, as they love themselves. The matter is thus: the one supreme, unchangeable rule of love, which is a law to all intelligent beings of all worlds, and will be a law to all eternity, is this, viz., that God alone is to be loved for himself, and all other beings only in him, and for him. Whatever intelligent creature lives not under this rule of love, is so far fallen from the order of his creation, and is, till he returns to this eternal law of love, an apostate from God, and incapable of the kingdom of heaven.

Now if God alone is to be loved for himself, then no creature is to be loved for itself; and so all self-love in every creature is absolutely condemned. And if all created beings are only to be loved in and for God, then my neighbor is to be loved, as I love myself, and I am only to love myself, as I love my neighbor, or any other created being, that is only in and for God. And thus the command of loving our neighbor as ourselves, stands firm, and yet all self-love is plucked up by the roots. But what is loving any creature, only in, and for God? It is when we love it only as it is God's work, image, and delight, when we love it merely as it is God's, and belongs to him, this is loving it in God, and when all that we wish, intend, or do to it, is done from a love of God, for the honor of God, and in conformity to the will of God, this is loving it for God. This is the one love that is, and must be the spirit of all creatures that live united to God. Now this is no speculative refinement, or fine-spun fiction of the brain, but the simple truth, and a first law of nature, and a necessary brand of union between God and the creature. The creature is not in God, is a stranger to him, has lost the life of God in itself, whenever its love does not thus begin and end in God. The loss of this love, was the fall of man, as it opened in him a kingdom of self, in which Satan, the world, and the flesh,

could all of them bring forth their own works. If therefore man is to rise from his fall, and return to his life in God, there is an absolute necessity that self, with all his brood of gross affections, be deposed, that his first love in and for which he was created, may be born again in him. Christ came into the world to save sinners, to destroy the works of the devil. Now self is not only the seat and habitation, but the very life of sin. The works of the devil are all wrought in self, it is his peculiar workhouse, and therefore Christ is not come as a savior from sin, as a destroyer of the works of the devil in any of us, but so far as self is beaten down, and overcome in us. If it is literally true, what our Lord said, that his kingdom was not of this world, then it is a truth of the same certainty, that no one is a member of this kingdom, but he that in the literal sense of the words renounces the spirit of this world. Christians might as well part with half the articles of their creed, or but half believe them, as really to refuse, or but by halves enter into these self-denials. For all that is in the creed, is only to bring forth this dying and death to all and every part of the old man, that the life and Spirit of Christ may be formed in us. Our redemption is this new birth; if this is not done, or doing in us, we are still unredeemed. And though the savior of the world is come, he is not come in us, he is not received by us, is a stranger to us, is not ours, if his life is not within us. His life is not, cannot be within us, but so far as the spirit of the world, self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, are renounced, and driven out of us.

Thirdly, hence we may also learn the true nature and worth of all self-denials and mortifications. As to their nature, considered in themselves, they have nothing of goodness or holiness, nor are any real parts of our sanctification, they are not the true food or nourishment of divine life in our souls, they have no quickening, sanctifying power in them; their only worth consists in this, that they remove the impediments of holiness, break down that which stands between God and us, and make way for the quickening, sanctifying Spirit of God to operate on our souls. Which operation of God is the one only thing that can raise the divine life in the soul, or help it to the smallest degree of real holiness, or spiritual life. As in our creation, we had only that degree of a divine life, which the power of God derived into us; as then all that we had, and were, was the sole operation of God in the creation of us; so in our redemption, or regaining that first perfection, which we have lost, all must be again the operation of God; every degree of the divine life restored in us, be it ever so small, must and can be nothing else but so much of the life and operation of God found again in the soul. All the activity of man in the works of self-denial has no good in itself, but is only to open an entrance for the one only good, the Light of God, to operate upon us.

Hence also we may learn the reason, why many people not only lose the benefit, but are even worse for all their mortifications. It is because they mistake the whole nature and worth of them. They practice them for their own sakes, as things good in themselves, they think them to be real parts of holiness, and so rest in them, and look no further, but grow full of self-esteem, and self-admiration, for their own progress in them. This makes them self-sufficient, morose, severe judges of all those that fall short of their mortifications. And thus their self-denials do only that for them, which indulgences do for other people, they withstand and hinder the operation of God upon their souls, and instead of being really self-denials, they strengthen and keep up the kingdom of self.

There is no avoiding this fatal error, but by deeply entering into this great truth, that all our own activity and working has no good in it, can do no good to us, but as it leads and turns us in the best manner to the Light and Spirit of God, which alone brings life and salvation into the soul. "Stretch

forth thy hand," said our Lord to the man "that had a withered hand"; he did so, and "it was immediately made whole as the other."

Now had this man any ground for pride, or a high opinion of himself, for the share he had in the restoring of his hand? Yet just such is our share in the raising up of the spiritual life within us. All that we can do by our own activity, is only like this man's stretching out his hand; the rest is the work of Christ, the only giver of life to the withered hand, or the dead soul. We can only then do living works, when we are so far born again, as to be able to say with the apostle, "Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." But to return, and further show, how the soul that feels the call of God to repentance is to behave under it, that this stirring of the divine power in the soul may have its full effect, and bring forth the birth of the new man in Christ Jesus. We are to consider it (as in truth it is) as the seed of the divine nature within us, that can only grow by its own strength and union with God. It is a divine life, and therefore can grow from nothing but divine power. When the Virgin Mary conceived the birth of the holy Jesus, all that she did towards it herself, was only this single act of faith and resignation to God; "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy Word." This is all that we can do towards the conception of that new man that is to be born in ourselves. Now this truth is easily consented to, and a man thinks he believes it, because he consents to it, or rather, does not deny it. But this is not enough, it is to be apprehended in a deep, full, and practical assurance, in such a manner as a man knows and believes that he did not create the stars, or cause life to rise up in himself. And then it is a belief, that puts the soul into a right state, that makes room for the operation of God upon it. His Light then enters with full power into the soul, and his Holy Spirit moves and directs all that is done in it, and so man lives again in God as a new creature. For this truth thus firmly believed, will have these two most excellent effects: first, it will keep the soul fixed, and continually turned towards God, in faith, prayer, desire, confidence, and resignation to him, for all that it wants to have done in it, and to it; which will be a continual source of all divine virtues and graces. The soul thus turned to God must be always receiving from him. It stands at the true door of all divine communications, and the Light of God as freely enters into it, as the light of the sun enters into the air. Secondly, it will fix and ground the soul in a true and lasting self-denial. For by thus knowing and owning our own nothingness and inability, that we have no other capacity for good, but that of receiving it from God alone, self is wholly denied, its kingdom is destroyed; no room is left for spiritual pride and self-esteem; we are saved from a Pharisaical holiness, from wrong opinions of our own works and good deeds, and from a multitude of errors, the most dangerous to our souls, all which arise from the something that we take ourselves to be either in nature or grace. But when we once apprehend but in some good degree, the all of God, and the nothingness of ourselves, we have got a truth, whose usefulness and benefit no words can express. It brings a kind of infallibility into the soul in which it dwells; all that is vain, and false, and deceitful, is forced to vanish and fly before it. When our religion is founded on this rock, it has the firmness of a rock, and its height reaches unto heaven. The world, the flesh, and the devil, can do no hurt to it; all enemies are known, and all disarmed by this great truth dwelling in our souls. It is the knowledge of the all of God, that makes cherubims and seraphims to be flames of divine love. For where this all of God is truly known, and felt in any creature, there its whole breath and spirit is a fire of love, nothing but a pure disinterested love can arise up in it, or come from it, a love that begins and ends in God. And where this love is born in any creature, there a seraphic life is born along with it. For this pure love introduces the creature into the all of God; all that is in God is opened in the creature, it is united with God, and has the life

of God manifested in it.

There is but one salvation for all mankind, and that is the life of God in the soul. God has but one design or intent towards all mankind, and that is to introduce or generate his own life, Light, and Spirit in them, that all may be as so many images, temples, and habitations of the Holy Trinity. This is God's good will to all Christians, Jews, and heathens. They are all equally the desire of his heart, his Light continually waits for an entrance into all of them, his wisdom crieth, she putteth forth her voice, not here, or there, but everywhere, in all the streets of all the parts of the world.

Now there is but one possible way for man to attain this salvation, or life of God in the soul. There is not one for the Jew, another for a Christian, and a third for the heathen. No; God is one, human nature is one, salvation is one, and the way to it is one; and that is, the desire of the soul turned to God. When this desire is alive and breaks forth in any creature under heaven, then the lost sheep is found, and the shepherd has it upon his shoulders. Through this desire the poor prodigal son leaves his husks and swine, and hastes to his father: it is because of this desire, that the father sees the son, while yet afar off, that he runs out to meet him, falls on his neck, and kisses him. See here how plainly we are taught, that no sooner is this desire arisen, and in motion towards God, but the operation of God's Spirit answers to it, cherishes and welcomes its first beginnings, signified by the father's seeing, and having compassion on his son, whilst yet afar off, that is, in the first beginnings of his desire. Thus does this desire do all, it brings the soul to God, and God into the soul, it unites with God, it co-operates with God, and is one life with God. Suppose this desire not to be alive, not in motion either in a Jew, or a Christian, and then all the sacrifices, the service, the worship either of the Law, or the gospel, are but dead works, that bring no life into the soul, nor beget any union between God and it. Suppose this desire to be awakened, and fixed upon God, though in souls that never heard either of the Law or the gospel, and then the divine life, or operation of God, enters into them, and the new birth in Christ is formed in those who never heard of his name. And these are they "that shall come from the East, and from the West and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, in the kingdom of God."

Oh my God, just and good, how great is thy love and mercy to mankind, that heaven is thus everywhere open, and Christ thus the common savior to all that turn the desire of their hearts to thee! Oh sweet power of the bruise of the serpent, born in every son of man, that stirs and works in every man, and gives every man a power, and desire, to find his happiness in God! O holy Jesus, heavenly light, that lightest every man that cometh into the world, that redeemest every soul that follows thy light, which is always within him! O Holy Trinity, immense ocean of divine love in which all mankind live, and move, and have their being! None are separated from thee, none live out of thy love, but all are embraced in the arms of thy mercy, all are partakers of thy divine life, the operation of thy Holy Spirit, as soon as their heart is turned to thee! Oh plain, and easy, and simple way of salvation, wanting no subtleties of art or science, no borrowed learning, no refinements of reason, but all done by the simple natural motion of every heart, that truly longs after God. For no sooner is the finite desire of the creature in motion towards God, but the infinite desire of God is united with it, co-operates with it. And in this united desire of God and the creature, is the salvation and life of the soul brought forth. For the soul is shut out of God, and imprisoned in its own dark workings of flesh and blood, merely and solely, because it desires to live to the vanity of this world. This desire is its darkness, its death, its imprisonment, and separation from God. When therefore the first spark of a desire after God arises in thy soul,

cherish it with all thy care, give all thy heart into it, it is nothing less than a touch of the divine loadstone, that is to draw thee out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity. Get up therefore and follow it as gladly, as the wise men of the East followed the star from heaven that appeared to them. It will do for thee, as the star did for them, it will lead thee to the birth of Jesus, not in a stable at Bethlehem in Judea, but to the birth of Jesus in the dark center of thy own fallen soul.

I shall conclude this first part, with the words of the heavenly illuminated, and blessed Jacob Behmen.

"It is much to be lamented, that we are so blindly led, and the truth withheld from us through imaginary conceptions; for if the divine power in the inward ground of the soul was manifest, and working with its luster in us, then is the whole Triune God present in the life and will of the soul, and there, in the soul, is the place where the Father begets his Son, and where the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son.

"Christ says, 'I am the Light of the world, he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness.' He directs us only to himself, he is the morning star, and is generated and rises in us, and shines in the darkness of our nature. O how great a triumph is there in the soul, when he arises in it! then a man knows, as he never knew before, that he is a stranger in a foreign land."

Oh heavenly Father, infinite, fathomless depth of never- ceasing love, save me from myself, from the disorderly workings of my fallen, long corrupted nature, and let my eyes see, my heart and spirit feel and find, thy salvation in Christ Jesus.

O God, who madest me for thyself, to show forth thy goodness in me, manifest, I humbly beseech thee, the life-giving power of thy holy nature within me; help me to such a true and living faith in thee, such strength of hunger and thirst after the birth, life, and Spirit of thy holy Jesus in my soul, that all that is within me, may be turned from every inward thought, or outward work, that is not thee, thy holy Jesus, and heavenly working in my soul. Amen.

09.02 Part 2 Dialogue 1

London: 1750 First Dialogue between Academicus, Rusticus and Theophilus; at which Humanus was present

Acad. Well met, honest Rusticus. I can now tell you with much pleasure, that we shall soon see a Second Part of The Spirit of Prayer. And as soon as I get it, I will come and read it to you.

Rust. I have often told you, Academicus, that I wondered at your eagerness and impatience to see more of this matter. As to my part, I have no such thrift within me, and should make no complaint, if it never came out.

Acad. My friend Rusticus, you cannot read; and that is the reason, that you are not in my state of impatience, to see another book.

Rust. Indeed, Academicus, you quite mistake the matter. The first part of The Spirit of Prayer you read to me more than three or four times, and that is the reason, why I am in no state of eagerness after a second part. I have found in the first part, all that I need to know of God, of Christ, of myself, of heaven, of hell, of sin, of grace, of death, and of salvation: that all these things have their being, their life, and their working, in my own heart: that God is always in me, that Christ is always within me; that he is the inward light and life of my soul, a bread from heaven, of which I may always eat; a water of eternal life springing up in my soul, of which I may always drink. O my friend, these truths have opened a new life in my soul: I am brought home to myself; the veil is taken off my heart; I have found my God; I know that his dwelling-place, his kingdom, is within me. What need we then call out for books written only with pen and ink, when such a book as this, so full of wonders, is once opened in our own hearts? My eyes, my ears, my thoughts, are all turned inwards, because all that God, and Christ, and grace, are doing for me, are only to be known, and found there. What need then of so much news from abroad, since all that concerns either life or death, are all transacting, and all at work, within me?

How could I be said to have felt these great truths, to be sensible of these riches of eternity treasured up in my soul, to know what a great good the divine nature is in me, and to me, if instead of turning all the desire and delight of my heart towards them, I only felt a longing and desire to read more concerning the spirit of prayer? No, Academicus, another, and a better fire is kindled within me; my heart is in motion, and all that is within me tends towards God; and I find that nothing concerns me more, than to keep my heart from wandering after anything else. I now know to what it is that I am daily to die, and to what it is that I am daily to live; and therefore look upon every day as lost, that does not help forwards both this death, and this life, in me. I have not yet done half, what the first part of The Spirit of Prayer directs me to do, and therefore have but little occasion to call out for a second.

Theoph. Indeed, Academicus, I must own, that honest Rusticus, as you called him, has spoken well. Your education has so accustomed you to the pleasure of reading variety of books, that you hardly propose any other end in reading, than the entertainment of your mind: thus The Spirit of

Prayer has only awakened in you a desire to see another part upon the same subject. This fault is very common to others, as well as scholars, and even to those who only delight in reading good books.

Philo for this twenty years has been collecting and reading all the spiritual books he can hear of. He reads them, as the critics read commentators and lexicons, to be nice and exact in telling you the style, spirit, and intent of this or that spiritual writer, how one is more accurate in this, and the other in that. Philo will ride you forty miles in winter to have a conversation about spiritual books, or to see a collection larger than his own. Philo is amazed at the deadness and insensibility of the Christian world, that they are such strangers to the inward life and spiritual nature of the Christian salvation; he wonders how they can be so zealous for the outward letter and form of ordinances, and so averse to that spiritual life, that they all point at, as the one thing needful. But Philo never thinks how wonderful it is, that a man who knows regeneration to be the whole, should yet content himself with the love of books upon the new birth, instead of being born again himself. For all that is changed in Philo, is his taste for books. He is no more dead to the world, no more delivered from himself, is as fearful of adversity, as fond of prosperity, as easily provoked, and pleased with trifles, as much governed by his own will, tempers, and passions, as unwilling to deny his appetites, or enter into war with himself, as he was twenty years ago. Yet all is well with Philo; he has no suspicion of himself; he dates the newness of his life, and the fullness of his light, from the time that he discovered the pearl of eternity in spiritual authors.

All this, Academicus, is said on your account, that you may not lose the benefit of this spark of the divine life that is kindled in your soul, but may conform yourself suitably to so great a gift of God.

It demands at present an eagerness of another kind, than that of much reading, even upon the most spiritual matters.

Acad. I thank you, Theophilus, for your good will towards me; but did not imagine my eagerness after such books to be so great and dangerous a mistake. And if I do not yet entirely give in to what you say, it is because a friend of yours has told us (and as I thought by way of direction) that he has been a diligent reader of all the spiritual authors, from the apostolical Dionysius down to the illuminated Guion, and celebrated Fenelon of Cambray. And therefore it would never have come into my head, to suspect it to be a fault, or dangerous, to follow his example.

Theoph. I have said nothing, my friend, with a design of hindering your acquaintance with all the truly spiritual writers. I would rather in a right way help you to a true intimacy with them: for they are friends of God, entrusted with his secrets, and partakers of the divine nature: and he that converses rightly with them, has a happiness, that can hardly be over-valued. My intention is only to abate, for a time, a spirit of eagerness after much reading, which in your state has more of nature than grace in it; which seeks delight in a variety of new notions, and rather gratifies curiosity, than reforms the heart.

Suppose you had seen an angel from heaven, who had discovered to you a glimpse of its own internal brightness, and of that glorious union in which it lived with God, opening more of itself to the inward sight of your mind, than you could either forget or relate. Suppose it had told you with a piercing word, and living impression, that all its own angelic and heavenly brightness was hid in yourself, concealed from you under a bestial covering of flesh and blood; that this flesh and blood

was become the master of it, would not suffer it to breathe, or stir, or come to life in you. Suppose it had told you, that all your life had been spent in helping this flesh and blood to more and more power over you, to hinder you from knowing and feeling this divine life within you. Suppose it had told you, that to this day you had lived in the grossest self-idolatry, loving, serving, honoring, and adoring yourself instead of loving, serving, and adoring God with all your heart, and soul, and spirit: that all your intentions, projects, cares, pleasures, and indulgences, had been only so much labor to bring you to the grave in a total ignorance of that great work, for which alone you were born into the world.

Suppose it had told you, that all this blindness and insensibility of your state, was obstinately and willfully brought upon yourself, because you had boldly slighted and resisted all the daily inward and outward calls of God to your soul, all the teachings, doings, and sufferings, of a Son of God to redeem you. Suppose it left you with this farewell, "O man awake; thy work is great, thy time is short, I am thy last trumpet; the grave calls for thy flesh and blood, thy soul must enter into a new lodging. To be born again, is to be an angel: not to be born again is to become a devil."

Tell me now, Academicus, what would you expect from a man who had been thus awakened, and pierced by the voice of an angel? Could you think he had any sense left, if he was not cast into the deepest depth of humility, self-dejection, and self-abhorrence? Casting himself, with a broken heart, at the feet of the divine mercy, desiring nothing but that, from that time, every moment of his life might be given unto God, in the most perfect denial of every temper, will, and inclination, that nourished the corruption of his nature: wishing and praying from the bottom of his heart, that God would lead him into and through everything inwardly and outwardly, that might destroy the evil workings of his nature, and awaken all that was holy and heavenly within him; that the seed of eternity, the spark of life, that he had so long quenched and smothered under earthly rubbish, might breathe, and come to life, in him. Or would you think he was enough affected with this angelic visit, if all that it had awakened in him, was only a longing and eager desire to hear the same, or another angel talk again?

Acad. O Theophilus, you have said enough: for all that is within me consents to the truth and justness of what you have said. I now feel in the strongest manner, that I have been rather amused, than edified, by what I have read.

Theoph. A spiritual book, Academicus, is a call to as real and total a death to the life of corrupt nature, as that which Adam died in paradise, was to the life of heaven. He indeed died at once totally to the divine life in which he was created: but as our body of earth is to last to the end of our lives; so to the end of our earthly life, every step we take, every inch of our road, is to be made up of denial, and dying to ourselves; because all our redemption consists in our regaining that first life of heaven in the soul, to which Adam died in paradise. And therefore the one single work of redemption, is the one single work of regeneration, or the raising up of a life, and spirit, and tempers, and inclinations, contrary to that life and spirit which we derive from our earthly fallen parents. To think therefore of anything, but the continual, total denial of our earthly nature, is to overlook the very one thing on which all depends. And to hope for anything, to trust or pray for anything, but the life of God, or a birth of heaven, in our souls, is as useless to us, as placing our hope and trust in a graven image. Thus saith the Christ of God the one pattern, and author of our salvation: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, hate his own life, take up his daily

cross, and follow me." And again: "Unless a man be born again from above, of water and the Spirit, he cannot see, or enter into, the kingdom of God."

Now is your time, Academicus, to enter deeply into this great truth. You are just come out of the slumber of life, and begin to see with new eyes the nature of your salvation. You are charmed with the discovery of a kingdom of heaven hidden within you, and long to be entertained more and more with the nature, progress, and perfection of the new birth, or the opening of the kingdom of God in your soul. But my friend, stop a little. It is indeed great joy, that the pearl of great price is found; but take notice, that it is not yours, you can have no possession of it, till as the merchant did, you sell all that you have, and buy it. Now self is all that you have, it is your sole possession; you have no goods of your own, nothing is yours but this self. The riches of self are your own riches; but all this self is to be parted with before the pearl is yours. Think of a lower price, or be unwilling to give thus much for it, plead in your excuse, that you keep the commandments, and then you are that very rich young man in the gospel, who went away sorrowful from our Lord, when he had said, "If thou wilt be perfect," that is, if thou wilt obtain the pearl, "sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor"; that is, die to all thy possession of self, and then thou hast given all that thou hast to the poor: all that thou hast is devoted and used for the love of God and thy neighbor. This selling all, Academicus, is the measure of your dying to self; all of it is to be given up; it is an apostate nature, a stolen life, brought forth in rebellion against God: it is a continual departure from him. It corrupts everything it touches; it defiles everything it receives; it turns all the gifts and blessings of God into covetousness, partiality, pride, hatred, and envy. All these tempers are born, and bred, and nourished, in self; they have no other place to live in, no possibility of existence, but in that creature which is fallen from a life in God, into a life in self.

Acad. Pray, sir, tell me more plainly, what this self is, since so much depends upon it.

Theoph. It is hell, it is the devil, it is darkness, pain, and disquiet. It is the one only enemy of Christ, the great anti- Christ. It is the scarlet whore, the fiery dragon, the old serpent, the devouring beast, that is mentioned in the Revelation of St. John.

Acad. You rather terrify than instruct me, by this description.

Theoph. It is indeed a very frightful matter; it contains everything that man has to dread and hate, to resist and avoid. Yet be assured, my friend, that, careless and merry as the world is, every man that is born into it, has all these enemies to overcome within himself. And every man, till he is in the way of regeneration, is more or less governed by them. No hell in any remote place, no devil that is separate from you, no darkness or pain that is not within you, no anti- Christ either at Rome or England, no furious beast, no fiery dragon, without, or apart from you, can do you any hurt. It is your own hell, your own devil, your own beast, your own anti-Christ, your own dragon, that lives in your own heart's blood, that alone can hurt you.

Die to this self, to this inward nature; and then all outward enemies are overcome. Live to this self, and then, when this life is out, all that is within you, and all that is without you, will be nothing else but a mere seeing and feeling this hell, serpent, beast, and fiery dragon.

See here, Academicus, the twofold nature of every man. He has within him a redeeming power, the meekness of the heavenly life, called the Lamb of God. This seed is surrounded, or encompassed, with the beast of fleshly lusts, the serpent of guile and subtlety, and the dragon of

fiery wrath. This is the great trial, or strife of human life, whether a man will live to the lusts of the beast, the guile of the serpent, the pride and wrath of the fiery dragon, or give himself up to the meekness, patience, the sweetness, the simplicity, the humility, of the Lamb of God. This is the whole of the matter between God and the creature. On one side, fire and wrath, awakened first by the rebellious angels; and on the other side, the meekness of the Lamb of God, the patience of divine love coming down from heaven, to stop and overcome the fire and wrath that is broken out in nature and creature. Your father Adam has introduced you into the fire and wrath of the fallen angels, into a world from whence paradise is departed. Your flesh and blood is kindled in that sin, which first brought forth a murdering Cain. But, dear soul, be of good comfort, for the meekness, the love, the heart, the Lamb of God, is become man, has set himself in the birth from him, heaven and paradise may be again opened both within thee, and without thee, not for a time, but to all eternity.

Once more, Academicus. Every man in this world stands essentially in heaven, and in hell, both as to that which is within him and that which is without him: for man and the world are both in the same fallen state. The curse in the earth is that same thing in outward nature, that the loss of the divine life was to the soul of Adam. The whole world, in all its nature, is nothing else but a real mixture of heaven and hell. The sun and water of this world, are what keep under and overcome the darkness, wrath, and fire of hell, and carry on the vegetable and animal life that are in it. The light of the sun blesses all the workings of the elements, and the cool softening essence of the water, keeps under the fire and wrath of nature. In all animal creatures, the birth of light in their own life, and the water of their own blood, both produced by the light of the sun, and the water of outward nature, bring forth an order of earthly creatures, that can enjoy the good that is in this world in spite of the wrath of hell, and the malice of devils. But man has more than all this; for being at first created an angel, and intended by the mercy of God to be an angel again, he has the light of heaven, and the water of eternal life, both given to Adam in that seed of the woman, which was to bruise the head of the serpent that is, to overcome the curse, the fire, and wrath, or hell, that was awakened in the fallen soul. So that man has not only, in common with the other animals, the light and water of outward nature, to quench the wrath of his own life in this mixed world, but he has the meekness, the light, the love, the humility of the holy Jesus, as a seed of life born in his soul, to bring forth that first image of God, in which Adam was created. This, my friend, is the true ground of all true religion: it means nothing, it intends nothing, but to overcome that earthly life, which overcame Adam in the fall, that made him a prisoner of hell, and a slave to the corrupt workings of earthly flesh and blood. And therefore you may see, and know with a mathematical certainty, that the one thing necessary for every fallen soul, is to die to all the life that we have from this world, and the life of heaven may be born again in him. The life of this world is the life of the beast, the scarlet whore, the old serpent and the fiery dragon.

Hence it is that sin rides in triumph over church and state, and from the court to the cottage all is over-run with sensuality, guile, falseness, pride, wrath, envy, selfishness, and every form of corruption. Everyone swims away in this torrent, but he who hears and attends to the voice of the Son of God within him, calling him to die to this life, to take up his cross, and follow him. Much learned pains has been often taken to prove Rome, or Constantinople, to be the seat of the beast, the anti-Christ, the scarlet whore, &c. But, alas! they are not at such a distance from us, they are the properties of fallen human nature, and are all of them alive in our own selves, till we are dead

or dying to all the spirit and tempers of this world. They are everywhere, in every soul, where the heavenly nature, and Spirit of the holy Jesus is not. But when the human soul turns from itself, and turns to God, dies to itself, and lives to God in the Spirit, tempers, and inclinations of the holy Jesus, loving, pitying, suffering, and praying for all its enemies, and overcoming all evil with good, as this Christ of God did; then, but not till then, are these monsters separate from it. For covetousness and sensuality of all kinds, are the very devouring beast; religion governed by a worldly, trading spirit, and gratifying the partial interest of flesh and blood, is nothing else but the scarlet whore; guile, and craft, and cunning, are the very essence of the old serpent; self-interest and self-exaltation are the whole nature of anti-Christ. Pride, persecution, wrath, hatred and envy, are the very essence of the fiery dragon.

This, Academicus, is the fallen human nature, and this is the old man, which is alive in everyone, though in various manners, till he is born again from above. To think therefore of anything in religion, or to pretend to real holiness, without totally dying to this old man, is building castles in the air, and can bring forth nothing, but Satan in the form of an angel of light. Would you know, Academicus, whence it is, that so many false spirits have appeared in the world, who have deceived themselves and others with false fire, and false light, laying claim to inspirations, illuminations, and openings of the divine life, pretending to do wonders under extraordinary calls from God? It is this; they have turned to God without turning from themselves; would be alive in God, before they were dead to their own nature; a thing as impossible in itself, as for a grain of wheat to be alive before it dies.

Now religion in the hands of self, or corrupt nature, serves only to discover vices of a worse kind, than in nature left to itself. Hence are all the disorderly passions of religious men, which burn in a worse flame than passions only employed about worldly matters: pride, self-exaltation, hatred and persecution, under a cloak of religious zeal, will sanctify actions, which nature, left to itself, would be ashamed to own.

You may now see, Academicus, with what great reason I have called you, at your first setting out, to this great point, the total dying to self, as the only foundation of a solid piety. All the fine things you hear or read of an inward and spiritual life in God, all your expectations of the Light and Holy Spirit of God, will become a false food to your soul, till you only seek for them through death to self.

Observe, sir, the difference which clothes make in those, who have it in their power to dress as they please: some are all for show, colors, and glitter; others are quite fantastical and affected in their dress; some have a grave and solemn habit; others are quite simple and plain in their whole manner. Now all this difference of dress, is only an outward difference, that covers the same poor carcase, and leaves it full of all its own infirmities. Now all the truths of the gospel, when only embraced and possessed by the old man, make only such superficial difference, as is made by clothes. Some put on a solemn, formal, prudent, outside carriage; others appear in all the glitter and show of religious coloring, and spiritual attainments; but under all this outside difference, there lies the poor fallen soul, imprisoned, unhelped, in its own fallen state. And thus it must be, if is not possible to be otherwise, till the spiritual life begins at the true root, grows out of death, and is born in a broken heart, a heart broken off from all its own natural life. Then self-hatred, self-contempt, and self-denial, are as suitable to this new-born spirit, as self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking,

are to the unregenerate man. Let me, therefore, my friend, conjure you, not to look forward, or cast about for spiritual advancement, till you have rightly taken this first step in the spiritual life. All your future progress depends upon it: for this depth of religion goes no deeper than the depth of your malady: for sin has its root in the bottom of your soul, it comes to life with your flesh and blood, and breathes in the breath of your natural life; and therefore, till you die to nature, you live to sin; and whilst this root of sin is alive in you, all the virtues you put on, are only like fine painted fruit hung upon a bad tree.

[Pyr-2.1-35]Acad. Indeed, Theophilus, you have made the difference between true and false religion as plain to me, as the difference between light and darkness. But all that you have said, at the same time, is as new to me, as if I had lived in a land, where religion has never been named. But pray, sir, tell me how I am to take this first step, which you so much insist upon.

Theoph. You are to turn wholly from yourself, and to give up yourself wholly unto God, in this or the like twofold form of words or thoughts:

"Oh my God, with all the strength of my soul, assisted by thy grace, I desire and resolve to resist and deny all my own will, earthly tempers, selfish views, and inclinations; everything that the spirit of this world, and the vanity of fallen nature, prompts me to. I give myself up wholly and solely unto thee, to be all thine, to have, and do, and be, inwardly and outwardly, according to thy good pleasure. I desire to live for no other ends, with no other designs, but to accomplish the work which thou requirest of me, an humble, obedient, faithful, thankful instrument in thy hands to be used as thou pleasest."

You are not to content yourself, my friend, with now and then, or even many times, making this oblation of yourself to God. It must be the daily, the hourly exercise of your mind; till it is wrought into your very nature, and becomes an essential state and habit of your mind, till you feel yourself as habitually turned from all your own will, selfish ends, and earthly desires, as you are from stealing and murder; till the whole turn and bent of your spirit points as constantly to God, as the needle touched with the loadstone does to the North. This, sir, is your first and necessary step in the spiritual life; this is the key to all the treasures of heaven; this unlocks the sealed book of your soul, and makes room for the Light and Spirit of God to arise up in it. Without this, the spiritual life is but spiritual talk, and only assists nature to be pleased with an holiness that it has not. The necessity of this first step, and the folly of pretending to succeed without it, is thus represented by our blessed Lord: "What man intending to build a house," &c.

All our ability and preparation to succeed in this great affair, lie in this first step. You may perhaps think this an hard saying. But do not go away sorrowful, like the young man in the gospel, because he had great possessions. For, my friend, you little think what a deliverance you will have from all hardships, and what a flow of happiness is found even in this life, as soon as the soul is thus dead to self, freed from its own passions, and wholly given up to God; of which I shall speak to you by and by. I have told you the price of the new birth. I shall now leave you to consider, whether you will be so wise a merchant, as to give up all the wealth of the old man for this heavenly pearl. I do not expect your answer now, but will stay for it till tomorrow. But pray, gentlemen, who is this Humanus? I do not remember to have seen him before; he seems not willing to speak, yet is often biting his lips at what is said.

Rust. This Humanus, sir, is my neighbor; but so ignorant of the nature of the gospel, that he is often trying to persuade me into a disbelief of it. I say ignorant (though he is a learned man) because I am well assured, that no man ever did, or can oppose the gospel, but through a total ignorance of what it is in itself; for the gospel, when rightly understood, is irresistible; it brings more good news to the human nature, than sight to the blind, limbs to the lame, health to the sick, or liberty to the condemned slave. But this neighbor of mine has never yet been in sight of the truth, as it is in the gospel; he knows nothing of the grounds and reason of it, but what he has picked up out of books, that have been written against it, and for it. He often makes use of one maxim of the gospel, to overthrow it, and wonders that so plain and honest a man as I am, will not submit to it. He says, if it be a truth, as the gospel saith, "That the tree must be known by its fruit, and that a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit," we need only look at the lives of Christians, the craft of priests, the wars, contentions, hatreds, sects, parties, heresies, divisions, outrages, and persecutions, which Christianity has brought forth, we need only look at this, to have all our senses and reason assure us, that the gospel must be a bad tree. But this is enough concerning the man. He comes with me at his own earnest desire, which has lately seized him, and upon his own strict promise, not to interrupt our conversation; but to be a silent hearer, till it is all over. And therefore, if you please, sir, I beg our conversation may for a while turn upon the chief points asserted in The Spirit of Prayer, for two reasons; first, that Academicus may see what reasons I had for saying, that book had given me a sufficient instruction; and also that Humanus, hearing these great points, may hear the whole ground and nature, the necessity and blessedness of the Christian redemption, set forth in such a degree of light, and truth, and amiableness, as he had no notion of before.

Theoph. Your neighbor is welcome, and I pray God to give him an heart attentive to those truths, which have made so good an impression upon you. The first point that you desire us to speak to, is concerning the original of this temporal world. How God was moved to create it, upon the fall of a whole host, or kingdom of angels, who, by their revolt from God, lost the divine light, and awakened in themselves, and the region in which they dwelt, the dark, wrathful fire of hell: for hell is nothing else, but nature departed, or excluded, from the beams of divine light. The materiality of their kingdom was spiritual, and the light that glanced through it, that filled its transparency with an infinity of glorious wonders, was the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory. The spirit that animated the inward life of those glorious angels, and that moved with its sweet breath, through all this glassy sea, opening and changing new scenes in the mirror of divine wisdom, was the Holy Spirit of God, that eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. Thus did these celestial spirits live, move, and have their being, in God. All was heaven, and they all were so many created gods, eternally sinking down, and rising up, into new heights and depths of the riches of the divine nature. With this degree of glory and happiness was the whole extent of the place of this world filled, before the angels fell: and to this degree of happiness, and heavenly glory, will the whole place of this world be again raised, when the love of God shall have finished the great work of the redemption of mankind. Heaven again, and angels again, raised out of the misery of time, to sing eternal praises to the Holy Trinity, and to the Lamb that has overcome sin, and death, and hell, and turned all the wrath, and misery and darkness of this world, into an heaven never more to be changed. Oh Rusticus, what sentiments do these things raise in you?

Rust. Indeed, sir, they almost make me to forget, that I am in the body. You have set me upon a mountain, from which, whether I look backwards, or forwards, or downwards, all is equally surprising: backwards, a breach made in heaven, the first opening of hell and darkness, and a new creation out of the ruins of the fallen angels; forwards, time and all temporal nature rising again into its first eternity; downwards, a globe of earth, the seat of war between heaven and hell, where men are born to partake of the dreadful strife, and have only the little span of life, either to overcome with God, or be overcome by the devil. Oh, sir, what great things are these? I wish that all the world, as well as my neighbor Humanus, were forced to be silent hearers of them. But pray, sir, go on.

Theoph. When God saw the darkness that was upon the face of the deep, and the whole angelic habitation become a chaos of confusion, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; that is, the Spirit of God began to operate again in this outward darkness, that covered this once transparent glassy sea; for from a glassy sea it was become a deep covered with darkness, which was soon to take another nature; to have its fire and wrath converted into sun and stars; its dross and darkness into a globe of earth; its mobility and moisture into air and water; when the Spirit of God began to move and operate in it. But before this chaos had entered into this new order, God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. This light, my friend, was not the present light of this world, which now governs the night and the day; for the sun, the moon, and stars, were not created till the fourth day. But the light which God then spoke forth, was a degree of heaven, that was commanded to glance into the darkened deep, which penetrated through all the depth of the chaos, and intermixed itself through every part; not turning the whole into a region of light, but only by its quickening virtue fitting, disposing, and preparing every part to take that change, which every following day of the creation was to bring forth, in and out of this darkened deep: for darkness is death, and light is life. This was the nature and work of that first light, which God called forth on the first day: it was God's baptizing the dead chaos with the Spirit of life, that it might be capable of a resurrection into a new creation.

See here the uniformity of the divine procedure, with regard both to fallen nature and creature. When the creature (man) was fallen, his redemption was begun by God's speaking a seed of light, called the seed of the woman, into the birth of his life. This alone could qualify him for the new creation in Christ Jesus. When nature was fallen, its restoration was begun in the same manner: light was commanded to enter into it, or rather to rise up in it: this was its power or possibility of coming out of its fallen state.

Marvel not, Rusticus, that I call this first light of the first day, a degree of heaven: for light is natural, essential, and inseparable from heaven; it belongs only to heaven; and wherever else it is, it is only there as a gift from heaven. And therefore so much as there is of light in this world, so much there is of heaven in it. Darkness is natural, essential, and inseparable from hell; and can be nowhere else, but where hell can in some degree open and discover itself. And wherever, and in what degree, darkness can show itself; there, and in the same degree, is the nature of hell known and felt. This world is made up of light and darkness, not only as it consists of day and night, but because every earthly thing is itself a mixture of light and darkness. The darkness is the evil, and the light is the good, that is in everything. If the darkness was predominant in vegetables, they would all be rank poison; if in animals, they would all be as so many venomous serpents of hell. If the light did quite suppress the darkness in vegetables, they would be like the fruits which were to

have been man's food in paradise.

Rust. These things, Theophilus, strike a most amazing light into all the mysteries both of nature and grace. But they do not more enlighten, than they edify the mind. They are all reforming truths; they have the nature of alternatives, they purge the heart of all its dross; they force it to drop all its pretensions to earthly things, as the poor deceitful baits of fallen nature; and to long for nothing, but to have that first heaven and life in God, for which angels and men were at first created. But I want to show to my friend Humanus, as it were in one view, that chain of truths, which follows from what you have said: though I had rather you would do it.

Theoph. Agreed: and I will set them in order thus. First, that the place of this world is the very place, or region, which belonged to Lucifer, and his angels. Secondly, that everything that we see in this world, all its elements, the stars, the firmament, &c., are nothing else but the invisible things of the fallen world, made visible in a new and lower state of existence. Thirdly, that before the rebellion of the angels there was nothing but God, and heaven, and heavenly beings. Light, and love, and joy, and glory, with all the wonders thereof, were the only things seen and felt by the angels. Darkness and fire, with every quality thereof, were absolutely unknown to the angels; they had no more suspicion of them, than of the possibility of sickness, pains, heat, and cold. All they aimed at, was at being higher in the glories, and powers, and light, of that heaven in which they lived. But their turning to their own strength to effect this, was their whole turning from God, and a falling into nature without God, which was the first discovery of darkness, wrath, and fire, and pain, and torment. Fourthly, hence it appears, that darkness is the ground of the substance, or materiality of nature; fire is its life; and light is its glorious transmutation into the kingdom of heaven; and spirit is the opener of all its wonders. All that can be conceived, is either God, or nature, or creature; God is the Holy Trinity without, or before nature; but nature is the manifestation of the Holy Trinity in a triune life of fire, light, and spirit.

Fifthly. Here we see the plain and true original of all evil, without any perplexity, or imputation upon God: that evil is nothing else but the wrath, and fire, and darkness of nature broken off from God: that the punishment, the pain, or the hell of sin, is no designedly prepared, or arbitrary penalty inflicted by God, but the natural and necessary state of the creature, that leaves, or turns from God. Sixthly, that the will of the creature is the only opener of all evil or good in the creature; the will stands between God and nature, and must in all its workings unite either with God, or nature: the will totally resigned, and given up to God, is one spirit with God, and God dwelleth in it; the will turned from God, is taken prisoner in the wrath, fire, and darkness of nature.

Seventhly. Here we see, how and why a creature can lose, and die to all its happiness and perfection, and, from a beauteous angel become a deformed devil. It is because nature has no beauty, happiness, or perfection, but solely from the manifestation or birth of the Holy Trinity in it. God manifested in nature, is the only blessing, happiness, and perfection of nature. Therefore the creature, that in the working of its will is turned from God, must have as great a change brought forth in it, as that of heaven into hell, forced to live, but to have no other life, but that of its own gnawing worm left to itself.

Eighthly. Hence we see the deep ground, and absolute necessity, of the Christian redemption, by a birth from above, of the Light and Spirit of God, demonstrated in the most absolute degree of certainty. It is because all nature is in itself nothing, but an hungry wrathful fire of life, a tormenting

darkness, unless the Light and Spirit of God kindle it into a kingdom of heaven. And therefore the fallen soul can have no possible relief, or redemption, it must be, to all eternity, an hungry, dark, fiery, tormenting spirit of life, unless the Light, or Son, and Spirit of God, be born again in it.

Hence also it follows, that in all the possibility of things, there is and can be but one happiness, and one misery. The one misery, is nature and creature left to itself; the one happiness, is the life, the Light, and Spirit of God, manifested in nature and creature. This is the true meaning of those words of our Lord, "There is but one that is good, and that is God."

Ninthly. Hence it is also seen, that there is and can be but one true religion for the fallen soul, and that is, the dying to self, to nature and creature; and a turning with all the will, the desire, and delight of the soul to God, sacrifices, oblations, prayers, praises, rites, and ceremonies, without this are but as sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals. Nay, zeal, and constancy, and warmth, and fervor, in the performance of these religious practices, is not the matter; for nature and self-love can do all this. But these religious practices are then only parts of true religion, when they mean nothing, seek nothing, but to keep up a continual dying to self, and all worldly things, and turn all the will, desire, and delight of the soul to God alone. Lastly, there is and can be only one salvation for the fallen soul, and that is heaven opened again in the soul, by the birth of such a life, Light, and Spirit, as is born in angels. For Adam was created to possess that heaven from which the angels fell; but nothing can enter into heaven, but the angelic life, which is born of heaven. The loss of this angelic life was the fall of Adam, or that death which he died, on the day he did eat of the earthly fruit; therefore the regeneration, or new birth of his first angelic life, is the one only salvation of the fallen soul. Ask not therefore, whether we are saved by faith, or by works? for we are saved by neither of them. Faith and works are at first only preparatory to the new birth; afterwards they are the true genuine fruits and effects of it. But the new birth, a life from heaven, the new creature, called Christ in us, is the one only salvation of the fallen soul. Nothing can enter into heaven, but this life which is born of, and comes from heaven.

Rust. I thank you, Theophilus, for setting these awakening truths in so strong a light. And I think it is not possible for my friend Humanus to be unaffected with them.

They must needs open in him a new way of thinking about religion, and show him the deep and solid ground of the absolute necessity of the Christian redemption, and incline him to be a willing hearer of that which follows.

Theoph. I hope it will be so, Rusticus; and what I would here, and through every point we speak of, observe to your friend Humanus, is this: that the Christian religion is the one only true religion of nature, deeply and necessarily founded in the nature of things; that its doctrines are not founded in an arbitrary appointment of God, but have their natural and necessary reason, why they cannot be otherwise, as has here been shown in the one great point of regeneration, which is the whole of man's salvation, and the one only thing intended by all revelation, from the fall of man to the end of the world. Now the true ground of the one true religion or nature cannot be known, or seen into, but by going back to the beginning of things, and showing how they came into their present state. We must find out, why and how religion came to be necessary, and on what its necessity is founded. Now this cannot be done, unless we find out, what sin, and evil, and death, and darkness, are in themselves; and how they came into nature and creature. For this alone can show us, what religion is true, is natural, is necessary, and alone sufficient to remove all evil, sin,

and disorder, out of the creation. For this reason, we began with the grounds and reasons of the creation of this world, showing how it came to be as it is. But this could not be done, but by going so far back as the fall of angels. For it was their revolting from God, that brought wrath, and fire, and thickness, and darkness, and death, into nature and creature; and so gave occasion to this new creation, and to its being in such a state, and of such a nature, as it is. For who does not see, that this first deadness, thickness, wrath, fire, and darkness, caused by the angels' sin, are the very materials out of which this world is made? For are not the fire, the air, the water, the earth, the rocks and stones of this world, the rage of heat and cold, the succession of day and night, the wrath of storms and tempests, an undeniable and daily proof of all this? Now when we thus see what sin, and evil, and death, and darkness, are in nature, and how they came into it, then we see also, how and what they are, and how they came into the creature; because the creature has its forms, its being, in and out of nature. They came into nature, or rose up in it, by nature's being broken off from God, and so losing the Light and Spirit of God, which made it to be a kingdom of heaven; we see also, that when this disordered nature was to be taken out of its fallen state by a new creation, that, to do this, the Spirit of God moved, or entered again into the darkness of the waters, and the Light of God was called into it. A plain proof, that the malady of nature, was nothing else but its loss of the Light and Spirit of God working in it. This shows us also, that the fallen creature is to be restored, or put into a way of recovery, in one and the same way as fallen nature; viz., by the Spirit, and Light of God entering into it again, and bringing forth a new birth, or creation in Christ Jesus. Just as the Spirit and Light entering into the chaos, created or turned the angels' ruined kingdom into a paradise on earth. God help him, who can see no light or truth here! Your friend Humanus lays claim to a religion of nature and reason: I join with him, with all my heart. No other religion can be right, but that which has its foundation in nature. For the God of nature can require nothing of his creatures, but what the state of their nature calls them to. Nature is his great law, that speaks his whole will both in heaven and on earth; and to obey nature, is to obey the God of nature, to please him, and to live to him, in the highest perfection. God indeed has many after-laws; but it is after his creatures have fallen from nature, and lost its perfection. But all these after-laws have no other end or intention, but to repair nature, and bring men back to their first natural state of perfection. What say you now, Academicus, to all these matters?

Acad. You, sir, and Rusticus, both of you know, how these matters affected me, ever since I read the book called *The Appeal to all that Doubt, &c.* >From that time, I have stood upon new ground; I have seen things in such a newness of light and reality, as makes me take my former knowledge for a dream. A dream I may justly call it, since all my labor was taken up in searching into a seventeen hundred years' history of doctrines, disputes, decrees, heresies, schisms, and sects, wherever to be found, in Europe, Asia, and Africa. From this goodly heap of stuff crowded into my mind, I have been settling matters betwixt all the present Christian divisions both at home and abroad, according to the best rules of criticism; having little or no other idea of a religious man, than that of a stiff maintainer of certain points against all those that oppose them. And in this respect, I believe I may say, that I only swam away in the common torrent. And in this laborious dream I had in all likelihood ended my days, had not that book, and some others of the like kind, shown me, that religion lay nearer home, was not to be dug out of disputes, but lay hid in myself, like a seed, which, for want of its proper nourishment, could not come to the birth. But however, though matters stand thus with myself, and I seem to be entered into a region of light, yet I must not forget to tell you, what some of my learned friends object to all this. They say, that in those

books, there are many things asserted, which have not the plain letter of Scripture to support them; and therefore men of sober learning, are cautious of giving in to opinions, not strictly grounded on the plain letter of Scripture, however fine and plausible they may seem to be.

Theoph. Is there not some reason, Academicus, to take this objection of your learned friends to be a mere pretense? For what is more fully grounded upon the plain letter of Scripture, than the doctrine of a real regeneration, a new birth of the Word, the Son, and Holy Spirit of God, really brought forth in the soul? And yet this plain letter of Scripture, upon the most important of all points, the very life, and essence, and whole nature of our redemption, is not only overlooked, but openly opposed, by the generality of men of sober learning. But this point, has not only the plain letter of Scripture for it, but what the letter asserts, is absolutely required by the whole spirit and tenor of the New Testament. All the epistles of the apostles proceed upon the supposed certainty of this one great point. A Son of God, united with, and born in our nature, that his nature may have birth in us; an Holy Spirit, breathing in the birth and life of our souls, quickening the dead life of fallen Adam, is the letter and spirit of the apostles' writings; grounded upon the plain letter of our Lord's own words, that unless we are born again from above, of the Son, Word, water, and Spirit of God, we cannot enter or see the kingdom of heaven.

Again: is it not the plain letter of Scripture, that Adam died the day that he did eat of the earthly tree? Have we not the most solemn asseveration of God for the truth of this? Was not the change which Adam found in himself a demonstration of the truth of this fact? Instead of the image and likeness of God in which he was created, the beauty of paradise, he was stripped of all his glory, confounded at the shameful deformity of his own body, afraid of being seen, and unable to see himself uncovered; delivered up a slave to a rage of all the stars and elements of this world, not knowing which way to look, or what to do in a world, where he was dead to all that he formerly felt, and alive only to a new and dreadful feeling at his sad entrance into a world, whence paradise, and God, and his own glory, were departed. Death enough surely!

Death in its highest reality, much greater in its change, than when an animal of earthly flesh and blood is only changed into a cold lifeless carcase. A death, that in all nature had none like it, none equal to it, none of the same nature with it, but that which the angels died, when, from angels of God, they became living devils, serpentine, hideous forms, and slaves to darkness. Say that the angels lost no life, that they did not die a real death, and then you may say, with the same truth, that Adam did not die, when he lost God, and paradise, and the first glory of his creation, because he afterwards lived and breathed in a world which was outwardly, in all its parts, full of the same curse that was within himself. But further, not only the plain letter of the text, and the change of state, which Adam found in himself, demonstrated a real death to his former state; but the whole tenor of Scripture absolutely requires it; all the system of our redemption proceeds upon it. For tell me, I pray, what need of a redemption, if Adam had not lost his first state of life? What need of the Deity to enter again into the human nature, not only as acting, but taking a birth in it, and from it? What need of all this mysterious method, to bring the life from above again into man, if the life from above had not been lost? Say that Adam did not die, and then tell me, what sense or reason there is in saying, that the Son of God became man, and died on the cross to restore to him the life that he had lost? It is true indeed, that Adam, in his death to the divine life, was left in the possession of an earthly life. And the reason is plain why he was so: for his great sin consisted in his desire and longing to enter into the life of this world, to know its good and evil, as the animals of this world do;

it was his choosing to have a life of this world after this new manner, and his entering upon the means of attaining it, that was his death to the divine life. And therefore it is no wonder, that after his death to heaven and paradise, he found himself still alive as an earthly animal. For the desire of this earthly life was his great sin, and the possession of this earthly life was the proper punishment and misery that belonged to his sin; and therefore it is no wonder that that life, which was the proper punishment, and real discovery of the fruits of his sin, should subsist, after his sin had put an end to the life of paradise and God in him. But wonderful it is to a great degree, that any man should imagine, that Adam did not die on the day of his sin, because he had as good a life left in him, as the beasts of the field have. For is this the life or is the death that such animals die, the life and death with which our redemption is concerned? Are not all the Scriptures full of a life and death of a much higher kind and nature? And do not the Scriptures make man the perpetual subject to whom this higher life and death belong? What ground or reason therefore can there be to think of the death of an animal of this world, when we read of the death, that Adam was assuredly to die the day of his sin? For does not all that befell him on the day of his sin, show that he lost a much greater life, suffered a more dreadful change, than that of giving up the breath of this world? For in the day of his sin, this angel of paradise, this lord of the new creation, fell from the throne of his glory (like Lucifer from heaven) into the state of a poor, darkened, naked, distressed animal of gross flesh and blood, unable to bear the odious sight of that which his new-opened eyes forced him to see; inwardly and outwardly feeling the curse awakened in himself, and all the creation, and reduced to have only the faith of the devils, to believe and tremble. Proof enough, surely, that Adam was dead to the life, and Light, and Spirit of God; and that, with this death, all that was divine and heavenly in his soul, his body, his eyes, his mind, and thoughts, was quite at an end. Now this life to which Adam then died, is that life which all his posterity are in want of, and cannot come out of that state of that death into which he fell, but by having this first life of heaven born again in them. Now is there any reason to say, that mankind, in their natural state, are not dead to that first life in which Adam was created, because they are alive to this world? Yet this is as well as to say, that Adam did not die a real death, because he had afterwards an earthly life in him. How comes our Lord to say, that "unless ye eat the flesh, and drink the blood, of the Son of Man, ye have no life in you?" Did he mean, ye have no earthly life in you? How comes the apostle to say, "He that hath the Son of God has life, but he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"? Does he mean the life of this world? No. But both Christ and his apostle assert this great truth, that all mankind are in the state of Adam's first death, till they are made alive again, by a birth of the Son, and the Holy Spirit of God brought forth in them. So plain is it, both from the express letter, and spirit of Scripture, that Adam died a real death to the kingdom of God in the day of his sin. Take away this death, and all the scheme of our redemption has no ground left to stand upon.

Judge now, Academicus, who leaves the letter of Scripture, your learned friends, or the author of the Appeal? They leave it, they oppose it, in that which is the very life of Christianity. For without the reality of a new birth, founded on the certainty of a real death in the fall of Adam, the Christian scheme is but a skeleton of empty words, a detail of strange mysteries between God and man, that do nothing, and have nothing to do. On the other hand, look now at the things set forth in the Appeal, concerning the fall of angels, the nature and effects of their revolt, and the creation of this world as deduced therefrom. They neither leave, nor oppose any letter, or doctrine of Scripture. They add nothing to religion, but the full proof of all its articles; they intend nothing but to open the

original ground, and true reason, of the Christian redemption, and the absolute necessity of its being such, as the gospel declares. Now the letter of Scripture does not do this in open words; it sets not forth the why, and how things are, either in nature or in grace; it teaches not the ground or philosophy of the Christian faith; it contents itself with bare facts and doctrines, and calls for simple faith and obedience. No wonder therefore, that when the natural and necessary ground of the Christian redemption is opened, that the letter of Scripture is not step by step appealed to, for everything that is said. And yet many things may be sufficiently grounded on Scripture, that are not so expressed in the letter. The Sadducees denied, that there was any resurrection at all; and this they did, because they could not find it in the express letter of the five books of Moses. And yet it seems, that the resurrection was plainly and strongly taught there: for thus saith our Lord, That the dead shall rise again, Moses showed at the bush, when he said, "The Lord is the God of Abraham, Isaac, &c. For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living." This shows us that a thing may be fully and sufficiently proved from Scripture, which is not plainly expressed in the letter. And thus stands the matter with regard to those great, and edifying truths set forth in the Appeal. They are truly scriptural, they have their ground and authority from Scripture, though not so open and express in the letter, as matters of faith and necessary doctrine are. For is not the fall of angels a Scripture truth? Is not the desolation which their fall brought into nature, and the very place of this world a Scripture-truth? What else can be meant by "darkness upon the face of the deep"? What darkness, or what deep, but in the place of this world? What darkness, or state of the deep, but that, which God was about to raise out of its disordered state? And does not the letter of Scripture show, that out of this darkness and waters, and state of the deep, the Spirit and Light of God entering into them, brought forth the earth, the stars, the sun, and all the elements, into a form of a new world? To ask for a particular text of Scripture, saying in so many express words, that the place of this world is the very place and extent of the kingdom of the fallen angels, is quite ridiculous, and without the least ground in reason, as is enough shown in the Appeal. For does not our Lord expressly call the devil, a prince of this world? But how could this name belong to him, but because he is here in his own first region and territories, and has still some power, till all the evil that he has raised in it, shall be entirely separated from it? For was not this world raised out of the materials of the fallen angels' kingdom, and was not the wrath, and fire, and darkness of their fall, still in some degree remaining in every part of this world, they could have no more power in it, than they have in heaven; they must be as entirely incapable of seeing or entering into it, as they are of seeing or entering into the kingdom of heaven: for they have nothing but evil in their nature; they can touch nothing, move nothing, see nothing, feel nothing, taste nothing, act in nothing, but that very evil, darkness, fire, and wrath, and disorder, which they first awakened and kindled both in themselves, and their kingdom. And therefore it is a truth of the utmost certainty, that they can be nowhere, but where there is something of that evil still subsisting which they brought forth. And this may pass for demonstration (if there be any such thing) that the Scriptures themselves demonstrate the place of this world, to be the very place and region in which the angels fell. And they still are here, because their kingdom is not wholly delivered from all the evil they had raised in it, but is to stand for a time, only in a state of recovery, where they themselves must see, in spite of all the rage and malice of their fiery darts, that the mystery of a Lamb of God, born upon earth, will raise creatures of flesh and blood, amidst the ruins of their spoiled kingdom, to be an host of angels in heaven restored, and themselves plunged into an hell, that is cut off from everything, but their own wrath, fire, and darkness. And all this, Academicus, to make it known through all the

regions of eternity, that pride can degrade the highest angels into devils, and humility raise fallen flesh and blood to the thrones of angels. This, this is the great end of God's raising a new creation, out of a fallen kingdom of angels; for this end it stands in its state of war, a war betwixt the fire and pride of fallen angels, and the meekness and humility of the Lamb of God: it stands its thousands of years in this strife, that the last trumpet may sound this great truth, through all the heights and depths of eternity, "That evil can have no beginning, but from pride; nor any end, but from humility."

Oh Academicus, what a blindness there is in the world! What a strife is there amongst mankind about religion, and yet almost all seem to be afraid of that, in which alone is salvation!

Poor mortals! What is the one wish and desire of your hearts? What is it that you call happiness, and matter of rejoicing? Is it not when everything about you helps you to stand upon higher ground, gives full nourishment to self-esteem, and gratifies every pride of life? And yet life itself is the loss of everything, unless pride be overcome. Oh stop a while in contemplation of this great truth. It is a truth as unchangeable as God; it is written and spoken through all nature; heaven and earth, fallen angels, and redeemed men, all bear witness to it. The truth is: pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you. Under the banner of this truth, give up yourselves to the meek and humble Spirit of the holy Jesus, the overcomer of all fire, and pride, and wrath. This is the one way, the one truth, and the one life. There is no other open door into the sheepfold of God. Everything else is the working of the devil in the fallen nature of man. Humility must sow the seed, or there can be no reaping in heaven. Look not at pride only as an unbecoming temper; not at humility only as a decent virtue; for the one is death, and the other is life; the one is hell, and the other is all heaven. So much as you have of pride, so much you have of the fallen angel alive in you; so much you have of true humility; so much you have of the Lamb of God within you. Could you see with your eyes that every stirring of pride does to your soul, you would beg of everything you meet, to tear the viper from you, though with the loss of an hand, or an eye. Could you see what a sweet, divine, transforming power there is in humility, what an heavenly water of life it gives to the fiery breath of your soul, how it expels the poison of your fallen nature, and makes room for the Spirit of God to live in you, you would rather wish to be the footstool of all the world, than to want the smallest degree of it. Excuse, Academicus, this little digression, if it be such, for the subject we were upon, forced me into it.

Acad. Indeed, sir, the lesson you have here given, is the same that the whole nature of the fall of angels, and the whole nature of the redemption of man, daily reads to every creature; and he, who alone can redeem the world, has plainly shown us, wherein the life and spirit of our redemption must consist, when he saith, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." Now if this lesson is unlearned, we must be said to have left our master, as those disciples did, "who went back, and walked no more with him." But if you please, Theophilus, we will now break off till the afternoon.

Theoph. Give me leave first, Academicus, but just to mention one point more, to show you still further, how unreasonably your friends object to the Appeal the want of the plain letter of Scripture. Now let it be supposed, that the account of the fall of angels, the creation, &c., given in the Appeal, has not Scripture enough; take then the contrary opinion, which is that of your friends; viz., that all worlds, and all things, are created out of nothing.

Show me now, Academicus, I do not say a text, but the least hint of Scripture, that by all the art of commenting, can so much as be drawn to look that way. It is a fiction, big with the grossest absurdities, and contrary to everything that we know, either from nature or Scripture, concerning the rise and birth, and nature of things, that have begun to be. Adam was not created out of nothing; for the letter of Moses tells us in the plainest words, out of what he was created or formed, both as to his inward, and his outward nature. It tells us also as expressly out of what, Eve, the next creature, was created. But from the time of Adam and Eve, the creation of every human creature is a birth out of its parents' body and soul, or whole nature. And to show us how all things, or worlds, as well as all living creatures, are not created out of nothing, St. Paul appeals to this very account, that Moses gives of the woman's being formed out of the man; but "all things" (says he) "are out of God." Here this fiction of a creation out of nothing, is by the plain and open letter of Scripture, absolutely removed from the whole system of created things, or things which begin to be; for St. Paul's doctrine is, that all things come into being, out of God, in the same reality, as the woman was formed or created out of man. So again, "There is to us but one God, out of whom are all things": for so you know the Greek should be translated, not "of," but "out of" God; not "of," but "out of" the man. The fiction therefore, which I speak of, is not only without but expressly contrary to, the plain letter of Scripture. For everything that we see, every creature that has life, is by the Scripture-account a birth from something else. And here, sir, you are to take notice of a maxim that is not deniable, that the reason why anything proceeds from a birth, is the reason why everything must do so. For a birth would not be in nature, but because birth is the only procedure of nature. Nature itself is a birth from God, the first manifestation of the hidden, inconceivable God, and is so far from being out of nothing, that it is the manifestation of all that in God, which was before unmanifest. As nature is the first birth, or manifestation of God, or discovery of the divine powers, so all creatures are the manifestation of the powers of nature, brought into a variety of births, by the will of God, out of nature. The first creatures that are the nearest to the Deity, are out of the highest powers of nature, by the will of God, willing that nature should be manifested in the rise and birth of creatures out of it. Nature, directed and governed by the wisdom of God, goes on in the birth of one thing, out of another. The spiritual materiality of heaven brings forth the bodies, or heavenly flesh and blood of angels, as the materiality of this world brings forth the birth of gross flesh and blood. The spiritual materiality of heaven, so far as the extent of the kingdom of fallen angels reached, has by various changes occasioned by their fall, gone through a variety of births, or creations, till some of it came down to the thickness of air and water, and the hardness of earth and stones. But when things have stood in this state their appointed time, the last purifying fire, kindled by God, will take away all thickness, hardness, and darkness, and bring all the divided things and elements of this world back again, to be that first glassy sea, or heavenly materiality, in which the throne of God is set, as was seen by St. John, in the revelation made to him. But the fiction of the creation out of nothing, is not only contrary to the letter and spirit of the Scripture-account of the rise and birth of things, but is in itself full of the grossest absurdities, and horrid consequences. It separates everything from God, it leaves no relation between God and the creature, nor any possibility for any power, virtue, quality, or perfection of God, to be in the creature: for if it is created out of nothing, it cannot have something of God in it. But I here stop: for, as you know, we have agreed, if God permit, to have hereafter one day's entire conversation on the nature and end of the writings of Jacob Behmen, and the right use and manner of reading them, as preparatory to a new edition of his works, so this and some other points shall be

adjourned to that time. In the afternoon, we will proceed only on such matters, as may further set the Christian redemption in its true and proper light before your friend Humanus.

Acad. I am very glad, Theophilus, that I have mentioned these objections to you, though they were of no weight with me, since you have thereby had an occasion of giving so full an answer to them. The matter stands now in this plain and easy point of light. In the Appeal we have a system of uniform truths, concerning the fall of angels, their spoiled and darkened kingdom, and the creation of this world as raised out of it. We have the creation and fall of man, his regeneration, and the manner of it, all opened and explained according to the letter and tenor of Scripture, from their deepest ground, in such manner, as to give light and clearness into all the articles of the Christian faith; to expel all difficulties and absurdities that had crept into it; and the whole scheme of our redemption is proved to be absolutely necessary, both from Scripture, and all that is seen and known in nature and creature. On the other hand, the opinion which is, and must be received, if the account in the Appeal is rejected, appears to be a fiction, that has no sense, no reason, no fact, no appearance in nature, nor one single letter of Scripture, to support it, but stands in the utmost contrariety to all that the Scripture saith of the creation of everything, and is in itself full of the grossest absurdities, raising darkness and difficulties in all parts of religion, that can never be removed from it. For a creation that has nothing of God in it, can explain nothing that relates to God: for a creation out of nothing, has no better sense in it, than a creation into nothing. My friends, for this time, adieu.

09.02 Part 2 Dialogue 2

Part II The Second Dialogue

Theoph. Let us now speak of Adam in his first perfection, created by God to be a lord and ruler of the new-created world, to people it with an host of angelic men, till time had finished its course, and all things were fitted to be restored to that state, from which they were fallen by the revolt of angels. For the restoration of all things to their first glorious state, by making the good to overcome evil, was the end which God proposed by the state and manner of this new creation.

Adam was the chosen instrument of God, to conduct this whole affair, to keep up this new-made world in the state in which God had created it, not to till the earth, which we now plow, but to keep that, which is now called the curse of the earth, covered, hid, and overcome, by that paradise in which he was created. For this end, he was created in a twofold nature, of the powers of heaven, and the powers of this world. Inwardly, he had the celestial body and soul of an angel, and he had this angelic nature united to a life and body taken from the stars and elements of this outward world. As paradise overcame, and concealed all the wrath of the stars and elements, and kept that evil, which is called the curse, from being known or felt, so Adam's angelic, heavenly nature, which was the paradise of God within him, kept him quite ignorant of the properties of that earthly nature that was under it. He knew, and saw, and felt nothing in himself, but a birth of paradise, that is, a life, light, and spirit of heaven: for he had no difference from an angel in heaven, but that this world was joined to him, and put under his feet. And this was done, because he was created by God to be the restoring angel, to do all that in this outward world, which God would have to be done in it, before it could be restored to its first state. And therefore he must have the nature of all this world in him, because he was to act in it, and upon it, as its restoring angel; and yet with such distinction from it, with such power upon it, and over it, as the light has upon and over darkness. Does not now the whole spirit of the Scriptures consent to this account of Adam's first perfection? Do not all the chief points of our redemption demand this perfection in Adam unfallen? How else could his fall bring on the necessity of the gospel-redemption of a new birth from above, of the Word and Holy Spirit of God? For had he not had this perfection of nature at first, his redemption could not have consisted in the revival of this birth and perfection in him. For had it been something less than the loss of an angelic and heavenly life, that had happened to him by his fall, had it been only some evil, that related to a life of this world, nothing else but some remedy from this world, could have been his redemption. But since it is the corner-stone of the gospel, that nothing less than the eternal Word, which was man's creator, could be his redeemer, and that by a new birth from above, it is a demonstration, that he was at first created an angel, born from above, and such a partaker of the divine life, as the angels are; and that his fall was a real death or extinction of his angelic life.

Now the letter of Moses is express for this first perfection of Adam. God said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." How different is this from the creation of the animals of this world? What can you think or say higher of an angel? Or what perfection can an angel have, but

that of being in the image and after the likeness of God? But now what an absurdity would it be, to hold that Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, and yet had not in him so much as the image and likeness of an angel? Again, was not paradise lost, was not evil and the curse awakened in all the elements, as soon as Adam fell? And does not this prove, beyond all contradiction, that Adam was created by God, as I said above, to be the restoring angel; to have power over all the outward world; to keep all its evil from being known or felt; till the fall of angels from heaven had been repaired by a race of angelic men born on earth? But how could he do, and be all this, for which he was created by God, how could he keep up the life of heaven and paradise in himself, and this new world, unless the life of heaven had been his own life? Or how could he be the father of an offspring that were to have no evil, nor so much as the knowledge of what was good and evil in this world? Could anything but an heavenly man bring forth an heavenly offspring? Or could he be said to have the life of this world opened in him in his creation, who was to bring forth a race of beings, insensible of the good and evil in this world? For everything that has the life of this world opened in it, is under an absolute necessity of knowing and feeling its good and evil.

Secondly, that Adam, when he first entered into the world, had the nature and perfection of an angel, is further plain from Moses, who tells us, that he was made at first both male and female in one person; and that Eve, or the female part of him, was afterwards taken out of him. Now this union of the male and female in him, was the purity, or virgin perfection of his life, and is the very perfection of the angelic nature. This we are assured of from our Lord himself, who, in answer to the question of the Sadducees, said unto them, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, and the power of God; for in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven." Or, as in St. Luke, "for they are equal to the angels of God." Here we have a twofold proof of the angelic perfection of Adam: (1) Because we are told, that that state in which he was created, neither male nor female, but with both natures in his one person, is the very nature and perfection of the angels of God in heaven. (2) Because everyone who shall have a part in this resurrection, shall then have this angelic perfection again; to be no more male or female, or a part of the humanity, but such perfect, complete, undivided creatures, as the angels of God are. But now this perfection could not belong to the humanity after the resurrection, but because it belonged to the first man before his fall: for nothing will be restored, but that which was first lost; nothing rise again, but that which should not have died; nor anything be united, but that which should not have been parted. The short is this: man is at last to have a nature equal to that of the angels. This equality consists in this, that as they have, so the humanity will have, both male and female nature in one person. But the humanity was thus created first, male and female in one person, therefore the humanity had at first a nature and perfection equal to that of the angels. Thus is the letter of Moses much more plain for the angelic perfection of Adam in his creation, than it is for the resurrection of the dead; and yet we have our Lord's word for it, that Moses sufficiently proved the resurrection of the dead. What say you, Academicus, to this matter?

Acad. I will here just mention what my good old tutor says: The author of the Appeal, says he, founds all his scheme of regeneration or redemption on a supposed threefold life, in which Adam was created. His sole proof of this threefold life is taken from this text of Moses: "God breathed into man the breath of lives, and man became a living soul." From this phrase, "the breath of lives," the Appeal, without any authority from the text, observes thus; "Here the highest, and most divine

original is not darkly, but openly, absolutely, and in the strongest form of expression, ascribed to the soul," &c. A vain assertion, says my tutor; for the breath of life or lives is used by Moses only as a phrase for animal life. This is plainly seen, Genesis 7:21. "And all flesh died," all in "whose nostrils was the breath of lives."

Behold, says he, the very phrase, which the Appeal takes to be so full a proof of the high dignity, and threefold life of God in the soul, here made us of to denote the life of every kind of animal. And therefore, says he, if this phrase proves the soul of Adam to be a mirror of the Holy Trinity, it proves the same of every breath in the nostrils of every creature.

Theoph. To make short work, Academicus, with your tutor's confutation, as he thinks, of the capital doctrine of the Appeal, I shall only quote the whole period, as it stands in the Appeal. "God breathed into him the breath of lives (spiraculum vitarum) and man became a living soul. Here," says the Appeal, "the notion of a soul, created out of nothing, is in the plainest, strongest manner, rejected by the first written Word of God; and no Jew or Christian can have the least excuse for falling into such an error: here the highest and most divine original is not darkly, but openly, absolutely ascribed to the soul. It came forth as a breath of life, or lives, out of, and from the mouth of God; and therefore did not come out of the womb of nothing, but is what it is, and has what it has in itself, from, and out of, the first and highest of all beings." Here, Academicus, behold the falseness and weakness of your tutor's observation. The Appeal, as you plainly see, proves only from the text of Moses, the high original of the soul; and only for this reason, because it is the breath of God, breathed into man. The Appeal makes no use of the expression, "breath of lives," takes no notice of it, deduces nothing from it, but solely considers the act of God, as breathing the spirit of the soul from himself; and from this act of God, the high birth and dignity of the soul is most justly affirmed. And the Appeal makes this observation solely to prove, that the soul is not created out of nothing. This is the one, sole, open, and declared intent of the Appeal, in all this paragraph. But your tutor, overlooking all this, though nothing else is there, makes the author of the Appeal to affirm the threefold life of God in the soul, merely from the phrase of the "breath of lives," when there is not one single word about it. For the Appeal not only has not the least hint in this place of any such matter, to be proved from the "breath of lives," but through the whole book there is not the smallest regard paid to this expression, nor any agreement ever deduced from it. How strange is all this in your good old tutor! The matter is plainly this; the author of the Appeal looks wholly to the action of God, breathing his own Spirit into Adam; and from this breathing, he justly affirms the divine nature of the soul; all his argument is deduced from thence. Now if your tutor, or anyone else, could show, that God breathed his own Spirit into every animal, and with this intent, that it might come forth in his own image and likeness, then the distinction and high birth of the soul, pleaded for by the Appeal, would indeed be lost. But till then, the Appeal must, and therefore will forever, stand unconfuted in its assertion of the dignity and divine birth of the soul.

Again; behold, Academicus, a still further weakness chargeable upon your tutor. You have seen, that his reasoning upon the "breath of lives," is meddling with something that the Appeal meddles not with, makes no account of: but your tutor has conjured it up for his own use; and yet see what a poor use he makes of it. He affirms that Moses uses only the "breath of lives," as a phrase for animal life. How does he prove this? Why, truly from this reason, because Moses uses the same phrase when he speaks of the lives of all animals.

Now does not every Englishman know, that we make use of the same four letters of the alphabet, when we say the "life" of a man, the "life" of a beast, and the "life" of a plant? That we use the same five letters, when we say the "death" of a man, the "death" of a beast, and the "death" of a plant? But will it thence follow, that the life and death of men, and beasts, and plants, are of the same nature and degree, and have the same good and evil in them? Yet this is full as well, as to conclude, that the breath of life in man, and the breath of life in animals, is of the same nature and degree, has the same goodness and excellence in it, because the same words, made up of the same letters, express them both. Your tutor therefore, Academicus, and not the author of the Appeal, is the person that reasons weakly from the phrase of "the breath of lives": for that author never so much as offers to argue from it. His proof of the threefold life of God in the soul, so far as it is deduced from the text of Moses, lies wholly in this; that it is the breath and Spirit of the triune God, breathed forth from this triune Deity into man. This, sure, is no small proof of its having the triune nature of God in it. And this threefold life of the soul, thus plainly deducible from the letter of Moses, is shown to be absolutely certain, from every chief doctrine and institution, nay, from the whole nature of our redemption: and all the gospel is shown to set its seal to this great truth, the threefold life of God in the soul. Nay, everything in nature, fire, and light, and air; everything that we know of angels, of devils, of the animal life of this world; are all in the plainest and strongest manner, from the beginning to the end of the Appeal, made so many proofs of the threefold life of the triune God in the soul. Thus says the Appeal; "No omnipotence can make you a partaker of the life of this outward world, without having the life of this outward world born in your own creaturely being"; the fire, and light, and air of this world, must have their birth in your own creaturely being, or you cannot possibly live in, or have a life from outward nature. And therefore no omnipotence can make you a partaker of the beatific life, or presence of the Holy Trinity, unless that life stands in the same triune state within you, as it does without you. Again: search to eternity, says the Appeal, why no devil or beast can possibly enter into heaven, and there can only this one reason be assigned for it, because neither of them have the triune holy life of God in them. But enough of this mistake of your good old tutor. Rusticus will I am afraid chide you for being the occasion of this long digression from the point we were speaking to.

Rust. Truly, sir, I do not know what to make of these great scholars; they seem to have more love for the shadow of an objection, than for the most substantial truths. I think I here see a great reason, why our savior chose poor and illiterate fishermen to be his apostles. St. Paul was the only man that had some learning, and he was a persecutor of Christ, till such time as God made as it were scales to fall from his eyes; and then he became a powerful apostle. But let us return to your account of the first created perfection of man, and the degree of his falling from it. It is one of the best doctrines that I ever heard in my life. It not only stirs up everything that is good, and makes me hate everything that is evil, in me; but it gives so good a sense, so sound a meaning to every mystery of the gospel, that it makes everything our savior has done for us, and everything he requires of us, to be equally necessary and beneficial to us. But suppose now our fall not to be a change of nature, not a death to our first life, but only a single sin or mistake in the first man; what a difficulty is there in supposing so great a scheme of redemption to set right a single mistake in one single creature? Again, what could man have to do with angels and heaven, if he had not, at his creation, had the nature of heaven and angels in him? But pray, sir, begin again just where you left off.

Theoph. I was indeed, Rusticus, at that time just going to say, that Adam had lost much of his first perfection before his Eve was taken out of him; which was done to prevent worse effects of his fall, and to prepare a means for his recovery, when his fall should become total, as it afterwards was, upon the eating of the earthly tree of good and evil.

"It is not good that man should be alone," saith the Scripture: this shows, that Adam had altered his first state, had brought some beginning of evil into it, and had made that not to be good, which God saw to be good, when he created him. And therefore as a less evil, and to prevent a greater, God divided the first perfect human nature into two parts, into a male and a female creature; and this, as you shall see by and by, was a wonderful instance of the love and care of God towards this new humanity. It was at first, the total humanity in one creature, who should in that state of perfection, have brought forth his own likeness out of himself, in such purity of love, and such divine power, as he himself was brought forth by God: the manner of his own birth from God, was the manner that his own offspring should have had a birth from him; all done by the pure power of a divine love. Man stood no longer in the perfection of his first state, as a birth of divine love, than whilst he loved himself only as God loved him, as in the image, and after the likeness of God. This purity of love, and delight in the image of God, would have carried on the birth of the humanity, in the same manner, and by the same divine power, as the first man was brought forth: for it was only a continuation of the same generating love that gave birth to the first man. But Adam turned away his love from the divine image, which he should only have loved, and desired to propagate out of himself. He gazed upon this outward world, and let in an adulterate love into his heart, which desired to know the life that was in this world. This impure desire brought the nature of this world into him. His first love and divine power, had no strength left in it; it was no longer a power of bringing forth a divine birth from himself. His first virginity was lost by an adulterate love, which had turned its desire into this world. This state of inability, is that which is called his falling into a deep sleep: and in this sleep, God divides this overcome humanity into a male and female. The first step therefore towards the redemption or recovery of man, beginning to fall, was the taking his Eve out of him, that so he might have a second trial in paradise; in which if he failed, another effectual redeemer might arise out of the seed of the woman. Oh my friends, what a wonderful procedure is there to be seen in the divine providence, turning all evil, as soon as it appears, into a further display and opening of new wonders of the wisdom and love of God! Look back to the first evil, which the fall of angels brought forth. The darkness, wrath, and fire, of fallen nature, were immediately taken from them, and turned into a new creation, where those apostate angels were to see all the evil that they had raised in their kingdom, turned against them, and made the ground of a new race of beings, which were to possess those thrones which they had lost. Look now at Adam brought into the world in such angelic nature, as he, and all his redeemed sons, will have after the resurrection; an angel at first, and an angel at last; with time, and misery, and sin, and death, and hell, all of them felt, and all overcome betwixt the two glorious extremes. When this first human angel, through a false, impure love, lost the divine power of generating his own likeness out of himself, God took part of his nature from him, that so the eye of his desire, which was turned to the life of this world, might be directed to that part of his nature which was taken from him. And this is the reason of my saying before, that this was chosen as a less evil, and to avoid a greater; for it was a less degree of falling from his first perfection, to love the female part of his own divided nature, than to turn his love towards that, which was so much lower than his own nature. And thus, at that time, Eve was an help, that was truly and properly meet for him, since he had lost his first

power of being himself the parent of an angelic offspring, and stood with a longing eye, looking towards the life of this world. But the most glorious effect of this division into male and female is yet to come. For when Adam and Eve had joined in the eating of the tree of good and evil, and so were totally fallen from God and paradise, into the misery and slavery of the bestial life of this world; when this greatest of all evils had thus happened to these two divided parts of the humanity; when all the angel was lost, and nothing but a shameful, frightened animal of this world, was to be seen in this divided male and female; then in, and by, and through this division, did God open and establish the glorious scheme of an universal redemption to these fallen creatures, and all their offspring, by the mysterious seed of the woman. Had Adam stood in his first state of perfection, as a birth of divine love, and loving only the divine image and likeness in himself, this love would have been itself the fruitful parent of an holy offspring; no Eve had been taken out of him, nor any male or female ever known in human nature: all his posterity had been in him secured, and the earthly tree of good and evil had never been seen in paradise. But though he lost this first generating power of divine love, and stood as a barren tree, yet seeing God's purpose of raising an offspring, God took from him that, which is called the female part of his nature, that by this means, both a posterity, and a savior, might proceed from him: for through this division of man, God would, in a wonderful manner, do that which Adam should have done, before he was divided. For out of this female part, and after the fall, God would raise, without the help of Adam, that same glorious angelic man, which Adam should have brought forth before and without his Eve; which glorious man is therefore called the second Adam: 1. As having in his humanity that very perfection, which the first Adam had in his creation. 2. Because he was to do all that for mankind, by a birth of redemption from him, which they should have had by a birth of nature from Adam, had he kept his first state of perfection. What say you, Academicus, to all this?

Acad. Truly, sir, there seems to be so much light, and truth, and Scripture, for all this account that you have given of these matters, as must even force one to consent to it. But then all our systems of divinity, to which learned men are chained, are quite silent of these matters. I never before heard of this gradual fall of Adam, nor this angelic state of his first creation, and power of bringing forth his own offspring, and therefore can hardly believe it so strongly as I would, and as the truth seems to demand of me.

Rust. Pray, sir, let me speak to Academicus: he seems to be so hampered with learning, that I can hardly be sorry, that I am not a great scholar. Can anything be more punctually related in Scripture than the gradual fall of Adam? Do not you see, that he was created first with both natures in him? Is it not expressly told you, that Eve was not taken out of him, till such time as it was not good for him to be as he then was, and yet God saw that it was good when he created him? Is it not plain therefore, that he had fallen from the goodness of his first creation, and therefore his fall was not at once, nor total, till his eating of the earthly tree? Again, as to his being an angel at his first creation, because of both natures in him, is it not sufficiently plain from his being designed to be an angel of the same nature at last, in the resurrection? For this is an axiom that cannot be shaken, that nothing can rise higher, than its first created nature; and therefore an angel at last, must have been an angel at first. Do you think it possible for an ox in tract of time to be changed into a rational philosopher? Yet this is as possible, as for a man that has only by his creation the life of this world in him, to be changed into an angel of heaven. The life of this world can reach no further than this world; no omnipotence of God can carry it further; and therefore, if man is to be an angel

at the last, and have the life of heaven in him, he must of all necessity, in his creation, have been created an angel, and had his life kindled from heaven; because no creature can possibly have any other life, or higher degree of life, than that which his creation brought forth in him.

Theoph. Marvel not, Academicus, at that which has been said of the first power of Adam, to generate in a divine manner an holy offspring, by the power of that divine love which gave birth to himself; for he was born of that love for no other end, than to multiply births of it; and whilst his love continued to be one with that love, which brought him into being, nothing was impossible to it. For love is the great creating fiat that brought forth everything, that is distinct from God, and is the only working principle that stirs, and effects everything that is done in nature and creature. Love is the principle of generation from the highest to the lowest of creatures; it is the first beginning of every seed of life; everything has its form from it; everything that is born is born in the likeness, and with the fruitfulness, of that same love that generates and bears it; and this is its own seed of love within itself, and is its power of fructifying in its kind.

Love is the holy, heavenly, magic power of the Deity, the first fiat of God; and all angels, and eternal beings, are the first births of it. The Deity delights in beholding the ideal images, which rise up and appear in the mirror of his own eternal wisdom. This delight becomes a loving desire to have living creatures in the form of these ideas; and this loving desire is the generating heavenly parent, out of which angels, and all eternal beings are born. Every birth in nature is a consequence of this first prolific love of the Deity, and generates from that which began the first birth. Hence it is, that through all the scale of beings, from the top to the bottom of nature, love is the one principle of generation of every life; and everything generates from the same principle, and by the same power, by which itself was generated. Marvel not therefore, my friend, that Adam, standing in the power of his first birth, should have a divine power of bringing forth his own likeness. But I must now tell you, that the greatest proof of this glorious truth is yet to come: for I will show you that all the gospel bears witness to that heavenly birth, which we should have had from Adam alone. This birth from Adam is still the one purpose of God, and must be the one way of all those, that are to rise with Christ to an equality with the angels of God. All must be children of Adam; for all that are born of man and woman, must lay aside this polluted birth, and be born again of a second Adam, in that same perfection of an holy angelic nature, which they should have had from the first Adam, before his Eve was separated from him. For it is an undeniable truth of the gospel, that we are called to a new birth, different in its whole nature, from that which we have from man and woman, or there is no salvation; and therefore it is certain from the gospel, that the birth which we have from Adam, divided into male and female, is not the birth that we should have had, because it is the one reason, why we are under a necessity of being born again of a birth from a second Adam, who is to generate us again in that purity and divine power, in and by which we should have been born of the first angelic Adam. A divine love in the first and holy Adam, united with the love of God, willing him to be the father of an holy offspring, was to have given birth to a race of creatures from him. But Adam fulfilled not this purpose of God; he awakened in himself a false love, and so all his offspring were forced to be born of man and woman, and thereby to have such impure flesh and blood as cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Is not this proof enough, that this birth from Adam and Eve is not the first birth that we should have had? Will anyone say, How could Adam have such a power to bring from a birth in such a spiritual way, and so contrary to the present state of nature? The whole nature of the gospel is a full answer to this question. For are we not all to be

born again in the same spiritual way, and are we not, merely by a spiritual power, to have a birth of heavenly flesh and blood? The strangeness of such a power in the first Adam, is only just so strange, and hard to be believed, as the same power in the second Adam; who is called the second Adam for no other reason, but because he stands in the place of the first, and is to do that, which the first should have done. And therefore our having from him a new heavenly flesh and blood raised in us by a spiritual power, superior to the common way of birth in this world, is the strongest of proofs, that we should have been born of Adam in the same spiritual power, and so contrary to the birth of animals into this world. For all that we have from the second Adam, is a proof that we should have had the same from Adam the first: a divine love in Adam the first, was to have brought forth an holy offspring. A divine faith now takes its place, in the second birth, and is to generate a new birth from the second Adam, is to eat his flesh, and drink his blood, by the same divine power, by which we should have had a birth of the angelic flesh and blood of our first parent. Thus, Academicus, is this birth from Adam alone no whimsy, or fiction, or fine-spun notion, but the very birth that the gospel absolutely requires, as the substance of our redemption. There is no room to deny it, without denying the whole nature of our redemption. On the other hand, the birth that we have from Adam divided into male and female, is through all Scripture declared to be the birth of misery, of shame, of pollution, of sinful flesh and blood; and is only a ground and reason, why we must be born again of other flesh and blood, before we can enter the kingdom of heaven. This truth therefore, that we were to have had an heavenly birth from Adam, depends not upon this, or that particular text of Scripture, but is affirmed by the whole nature of our redemption, and the whole spirit of Scripture, representing our birth from this world as shameful, as that of the wild ass's colt, and calling for a new birth from above, as absolutely necessary, if man is to have a place among the angels of God. And therefore it may be affirmed, that so sure as it is from Scripture, that Christ is become our second Adam, to help us to such a birth, so sure is it from Scripture, that we should have had the same birth from our first parent, who, if not fallen, could have wanted no redeemer of his offspring, and therefore must have brought forth that same birth, which we have from Christ, but could not have from the birth of man and woman. I shall now only just mention to you a passage much to the matter in hand, taken from the second epistle of St. Clemens, a bishop of Rome, who lived in the very time of the apostles. He relates, that Christ being asked, when his kingdom should come, gave this answer: "When two things shall become one, and that which is outward be as that which is inward, the male with the female, and neither man nor woman." There wants no comment here: I shall only observe, that the meaning of the words, "When that which is outward shall be as that which is inward," seems plainly to be this, when the outward life or birth is come to be as the inward angelic life is, then the birth will be one, the male and female in one, and then the kingdom of God is come. These words were in the next century quoted by Clemens of Alexandria, though with some alteration. The same author also relates another answer given by our Lord, to much the same question, put by Salome, where our Lord's answer was thus: "When ye shall have put off, or away, the garment of shame and ignominy, and when two shall become one, the male and the female united, and neither man nor woman." The garment of shame and ignominy, is plainly that clothing of flesh and blood, at the sight of which both Adam and Eve were ashamed.

[Pyr-2.2-26]Acad. I am fully satisfied, Theophilus, with the account you have given of the first perfection, and divine state of our first parent. And I think nothing can be plainer, than that we were to have been born of him to the same heavenly birth, which we now are to receive from Christ, our

second Adam. But I must still say, that I am afraid, your critical adversaries will here find some pretense, to charge you with a tendency, at least, to that heresy, which held marriage to be unlawful, since you here hold that it came in by Adam's falling from his first perfection.

Theoph. I own, my friend, that there is no knowing when one is safe from men of that stamp. But as for me my eye is only upon truth; and wherever that leads, there I follow; they, if they please, may persecute it with objections. Here is not the least pretense for the charge you speak of: for here is no more condemnation of marriage, as unlawful, than there is a condemnation of God, for keeping up the state, and life of this world. The continuation of the world, though fallen, is a glorious proof and instance of the goodness of God, that so a race of new-born angels may be brought forth in it. Happy therefore is it, that we have such a world as this to be born into, since we are only born, to be born again to the life of heaven. Now marriage has the nature of this fallen world; but it is God's appointed means of raising the seed of Adam to its full number. Honorable therefore is marriage in our fallen state, and happy is it for man to derive his life from it, as it helps him to a power of being eternally a son of God. Nor does this original of marriage cast the smallest reflection upon the sex, as if they brought all, or any impurity into the human nature. No, by no means. The impurity lies in the division, and that which caused it, and not in either of the divided parts. And the female part has this distinction, though not to boast of, yet to take comfort in, that the savior of the world is called the seed of the woman, and had his birth only from the female part of our undivided nature. But Rusticus, I see, wants to speak.

Rust. Indeed, sir, I do. But it is only to observe to you, what a system of solid, harmonious, and great truths are here opened to our view, by this consideration of the first angelic state of Adam, and his falling from it into an earthly animal life of this world; created at first an human angel, with an host of angels in his loins, and then falling from this state, with this particular circumstance, that he had not only undone himself, but had also involved an innocent, and almost numberless posterity in the same misery, who now must all be born of him in his fallen condition. Thus looking at this creation of so noble and high a creature, and his fall, as introducing so extensive a train of misery, how worthy of God, how becoming a love and wisdom that are infinite, does all the stupendous mystery of our redemption appear! It was to restore an angel, big with an angelic offspring, an angel that God had created to carry on the great work of his new creation, to bring time with all its conquests back into eternity, an angel in whom, and with whom, were fallen an innocent, numberless posterity, that had not yet begun to breathe.

What a sense and reasonableness does this state of things give to all those passages of Scripture, which bring a God incarnate from heaven, to remedy this sad scene of misery, that was opened on earth! What less than God, could awaken again the dead angelic life! What less than God's entering into the human birth itself, and becoming one of it, and with it, could generate again the life of God in every human birth? The Scripture saith, "God so loved the world"; "God spared not his only Son": "Christ laid down his life for us"; &c. How glorious a sense is there in all these sayings, when it is considered, that all this was done for so high and divine a creature, created by God for such great ends, and full of a posterity, that was to have filled an heaven restored? In this light, every part of our redemption gives a glory, a wisdom, and goodness to God, which far surpasses every other view we can possibly take of them: whereas if you lessen this angelic dignity of the first man, if you suppose his fall to be less than that of falling, with all his posterity, from an angelic life, into the earthly, animal life of this world, slaves to sin and misery, all the fabric

of our redemption is full of such wonders, as can only be wondered at. Thus, if you consider this world, and man its highest inhabitant made out of nothing, and with only the breath of this earthly life breathed into his nostrils, what is there to call for this great redemption from heaven?

Again, if you consider the fall of man, only as a single act of disobedience to a positive, arbitrary command of God, this is to make all the consequences of his fall inexplicable. For had the first sin been only a single act of disobedience, it had been more worthy of pardon, than any other sin, merely because it was the first, and by a creature that had as yet no experience. But to make the first single act of disobedience, not only unpardonable, but the cause of such a curse and variety of misery entailed upon all his posterity, from the beginning to the end of time; and to suppose, that so much wrath was raised in God at this single act of disobedience, that nothing could make an atonement for it, but the stupendous mystery of the birth, sufferings, and death, of the Son of God; is yet further impossible to be accounted for. In this case, the supposed wrath, and goodness of God, are equally inexplicable. And from hence alone, have sprung up the detestable doctrines, about the guilt and imputation of the first sin, and the several sorts of partial, absolute elections, and reprobations, of some to eternal happiness, and others to be firebrands of hell to all eternity. Detestable may they well be called, since if Lucifer could truly say, that God from all eternity determined, and created him to be that wicked hellish creature that he is, he might then add, not unto him, but unto his creator, must all his wickedness be ascribed. How innocent, how tolerable is the error of transubstantiation, when compared with this absolute election and reprobation! It indeed cannot be reconciled to our senses and reason, but then it leaves God, and heaven, possessed of all that is holy and good; but this reprobation- doctrine, not only overlooks all sense and reason, but confounds heaven and hell, takes all goodness from the Deity, and leaves us nothing to detest in the sinner, but God's eternal irresistible contrivance to make him to be such. But now, when we take this matter of the creation, and fall of man, as truth, and fact, and Scripture, plainly represent it, everything that can awaken in ourselves a love, and desire to be like unto God, is to be found in it. Whilst man stood in his first perfection, unturned from God, this world was under his feet; paradise was the element in which he lived; the Spirit of God was his life; the Son of God was his light; he was in the world, as much above it, and with as full distinction from it, as incapable of being hurt by it, as an angel, that only comes with a divine commission into it. The whole world was a gift, put into his hands; the standing, or fall of it was left to him; as his will and mind should work so should either paradise, or a cursed earth overcome. God, by his new creation, had so altered the wrathful state of Lucifer's fallen kingdom, that the evil that had been raised in it, was hid and overcome by the good. It was thus created, and put into this new state, for this sole end, that a human angel might keep paradise alive, and bring forth a paradisiacal host of angels, in the very place, where the fallen angels had brought forth their evil. But all these great things, depended upon Adam's conforming to the designs of God, and living in this world in such a state, as God had created him in. He could not conform to the designs of God any other way, than by the rectitude of his will, willing that which God willed, both in the creation of him, and the world.

Whilst his will stood thus inclined, the new creation was preserved, himself was an angel, and the world a paradise. No evil would have been known either in plant, or fruit, or animal, nor could have been known, but by the declining will, and desire of man calling it forth. His first longing look towards the knowledge of the life of this world, was the first loosening of the reins of evil. It began to be earthly; hence the curse, or evil, hid in the earth, could begin to show itself, and got a power

of giving forth an evil tree, whose fruit was the key to the knowledge of good and evil; a tree which could not have grown, had he willed nothing, but that which God willed in the creation of him.

He was not the creator of this bad tree, no more than he was the creator of the good trees, that grew in paradise. But as the heavenly rectitude of his will kept up the heavenly powers of paradise in the earth, so when his will began to be earthly, it opened a passage for the natural evil; that was hid in the earth, to bring forth a tree in its own likeness. The earth as now, had then a natural power of bringing forth a tree of its own nature, viz., good and evil, but paradise was that heavenly power, which hindered it from bringing forth such productions: but when the keeper of paradise turned a wish from God, and paradise, after a bad knowledge, then paradise lost some of its power, and the curse, or evil, hid in the earth, could give forth a bad tree. But see now the goodness, and compassion of God towards this mistaken creature; for no sooner had Adam, by the abuse of his power and freedom, given occasion to the birth of this evil tree, but the God of love informs him of the dreadful nature of it, commands him not to eat of it, assuring him, that death was hid in it, that death to his angelic life, would be found in the day that he should eat of it. A plain proof, if anything can be plain, that this tree came not from God, was not according to his own will and purpose towards Adam, but from such a natural power in the earth, as could not show itself, till the strong will and desire of Adam, beginning to be earthly, worked with that, which was the evil hid in the earth. But pray, Theophilus, do you now speak again.

Theoph. The short of the matter then, my friend, is this: neither Adam, nor any other creature, has at its creation, or entrance into life, any arbitrary trial imposed upon it by God. The natural state of every intelligent creature is its one only trial; and it cannot sin, but by departing from that nature, or falling from that state in which it was created. Adam was created an human angel in paradise, and he had no other trial but this, whether he would live in paradise, as an angel of God, insensible of the life, or the good and evil, of this earthly world. This was the tree of life, and the tree of death, that must stand before him; and the necessity of his choosing either the one, or the other, was a necessity founded in his own happy nature. The true account therefore of the fall of Adam, is a gradual declension, or tendency of his will, from the life of paradise into the life of this world, till he was at last wholly fallen into it, and swallowed up by it. The first beginning of his lust towards this world, was the first beginning of his fall, or departure from the life of heaven and paradise; and his eating of the earthly tree, was his last and finishing step of his entrance into, and under the full power of this world. This was the true nature of his fall. On the other hand, all that we see on the part of God, is a gradual help, administered by God to this falling creature, suitable to every degree of his falling, till at last, in the fullness of his fall, an universal redeemer of him, and his posterity, was given by a second Adam, to regenerate again the whole seed of Adam the first.

Thus, the first degree of his lust towards this world had some stop put to it, by the taking his Eve out of him; that so his desire into the life of this world, might be in some measure lessened. When his lust into this world still went on, and gave occasion to the birth of the evil tree, a suitable remedy was here given by God; for God laid a prohibition upon it, and declared the death that must be received from it. When he was further so overcome by his lusting and so lost his first life, and angelic clothing, then God, even then all goodness and mercy to him, only told him of the curse and misery that was opened in nature; that himself and posterity must be sweating, laboring animals, in a fallen world, till their sickly, shameful, naked, new-gotten bodies mixed and mouldered in the corruption of that earth, whose fruits they had chosen to know, instead of those

of paradise.

Now all this is nothing of a penalty wrathfully inflicted by God, but was the natural state of Adam, as soon as his own lust had led him out of an heavenly paradise, into the earthly life of this world. God brings no misery upon him, but only shows the misery that he had opened in himself, by not keeping to the state in which he was created. And no sooner had God informed this miserable pair of the state they had brought upon themselves, but, in that moment, his eternal love begins a covenant of redemption, that was to begin in them, and in and through them extend itself to all their posterity. A beginning of a new birth, called the seed of the woman, as the remains of the first breath of life, was treasured up, or preserved in the light of their life, which, as an Immanuel, or God with them, should be born in all their posterity, and be their power of becoming again such sons of God, as should fulfill the first designs of the creation of Adam, and fill heaven again with that host of angels which it had lost. Thus from the creation of Adam, through all the degrees of his fall to the mystery of his redemption, everything tells you, that God is love. Nay the very possibility of his having so great a fall, gives great glory to the goodness and love of God towards him. He was created an angel, and therefore had the highest perfection of an angel, which is a freedom of willing. Secondly. He was created to be the restoring angel of this new creation. Now these two things, which were his highest glory, and greatest marks of the divine favor, were the only possibility of his falling. Had he not had an angelic freedom of will, he could not have had a false will; had he not had all power given unto him over this world, he could not have fallen into it? It was this divine and high power over it, that opened a way for his entrance, or falling into it. Thus, Academicus, from this view of man, we come to the utmost certainty of a threefold nature or life in him. 1. He is the son of a fallen angel. 2. He is the son of a male and female of this bestial world. 3. He is a son of the Lamb of God, and has a birth of heaven again in his soul. Hence we see also, that all that we have to fear, to hate, and renounce; all that we have to love, to desire, and pray for; is all within ourselves. No man can be miserable, but by falling a sacrifice to his own inward passions and tempers; nor anyone happy, but by overcoming himself. How ridiculous would a man seem to you, who should torment himself, because the land in America was not well tilled? Now everything that is not within you, that has not its birth and growth in your own life, is at the same distance from you, is as foreign to your own happiness or misery, as an American story. Your life is all that you have; and nothing is a part of it, or makes any alteration in it, but the good or evil that is in the workings of your own life. Hence you may see why our savior, who, though he had all wisdom, and came to be the light of the world, is yet so short in his instructions, and gives so small a number of doctrines to mankind, whilst every moral teacher, writes volumes upon every single virtue. It is because he knew what they knew not, that our whole malady lies in this, that the will of our mind, the lust of our life, is turned into this world; and that nothing can relieve us, or set us right, but the turning the will of our mind, and the desire of our hearts to God, and that heaven which we had lost. And hence it is, that he calls us to nothing, but a total denial of ourselves, and the life of this world, and to a faith in him, as the worker of a new birth and life in us. Did we but receive his short instructions with true faith, and simplicity of heart, as the truth of God, we should not want anyone to comment or enlarge upon them. A traveler that has taken a wrong road, does not want an orator to discourse to him on the nature of roads, but to be told, in short, which is his right way. Now this is our case; it was not a number of things that brought about our fall; Adam only took up a wrong will; that will brought him, and us into our present state, or road of life; and therefore our savior uses not a number of instructions to set us right; he only tells us to renounce

the false will, which brought Adam into the life of this world, and to take up that will, which should have kept him in paradise. Observe now, my friend, the great benefit that we have from the foregoing account of man's original perfection, and the nature of his fall. It opens the true ground of our religion, and the absolute necessity of it; it forces us to know, that our whole natural life is a mistaken road, and that Christ is alone our true guide out of it. It teaches us every reason for renouncing ourselves, and loving the whole nature of our redemption, as the greatest joy and desire of our hearts. We are not only compelled, as it were, to hunger after it, to run with eagerness into its arms, but are also delivered from all mistakes about it, from all the difficulties and perplexities, which divided sects and churches have brought into it. For, from this view of things, we see, not uncertainly, but with the fullest assurance, that our will, and our heart is all, that nothing else either finds or loses God; and that all our religion is only the religion of the heart. We see with open eyes, that as a spirit of longing after the life of this world, made Adam and us to be the poor pilgrims on earth that we are, so the spirit of prayer, or the longing desire of the heart after Christ, and God, and heaven, breaks all our bonds asunder, casts all our cords from us, and raises us out of the miseries of time, into the riches of eternity. Thus seeing and knowing our first and our present state, everything calls us to prayer; and the desire of our heart becomes the spirit of prayer. And when the spirit of prayer is born in us, then prayer is no longer considered, as only the business of this or that hour, but is the continual panting or breathing of the heart after God. Its petitions are not picked out of manuals of devotion; it loves its own language, it speaks most when it says least. If you ask what its words are, they are spirit, they are life, they are love, that unite with God.

Acad. I apprehend, sir, that what you here say of the spirit of prayer, will be taken by some people for a censure upon hours and forms of prayer; though I know you have no such meaning.

Rust. Pray let me speak again to Academicus: his learning seems to be always upon the watch, to find out some excuse for not receiving the whole truth. Does not Theophilus here speak of the spirit of prayer, as a state of the heart, which is become the governing principle of the soul's life? And if it is a living state of the heart, must it not have its life in itself, independent of every outward time and occasion? And yet must it not, at the same time, be that alone which disposes and fits the heart to rejoice and delight in hours, and times, and occasions of prayer? Suppose he had said, that honesty is an inward living principle of the heart, a rectitude of the mind, that has all its life and strength within itself: could this be thought to censure all times and occasions of performing outward acts of honesty? St. John saith, "If any man hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion to him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Just so, and with the same truth, it may be said, if a man overlooks, neglects, or refuses, times and hours of prayer, how dwelleth the spirit of prayer in him? And yet, its own life and spirit is vastly superior to, independent of, and stays for no particular hours, or forms of words. And in this sense it is truly said, that it has its own language, that it wants not to pick words out of manuals of devotion, but is always speaking forth spirit and life, and love towards God. But pray, Theophilus, do you go on, as you intended.

Theoph. I shall only add, before we pass on to another point, that, from what has been said of the first state and fall of man, it plainly follows, that the sin of all sins, or the heresy of all heresies, is a worldly spirit. We are apt to consider this temper only as an infirmity, or pardonable failure; but it is indeed the great apostasy from God and the divine life. It is not a single sin, but the whole nature

of all sin, that leaves no possibility of coming out of our fallen state, till it be totally renounced with all the strength of our hearts. Every sin, be it of what kind it will, is only a branch of the worldly spirit that lives in us. "There is but one that is good," saith our Lord, "and that is God." In the same strictness of expression it must be said, there is but one life that is good, and that is the life of God and heaven. Depart in the least degree from the goodness of God, and you depart into evil; because nothing is good but his goodness.

Choose any life, but the life of God and heaven, and you choose death; for death is nothing else but the loss of the life of God. The creatures of this world have but one life, and that is the life of this world: this is their one life, and one good. Eternal beings have but one life, and one good, and that is the life of God. The spirit of the soul is in itself nothing else but a spirit breathed forth from the life of God, and for this only end, that the life of God, the nature of God, the working of God, the tempers of God, might be manifested in it. God could not create man to have a will of his own, and a life of his own, different from the life and will that is in himself; this is more impossible than for a good tree to bring forth corrupt fruit. God can only delight in his own life, his own goodness, and his own perfections; and therefore cannot love or delight, or dwell, in any creatures, but where his own goodness and perfections are to be found. Like can only unite with like, heaven with heaven, and hell with hell; and therefore the life of God must be the life of the soul, if the soul is to unite with God. Hence it is, that all the religion of fallen man, all the methods of our redemption, have only this one end, to take from us that strange and earthly life we have gotten by the fall, and to kindle again the life of God and heaven in our souls; not to deliver us from that gross and sordid vice called covetousness, which heathens can condemn, but to take the whole spirit of this world entirely from us, and that for this necessary reason, because "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father," that is, is not that life, or spirit of life, which we had from God by our creation, "but is of this world," {1 John 2:16} is brought into us by our fall from God into the life of this world. And therefore a worldly spirit is not to be considered, as a single sin, or as something that may consist with some real degrees of Christian goodness, but as a state of real death to the kingdom and life of God in our souls. Management, prudence, or an artful trimming betwixt God and mammon, are here all in vain; it is not only the grossness of an outward, visible, worldly behavior, but the spirit, prudence, the subtlety, the wisdom of this world, that is our separation from the life of God.

Hold this therefore, Academicus, as a certain truth, that the heresy of all heresies is a worldly spirit. It is the whole nature and misery of our fall; it keeps up the death of our souls, and, so long as it lasts, makes it impossible for us to be born again from above. It is the greatest blindness and darkness of our nature, and keeps us in the grossest ignorance both of heaven and hell. For though they are both of them within us, yet we feel neither the one, nor the other, so long as the spirit of this world reigns in us. Light and truth, and the gospel, so far as they concern eternity, are all empty sounds to the worldly spirit. His own good, and his own evil, govern all his hopes and fears; and therefore he can have no religion, or be further concerned in it, than so far as it can be made serviceable to the life of this world. Publicans and harlots are all born of the spirit of this world; but its highest birth, are the scribes, and Pharisees, and hypocrites, who turn godliness into gain, and serve God for the sake of mammon; these live, and move, and have their being, in and from the spirit of this world. Of all things therefore, my friend, detest the spirit of this world, or there is no help; you must live and die an utter stranger to all that is divine and heavenly. You will go out

of the world in the same poverty and death to the divine life, in which you entered it. For a worldly, earthly spirit can know nothing of God; it can know nothing, feel nothing, taste nothing, delight in nothing, but with earthly senses, and after an earthly manner. "The natural man," saith the apostle, "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him. He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned"; that is, they can only be discerned by that spirit, which he has not. Now the true ground and reason of this, and the absolute impossibility for the natural man to receive and know them, how polite, and learned, and acute soever he be, is this; it is because all real knowledge is life, or a living sensibility of the thing that is known. There is no light in the mind, but what is the light of life; so far as our life reaches, so far we understand, and feel, and know, and no further. All after this, is only the play of our imagination, amusing itself with the dead pictures of its own ideas. Now this is all that the natural man, who has not the life of God in him, can possibly do with the things of God. He can only contemplate them, as things foreign to himself, as so many dead ideas, that he receives from books, or hearsay; and so can learnedly dispute and quarrel about them, and laugh at those as enthusiasts, who have a living sensibility of them. He is only the worse for his hearsay, dead ideas of divine truths; they become a bad nourishment of all his natural tempers: he is proud of his ability to discourse about them, and loses all humility, all love of God and man, through a vain and haughty contention for them. His zeal for religion is envy and wrath; his orthodoxy is pride and obstinacy; his love of the truth is hatred and ill-will to those who dare to dissent from him. This is the constant effect of the religion of the natural man, who is under the dominion of the spirit of this world. He cannot know more of religion, nor make a better use of his knowledge, than this comes to; and all for this plain reason, because he stands at the same distance from a living sensibility of the truth, as the man that is born blind, does from a living sensibility of light. Light must first be the birth of his own life, before he can enter into a real knowledge of it. Yet so ignorant is the natural man with all his learned acuteness, that he does not so much as know, that there is, and must be, this great difference between real knowledge, and dead ideas of things; and that a man cannot know anything, any further than as his own life opens the knowledge of it in himself. The measure of our life is the measure of our knowledge; and as the spirit of our life works, so the spirit of our understanding conceives. If our will works with God, though our natural capacity be ever so mean and narrow, we get a real knowledge of God, and heavenly truths; for everything must feel that in which it lives. But if our will works with Satan, and the spirit of this world, let our parts be ever so bright, our imaginations ever so soaring, yet all our living knowledge, or real sensibility, can no higher or deeper, than the mysteries of iniquity, and the lusts of flesh and blood. For where our life is, there, and there only, is our understanding; and that for this plain reason, because as life is the beginning of all sensibility, so it is and must be the bounds of it; and no sensibility can go any further than the life goes, or have any other manner of knowledge, than as the manner of its life is. If you ask what life is, or what is to be understood by it? It is in itself nothing else but a working will; and no life could be either good or evil, but for this reason, because it is a working will: every life, from the highest angel to the lowest animal, consists in a working will; and therefore as the will works, as that is with which it unites, so has every creature its degree, and kind, and manner of life; and consequently as the will of its life works, so it has its degree, and kind, and manner of conceiving and understanding, of liking and disliking. For nothing feels, or tastes, or understands, or likes, or dislikes, but the life that is in us. The spirit that leads our life, is the spirit that forms our understanding. The mind is our eye, and all the faculties of the mind see everything according to the state the mind is in. If selfish pride is the

spirit of our life, everything is only seen, and felt, and known, through this glass. Everything is dark, senseless, and absurd to the proud man, but that which brings food to this spirit. He understands nothing, he feels nothing, he tastes nothing, but as his pride is made sensible of it, or capable of being affected with it. His working will, which is the life of the soul, lives and works only in the element of pride; and therefore what suits his pride, is his only good; and what contradicts his pride, is all the evil that he can feel or know. His wit, his parts, his learning, his advancement, his friends, his admirers, his successes, his conquests, all these are the only god and heaven, that he has any living sensibility of. He indeed can talk of a Scripture-God, a Scripture- Christ, and heaven; but these are only the ornamental furniture of his brain, whilst pride is the god of his heart. We are told, that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." This is not to be understood, as if God, by an arbitrary will, only chose to deal thus with the proud and humble man. Oh no. The true ground is this, the resistance is on the part of man. Pride resisteth God, it rejects him, it turns from him; whereas humility leaves all for God, falls down before him, and opens all the doors of the heart for his entrance into it. This is the only sense, in which God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. And thus it is in the true ground and reason of every good and evil that rises up in us; we have neither good nor evil, but as it is the natural effect of the workings of our own will, either with, or against God; and God only interposes with his threatenings and instructions, to direct us to the right use of our wills, that we may not blindly work ourselves into death, instead of life. But take now another instance like that already mentioned. Look at a man whose working will is under the power of wrath. He sees, and hears, and feels, and understands, and talks wholly from the light and sense of wrath. All his faculties are only so many faculties of wrath; and he knows of no sense or reason, but that which his enlightened wrath discovers to him. I have appealed, Academicus, to these instances, only to illustrate and confirm that great truth, which I before asserted, namely, that the working of our will, or the state of our life, governs the state of our mind, and forms the degree and manner of our understanding and knowledge; and that as the fire of our life burns, so is the light of our life kindled: and all this only to show you the utter impossibility of knowing God, and divine truths, till your life is divine, and wholly dead to the life and spirit of this world; since our light and knowledge can be no better, or higher, than the state of our life and heart is. Tell me now, do you feel the truth of all this? I say feel, because no truth is possessed, till you have a feeling and living sensibility of it.

Acad. Oh! Sir, you have touched every string of my heart; and I now wish, with the psalmist, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away, and be at rest; fly away from the spirit of this world, to be at rest in the sweet tranquillity of a life born again of God. You know, sir, that in the morning you told me of a certain first step, that all necessity must be the beginning of a spiritual life; you gave me till tomorrow to speak my mind and resolution about it. But you have now extorted my answer from me, I cannot stay a moment longer: with all the strength that I have, I turn from everything that is not God, and his holy will; with all the desire, delight, and longing of my heart, I give up myself wholly to the life, Light, and Holy Spirit of God; pleased with nothing in this world, but as it gives time, and place, and occasions, of doing and being that, which my heavenly Father would have me to do, and be; seeking for no happiness from this earthly fallen life, but that of overcoming all its spirit and tempers. But I believe, Theophilus, that you had something further to say.

Theoph. Indeed, Academicus, there is hardly any knowing, when one has said enough of the evil effects of a worldly spirit. It is the canker that eats up all the fruits of our other good tempers; it leaves no degree of goodness in them, but transforms all that we are, or do, into its own earthly nature. The philosophers of old, began all their virtue in a total renunciation of the spirit of this world. They saw with the eyes of heaven, that darkness was not more contrary to light, than the wisdom of this world was contrary to the spirit of virtue; therefore they allowed of no progress in virtue, but so far as a man had overcome himself, and the spirit of this world. This gave a divine solidity to all their instructions, and proved them to be masters of true wisdom. But the doctrine of the cross of Christ, the last, the highest, the most finishing stroke given to the spirit of this world, that speaks more in one word than all the philosophy of voluminous writers, is yet professed by those, who are in more friendship with the world, than was allowed to the disciples of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, or Epictetus.

Nay, if those ancient sages were to start up amongst us with their divine wisdom, they would bid fair to be treated by the sons of the gospel, if not by some fathers of the church, as dreaming enthusiasts.

But, Academicus, this is a standing truth, the world can only love its own, and wisdom can only be justified of her children. The heaven-born Epictetus told one of his scholars, that then he might first look upon himself, as having made some true proficiency in virtue, when the world took him for a fool; an oracle like that, which said, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

If you were to ask me, What is the apostasy of these last times, or whence is all the degeneracy of the present Christian church? I should place it all in a worldly spirit. If here you see open wickedness, there only forms of godliness; if here superficial holiness, political piety, crafty prudence, there haughty sanctity, partial zeal, envious orthodoxy; if almost everywhere you see a Jewish blindness, and hardness of heart, and the church trading with the gospel, as the old Jews bought and sold beasts in their temple; all these are only so many forms and proper fruits of the worldly spirit. This is the great net, with which the devil becomes a fisher of men; and be assured of this, my friend, that every son of man is in this net, till through and by the Spirit of Christ, he breaks out of it.

I say the Spirit of Christ, for nothing else can deliver him from it. Trust now to any kind, or form of religious observances, to any number of the more plausible virtues, to any kinds of learning, or efforts of human prudence, and then I will tell you what your case will be; you will overcome one temper of the world, only and merely by cleaving to another. For nothing leaves the world, nothing renounces it, nothing can possibly overcome it, but singly and solely the Spirit of Christ. Hence it is, that many learned men, with all the rich furniture of their brain, live and die slaves to the spirit of this world; and can only differ from gross worldlings, as the scribes and Pharisees differ from publicans and sinners: it is because the Spirit of Christ, is not the one only thing that is the desire of their hearts; and therefore their learning only works in, and with the spirit of this world, and becomes itself, no small part of the vanity of vanities. Would you further know, Academicus, the evil nature and effects of a worldly spirit, you need only look at the blessed power and effects of the spirit of prayer; for the one goes downwards with the same strength, as the other goes upwards; the one betroths and weds you to an earthly nature, with the same certainty, as the other espouses, and unites you to Christ, and God, and heaven. The spirit of prayer, is a pressing forth

of the soul out of this earthly life; it is a stretching with all its desire after the life of God; it is a leaving, as far as it can, all its own spirit, to receive a Spirit from above, to be one life, one love, one Spirit with Christ in God. This prayer, which is an emptying itself of all its own lusts, and natural tempers, and an opening itself for the Light and love of God to enter into it, is the prayer in the Name of Christ, to which nothing is denied. For the love which God bears to the soul, his eternal, never-ceasing desire to enter into it, stays no longer, than till the door of the heart opens for him. For nothing does, or can keep God out of the soul, or hinder his holy union with it, but the desire of the heart turned from him. And the reason of it is this; it is because the life of the soul is in itself nothing else but a working will; and therefore wherever the will works or goes, there, and there only, the soul lives, whether it be in God, or in the creature.

Whatever it desires, that is the fuel of its fire; and as its fuel is, so is the flame of its life. A will, given up to earthly goods, is at grass with Nebuchadnezzar, and has one life with the beasts of the field: for earthly desires keep up the same life in a man and an ox. For the one only reason, why the animals of this world have no sense or knowledge of God, is this; it is because they cannot form any other than earthly desires, and so can only have an earthly life. When therefore a man wholly turns his working will to earthly desires, he dies to the excellence of his natural state, and may be said only to live, and move, and have his being, in the life of this world, as the beasts have. Earthly food, &c., only desired and used for the support of the earthly body, is suitable to man's present condition, and the order of nature: but when the desire, the delight, and longing of the soul is set upon earthly things, then the humanity is degraded, is fallen from God; and the life of the soul is made as earthly and bestial, as the life of the body: for the creature can be neither higher nor lower, neither better nor worse, than as the will worketh: for you are to observe, that the will has a divine and magic power; what it desires, that it takes, and of that it eateth and liveth. Wherever, and in whatever, the working will chooses to dwell and delight, that becomes the soul's food, its condition, its body, its clothing, and habitation: for all these are the true and certain effects and powers of the working will.

Nothing does, or can go with a man into heaven, nothing follows him into hell, but that in which the will dwelt, with which it was fed, nourished, and clothed, in this life. And this is to be noted well, that death can make no alteration of this state of the will; it only takes off the outward, worldly covering of flesh and blood, and forces the soul to see, and feel, and know, what a life, what a state, food, body, and habitation, its own working will has brought forth for it. Oh Academicus, stop a while, and let your hearing be turned into feeling. Tell me, is there anything in life that deserves a thought, but how to keep this working of our will in a right state, and to get that purity of heart, which alone can see, and know, and find, and possess God? Is there anything so frightful as this worldly spirit, which turns the soul from God, makes it an house of darkness, and feeds it with the food of time, at the expense of all the riches of eternity? On the other hand, what can be so desirable a good as the spirit of prayer, which empties the soul of all its own evil, separates death and darkness from it, leaves self, time, and the world, and becomes one life, one light, one love, one Spirit with Christ, and God, and heaven?

Think, my friends, of these things, with something more than thoughts; let your hungry souls eat of the nourishment of them as a bread of heaven; and desire only to live, that with all the working of your wills, and the whole spirit of your minds, you may live and die united to God: and thus let this conversation end, till God gives us another meeting.

09.02 Part 2 Dialogue 3

Part II The Third Dialogue

Rust. I have brought again with me, gentlemen, my silent friend, Humanus, and upon the same condition of being silent still. But though his silence is the same, yet he is quite altered. For this twenty years I have known him to be of an even cheerful temper, full of good-nature, and even quite calm and dispassionate in his attacks upon Christianity, never provoked by what was said either against his infidelity, or in defense of the gospel. He used to boast of his being free from those four passions and resentments, which, he said, were so easy to be seen, in many or most defenders of the gospel-meekness. But now he is morose, peevish, and full of chagrin, and seems to be as uneasy with himself, as with everybody else: whatever he says, is rash, satirical, and wrathful. I tell him, but he will not own it, that his case is this: the truth has touched him; but it is only so far, as to be his tormentor. It is only as welcome to him, as a thief that has taken from him all his riches, goods, and armor, wherein he trusted. The Christianity he used to oppose is vanished; and therefore all the weapons he had against it, are dropped out of his hands. It now appears to stand upon another ground, to have a deeper bottom, and better nature, than what he imagined; and therefore he, and his scheme of infidelity, are quite disconcerted. But though his arguments have thus lost all their strength, yet his heart is left in the state it was; it stands in the same opposition to Christianity as it did before, and yet without any ideas of his brain to support it. And this is the true ground of his present, uneasy, peevish state of mind. He has nothing now to subsist upon, but the resolute hardness of his heart, his pride, and obstinacy, to continue as he is. These, I own, are severe and hard words: but, hard as they are, I am sure Humanus knows, that they proceed from the softness and affection of my heart towards him, from a compassionate zeal to show him where his malady lies, and the necessity of overcoming himself, before he can have the blessing of light, and truth, and peace. Though it is with some reluctance, yet I have chosen thus to make my neighbor known both to myself, and to you, that you may speak of such matters as may give the best relief to the state he is in.

Theoph. Indeed, Rusticus, I much approve of the spirit you have here shown, with regard to your friend, and hope he will take in good part all that you have said. As for me, I embrace him with the utmost tenderness of affection. I feel and compassionate the trying state of his heart, and have only this one wish, that I could pour the heavenly water of meekness, and the oil of divine love, into it. Let us force him to know, that we are the messengers of divine love to him; that we seek not ourselves, nor our own victory, but to make him victorious over his own evil, and become possessed of a new life in God. His trial is the greatest and hardest that belongs to human nature: and yet it is absolutely necessary to be undergone.

Nature must become a torment and burden to itself, before it can willingly give itself up to that death, through which alone it can pass into life. There is no true and real conversion, whether it be from infidelity, or any other life of sin, till a man comes to know, and feel, that nothing less than his whole nature is to be parted with, and yet finds in himself no possibility of doing it. This is the

inability that can bring us at last to say, with the apostle, "When I am weak, then am I strong." This is the distress that stands near to the gate of life; this is the despair by which we lose all our own life, to find a new one in God. For here, in this place it is, that faith, and hope, and true seeking to God and Christ, are born. But till all is despair in ourselves, till all is lost that we had any trust in as our own; till then, faith and hope, and turning to God in prayer, are only things learnt and practiced by rule and method; but they are not born in us, are not living qualities of a new birth, till we have done feeling any trust or confidence in ourselves. Happy therefore is it for your friend Humanus, that he is come thus far, that everything is taken from him on which he trusted, and found content in himself. In this state, one sigh or look, or the least turning of his heart to God for help, would be the beginning of his salvation. Let us therefore try to improve this happy moment to him, not so much by arguments of reason, as by the arrows of that divine love which overflows all nature and creature. For Humanus, though hitherto without Christ, is still within the reach of divine love: he belongs to God; God created him for himself, to be an habitation of his own life, Light, and Holy Spirit; and God has brought him and us together, that the lost sheep may be found, and brought back to its heavenly shepherd.

Oh Humanus, love is my bait; you must be caught by it; it will put its hook into your heart, and force you to know, that of all strong things, nothing is so strong, so irresistible, as divine love.

It brought forth all the creation; it kindles all the life of heaven; it is the song of all the angels of God. It has redeemed all the world; it seeks for every sinner upon earth; it embraces all the enemies of God; and from the beginning to the end of time, the one work of providence, is the one work of love.

Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, were all of them messengers of divine love. They came to kindle a fire on earth, and that fire was the love which burns in heaven. Ask what God is? His name is love; he is the good, the perfection, the peace, the joy, the glory, and blessing, of every life. Ask what Christ is? He is the universal remedy of all evil broken forth in nature and creature. He is the destruction and life of all fallen nature. He is the unwearied compassion, the long-suffering pity, the never-ceasing mercifulness of God to every want and infirmity of human nature.

He is the breathing forth of the heart, life, and Spirit of God, into all the dead race of Adam. He is the seeker, the finder, the restorer, of all that was lost and dead to the life of God. He is the love, that, from Cain to the end of time, prays for all its murderers; the love that willingly suffers and dies among thieves, that thieves may have a life with him in paradise; the love that visits publicans, harlots, and sinners, and wants and seeks to forgive, where most is to be forgiven.

Oh, my friends, let us surround and encompass Humanus with these flames of love, till he cannot make his escape from them, but must become a willing victim to their power. For the universal God is universal love; all is love, but that which is hellish and earthly. All religion is the spirit of love; all its gifts and graces are the gifts and graces of love; it has no breath, no life, but the life of love. Nothing exalts, nothing purifies, but the fire of love; nothing changes death into life, earth into heaven, men into angels, but love alone. Love breathes the Spirit of God; its words and works are the inspiration of God. It speaketh not of itself, but the Word, the eternal Word of God speaketh in it; for all that love speaketh, that God speaketh, because love is God. Love is heaven revealed in the soul; it is light, and truth; it is infallible; it has no errors, for all errors are the want of love. Love

has no more of pride, than light has of darkness; it stands and bears all its fruits from a depth, and root of humility. Love is of no sect or party; it neither makes, nor admits any bounds; you may as easily enclose the light, or shut up the air of the world into one place, as confine love to a sect or party. It lives in the liberty, the universality, the impartiality of heaven. It believes in one, holy, catholic God, the God of all spirits; it unites and joins with the catholic Spirit of the one God, who unites with all that is good, and is meek, patient, well-wishing, and long-suffering over all the evil that is in nature and creature. Love, like the Spirit of God, rideth upon the wings of the wind; and is in union and communion with all the saints that are in heaven and on earth Love is quite pure; it has no by-ends; it seeks not its own; it has but one will, and that is, to give itself into everything, and overcome all evil with good. Lastly, love is the Christ of God; it comes down from heaven; it regenerates the soul from above; it blots out all transgressions; it takes from death its sting, from the devil his power, and from the serpent his poison. It heals all the infirmities of our earthly birth; it gives eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, and makes the dumb to speak; it cleanses the lepers, and casts out devils, and puts man in paradise before he dies. It lives wholly to the will of him, of whom it is born; its meat and drink is, to do the will of God. It is the resurrection and life of every divine virtue, a fruitful mother of true humility, boundless benevolence, unwearied patience, and bowels of compassion. This, Rusticus, is the Christ, the salvation, the religion of divine love, the true church of God, where the life of God is found, and lived, and to which your friend Humanus is called by us. We direct him to nothing but the inward life of Christ, to the working of the Holy Spirit of God, which alone can deliver him from the evil that is in his own nature, and give him a power to become a son of God.

Rust. My neighbor has infinite reason to thank you, for this lovely draft you have given of the spirit of religion; he cannot avoid being affected with it. But pray let us now hear how we are to enter into this religion of divine love, or rather what God has done to introduce us into it, and make us partakers again of his divine nature.

Theoph. The first work, or beginning of this redeeming love of God, is in that Immanuel, or God with us, treasured up, or preserved in the first Adam, as the seed of the woman, which in him, and all his posterity, should bruise the head, and overcome the life of the serpent in our fallen nature. This is love indeed, because it is universal, and reaches every branch of the human tree, from the first to the last man, that grows from it. Miserably as mankind are divided, and all at war with one another, everyone appropriating God to themselves, yet they all have but one God, who is the Spirit of all, the life of all, and the lover of all. Men may divide themselves, to have God to themselves; they may hate and persecute one another for God's sake; but this is a blessed truth, that neither the hater, nor the hated, can be divided from the one, holy, catholic God, who with an unalterable meekness, sweetness, patience, and good-will towards all, waits for all, calls them all, redeems them all, and comprehends all in the outstretched arms of his catholic love. Ask not therefore how we shall enter into this religion of love and salvation? for it is itself entered into us, it has taken possession of us from the beginning. It is Immanuel in every human soul; it lies as a treasure of heaven, and eternity in us; it cannot be divided from us by the power of man; we cannot lose it ourselves; it will never leave us nor forsake us, till with our last breath we die in the refusal of it. This is the open gate of our redemption; we have not far to go to find it. It is every man's own treasure; it is a root of heaven, a seed of God, sown into our souls by the Word of God; and, like a small grain of mustard-seed, has a power of growing to be a tree of life. Here, my

friend, you should, once for all, mark and observe, where and what the true nature of religion is; for here it is plainly shown you, that its place is within; its work and effect is within; its glory, its life, its perfection, is all within; it is merely and solely the raising of a new life, new love, and a new birth, in the inward spirit of our hearts. Religion (which is solely to restore man to his first and right state in God) had its beginning, and first power, from the seed of the woman, the treader on the serpent's head; and therefore all its progress, from its beginning to its last finished work, is, and can be nothing else, but the growing power and victory of the seed of the woman, over all the evil brought by the serpent into human nature. For the seed of the woman is the Spirit, and power, and life of God, given or breathed again into man, to be the raiser and redeemer of that first life, which he had lost. This was the spiritual nature of religion in its first beginning, and this alone is its whole nature to the end of time; it is nothing else, but the power, and life, and Spirit of God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, working, creating, and reviving life in the fallen soul, and driving all its evil out of it. This is the true rock, on which the church of Christ is built; this the one church out of which there is no salvation, and against which the gates of hell can never prevail.

Here therefore we are come to this firm conclusion, that let religion have ever so many shapes, forms, or reformations, it is no true divine service, no proper worship of God, has no good in it, can do no good to man, can remove no evil out of him, raise no divine life in him, but so far as it serves, worships, conforms, and gives itself up to this operation of the holy, triune God, as living and dwelling in the soul. Keep close to this idea of religion, as an inward, spiritual life in the soul; observe all its works within you, the death and life that are found there; seek for no good, no comfort, but in the inward awakening of all that is holy and heavenly in your heart; and then, so much as you have of this inward religion, so much you have of a real salvation. For salvation is only a victory over nature; so far as you resist and renounce your own vain, selfish, and earthly nature, so far as you overcome all your own natural tempers of the old man, so far God enters into you, lives, and operates in you, he is in you the Light, the life, and the Spirit, of your soul; and you are in him that new creature, that worships him in spirit, and in truth. For divine worship or service is, and can be only performed by being like-minded with Christ; nothing worships God, but the Spirit of Christ his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. This is as true, as that "no man hath known the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth him." Look now at anything as religion, or divine service, but a strict, unerring conformity to the life and Spirit of Christ, and then, though every day was full of burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, yet you would be only like those religionists, who drew near to God with their lips, but their hearts "were far from him." For the heart is always far from God, unless the Spirit of Christ be alive in it. But no one has the living Spirit of Christ, but he who in all his conversation walketh, as he walked. Consider these words of the apostle, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you." This is the sum total of all, and, if this is wanting, all is wanting. Again, says he, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the new creature is all." Nay, see how much further he carries this point, in the following words: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, though I have the gift of prophecy, though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains," &c. "and have not charity" (that is, have not the Spirit of Christ) "it profiteth me nothing." For by charity here, the apostle means neither more nor less, but strictly that same thing, which, in other places, he calls the new creature, Christ formed in us, and our being led by the Spirit of Christ. According to the apostle, nothing avails but the new creature, nothing avails but the Spirit of charity here described; therefore this charity, and the new creature, are only

two different expressions of one and the same thing, viz., the birth, and formation of Christ in us. Thus saith he, "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"; nay, though he could say of himself (as our Lord says many will) Have I not prophesied in the Name of Christ, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works? yet such a one not being led by the Spirit of Christ, is that very man, whose high state the apostle makes to be a mere nothing, because he has not that Spirit of charity, which is the Spirit of Christ. Again, "There is no condemnation to those, who are in Christ Jesus"; therefore to be in Christ Jesus, is to have that spirit of charity, which is the spirit, and life, and goodness of all virtues. Now here you are to observe, that the apostle no more rejects all outward religion, when he says circumcision is nothing, than he rejects prophesying, and faith, and alms-giving, when he says they profit nothing; he only teaches this solid truth, that the kingdom of God is within us, and that it all consists in the state of our heart; and that therefore all outward observances, all the most specious virtues, profit nothing, are of no value, unless the hidden man of the heart, the new creature, led by the Spirit of Christ, be the doer of them.

Thus, says he, "They who are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God." And therefore none else, be they who, or where, or what they will, clergy, or laity, none are, or can be, sons of God, but they who give up themselves entirely to the leading and guidance of, the Spirit of God, desiring to be moved, inspired, and governed solely by it.

Again, "We are of the circumcision, who worship God in spirit"; and to show, that this is not a vain pretense, he says in another place, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." Therefore no profit from anything else; all preaching and hearing is vain, and all preachers and hearers stand chargeable with the vanity of their religious performances, who think of preaching, or hearing profitably, any other way, or by any other power, than in and by the Holy Spirit of God dwelling and working in them. Thus again, "If the Spirit of him, who raised Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he also shall quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit, which dwelleth in you." In vain therefore is life expected, either for body or soul, but by the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Again, "Through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father"; therefore this one Spirit is the one only way to God, and salvation. Thus does all Scripture bring us to this conclusion, that all religion is but a dead work, unless it be the work of the Spirit of God; and that sacraments, prayers, singing, preaching, hearing, are only so many ways of being fervent in the spirit, and of giving up ourselves more and more to the inward working, enlightening, quickening, sanctifying Spirit of God within us; and all for this end, that the curse of the fall may be taken from us, that death may be swallowed up in victory, and a true, real, Christlike nature formed in us, by the same Spirit, by which it was formed in the holy Virgin Mary. Now for the true ground, and absolute necessity, of this turning wholly and solely to the Spirit of God, you need only know this plain truth; namely, that the Spirit of God, the spirit of Satan, or the spirit of this world, are, and must be, the one or the other of them, the continual leader, guide, and inspirer, of everything that lives in nature. There is no going out from some one of these; the moment you cease to be moved, quickened, and inspired by God, you are infallibly moved and directed by the spirit of Satan, or the world, or by both of them. And the reason is, because the soul of man is a spirit, and a life, that in its whole being is nothing else but a birth both of God and nature; and therefore, every moment of its life, it must live in some union and conjunction, either with the Spirit of God governing nature, or with the spirit of nature fallen from God, and working in itself. As creatures therefore, we are under an absolute necessity of being under the motion, guidance, and inspiration of some spirit, that is

more and greater than our own. All that is put in our own power, is only the choice of our leader; but led and moved we must be, and by that spirit, to which we give up ourselves, whether it be to the Spirit of God, or the spirit of fallen nature. To seek therefore to be always under the inspiration and guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and to act by an immediate power from it, is not proud enthusiasm, but as sober and humble a thought, as suitable to our state, as to think of renouncing the world, and the devil: for they never are, or can be, renounced by us, but so far as the Spirit of God is living, breathing, and moving in us: and that for this plain reason, because nothing is contrary to the spirit of Satan, and the world, nothing works, or can work, contrary to it, but the Spirit of heaven.

Hence our Lord said, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth"; plainly declaring, that not to be with him, and led by his Spirit is to be led by the spirit of Satan, and the world. Ask now, what hell is? It is nature destitute of the Light and Spirit of God, and full only of its own darkness; nothing else can make it to be hell. Ask what heaven is? It is nature quickened, enlightened, blessed, and glorified, by the Light and Spirit of God dwelling in it. What possibility therefore can there be, of our dividing from hell, or parting with all that is hellish in us, but by having the life, Light, and Spirit of God living and working in us? And here again, my friends, you may see in the greatest clearness, why nothing is available, nothing is salvation, but the new birth of a Christlike nature; it is because everything else but this birth, and life of the spirit, is only the spirit of Satan, or the spirit of this world. Have you anything to object to these things?

Acad. Truly, sir, all objections are over with me; you have taken from me every difficulty or perplexity that I had, either about religion, or the providence of God. I can now look back into the first origin of things with satisfaction: I have seen how the world and man began to be, in a way highly worthy of the divine wisdom, and how they both came into their present condition, and how they both are to rise out of it, and return back to their first state in a glorious eternity. It now appears to me with the utmost clearness, that to look for salvation in anything else, but the Light of God within us, the Spirit of God working in us, the birth of Christ really brought forth in us, is to be as carnally minded, as ignorant of God, and man, and salvation, as the Jews were, when their hearts were wholly set upon the glory of their temple-service, and a temporal savior to defend it, by a temporal power. For everything but the Light and Spirit of God bringing forth a birth of Christ in the soul, everything else, be it what it will, has and can have no more of salvation in it, than a temporal fighting savior. For what is said of the impossibility of the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins, must with the same truth be said of all other outward creaturely things; they are all at the same distance from being the salvation of the soul, and in the same degree of inability to take away sins, as the blood of bulls and goats. And all this for this plain reason, because the soul is a spirit breathed forth from God himself, which therefore cannot be blessed but by having the life of God in it; and nothing can bring the life of God into it, but only the Light and Spirit of God. Upon this ground I stand in the utmost certainty, looking wholly to the Light and Spirit of God for an inward redemption from all the inward evil that is in my fallen nature. All that I now want to know is this, what I am to do, to procure this continual operation of the Spirit of God within me. For I seem to myself, not to know this enough; and I am also afraid of certain delusions, which I have heard many have fallen into, under pretenses of being led by the Spirit of God. Pray therefore, Theophilus, give me some instructions on this head.

Rust. Pray, gentlemen, let an unlearned man speak a word here. Suppose, Academicus, you had a longing earnest desire, to be governed by a spirit of plainness and sincerity in your whole conversation. Would this put you upon asking for art, and rules, and methods, or consulting some learned man, or book, to direct you, and keep you from delusion? Would you not know and feel in yourself, that your own earnest desire, and love of sincerity and plainness, and your own inward aversion to everything that was contrary to it, must be the one and only possible way of attaining it, and that you must have it in that degree, as you loved and liked to act by it? Now there is no more of art, or any secret required to bring and keep you under the direction of the Spirit of God, than under the spirit of plainness and sincerity. The longing earnest desire of the heart, brings you into the safe possession of the one, as it does of the other. For it has been enough proved, that the spirit of prayer forms the spirit of our lives, and every man lives as the spirit of prayer leads him. Nay every prayer for the Holy Spirit, is the Spirit itself praying in you. For nothing can turn to God, desire to be united to him, and governed by him, but the Spirit of God. The impossibility of praying for the Spirit of God in vain, is thus shown by our blessed Lord: "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask for it?" But here I stop.

Acad. I do not know how to understand what Rusticus has said. For do not all good Christians daily pray for the Spirit of God? yet how few are led by it? Pray, Theophilus, do you speak here.

Theoph. People may be daily at the service of the church, and read long prayers at home, in which are many petitions for the Holy Spirit, and yet live and die, led and governed by the spirit of the world; because all these prayers, whether we hear them read by others, or read them ourselves, may be done in compliance only to duties, rules, and forms of religion, as things we are taught not to neglect; but, being only done thus, they are not the true, real working of the spirit of the heart, nor make any real alteration in it. But you are to observe, that Rusticus spoke of the spirit of prayer, which is the heart's own prayer, and which has all the strength of the heart in it. And this is the prayer that must be affirmed to be always effectual; it never returns empty; it eats and drinks that, after which it hungers and thirsts; and nothing can possibly hinder it from having that, which it prays for. This we are assured of from these words of truth itself; "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." But this blessedness could not belong to hungering, if the truly hungry and thirsty, could ever be sent empty away. Every spirit necessarily reaps that which it sows, it cannot possibly be otherwise, it is the unalterable procedure of nature. Spirit is the first power of nature, everything proceeds from it, is born of it, yields to it, and is governed by it. If the spirit soweth to the flesh, it reapeth that corruption which belongs to the flesh; if it soweth to the Spirit, it reapeth the fruits of the Spirit, which are eternal life. The spirit of prayer therefore is the opener of all that is good within us, and the receiver of all that is good without us; it unites with God, is one power with him; it works with him, and drives all that is not God, out of the soul. The soul is no longer a slave to its natural impurity and corruption, no longer imprisoned in its own death and darkness, but till the fire from heaven, the spirit of prayer is kindled in it.

Then begins the resurrection, and the life; and all that which died in Adam comes to life in Christ. Ask not therefore, Academicus, what you are to do to obtain the Spirit of God, to live in it, and be led by it? For your power of having it, and your measure of receiving it, are just according to that faith and earnestness with which you desire to be led by it. For the hungry spirit of prayer is that faith, to which all things are possible, to which all nature, though as high as mountains, and as stiff

as oaks, must yield and obey. It heals all diseases, breaks the bands of death, and calls the dead out of their graves. Look at the small seeds of plants, shut up in their own dead husks, and covered with thick earth, and see how they grow. What do they do? They hunger and thirst after the light and air of this world. Their hunger eats that which they hunger after, and this is their vegetation. If the plant ceases to hunger, it withers and dies, though surrounded with the air and light of this world. This is the true nature of the spiritual life; it is as truly a growth or vegetation, as that of plants; and nothing but its own hunger can help it to the true food of its life. If this hunger of the soul ceases, it withers and dies, though in the midst of divine plenty. Our Lord, to show us that the new birth is really a state of spiritual vegetation, compares it to a small grain of mustard-seed, from whence a great plant arises. Now every seed has a life in itself, or else it could not grow. What is this life? It is nothing else but an hunger in the seed, after the air and light of this world; which hunger, being met and fed by the light and air of nature, changes the seed into a living plant. Thus it is with the seed of heaven in the soul. It has a life in itself, or else no life could arise from it. What is this life? It is nothing else but faith, or an hunger after God and heaven; which no sooner stirs, or is suffered to stir, but it is met, embraced, and quickened, by the Light and Spirit of God and heaven; and so a new man in Christ, is formed from the seed of heaven, as a new plant from a seed in the earth. Let us suppose now, that the seed of a plant had sense and reason, and that, instead of continually hungering after, and drawing in the virtue of the light and air of our outward nature, it should amuse, and content its hunger with reasoning about the nature of hunger, and the different powers and virtues of light and air; must not such a seed of all necessity wither away, without ever becoming a living plant? Now this is no false similitude of the seed of life in man: man has a power of drawing all the virtue of heaven into himself, because the seed of heaven is the gift of God in his soul, which wants the Light and Spirit of God to bring it to the birth, just as the seed of the plant wants the light and air of this world; it cannot possibly grow up in God, but by taking in light, life, and spirit from heaven, as the creatures of time take in the light, and life, and spirit of this world. If therefore the soul, instead of hungering after heaven, instead of eating the flesh and blood of the Christ of God, contents and amuses this seed of life with ideas, and notions, and sounds, must not such a soul of necessity wither, and die, without ever becoming a living creature of heaven? Wonder not therefore, Academicus, that all the work of our salvation and regeneration is, by the Scripture, wholly confined to the operation of the Light and Spirit of God, living and working in us. It is for the same reason, and on the same necessity, that the life and growth of the creatures of this world, must be wholly ascribed to the powers of this world, living and working in them. Nor does all this, in the least degree, make a man a machine, or without any power with regard to his salvation. He must grow in God, as the plants grow in this world, from a power that is not his own, as they grow from the powers of outward nature. But he differs entirely from the plants in this, that an uncontrollable will, which is his own, must be the leader and beginner of his growth either in God, or nature. It is strictly true, that all man's salvation depends upon himself; and it is as strictly true, that all the work of his salvation, is solely the work of God in his soul. All his salvation depends upon himself, because his will-spirit has its power of motion in itself. As a will, it can only receive that which it willeth; everything else is absolutely shut out of it. For it is the unalterable nature of the will, that it cannot possibly receive anything into it, but that which it willeth; its willing is its only power of receiving; and therefore there can be no possible entrance for God or heaven into the soul, till the will-spirit of the soul desires it; and thus all man's salvation depends upon himself. On the other hand, nothing can create, effect, or bring forth, a birth or growth of the divine

life in the soul, but that Light and Spirit of God, which brings forth the divine life in heaven, and all heavenly beings. And thus the work of our salvation is wholly and solely the work of the Light and Spirit of God, dwelling and operating in us. Thus, Academicus, you see that God is all; that nothing but his life and working power in us, can be our salvation; us to have it, or be capable of it. And therefore neither you, nor any other human soul, can be without the operation of the Light and Spirit of God in it, but because its will-spirit, or its spirit of prayer, is turned towards something else; for we are always in union with that, with which our will is united. Again: look, Academicus, at the light and air of this world, you see with what a freedom of communication they overflow, enrich, and enliven everything; they enter everywhere, if not hindered by something that withstands their entrance. This may represent to you the ever-overflowing free communication of the Light and Spirit of God, to every human soul. They are everywhere; we are encompassed with them; our souls are as near to them, as our bodies are to the light and air of this world; nothing shuts them out of us, but the will and desire of our souls, turned from them, and praying for something else. I say, praying for something else; for you are to notice this, as a certain truth, that every man's life is a continual state of prayer; he is no moment free from it, nor can possibly be so. For all our natural tempers, be they what they will, ambition, covetousness, selfishness, worldly-mindedness, pride, envy, hatred, malice, or any other lust whatever, are all of them in reality, only so many different kinds, and forms of a spirit of prayer, which is as inseparable from the heart, as weight is from the body. For every natural temper is nothing else, but a manifestation of the desire and prayer of the heart, and shows us, how it works and wills. And as the heart worketh, and willeth, such, and no other, is its prayer. All else is only form, and fiction, and empty beating of the air. If therefore the working desire of the heart is not habitually turned towards God, if this is not our spirit of prayer, we are necessarily in a state of prayer towards something else, that carries us from God, and brings all kind of evil into us. For this is the necessity of our nature; pray we must, as sure as our heart is alive; and therefore when the state of our heart is not a spirit of prayer to God, we pray without ceasing to some, or other part of the creation. The man whose heart habitually tends towards the riches, honors, powers, or pleasures of this life, is in a continual state of prayer towards all these things. His spirit stands always bent towards them; they have his hope, his love, his faith, and are the many gods that he worships: and though when he is upon his knees, and uses forms of prayer, he directs them to the God of heaven; yet these are in reality the god of his heart, and, in a sad sense of the words, he really worships them in spirit, and in truth. Hence you may see, Academicus, how it comes to pass, that there is so much praying, and yet so little of true piety amongst us. The bells are daily calling us to church, our closets abound with manuals of devotion, yet how little fruit! It is all for this reason, because our prayers are not our own; they are not the abundance of our own heart; are not found and felt within us, as we feel our own hunger and thirst; but are only so many borrowed forms of speech, which we use at certain times and occasions. And therefore it is no wonder that little good comes of it. What benefit could it have been to the Pharisee, if, with an heart inwardly full of its own pride and self-exaltation, he had outwardly hung down his head, smote upon his breast, and borrowed the publican's words, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? What greater good can be expected from our praying in the words of David, or singing his psalms seven times a day, if our heart has no more the spirit of David in it, than the heart of the Pharisee had of the spirit of the humble publican?

Acad. O Theophilus, truth and reason force me to consent to what you say; and yet I am afraid of following you: for you here seem to condemn forms of prayer in public, and manuals of devotion in

private. What will become of religion, if these are set aside or disregarded?

Theoph. Dear Academicus, abate your fright. Can you think, that I am against your praying in the words of David, or breathing his spirit in your prayers, or that I would censure your singing his psalms seven times a day? Remember how very lately I put into your hands the book called, *A Serious Call to a Devout Life &c.*, and then think how unlikely it is, that I should be against times and methods of devotion. At three several times, we are told, our Lord prayed, repeating the same form of words; and therefore a set form of words are not only consistent with, but may be highly suitable to, the most divine spirit of prayer. If your own heart, for days and weeks, was unable to alter, or break off from inwardly thinking and saying, "hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done"; if at other times, for weeks and months, it stood always inwardly in another form of prayer, unable to vary, or depart from saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with all thy holy nature, spirit, and tempers, into my soul, that I may be born again of thee, a new creature"; I should be so far from censuring such a formality of prayer, that I should say, blessed and happy are they, whose hearts are tied to such a form of words. It is not therefore, sir, a set form of words that is spoken against, but an heartless form, a form that has no relation to, or correspondence with, the state of the heart that uses it. All that I have said is only to teach you the true nature of prayer, that it is only the work of the heart, and that the heart only prays in reality (whatever its words are) for that which it habitually wills, likes, loves, and longs to have. It is not therefore the using the words of David, or any other saint, in your prayers, that is censured, but the using them without that state of heart, which first spoke them forth, and the trusting to them, because they are a good form, though in our hearts we have nothing that is like them. It would be good to say incessantly with holy David, "My heart is athirst for God. As the hart desireth the waterbrooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God." But there is no goodness in saying daily these words, if no such thirst is felt, or desired in the heart. And, my friend, you may easily know, that dead forms of religion, and numbers of repeated prayers, keep men content with their state of devotion, because they make use of such holy prayers; though their hearts, from morning to night, are in a state quite contrary to them, and join no further in them, than in liking to use them at certain times.

Acad. I acquiesce, Theophilus, in the truth of what you have said, and plainly see the necessity of condemning what you have condemned; which is not the form, but the heartless form. But still I have a scruple upon me: I shall be almost afraid of going to church, where there are so many good prayers offered up to God, as suspecting they may not be the prayers or language of my own heart, and so become only a lip-labor, or, what is worse, an hypocrisy before God.

Theoph. I do not, Academicus, dislike your scruple at all; for you do well to be afraid of saying anything of yourself, or to God, in your prayers, which your heart does not truly say. It is also good for you to think, that many of the prayers of the church may go faster, and higher, than your heart can in truth go along with them. For this will put you upon a right care over yourself, and so to live, that, as a true son of your mother the church, your heart may be able to speak her language, conform to her service, and find the delight of your soul in the spirit of her prayers. But this will only then come to pass, when the spirit of prayer is the spirit of your heart; then every good word, whether in a form, or out of a form, whether heard, or read, or thought, will be a suitable to your heart, as gratifying to it, as food is to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty soul. But till the spirit of the heart is thus renewed, till it is emptied of all earthly desires, and stands in an habitual hunger and thirst after God (which is the true spirit of prayer) till then, all our forms of prayer will be, more or

less, but too much like lessons that are given to scholars; and we shall mostly say them, only because we dare not neglect them. But be not discouraged, Academicus; take the following advice, and then you may go to church without any danger of a mere lip-labor or hypocrisy, although there should be an hymn, or a psalm, or a prayer, whose language is higher than that of your own heart. Do this: go to the church, as the publican went into the temple; stand inwardly in the spirit of your mind, in that form which he outwardly expressed, when he cast down his eyes, smote upon his breast, and could only say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Stand unchangeably (at least in your desire) in this form and state of heart; it will sanctify every petition that comes out of your mouth; and when anything is read, or sung, or prayed, that is more exalted and fervent than your heart is, if you make this an occasion of a further sinking down in the spirit of the publican, you will then be helped, and highly blessed, by those prayers and praises, which seem only to fit, and belong to, a better heart than yours.

This, my friend, is a secret of secrets; it will help you to reap where you have not sown, and be a continual source of grace in your soul. This will not only help you to receive good from those prayers, which seem too good for the state of your heart, but will help you to find good from everything else: for everything that inwardly stirs in you, or outwardly happens to you, becomes a real good to you, if it either finds or excites in you this humble form of mind: for nothing is in vain, or without profit, to the humble soul; like the bee, it takes its honey even from bitter herbs; it stands always in a state of divine growth; and everything that falls upon it, is like a dew of heaven to it. Shut up yourself therefore in this form of humility, all good is enclosed in it; it is a water of heaven, that turns the fire of the fallen soul, into the meekness of the divine life, and creates that oil, out of which the love to God and man gets its flame. Be enclosed therefore always in it; let it be as a garment wherewith you are always covered, and the girdle with which you are girt; breathe nothing but with its ears; and then, whether you are in the church, or out of the church; hearing the praises of God, or receiving wrongs from men, and the world, all will be edification, and everything will help forward your growth in the life of God.

Acad. Indeed, Theophilus, this answer to my scruple is quite good: I not only like, but I love it much: it gives as well an unction to my heart, as a light to my mind. All my desire now is, to live no longer to the world, to myself, my own natural tempers and passions, but wholly to the will of the blessed and adorable God, moved and guided by his Holy Spirit.

Theoph. This resolution, Academicus, only shows that you are just come to yourself; for everything short of this earnest desire to live wholly unto God, may be called a most dreadful infatuation or madness, an insensibility that cannot be described. For what else is our life, but a trial for the greatest evil, or good, that an eternity can give us? What can be so dreadful, as to die possessed of a wicked immortal nature, or to go out of this world with tempers, that must keep us forever burning in our own fire, and brimstone? What has God not done to prevent this? His redeeming love began with our fall, and kindles itself as a spark of heaven in every fallen soul. It calls every man to salvation, and every man is forced to hear, though he will not obey his voice. God has so loved the world, that his only Son hung and expired, bleeding on the cross, not to atone his own wrath against us, but to extinguish our own hell within us, to pour his heavenly love into us, to show us that meekness, suffering, and dying to our own fallen nature, is the one, only possible way, for fallen man to be alive again in God. Are we yet sons of pride, and led away with vanity? Do the powers of darkness rule over us? Do impure evil spirits possess and drive on our lives?

Has sin lost all its power of frightening us? Is remorse of conscience no longer felt? Are falsehood, guile, debauchery, profaneness, perjury, bribery, corruption, and adultery, no longer seeking to hide themselves in corners, but openly entering all our high places, giving battle to every virtue, and laying claim to the government of the world? Are we thus near being swallowed up by a deluge of vice and impiety? All this is not come upon us, because God has left us too much without help from heaven, or too much exposed us to the powers of hell; but it is because we have rejected and despised the whole mystery of our salvation, and trampled under foot the precious blood of Christ, which alone has that omnipotence, that can either bring heaven into us, or drive hell out of us. O Britain, Britain, think that the Son of God saith unto thee, as he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." And now let me say, What aileth thee, O British earth, that thou quakest, and the foundations of thy churches that they totter? Just that same aileth thee, as ailed Judah's earth, when the divine savior of the world, dying on the cross, was reviled, scorned, and mocked, by the inhabitants of Jerusalem; then the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the sun refused to give its light. Nature again declares for God; the earth, and the elements can no longer bear our sins: Jerusalem's doom for Jerusalem's sin, may well be feared by us. Oh ye miserable pens dipped in Satan's ink, that dare to publish the folly of believing in Jesus Christ, where will you hide your guilty heads, when nature dissolved, shall show you the rainbow, on which the crucified savior shall sit in judgment, and every work receive its reward? O tremble! ye apostate sons that come out of the schools of Christ, to fight Lucifer's battles, and do that for him, which neither he, nor his legions can do for themselves. Their inward pride, spite, wrath, malice and rage against God, and Christ, and human nature, have no pens but yours, no apostles but you. They must be forced to work in the dark, to steal privately into impure hearts, could they not beguile you into a fond belief, that you are lovers of truth, friends of reason, detectors of fraud, great geniuses, and moral philosophers, merely and solely, because ye blaspheme Christ, and the gospel of God. Poor deluded souls, rescued from hell by the blood of Christ, called by God to possess the thrones of fallen angels, permitted to live only by the mercy of God, that ye may be born again from above! my heart bleeds for you. Think, I beseech you, in time, what mercies ye are trampling under your feet. Say not that reason, and your intellectual faculties, stand in your way; that these are the best gifts, that God has given you, and that these suffer you not to come to Christ. For all this is as vain a pretense, and as gross a mistake, as if ye were to say, that you had nothing but your feet to carry you to heaven. For your heart is the best and greatest gift of God to you; it is the highest, greatest, strongest, and noblest power of your nature; it forms your whole life, be it what it will; all evil, and all good, comes from it; your heart alone has the key of life and death; it does all that it will; reason is but its plaything, and whether in time or eternity, can only be a mere beholder of the wonders of happiness, or forms of misery, which the right, or wrong working of the heart is entered into.

I will here give you an infallible touchstone, that will try all to the truth. It is this: retire from the world, and all conversations, only for one month; neither write, nor read, nor debate anything in private with yourself; stop all the former workings of your heart and mind; and, with all the strength of your heart, stand all this month as continually as you can, in this following form of prayer to God. Offer it frequently on your knees; but, whether sitting, standing, or walking, be always inwardly longing, and earnestly praying this one prayer to God: "That, of his great goodness, he would make known to you and take from your heart, every kind, and form, and degree of pride, whether it

be from evil spirits, or your own corrupt nature; and that he would awaken in you the deepest depth and truth of all that humility, which can make you capable of his Light, and Holy Spirit." Reject every thought, but that of wishing, and praying in this manner from the bottom of your heart, with such truth and earnestness, as people in torment, wish and pray to be delivered from it. Now if you dare not, if your hearts will not, cannot give themselves up in this manner to the spirit of this prayer, then the touchstone has done its work, and you may be as fully assured, both what your infidelity is, and from what it proceeds, as you can be of the plainest truth in nature. This will show you, how vainly you appeal to your reason, and speculation, as the cause of your infidelity; that it is full as false and absurd, as if thieves and adulterers should say, that their theft and adultery was entirely owing to their bodily eyes, which showed them external objects, and not to anything that was wrong or bad in their hearts. On the other hand, if you can, and will give yourselves up in truth and sincerity to this spirit of prayer, I will venture to affirm, that if you had twice as many evil spirits in you, as Mary Magdalen had, they will all be cast out of you, and you will be forced with her, to weep with tears of love, at the feet of the holy Jesus. But here, my friends, I stop, that we may return to the matter we had in hand.

Rust. You have made no digression, Theophilus, from our main point, which was to recommend Christianity to poor Humanus. He must, I am sure, have felt the death-blows, that you have here given to the infidel scheme. The idol of reason, which is the vain god, that they worship in vain, is here like Dagon fallen to the ground, never to rise up again. Humanus is caught by your bait of love, and I dare say he wants only to have this conversation ended, that he may try himself to the truth, by this divine touchstone, which you have put into his hands.

Acad. Give me leave, gentlemen, to add one word to this matter. Theophilus has here fairly pulled reason out of its usurped throne, and shown it to be a powerless, idle toy, when compared to the royal strength of the heart, which is the kingly power, that has all the government of life in its hands. But if Humanus, or anyone else, would see reason fully maintained in all its just rights, and yet entirely disarmed of all its pretenses to a religion of its own, and the truth of the gospel fully proved to every man, learned, or unlearned, from the known state of his own heart; if he would see all this set forth in the strongest, clearest light, he need only read about an hundred pages of a book {A Demonstration of the Gross and Fundamental Errors of a Late Book called A Plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper} published about twelve years ago, to which no answer has, nor, it may be, ever will be given by any patron of reason, and infidelity. And if part of that book (as I have often wished) beginning at page 70 to 117, was printed by itself, and known and read in every part of the kingdom, all Christians, though no scholars, would have learning enough both to see the deep, true, and comfortable foundation of their gospel faith, and the miserable folly, and ignorance of those, who would set up a religion of human reason instead of it. But now, Theophilus, I beg we may return to that very point concerning prayer, where we left off. I think my heart is entirely devoted to God, and that I desire nothing but to live in such a state of prayer, as may best keep me under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. Assist me therefore, my dear friend, in this important matter; give me the fullest directions that you can; and if you have any manual of devotion, that you prefer, or any method that you would put me in, pray let me know it.

Rust. I beg leave to speak a word to Academicus. I am glad, sir, to see this fire of heaven, thus far kindled in your soul; but wonder that you should want to know, how you are to keep up its flame,

which is like wanting to know, how you are to love and desire that, which you do love and desire. Does a blind, or sick, or lame man want to know, how he shall wish and desire sight, health, and limbs? or would be at a loss, till some form of words taught him how to long for them? Now you can have no desire or prayer for any grace, or help from God, till you in some degree as surely feel the want of them, and desire the good of them, as the sick man feels the want, and desires the good of health. But when this is your case, you want no more to be told how to pray, than the thirsty man wants to be told what he shall ask for. Have you not fully consented to this truth, that the heart only can pray, and that it prays for nothing but that, which it loves, wills, and wishes to have? But can love or desire want art, or method, to teach it to be, that which it is? If from the bottom of your heart you have a sincere, warm love for your most valuable friend, would you want to buy a book, to tell you, what sentiments you feel in your heart towards this friend, what comfort, what joy, what gratitude, what trust, what honor, what confidence, what faith, are all alive, and stirring in your heart towards him? Ask not therefore, Academicus, for a book of prayers; but ask your heart what is within it, what it desires? and then, instead of calling upon Theophilus for assistance, stand in the same form of petition to God. For this turning to God according to the inward feeling, want, and motion of your own heart, in love, in trust, in faith of having from him all that you want, and wish to have, this turning thus unto God, whether it be with, or without words, is the best form of prayer in the world. Now no man can be ignorant of the state of his own heart, or a stranger to those tempers, that are alive and stirring in him, and therefore no man can want a form of prayer; for what should be the form of his prayer, but that which the condition and state of his heart demands? If you know of no trouble, feel no burden, want nothing to be altered, or removed, nothing to be increased or strengthened in you, how can you pray for anything of this kind? But if your heart knows its own plague, feels its inward evil, knows what it wants to have removed, will you not let your distress form the manner of your prayer? or will you pray in a form of words, that have no more agreement with your state, than if a man walking above-ground, should beg every man he met, to pull him out of a deep pit. For prayers not formed according to the real state of your heart, are but like a prayer to be pulled out of a deep well, when you are not in it. Hence you may see, how unreasonable it is to make a mystery of prayer, or an art, that needs so much instruction; since every man is, and only can be, directed by his own inward state and condition, when, and how, and what he is to pray for, as every man's outward state shows him what he outwardly wants. And yet it should seem, as if a prayer book was highly necessary, and ought to be the performance of great learning and abilities, since only our learned men and scholars make our prayer books.

Acad. I did not imagine, Rusticus, that you would have so openly declared against manuals of devotion, since you cannot but know, that not only the most learned, but the most pious doctors of the church, consider them as necessary helps to devotion.

Rust. If you, Academicus, were obliged to go a long journey on foot, and yet through a weakness in your legs could not set one foot before another, you would do well to get the best travelling crutches that you could. But if, with sound and good legs, you would not stir one step, till you had got crutches to hop with, surely a man might show you the folly of not walking with your own legs, without being thought a declared enemy to crutches, or the makers of them. Now a manual is not so good an help, as crutches, and yet you see crutches are only proper, when our legs cannot do their office. It is, I say, not so good an help as crutches, because that which you do with crutches,

is that very same thing, that you should have done with your legs; you really travel; but when the heart cannot take one step in prayer, and you therefore read your manual, you do not do that very same thing, which your heart should have done, that is, really pray. A fine manual therefore is not to be considered as a means of praying, or as something that puts you in a state of prayer, as crutches help you to travel; but its chief use, as a book of prayers to a dead and hardened heart that has no prayer of its own, is to show it, what a state and spirit of prayer it wants, and at what a sad distance it is from feeling all that variety of humble, penitent, grateful, fervent, resigned, loving sentiments, which are described in the manual, that so, being touched with a view of its own miserable state, it may begin its own prayer to God for help. But I have done. Theophilus may now answer your earnest request.

Theoph. Your earnest desire, Academicus, to live in the spirit of prayer, and be truly governed by it, is a most excellent desire; for to be a man of prayer is that which the apostle means by living in the Spirit, and having our conversation in heaven. It is to have done, not only with the confessed vices, but with the allowed follies and vanities of this world. To tell such a soul of the innocence of levity, that it needs not run away from idle discourse, vain gaiety, and trifling mirth, as being, the harmless relief of our heavy natures, is like telling the flame, that it needs not always be ascending upwards. But here you are to observe, that this spirit of prayer is not to be taught you by a book, or brought into you by an art from without, but must be an inward birth, that must arise from your own fire and light within you, as the air arises from the fire and light of this world. For the spirit of every being, be it what or where it will, or be its spirit of what kind it will, is only the breath or spirit that proceeds from its own fire and light. In vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual creatures, it is all in the same manner; spirit is the third form of its life, and is the birth that proceeds from the other two; and is the manifestation of their nature and qualities. For such as the fire and light are, such and no other, neither higher nor lower, neither better nor worse, is the spirit that proceeds from them. Now the reason why all, and every life does, and must stand in this form, is wholly and solely from hence, because the Deity, the one source and fountain of all life, is a triune God, whose third form is, and is called, the Spirit of God, proceeding from the Father, and the Son. The painful sense and feeling of what you are, kindled into a working state of sensibility of the Light of God within you, is the fire and light from whence your spirit of prayer proceeds. In its first kindling nothing is found or felt, but pain, wrath, and darkness, as is to be seen in the first kindling of every heat or fire. And therefore its first prayer is nothing else but a sense of penitence, self-condemnation, confession, and humility. It feels nothing but its own misery, and so is all humility. This prayer of humility is met by the divine love, the mercifulness of God embraces it; and then its prayer is changed into hymns, and songs, and thanksgivings. When this state of fervor has done its work, has melted away all earthly passions and affections, and left no inclination in the soul, but to delight in God alone, then its prayer changes again. It is now so near to God, has found such union with him, that it does not so much pray as live in God. Its prayer is not any particular action, is not the work of any particular faculty, not confined to times, or words, or place, but is the work of his whole being, which continually stands in fullness of faith, in purity of love, in absolute resignation, to do and be, what and how his beloved pleases. This is the last state of the spirit of prayer, and its highest union with God in this life. Each of these foregoing states has its time, its variety of workings, its trials, temptations, and purifications, which can only be known by experience in the passage through them. The one only and infallible way to go safely through all the difficulties, trials, temptations, dryness, or opposition, of our own evil tempers, is this: it is to expect nothing from ourselves, to

trust to nothing in ourselves, but in everything expect, and depend upon God for relief. Keep fast hold of this thread, and then let your way be what it will, darkness, temptation, or the rebellion of nature, you will be led through all, to an union with God: for nothing hurts us in any state, but an expectation of something in it, and from it, which we should only expect from God. We are looking for our own virtue, our own piety, our own goodness, and so live on and on in our own poverty and weakness; today pleased and comforted with the seeming strength and firmness of our own pious tempers, and fancying ourselves to be somewhat; tomorrow, fallen into our own mire, we are dejected, but not humbled; we grieve, but it is only the grief of pride, at the seeing our perfection not to be such as we vainly imagined. And thus it will be, till the whole turn of our minds is so changed, that we as fully see and know our inability to have any goodness of our own, as to have a life of our own. For since nothing is, or can be, good in us, but the life of God manifested in us, how can this be had but from God alone? When we are happily brought to this conviction, then we have done with all thought of being our own builders; the whole spirit of our minds is become a mere faith, and hope, and trust in the sole operation of God's Spirit, looking no more to any other power, to be formed in Christ new creatures, than we look to any other power for the resurrection of our bodies at the last day. Hence may be seen, that the trials of every state are its greatest blessings; they do that for us, which we most of all want to have done, they force us to know our own nothingness, and the all of God.

People who have long dwelt in the fervor of devotion, in an high sensibility of divine affections, practicing every virtue with a kind of greediness, are frightened, when coldness seizes upon them, when their hymns give no transport, and their hearts, instead of flaming with the love of every virtue, seem ready to be overcome by every vice. But here, keep fast hold of the thread I mentioned before, and all is well. For this coldness is the divine offspring, or genuine birth, of the former fervor; it comes from it as a good fruit, and brings the soul nearer to God, than the fervor did. The fervor was good, and did a good work in the soul; it overcome the earthly nature, and made the soul delight in God, and spiritual things; but its delight was too much an own delight, a fancied self-holiness, and occasioned rest and satisfaction in self, which if it had continued uninterrupted, undiscovered, an earthly self had only been changed into a spiritual self. Therefore I called this coldness, or loss of fervor, its divine offspring, because it brings a divine effect, or more fruitful progress in the divine life. For this coldness overcomes, and delivers us from spiritual self, as fervor overcame the earthly nature. It does the work that fervor did, but in an higher degree, because it gives up more, sacrifices more, and brings forth more resignation to God, than fervor did; and therefore it is more in God, and receives more from him. The devout soul therefore is always safe in every state, if it makes everything an occasion either of rising up, or falling down into the hands of God, and exercising faith, and trust, and resignation to him. Fervor is good, and ought to be loved; but tribulation, distress, and coldness, in their season are better, because they give means and power of exercising an higher faith, a purer love, and more perfect resignation to God, which are the best state of the soul. And therefore the pious soul that eyes only God, that means nothing but being his alone, can have no stop put to its progress; light and darkness equally assist him; in the light he looks up to God; in the darkness he lays hold on God; and so they both do him the same good. This little sketch, Academicus, of the nature and progress of the spirit of prayer, may show you, that a manual is not so great a matter as you imagined. The best instruction that I can give you, as helpful, or preparatory to the spirit of prayer, is already full given, where we have set forth the original perfection, the miserable fall, and the glorious redemption of

man. It is the true knowledge of these great things that can do all for you, which human instruction can do. These things must fill you with a dislike of your present state, drive all earthly desires out of your soul, and create an earnest longing after your first perfection. For prayer cannot be taught you, by giving you a book of prayers, but by awakening in you a true sense and knowledge of what you are, and what you should be; that so you may see, and know, and feel, what things you want, and are to pray for. For a man does not, cannot pray for anything, because a fine petition for it is put into his hands, but because his own condition is a reason and motive for his asking for it. And therefore it is that the spirit of prayer, in the first part, began with a full discovery and proof of these high and important matters, at the sight of which the world, and all that is in it, shrinks into nothing, and everything past, present, and to come, awakens in our hearts a continual prayer, and longing desire, after God, Christ, and eternity.

Acad. I perceive then, Theophilus, that you direct me entirely to my own prayer in my private devotions, and not to the use of any book. But surely you do not take this to be right in general, that the common people, who are unlearned, and mostly of low understandings, should kneel down in private, without any borrowed form of prayer, saying only what comes then into their own heads.

Theoph. It would be very wrong, Academicus, to condemn a manual as such, or to tell any people, learned or unlearned, that they ought not to make any use of it. This would be quite rash and silly: but it cannot be wrong, or hurtful to anybody, to show, that prayer is the natural language of the heart, and, as such, does not want any form, or borrowed words. Now all that has been said of manuals of prayers, only amounts to thus much; that they are not necessary, nor the most natural and excellent way of praying. If they happen to be necessary to any person, or to be his most excellent way, it is because the natural, real prayer of his heart is already engaged, loving, wishing, and longing after, the things of this life; which makes him so insensible of his spiritual wants, so blind and dead as to the things of God, that he cannot pray for them, but so far as the words of other people are put into his mouth. If a man is blind, and knows it not, he may be told to pray for health: so if the soul is in this state, with regard to its spiritual wants, a manual may be of good use to it, not so much by helping it to pray, as by showing it, at what a miserable distance it is from those tempers which belong to prayer. But when a man has had so much benefit from the gospel, as to know his own misery, his want of a redeemer, who he is, and how is he to be found; there everything seems to be done, both to awaken and direct his prayer, and make it a true praying in and by the Spirit. For when the heart really pants and longs after God, its prayer is a praying, as moved and animated by the Spirit of God; it is the breath or inspiration of God, stirring, moving and opening itself in the heart. For though the early nature, our old man, can oblige or accustom himself to take heavenly words at certain times into his mouth, yet this is a certain truth, that nothing ever did, or can have the least desire or tendency to ascend to heaven, but that which came down from heaven; and therefore nothing in the heart can pray, aspire, and long after God, but the Spirit of God moving and stirring in it. Every breath therefore of the true Spirit of prayer, can be nothing else but the breath of the Spirit of God, breathing, inspiring, and moving the heart, in all its variety of motions and affections, towards God. And therefore every time a good desire stirs in the heart, a good prayer goes out of it, that reaches God as being the fruit and work of his Holy Spirit. When any man, feeling his corruption, and the power of sin in his soul, looks up to God, with true earnestness of faith and desire to be delivered from it, whether with words, or without words,

how can he pray better? What need of any change of thoughts, or words, or any variety of expressions, when the one faith and desire of his heart made known to God, and continued in, is not only all, but the most perfect prayer he can make? Again suppose the soul in another state, feeling with joy its offered redeemer, and opening its heart for the full reception of him; if it stands in this state of wishing and longing for the birth of Christ, how can its prayer be in an higher degree of request? Or if it breaks out frequently in these words, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with all thy holy nature, Spirit, and tempers into my soul," is there any occasion to enlarge, or alter these words into another form of expression? Can he do better, or pray more, than by continually standing from time to time in this state of wishing to have Christ formed in him? Nay, is it not more likely, that his heart should be more divided and dissipated by a numerous change of expressions, than by keeping united to one expression that sets forth all that he wants? For it is the reality, the steadiness, and continuity of desire, that is the goodness of prayer, and its qualification to receive all that it wants. Our Lord said to one that came to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He answered, "Lord, that I may receive my sight": and he received it. Another said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.": and he was cleansed. Tell me what learning, or fine parts, are required to make such prayers as these? and yet what wonders of relief are recorded in Scripture, as given to such short prayers as these! Or tell me what blessing of prayer, or faith, or love, may not now be obtained in the same way, and with as few words, as then was done? Every man therefore that has any feeling of the weight of his sin, or any true desire to be delivered from it by Christ, has learning and capacity enough to make his own prayer. For praying is not speaking forth eloquently, but simply, the true desire of the heart; and the heart, simple and plain in good desires, is in the truest state of preparation for all the gifts and graces of God. And this I must tell you, that the most simple souls, that have accustomed themselves to speak their own desires and wants to God, in such short, but true breathings of their hearts to him, will soon know more of prayer, and the mysteries of it, than any persons who have only their knowledge from learning, and learned books.

Acad. You seem to me, Theophilus, to have much truth in what you say, and yet to be in a way by yourself. I cannot take you to be with those who place all in many and long forms; and now I take you to be even more against those, who make much account of what they call a gifted man, and make that to be the one true gift of prayer, when anyone is able to pray extempore, or with his own words, for an hour or two at a time.

Theoph. I have shown you, Academicus, that prayer is purely the desire of the heart; that it has not the nature of praying, but so far as it is the true language of the heart. I have shown you the great benefit that all people must receive from this true prayer of the heart. And to remove all pretense of want of ability in the lowest sort of people to pray from their own hearts, I have shown, that the most simple, short petitions, when truly spoken by the heart, have all the perfection that prayer can have. But mark, sir, why or when I ascribe this perfection to it. It is when the heart stands continually in this state of wishing to have that, which is expressed in so few words. It is then, that I said, there was no occasion to enlarge, or alter the words into another or longer form, because the reality, the steadiness, and the continuity of the desire, is the goodness and perfection of the prayer. Now, sir, let us suppose two men; the one is frequently an hour, or two, or a whole night, on his knees, in silent prayer, in high acts of love, and faith, and resignation to God, not outwardly spoken by his mouth; the other is as long a time pouring forth the devotion of his heart in a variety

of fervent expressions. May not both these men justly appeal to me, not only as not condemning, but as asserting, the goodness of their length and manner of prayer, since I make a short simple petition to be only then a good prayer, when it proceeds from a steady, continued desire of the heart? It is not therefore silence, or a simple petition, or a great variety of outward expressions, that alters the nature of prayer, or makes it to be good, or better, but only and solely the reality, steadiness, and continuity of the desire; and therefore whether a man offers this desire to God in the silent longing of the heart, or in simple short petitions, or in a great variety of words, is of no consequence; but all of them are equally good, when the true and right state of the heart is with them.

Thus you see, Academicus, that I am so far from being, as you said, in a way by myself, that I am with every man in every way, whose heart stands right towards God. But if you would know what I would call a true and great gift of prayer, and what I most of all wish for to myself, it is a good heart, that stands continually inclined towards God.

Acad. I am not sorry, Theophilus, that I have made so unreasonable an observation upon what you said, since it has occasioned you to give so good and just an answer to it. But yet this silent prayer you speak of, is what I never read nor heard anything of before; and it seems to me but like ceasing to pray; and yet you seem to like it in its turn, as well as any other way of praying.

Theoph. All that I have said of prayer, Academicus, has been only to this end, to show you its true and real nature, whence it is to arise, where it is to be found, and how you are to begin, and become a true proficient in it. If, therefore, you were at present to look no further, than how to put yourself in a state of beginning to practice a prayer proceeding from your own heart, and continuing in it, leaving all that you are further to know of prayer, to be known in its own time by experience, which alone can open any true knowledge in you, this would be much better for you, than to be asking beforehand about such things, as are not your immediate concern.

Begin to be a man of prayer, in this easy, simple, and natural manner, that has been set before you; and when you are faithful to this method, you will then need no other instructor in the art of prayer. Your own heart thus turned to God, will want no one to tell it, when it should be simple in its petitions, or various in its expressions, or prostrate itself in silence before God. But his {this?} hastiness of knowing things, before they become our concern, or belong to us, is very common. Thus a man that has but just entered upon the reformation of his life, shall want to read or hear a discourse upon perfection, whether it be absolutely attainable or not; and shall be more eager after what he can hear of this matter, though at such a distance from himself, than of such things as concern the next step that he is to take in his own proper state.

You, my friend, have already rightly taken the first step in the spiritual life; you have devoted yourself absolutely to God, to live wholly to his will, under the light and guidance of his Holy Spirit, intending, seeking nothing in this world, but such a passage through it, as may tend to the glory of God, and the recovery of your own fallen soul. Your next step is this, it is a looking to the continuance of this first resolution, and donation of yourself to God, to see that it be kept alive, that everything you do may be animated and directed by it, and all the occurrences of every day, from morning to night, be received by you, as becomes a spirit that is devoted to God. Now this second step cannot be taken, but purely by prayer; nothing else has the least power here but prayer: I do not mean you must frequently read or say a number of prayers (though this in its turn may be good

and useful to you) but the prayer I mean and which you must practice, if you would take this second step in the spiritual life, is prayer of the heart, or a prayer of your own, proceeding from the state of your heart, and its own tendency to God. Of all things therefore look to this prayer of the heart; consider it as your infallible guide to heaven; turn from everything that is an hindrance of it, that quenches or abates its fervor; love and like nothing but that which is suitable to it; and let every day begin, go on, and end, in the spirit of it. Consider yourself as always wrong, as having gone aside, and lost your right path, when any delight, desire, or trouble, is suffered to live in you, that cannot be made a part of this prayer of the heart to God. For nothing so infallibly shows us the true state of our heart, as that which gives us either delight or trouble; for as our delight and trouble is, so is the state of our heart: if therefore you are carried away with any trouble or delight, that has not an immediate relation to your progress in the divine life, you may be assured your heart is not in its right state of prayer to God. Look at a man who is devoted to some one thing, or has some one great worldly matter at heart, he stands turned from everything that has not some relation to it; he has no joy or trouble but what arises from it; he has no eyes nor ears, but to see or hear something about it. All else is a trifle, but that which some way or other concerns this great matter. You need not tell him of any rules or methods to keep it in his thoughts; it goes with him into all places and companies; it has his first thoughts in the morning; and every day is good or bad, as this great matter seems to succeed or not. This may show you how easily, how naturally, how constantly, our heart will carry on its own state of prayer, as soon as God is its great object, or it is wholly given up to him, as its one great good. This may also show you, that the heart cannot enter into a state of the spirit of prayer to God, till that which I call the first step in the spiritual life is taken, which is the taking God for its all, or the giving itself up wholly to God. But when this foundation is laid, the seed of prayer is sown, and the heart is in a continual state of tendency to God; having no other delight or trouble in things of any kind, but as they help or hinder its union with God. Therefore, Academicus, the way to be a man of prayer, and be governed by its spirit, is not to get a book full of prayers; but the best help you can have from a book, is to read one full of such truths, instructions, and awakening informations, as force you to see and know who, and what, and where, you are; that God is your all; and that all is misery, but a heart and life devoted to him. This is the best outward prayer book you can have, as it will turn you to an inward book, and spirit of prayer in your heart, which is a continual longing desire of the heart after God, his divine life, and Holy Spirit. When, for the sake of this inward prayer, you retire at any time of the day, never begin till you know and feel, why and wherefore you are going to pray; and let this why and wherefore, form and direct everything that comes from you, whether it be in thought or in word. As you cannot but know your own state, so it must be the easiest thing in the world to look up to God, with such desires as suit the state you are in; and praying in this manner, whether it be in one, or more, or no words, your prayer will always be sincere, and good, and highly beneficial to you. Thus praying, you can never pray in vain; but one month in the practice of it, will do you more good, make a greater change in your soul, than twenty years of prayer only by books, and forms of other people's making. No vice can harbor in you, no infirmity take any root, no good desire can languish, when once your heart is in this method of prayer; never beginning to pray, till you first see how matters stand with you; asking your heart what it wants, and having nothing in your prayers, but what the known state of your heart puts you upon demanding, saying, or offering, unto God. A quarter of an hour of this prayer, brings you out of your closet a new man; your heart feels the good of it; and every return of such a prayer, gives new life and growth to all your virtues, with

more certainty, than the dew refreshes the herbs of the field: whereas, overlooking this true prayer of your own heart, and only at certain times taking a prayer that you find in a book, you have nothing to wonder at, if you are every day praying, and yet every day sinking further and further under all your infirmities. For your heart is your life, and your life can only be altered by that which is the real working of your heart. And if your prayer is only a form of words, made by the skill of other people, such a prayer can no more change you into a good man, than an actor upon the stage, who speaks kingly language, is thereby made to be a king: whereas one thought, or word, or look, towards God, proceeding from your own heart, can never be without its proper fruit, or fail of doing a real good to your soul. Again, another great and infallible benefit of this kind of prayer is this; it is the only way to be delivered from the deceitfulness of your own hearts. Our hearts deceive us, because we leave them to themselves, are absent from them, taken up in outward rules and forms of living and praying. But this kind of praying, which takes all its thoughts and words only from the state of our hearts, makes it impossible for us to be strangers to ourselves. The strength of every sin, the power of every evil temper, the most secret workings of our hearts, the weakness of any or all our virtues, is with a noonday clearness forced to be seen, as soon as the heart is made our prayer book, and we pray nothing, but according to what we read, and find there.

Acad. O Theophilus, you have shown me, that it is almost as easy and natural a thing to pray, as to breathe; and that the best prayer in the world, is that which the heart can thus easily send forth from itself, untaught by anything, but its own sense of God and itself. And yet I am almost afraid of loving this kind of prayer too much. I am not free from suspicions about it: I apprehend it to be that very praying by the Spirit, or as moved by the Spirit, or from a Light within, which is condemned as Quakerism.

Theoph. There is but one good prayer that you can possibly make, and that is a prayer in and from the Spirit, or as the Spirit of God moves you in it, or to it. This, this alone, is a divine prayer; no other prayer has, or can possibly have any communion with God. Take the matter thus: man is a threefold being; he has three natures; he partakes of the divine, the elementary, and the diabolical nature. Had he not these three natures in a certain degree in him, he could have no communion with God, he could not enjoy the elements, nor could the evil spirits have the least power of access to him.

Now the astral, elementary nature of man, in this world, cannot have a longing after the pure Deity; it cannot hunger, and thirst after the divine image, nor desire to be perfect as God is perfect; this is as impossible, as for the beasts of the field to long to be angels. Therefore flesh and blood in us, can no more make a divine prayer, than in any other animal of this world. The diabolical nature which is in us, can do nothing but that which the devils do: it can only rise up in its own pride, envy, and self-exaltation, and only hate all the goodness that is either in heaven, or on earth. And therefore it is a truth of the greatest certainty, that no man ever did, or can send up a divine and heavenly prayer to God, or such a prayer as can reach God, but in and by the Spirit of God in him. Our astral, elementary man, and our proud, subtle, serpentine nature, can read, or say a prayer full of good words and wishes, as easily as Satan could use Scripture-language in the temptation of Christ; but nothing can wish to be like God, or to unite with his goodness and holiness, but that spirit in us, which partakes of his divine nature. Therefore to ridicule praying by the Spirit, or as moved by the Spirit, is ridiculing the one only prayer that is divine, or can do us any divine good;

and to reject and oppose it, as a vain conceit, is to quench, and suppress all that is holy, heavenly, and divine, within us. For if this Holy Spirit does not live, and move in us, and bring forth all the praying affections of our souls, we may as well think of reaching heaven with our hands, as with our prayers.

Acad. I know not, Theophilus, how to deny anything that you have here said: yet this account seems to make no distinction between our own good spirit, and the Holy Spirit of God, I took the inspirations, and graces of the Holy Spirit to be something, that came into us from without, and to be as distinct from our own good spirit, as God is distinct from the creature.

Theoph. The Holy Spirit of God is as necessary to our divine life, or the life of grace, as the air of this world is necessary to our animal life; and is as distinct from us, and as much without us, as the air of this world is distinct from, and without, the creatures that live in it. And yet our own good spirit is the very Spirit of God, moving and stirring in us. No animal can unite with, or breathe the air of this world, till it has first the air of this world brought forth, as the true birth of its own life in itself; this is its only capacity to live in the spirit of this world; and the breath or spirit that thus arises in its own life, is the very same breath, that is in outward nature, in which it lives. It is strictly thus, with the Spirit of God in our souls; it must first have a birth within us, arising from the life of our souls, and as such, is our only capacity to have life, and live in the Spirit of God himself, and is the very breath of the Spirit of God, who is yet as distinct from us, as the breath of our animal life, that arises from our own fire, is distinct from the air of the world in which it lives. And thus, Academicus, our own good spirit is the very Spirit of the Deity, and yet not God, but the Spirit of God, breathed or kindled into a creaturely form; and this good spirit, divine in its origin, and divine in its nature, is that alone in us, that can reach God, unite with him, cooperate with him, be moved, and blessed by him, as our earthly spirit is, by the outward spirit of this elementary world.

Acad. Indeed, Theophilus, you have, in few words, so gone to the bottom of this matter, that nothing is left either for any further doubt, or inquiry about it. My own good spirit is the Breath of God in me, and so related to God, as the breath of my animal life is related to the air, or spirit of this outward world. It is from God, has the nature, the eternity, the Spirituality of God, as the breath of my flesh and blood, has the grossness, the earthly, transitory nature of the spirit of this world. And as all my communication with this world arises from the breath of this world, kindled in my own life, so all my possibility of communication with God, arises solely from the Breath of his Holy Spirit brought forth in the life of my soul; and I can only live in God, by his Spirit having a birth in me, as I can only live in this world, by having its spirit born in me. This plain truth sets all the Scripture-doctrine, concerning the necessity, power, and operation of the Holy Spirit, in the greatest and most edifying degree of clearness. Thus, what can be a more plain, sober, and palpable truth, than when the apostle says, "They only are the sons of God, who are led by the Spirit of God"? It is only like saying, that those creatures only belong to this world, who live in, and by its spirit. I shall here, sir, only add, that my gospel-faith stands now upon a most solid, and comfortable foundation; my heart is all delight, and devotion to God, when I consider, first, that Christ my redeemer is the first seed of the woman, or power of salvation preserved in fallen Adam; the immanuel; the God within every man; "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Secondly, that the Holy Spirit of God, the breath of eternity, has also its seed of life in my soul; for where the Word, or Son of God is, there is the Spirit of God in the same state; if one is only a seed of life, a spark of heaven, the other is so also; and these two, thus considered, are the

glorious pearl of eternity, hidden in every man's soul, and so often spoken of before. And thus we understand, how the whole of our redemption (according to the plain language of Scripture) is inwardly and outwardly solely the work of the Light and Spirit of God, a kingdom of God within and without us, and to which we do not, cannot live, but so far as we are inspired, moved, and led, by the Spirit of God. Earnestly, therefore, to pray, humbly to hope, and faithfully to expect, to be continually inspired, and animated by the Holy Spirit of God has no more of vanity, fanaticism, or enthusiastic wildness in it, than to hope and pray, to act in everything from and by a good spirit. For as sure as the lip of truth hath told us, that there is but one that is good, so sure is it, that not a spark of goodness, nor a breath of piety, can be in any creature, either in heaven, or on earth, but by that divine Spirit, which is the Breath of God, breathed from himself into the creature. The matter is not about appearances of goodness, forms of virtue, rules of religion, or a prudential piety, suited to time, and place, and character; all these are degrees of goodness, that our old man can as easily trade in, as in any other matters of this world. But so much as we have of an heavenly and divine goodness, or of a goodness that belongs to heaven, and has the nature of heaven in it, so much we must have of a divine inspiration in us. For as nothing can fall to the earth, but because it has the nature of earth in it; so it is a truth of the utmost certainty, that nothing can ascend towards heaven, or have the least power to unite with it, but that very Spirit which came down from heaven, and has the nature of heaven in it. This truth, therefore, that the kingdom of God is within us, that its light is solely the Lamb of God, its spirit solely the Spirit of God, stands upon a rock, against which all attempts are in vain. All that I now further desire to know, is only this; how I may keep free from all delusions in this matter, and not take my own natural abilities, tempers, and passions, or the suggestions of evil spirits, to be the working of the Spirit of God in me. Pray, sir, tell me how I shall safely know when, and how far, I am led and governed by the Spirit of God?

Theoph. You may know this, Academicus, just as you know, when you are governed by the spirit of wrath, envy, guile, craft, or covetousness. Every man knows this of himself, as easily, and as certainly as he knows when he is hungry, pleased, or displeased. Now it is the same thing with regard to the Spirit of God; the knowledge of it is as perceptible in yourself, and liable to no more delusion. For the Spirit of God is more distinguishable from all other spirits and tempers, than any of your natural affections or tempers are, from one another; as I will here plainly show you.

"God is unwearied patience, a meekness that cannot be provoked; he is an ever-enduring mercifulness; he is unmixed goodness, impartial, universal love; his delight is in the communication of himself, his own happiness, to everything, according to its capacity he does everything that is good, righteous and lovely, for its own sake, because it is good, righteous, and lovely. He is the good from which nothing but good comes, and resisteth all evil, only with goodness." This, sir, is the nature and Spirit of God, and here you have your infallible proof, whether you are moved, and led by the Spirit of God. Here is a proof that never can fail you; is always at hand; and is liable to no mistake or delusion. If it be the earnest desire, and longing of your heart, to be merciful as he is merciful; to be full of his unwearied patience, to dwell in his unalterable meekness; if you long to be like him in universal, impartial love; if you desire to communicate every good, to every creature that you are able; if you love and practice everything that is good, righteous, and lovely, for its own sake, because it is good, righteous, and lovely; and resist no evil, but with goodness; then you have the utmost certainty, that the Spirit of God lives,

dwells, and governs in you. Now all these tempers are as capable of being known to every man, as his own love and hatred; and therefore no man can be deceived as to the possession of them, but he that chooses to deceive himself. Now if you want any of these tempers, if the whole bent of your heart and mind is not set upon them, all pretenses to an immediate inspiration, and continual operation of the Spirit of God in your soul, are vain and groundless. For the Spirit of God is that which I have here described; and where his Spirit dwells and governs, there all these tempers are brought forth, or springing up, as the certain fruits of it. What room therefore, Academicus, for so much uncertainty, or fear of delusion, in this matter? Keep but within the bounds here set you; call nothing a proof of the Spirit or work of God in your soul, but these tempers, and the works which they produce; and then, but not till then, you may safely and infallibly say, with St. John, "Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us."

Acad. Indeed, Theophilus, you have given me a short, but very full and satisfactory answer to my question. I now perceive, that, as a spiritual man, or one devoted to the Spirit of God, I am not to look after any extraordinaries, any new openings, illuminations, visions, or voices, inward or outward, from God, as proofs of the Spirit of God dwelling and working in me; but that all my proof and security of being governed by the Spirit of God, is to be grounded on other matters: that the boundless humility and resignation of the holy Jesus; the unwearied patience, the unalterable meekness, the impartial, universal love of God, manifested in my soul; are its only proofs, that God is in me of a truth. Thus far all is right and good. But yet, sir, surely it must be said with truth, that the Spirit of God often discovers itself, and operates in good souls in very extraordinary ways, in uncommon illuminations, and openings of divine light and knowledge, in the revelation of mysteries, in strong impulses and sallies of a wonderful zeal, full of highest gifts and graces of God: and that these have frequently been God's gracious methods of awakening a sinful world.

Theoph. What you say, Academicus, is very true; and almost every age of the church is a sufficient proof of it. By the goodness of God, the church has always had its extraordinary persons, highly gifted from above, made burning, and shining lights, and carried into as uncommon ways of life, by the same Spirit, and for the same ends, as John the Baptist was; and as different from common Christians, as he was from the common Jews. But, my friend, these extraordinary operations of God's Holy Spirit, and the wonders of his gifts and graces showing themselves at certain times, and upon certain persons, through all the ages of the church, are not matters of common instruction; they belong not to our subject; it would be ignorance and vanity in me, to pretend to let you into the secret of them; it would be the same thing in you, to think yourself ready for it. Would you know the sublime, the exalted, the angelic, in the Christian life, see what the Son of God saith: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself. On these two," saith he, "hang all the Law and the prophets." And without these two things, no good light ever can arise, or enter into your soul. Take all the sciences, shine in all the accomplishments of the lettered world, they will only lead you from one vain passion to another; everything you send out from within you is selfish, vain, and bad; everything you see or perceive from without, will be received with a bad spirit; till these two heavenly tempers have overcome the natural perverseness of fallen nature. Till then, nothing pure can proceed from within, nor anything be received in purity from without.

Think yourself therefore unfit, incapable of judging rightly, or acting virtuously, till these two tempers have the government of your heart. Then every truth will meet you; no hurtful error can

get entrance into your heart; you will neither deceive, nor be deceived; but will have a better knowledge of all divine matters, than all the human learning in the world can help you to. Would you know what it is to love God with all your heart and soul, &c., you need only look back to that, which has been said of the nature and Spirit of God. For when with all your heart and soul you love, and long to have, that nature and Spirit, to be wholly united to it, possessed and governed by it, then you love God with all your heart and soul, &c. And then you are first capable of loving yourself and your neighbor rightly. For so much as you have of the divine nature and Spirit in you, just so much power have you of loving equally, that in yourself and your neighbor, which the Deity only and equally loves, both in you, and him. But it is time to part, when we have only told our silent friend, Humanus, that if we live to meet again, we shall, with all our hearts, receive him as a speaker among us. And so, gentlemen, once more, adieu.

FINIS

10.00 Way to Divine knowledge

The Way to Divine Knowledge being several Dialogues between Humanus, Academicus, Rusticus, and Theophilus As preparatory to a new edition of the works of Jacob Behmen; and the right use of them Table of Contents The Way to Divine Knowledge

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10.01 First Dialogue

First Dialogue

Humanus. Oh! Theophilus, I must yield, and it is with great pleasure that I now enter into conversation with you. You have taken from me all power of cavilling and disputing. I have no opinions that I choose to maintain, but have the utmost desire of entering further into this field of light, which you have so clearly opened to my view. I shall not trouble you with the relation of what has passed in my soul, nor what struggles I have had, with that variety of heathenish notions which have had their turn in my mind. It is better to tell you, that they are dead and buried, or rather consumed to nothing by that new light, which you have opened in so many great points, that I was quite a stranger to before. To reject all that you have said concerning the fall of angels, the original of this world, the creation and fall of man, and the necessity of a redemption, as great as that of the gospel, is impossible; nothing can do it, or stand out against it, but the most willful and blind obstinacy. But these great points cannot be received in any true degree, without seeing the vain contention of all those, who either defend or oppose the gospel without any true and real knowledge of them. The one contend for, and the other oppose, not the gospel, but a system of empty words, and historical facts, branched into forms and modes of dividing one church from another; whereas the gospel is no history of any absent, distant, or foreign thing, but is a manifestation of an essential, inherent, real life and death in every son of Adam; grounded on the certainty of his first angelical nature, on the certainty of his real fall from that into an animal earthly life of impure, bestial flesh and blood, and on the certainty of an inward redemption from it, by the divine nature given again into him. These three great points, with all the doctrines, duties, and consequences, that are essentially contained in, or flow from them, are the gospel of Jesus Christ, to which, by your means, I am become a convert. I am now, dear Theophilus, strongly drawn two different ways. First, I am all hunger and thirst after this new light, a glimpse of which has already raised me, as it were, from the dead; and I am in the utmost impatience to hear more and more of this divine philosophy, which, I so plainly see, opens all the mysteries both of nature and grace from the beginning to the end of time. What I have heard from you, when I was obliged to be silent, and what I have since found and felt by much reading the Appeal, and that Dialogue, obliges me to speak in this ardent manner. They have awakened something in me which I never felt before, something much deeper than my reason, and over which I have no power; it glows in my soul, like a fire, or hunger, which nothing can satisfy, but a further view of those great truths, which I this day expect from your opening to us the mysteries of heaven revealed to that wonderful man, Jacob Behmen. On the other hand, I find in myself a vehement impulse to turn preacher amongst my former infidel brethren; which impulse I know not how to resist: For being just converted myself, I seem to know, and feel the true place, from whence conversion is to arise in others; and by the reluctance which I have felt in my passage from one side to the other, I seem also to know the true ground on which infidelity supports itself. And he only is able to declare with spirit and power any truths, or bear a faithful testimony of the reality of them, who preaches nothing but what he has first seen, and felt, and found to be true, by a living sensibility and true experience of their reality

and power in his own soul. All other preaching, whether from art, hearsay, books, or education, is, at best, but playing with words, and mere trifling with sacred things. Being thus divided in myself, I hope to have your direction.

Theophilus. Dear Humanus, my heart embraces you with great joy, and I am much pleased with what you say of yourself. This hunger of your soul is all that I wish for; it is the fire of God, the opening of eternity, the beginning of your redemption, the awakener of the angelic life, the root of an omnipotent faith, and the true seeker of all that is lost. For all these things, and much more, are the blessed powers which will soon break forth, and show themselves to be the true workings of this celestial fire, that has begun to glow within you. Your business is now to give way to this heavenly working of the Spirit of God in your soul, and turn from everything either within you, or without you, that may hinder the farther awakening of all that is holy and heavenly within you. For within you is that heavenly angel that died in paradise, and died no other death, than that of being hid a while from your sight and sensibility. For be assured of this, as a certain truth, that corrupt, fallen, and earthly as human nature is, there is nevertheless in the soul of every man, the fire, and light, and love of God, though lodged in a state of hiddenness, inactivity, and death, till something or other, human or divine, Moses and the prophets, Christ or his apostles, discover its life within us. For the soul of every man is the breath and life of the triune God, and as such a partaker of the divine nature; but all this divinity is unfelt, because overpowered by the workings of flesh and blood, till such time as distress, or grace, or both, give flesh and blood a shock, open the long shut-up eyes, and force a man to find something in himself, that sense and reason, whilst at quiet were not aware of. Wonder not therefore at this conflict in your soul, that you are eager after more light, and impatient to communicate that which you have. For you must be thus driven; and both these desires are only two witnesses to this truth, that a heaven-born spirit is come to life in you.

Only remember this; look well to the ground on which you stand, keep a watchful eye upon every working of nature, and take care that nothing human, earthly, private, or selfish, mix with this heavenly fire: that is, see that your mind be free, universal, impartial, without regard to here or there, this or that, but loving all goodness, practicing every virtue, for itself, on its own account, because it is so much of God; neither coveting light, nor longing to communicate it to others, but merely and solely for this reason, that the will of God may be done, and the goodness of God brought to life both in you and them. For there is no goodness but God's; and his goodness is not alive, or fruitful in you, but so far, and in such degree, as the good that you mean, and do, is done in and by that Spirit, by which God himself is good. For as there is but one that is good, so there is, and can be but one goodness. And therefore it is, that we are called not to an human, worldly, prudential, partial goodness, suitable to our selfish reason, and natural tempers, but to be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. And the full reason is expressed in the words; for if our Father is in heaven, we must be there too in spirit and life, or we are not his children; if heaven is that for which we are made, and that which we have lost, it is not any human goodness, but a heavenly birth and Spirit of God's own goodness, working in us, as it does in God, that can make us the heavenly children of our Father in heaven. You must love the light of God, as God loves it; you must desire that others may enjoy it, as God desires it. Now God is a free, universal, impartial love, loving and doing every kind of good, for its own sake, because that is the highest and most perfect working of life; and because everything else but goodness, for its own sake, is imperfect, and a degree of evil, misery, and death. And no creature can come out of its imperfection, misery,

and death, but by the pure, free, unmixed goodness of God, being born in it. Though you had outwardly all virtues, and seemed doing all that the saints of God have done, yet unless the same Spirit, by which God himself is good, brought forth your goodness, all would be only an earthly labor, that could have no communication with heaven.

Therefore, my friend, set out right, and be assured of this truth, that nature, and self, and every particular view, must be totally renounced; or else, be your zeal what it will, ever so pleasing to yourself, or astonishing to the world, you are not working with God.

Here now you have the test of truth, by which you may always know, whether it be the Spirit of God, and the love of God, that drives you. If your zeal is after this pure, free, universal goodness of God, then of a truth the Spirit of God breatheth in you; but if you feel not the love of this pure, free, universal goodness, and yet think that you love God, you deceive yourself; for there is no other true love of God, but the loving that, which God is. But if you please, Humanus, pray tell me, in what manner you would attempt to make converts to Christianity.

Humanus. I would not take the method generally practiced by the modern defenders of Christianity. I would not attempt to show from reason and antiquity, the necessity and reasonableness of a divine revelation in general, or of the Mosaic and Christian in particular. Nor enlarge upon the arguments for the credibility of the gospel- history, the reasonableness of its creeds, institutions, and usages; or the duty of man to receive things above, but not contrary to, his reason. I would avoid all this, because it is wandering from the true point in question, and only helping the Deist to oppose the gospel with a show of argument, which he must necessarily want, was the gospel left to stand upon its own bottom.

And, on the other hand, should the Deist yield up such a cause as this, and change sides, he could only be said to have changed his opinion about facts, without any more altering or bettering his state in God, than if he had only altered his opinion about things in dispute amongst the ancient philosophers. For since the fall of man, implying a real change from his first state, or a total death to his first created life, since the necessity of a new birth of that lost life, by the life of God again restored to, or born in the soul, are two points, quite overlooked by those who defend the truth and reasonableness of the Christian scheme, it may be truly said, that the only ground, and the whole nature of the gospel is quite dropped and given up by those who thus defend it. For the gospel has but one ground, or reason, and that is the fall of man, it has but one nature, and that is to help man again to all that he had lost.

How unreasonable would it be, to offer the Christian redemption to glorious angels in heaven? Could anything be more inconsistent with their heavenly, unfallen state? Yet just so unreasonable would it be to offer it to man unfallen from his first created state--for man standing in that first perfection of life, which God breathed into him, and in that very outward state, or world, into which God himself brought him, wants no more redemption, than the most glorious angels do; and to preach to such a man, in order to be reconciled to God, the necessity of dying to himself, and the world he is in, would be as contrary to all sense and reason, as to preach to angels the necessity of dying to themselves, their divine life and the kingdom of heaven, for which God had created them.

Thus does it appear, that the fall of man, into the life of this earthly world, is the sole ground of his wanting the redemption, which the gospel offers.

Hence it is that the gospel has only one simple proposal of certain life, or certain death to man; of life, if he will take the means of entering into the kingdom of God, of death if he chooses to take up his rest in the kingdom of this world. This is the simple nature, and sole drift of the gospel; it means no more, than making known to man, that this world, and the life of it, is his fall, and separation from God, and happiness, both here and hereafter: and that to be saved or restored to God and happiness, can only be obtained, by renouncing all love, and adherence to the things of this world. Look at all the precepts, threatenings and doctrines of the gospel, they mean nothing, but to drive all earthly-mindedness and carnal affections out of the soul, to call man from the life, spirit and goods of this world, to a life of hope, and faith, and trust, and love and desire of a new birth from heaven. To embrace the gospel is to enter with all our hearts into its terms of dying to all that is earthly both within us, and without us; and on the other hand to place our faith, and hope, and trust, and satisfaction in the things of this world, is to reject the gospel with our whole heart, spirit and strength, as much as any infidel can do, notwithstanding we made ever so many verbal assents and consents to everything that is recorded in the New Testament. This therefore is the one true essential distinction between the Christian and the infidel. The infidel is a man of this world, wholly devoted to it, his hope and faith are set upon it; for where our heart is, there, and only there is our hope and faith. He has only such virtues, such goodness, and such a religion, as entirely suits with the interest of flesh and blood, and keeps the soul happy in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life: this, and this alone, is infidelity, a total separation from God, and a removal of all faith, and hope from him, into the life of this world. It matters not, whether this infidel be a professor of the gospel, a disciple of Zoroaster, a follower of Plato, a Jew, a Turk, or an opposer of the gospel-history: this difference of opinions or professions alters not the matter, it is the love of the world instead of God, that constitutes the whole nature of the infidel. On the other hand, the Christian renounces the world, as his horrid prison; he dies to the will of flesh and blood, because it is darkness, corruption, and separation from God; he turns from all that is earthly, animal, and temporal, and stands in a continual tendency of faith, and hope, and prayer to God, to have a better nature, a better life and spirit born again into him from above. Where this faith is, there is the Christian, the new creature in Christ, born of the Word and Spirit of God; neither time nor place, nor any outward condition of birth, and life, can hinder his entrance into the kingdom of God. But where this faith is not, there is the true, complete infidel, the man of the earth, the unredeemed, the rejector of the gospel, the son of perdition, that is dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

Here therefore I fix my true ground of converting men to Christianity; and how miserably, may I say, do they err, who place Christianity and infidelity in anything else, but in the heart either devoted to this world, or devoted to God!

He therefore that opens a field of controversy to the Deist, about revelation in general, of the history of facts, creeds, and doctrines of churches, not only leads him from the merits of the gospel, but brings him into a field of battle, where he may stand his ground as long as he pleases. This I can truly say from my own experience, who have been 20 years in this dust of debate; and have always found that the more books there were written in this way of defending the gospel, the

more I was furnished with new objections to it, and the less apprehensive of any danger from my not receiving it. For I had frequently a consciousness rising up within me, that the debate was equally vain on both sides, doing no more real good to the one than to the other, not being able to imagine, that a set of scholastic, logical opinions about history, facts, doctrines, and institutions of the church, or a set of logical objections against them, were of any significancy toward making the soul of man either an eternal angel of heaven, or an eternal devil of hell. And therefore it was, that I was often tempted rather to think, there was neither heaven, nor hell, than to believe that such a variety of churches, and systems of opinion, all condemning, and all condemned by one another, were to find the heaven of God opened to receive them, but he who was equally led by opinion to reject them all, was doomed to hell. But you, sir (and how can I thank you for it?) have put a full end to all this vain strife of opinions floating in the brain; you have dispersed the clouds that surrounded my bewildered mind; you have brought me home to myself, where I find heaven and hell, life and death, salvation and damnation at strife within me; you have shown me the infinite worth of Christianity, and the dreadful nature of infidelity, not by helping me to a new opinion, for my reason to maintain, but by proving to me this great and decisive truth, that Christianity is neither more nor less, than the goodness of the divine life, light and love, living and working in my soul; and that infidelity in its whole nature, is purely and solely the heart of man living in, governed by, and contented with the evil workings of the earthly life, spirit and nature. This is the infidelity that you have forced me to fly from, and renounce, and that is the Christianity, to which I am converted with all the strength of my heart and spirit. Away then with all the fictions and workings of reason, either for, or against Christianity! They are only the wanton sport of the mind, whilst ignorant of God, and insensible of its own nature and condition. Death and life are the only things in question; life is God, living and working in the soul; death is the soul living and working according to the sense and reason of bestial flesh and blood. Both this life, and this death are of their own growth, growing from their own seed within us, not as busy reason talks or directs, but as our heart turns either to the one or the other.

But, dear Theophilus, I must now tell you that I want to make haste in this new road you have put me in. Time is short, I am afraid of leaving the world, before I have left all worldly tempers, and before the first holy and heavenly birth be quickened, and brought to life in me. An angel my first father was created, and therefore nothing but the angel belongs to man, and nothing but the angel can enter into heaven. Angelic goodness, therefore, is the one thing that man must look up into God for, because it is the one goodness that he has lost. Everything else, flesh and blood, earth and all earthly tempers, everything that had its rise from the fall of Adam, must be renounced, and given up to death, that the first angelic glory of the life of God in man may be again found in him.

Theophilus. Indeed, Humanus, you have made great haste already; for all the haste that we can make, consists in a total dying to all the tempers and passions which we have received from the spirit of this world, by our fall into it. And the more watchfully, earnestly, and constantly, we do this, the more haste we make to our lost country, and heavenly glory.

It is no extravagance, or overstraining the matter, when we say, that our goodness must be angelic; for no goodness less than that, can be divine and heavenly, or help us to a life in heaven. It is often said, that we are poor, infirm men, and not angels; and therefore must be content with the poverty and infirmity of human virtues. That we are poor, infirm men, is undeniable; but this is the one infallible reason, why a virtue that is according to our nature, or of its own growth, can do

us no good. We were not created poor and infirm men by God, but have lost him, are separated from him; full of misery, because we have changed our first state, and brought all this poverty, corruption, and infirmity, upon ourselves. And therefore, as this infirmity is from ourselves, so we must intend nothing less, or short of the total removal of it, nor think that we have our proper goodness, till we stand in that degree of it, in which God created us. For, be assured of this great truth, that nothing in us can be the delight of God, but that very creature, which he created. All therefore must be parted with, that God hath not created and brought to life in us. And no goodness but that of an angel, can overcome the evil that is in us, or do the will of God on earth, as it is done in heaven, which is the only goodness in and for which God created us.

Academicus. Pray, Theophilus, give me leave to say, that I should think it better, not to insist so much upon the word "angelic," when you speak of the goodness, that ought to be ours. For it seems to me too liable to objection. We have not the high faculties, and exalted powers, of angels; and therefore our goodness cannot rise up to an equality with theirs.

Rusticus. Pray, Academicus, give me leave also to say, that if your learning did not lead you to mind words, more than things, you could not have fallen into this critical scruple. For our call to angelic goodness does not suppose or require any high stretch, or refined elevation, of our intellectual faculties and powers. A shepherd watching over his flock, a poor slave digging in the mines, may each of them, though so employed to the end of their lives, stand before God in a degree of goodness truly angelic. On the other hand, you may spend all your time in high speculations, writing and preaching upon Christian perfection, composing seraphic hymns of heavenly matters, with a strength of thought and genius that delights both yourself and others, and yet, so doing to the day of your death, have only a goodness like that of eating and drinking that which most pleases your palate. Would you know the true nature of angelic goodness, see how the Spirit of Christ speaks, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, soul, and strength, and thy neighbor as thyself. I came into the world not to do my own will, not to seek my own glory or honor, not to have a kingdom in this world, but to promote the kingdom of God, and do the will of my Father in heaven. My meat and drink is to do the will of him that sent me. When thou makest a feast, call not thy rich friends and acquaintance, but the poor, the lame, and blind. Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory and praise of God. Thus speaks the Spirit of Christ; and he that in this Spirit thus lives, is an angel, whether he be in heaven, or enclosed in flesh and blood. And all of us are in the way of attaining to this angelic goodness, as soon as we hate the selfish tempers of our own earthly life, and earnestly long, in the spirit of prayer, to have the life of God brought forth in us. Now this goodness we must have, or we have none at all; for there is but one God, one good, and one goodness; and it is rightly called angelic, because nothing is capable of it, but the heavenly angelic nature; nor can it have any existence in man, till the workings of our earthly nature are overcome, and brought into subjection to that Spirit, which is not of man, but from heaven. For flesh and blood in all its workings can work only for itself; darkness can only be dark, it has no other nature; coldness can only be cold; earth can only be earthly; and the works of light can only proceed from light. Flesh and blood, or that life which is only from the stars and elements of this world, can only work as the stars and elements work, only for time, and a corruptible life; it can only be bestial, and serve the end of a bestial life; it is insensible and incapable of divine virtue, and is, and can be of no higher a nature in a man, than in a beast, and must have the same end in both. It is quite incapable of entering into the kingdom of

God; and only for this reason, because it is absolutely incapable of having any true and heavenly goodness. It has then only its proper goodness, when it has lost its power of acting, and is governed by a spirit superior to it; whilst it lives and rules, it can only live to itself; is nothing but an earthly own will, own love, own honor, own interest, never rising higher, doing better, or coming any nearer to goodness, than its own pride or covetousness, envy or wrath, can carry it. For these tempers, with all their lesser subdivisions, are the atmosphere that sets bounds to the breath of the earthly life; they are essential to it, and as inseparable from it, as hardness and darkness are inseparable from a rock of stone. So long as the stony rock lasts, so long is it hard and dark. And so long as earthly flesh and blood lives and acts, it can only live and act for itself; it can seek, love, like, or do no manner of thing, but as its own will, own love, own interest, is some way or other felt, and found in it. Would you know the true ground and reason of this? It is because no life can go out of, or farther than itself; nor can it will anything, but what its own life is. This is absolutely true of every life, whether it be divine, earthly, or hellish; it can seek, love, and delight in nothing, but that which is according to its own life.

See here, Academicus, the folly of your quarrelling with the word "angelic," since the thing itself, angelic goodness, is absolutely necessary; it is the goodness of our first creation, and must be the goodness of our redemption. The falling from it has brought forth all the evils that we are surrounded with, and nothing can deliver us from the death of our fallen state, but a true and full resurrection of all that purity and goodness, which was living in the first creation of man. To be content with our infirmities, is to be content with our separation from God; and not to aspire after the one angelic goodness, is to be carnally-minded, which we are told is death, that is, death to the one divine life. A virtue that is only according to the state of this earthly life, is a virtue of art, and human contrivance, a fiction of behavior, modelled according to rule and custom, or education, that can go no deeper, nor rise higher, nor reach farther, than the sense and reason, and interests of flesh and blood, can carry it. But this can have no communication with God and heaven, because it is not born of them, but is a lower, separate state of life, that at best can only bring forth a civility of outward manners, little better than such a new birth as may be had from a dancing-master. But the goodness which we want, and which we were created to have, is the one holy blessed life of God, and Christ, and heaven, living in the soul. For from eternity to eternity, there never was, or ever can be, any other heavenly goodness in any creature, but the life, and Spirit, and Word of God, speaking, living, and breathing in it.

Bid the anatomist, that can skillfully dissect an human body, that can tell you the names, nature, and offices of most of its parts, that can show you how they all conspire to give life, strength, and motion, to the living machine: bid him, I say, put life into the dead carcass.

Now learned reason, when pretending to be a master of morality, is just as powerful as this very anatomist. It can skillfully dissect a dead system of morality, can separate all its parts, tell you the names, nature, distinctions, and connections, of most kinds of good and evil. But when this is done, learned reason, with all its dictates, distinctions, and definitions, can do just as much good to the soul, that has lost its goodness, as the anatomist can do to the carcass, that has lost its life.

It is wonderfully astonishing, that you men of learning seldom come thus far, as to see, and feel this glaring truth, that goodness must be a living thing; but, blinded with the empty sounds of words in variety of languages, are as content and happy with a religion of nature delineated, or book of

axioms, maxims, and deductions, mathematically placed one after another, as if you had really found the tree of life. Whereas, in truth, all this is no better than the reading a lecture upon the use of the heart, liver, and lungs, to a dead carcass: for the life of goodness can no more be raised, or brought into the soul, by this art of reasoning, than life can be brought into the carcass, by a discourse upon the heart, liver, and lungs, made over it.

Oh! Academicus, forget your scholarship, give up your art and criticism, be a plain man, and then the first rudiments of sense may teach you, that there, and there only, can goodness be, where it comes forth as a birth of life, and is the free natural work and fruit of that which lives within us. For till goodness thus comes from a life within us, we have in truth none at all. For reason, with all its doctrine, discipline, and rules, can only help us to be so good, so changed, and amended, as a wild beast may be, that by restraints and methods is taught to put on a sort of tameness, though its wild nature is all the time only restrained, and in a readiness to break forth again as occasion shall offer.

Thus far the masters of morality and human discipline may go; they may tame and reform the outward man, clothe him with the appearance of many images of virtue, which will, some or all of them, be put off, just as time, occasion, and flesh and blood, require it. For the goodness of a living creature must be its own life; it must arise up in it as its own love, or any passion doth; just as the fierceness of the tiger, and the meekness of the lamb, are the birth of their own life. And if goodness is not our natural birth from our natural parents, we must of all necessity be born again from a principle above nature, or no goodness can be living in us. Now since goodness is a life, we have a twofold proof, that no goodness can be living in us, till we are born again of the Word and Spirit of God: for nature, as well as scripture, assures us, that God is originally the one good, and the one life; and therefore no good life can possibly be in us, but by the Word, life, and Spirit, of God having a birth in us. And from this birth alone it is, that the free, genuine works of goodness flow forth with the freedom of the divine life, wherewith the Spirit of God has made us free; loving and doing all manner of good, merely for goodness-sake; virtuous in all kind of virtue, purely for virtue-sake: then we are the natural true children of our heavenly Father, and do the works of heaven with a cheerful and willing mind. Then it is, that we are good in the manner as God is good, because it is his goodness that is born in us; we are perfect as he is perfect, we love as he loves, are patient as he is patient, we give as he gives, we forgive as he forgives, and resist evil only with good as he does.

This, Academicus, is angelic goodness; and is the goodness of those who are born again of the Word, and become new creatures in the Spirit of Christ. This goodness our first father lost, when he chose to have the eyes of flesh and blood, and the spirit of this world, opened in him; and therefore our redeemer, who well knew what we had lost, and must have again, has taught us in our daily prayer, to ask for angelic goodness in these words, viz., "thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." But I have done, and I think you must have done, with your learned scruple about the word "angelic." And now, Theophilus, if you please, return to your subject with Humanus.

Theophilus. Let me then tell you, Humanus, that I much approve of the way that you intend to proceed in. You are come directly to the truth and heart of the matter, and have hit upon the one only method of putting Deism to a full stand, by reducing Christianity to this one single great point,

which so evidently contains the whole ground and nature of it.

Now this one great point consists of two essential parts; 1st, the fall of man from a divine angelic life into an earthly, bestial, corruptible, miserable life of this world. 2dly, the redemption of man, or his regaining his first angelic perfection, by a new birth of the divine nature, by the Word and Spirit of God. Stand steadily upon this true Christian ground; and then you will not only stand safely yourself, but you will have left the Deist no ground to stand upon. For here all the labored volumes of infidelity, with which these last ages have swarmed, are at once rendered useless, and cannot put so much as a little finger into this debate. Consult all, from Hobbes to the Moral Philosopher, and you consult in vain; their works are as dead as themselves, and unable to give forth one word against this Christianity. They had a much easier task upon their hands; for nothing can be easier than for reason to object, and continue objecting, to the extraordinary matters of the Old and New Testament. I don't mention this as an accusation of the Deists, or to charge them with the crafty contrivance of placing the merits of the cause where it is not. No, the learning of the Christian world must bear the blame of the fruitless disputes: the demonstrators of the truth and reasonableness of Christianity have betrayed their own cause, and left true Christianity unmentioned in their defenses of it. What a reasonableness of Christianity have some great names helped us to? Just as useful, and good to our fallen souls, as the reasonableness of consenting to the death of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. But you, my friend, being rightly converted to Christianity, that began before the scriptures were written, and is as old as the creation and fall of man; keep close to its true and real ground; and, instead of showing the reasonableness of believing a long history of things, show the absolute necessity of man's dying to his present life, in order to have a better from God. This is the Christianity that began with the fall, and has been preached ever since to every son of fallen man, in every corner of the world; and by the same preacher that tells every man, that he ought to be better than he is. For was not man fallen from a better state than that he is now in, he could no more be ashamed or offended at anything that his nature prompts him to do, than the ox is ashamed at breaking into a good pasture. Every man, therefore, from the beginning of the world, has had Christianity and the gospel written and preached within him; as it contains the fall of man, and his want of being raised to a better state. But as we see, that the truth and reality of his fall, and the truth and reality of his redemption by a real birth from above, can be lost, nay disowned, amongst those that are daily reading and expounding the scriptures; so it is no wonder that the same should have happened to those, who had no scriptures to read. Justly therefore, Humanus, are churches and creeds, doctrines above and contrary to reason, miracles of the Old and New Testament, and all historical facts and matters, which are so great an harvest to the Deists; justly, I say, are they removed by you out of the debate; and the one great point above-mentioned only insisted upon, as the whole of the matter. For this one point gained, all is gained; and, till this point is cleared up, all the rest is but a debate about nothing. For if man is fallen from a divine life, no one need be told, that he can only be redeemed or saved from his fall by having the same divine life born in him again, or a second time. Nothing therefore touches the truth of the debate betwixt the Christian and the infidel, but that which proves with certainty, that man has, or has not, lost a divine life.

If he is thus fallen, has died this death to a divine life; then the nature and necessity of the Christian new-birth sufficiently proves itself. But if it can be proved, that he is not thus fallen, but stands in that state and degree of life in which God created him; the Deists have reason enough to

reject the Christian scheme of redemption.

Strange it is therefore beyond expression, that every man, whether Christian or infidel, should not see, that here lies the whole of the matter; or that any learned defender of Christianity should think of beginning anywhere, or in anything, but where the redemption itself begins; or imagine there can be the least ground to propose a redemption to man, till he shows why, and from what, he is to be redeemed. Stranger is it still, if you consider, that Christians have nothing to excuse their wandering from this one great point, since both the Testaments bear so open a witness to it. "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," says the Old Testament. "Except a man be born again from above, of the Word and Spirit of God, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven," says the New Testament.

Thus do these two Testaments begin with the most open declarations of these two things; viz., the death of man to his first created life; 2ndly, his redemption only and solely by a real birth of the divine life, received again from above. What excuse therefore can be made for those who read the scripture, and yet overlook that very one point; not only so plainly declared, but which, in itself, is the one only ground and foundation upon which all the scripture stands? For had not man died, neither Moses, nor the prophets, had ever been in being. For man not fallen, but abiding in his first created perfection of life, had been as free from any outward law, as the light is from darkness. The keeping his own nature had been the keeping, and doing, and seeing, and knowing all that God required of him. So that neither law nor prophecy have any ground or reason, but because man is dead to his first life. But seeing man is dead to his first life, and living only in an earthly bestial world, under the power and slavery of the evil motions and tempers of gross flesh and blood; therefore Moses must come with his law, to set sin before him, and give him precepts of resisting and dying to all the lusts of this new earthly life, which he is fallen into: therefore, to seek for any other learning in or from Moses, than that of learning to resist and die to the tempers and passions of this earthly life, is knowing nothing right of Moses, nor of ourselves.

Next after Moses came the prophets, or the spirit of prophecy, with its far-seeing sight, and declaration of glories to come. Now the ground of prophecy is this, it is because man is to be restored to his first glorious state; and therefore the spirit of prophecy comes forth from God to awaken hope and faith, expectation and desire in man; because these are the only powers that can draw him out of the mire of the earthly life, in which he sticks, and carry him up to his first heavenly state again. Nothing therefore is to be sought for in or from the prophets, but the increase of our hope, faith, and desire of the new birth of that glorious life which we have lost, and they foretold was to be had again.

Thus, my friend, you see the importance of this one point; Moses and the prophets have no ground or reason but this, that man has lost his divine life; and that this same divine life is to be born again in him. Now seeing this is the ground and reason of the scriptures, therefore is it the one unerring key to the right use of them. They have only this one intent, to make man know, resist, and abhor the working of his fallen earthly nature; and to turn the faith, hope, and longing desire of his heart to God: and therefore we are only to read them with this view, and to learn this one lesson from them. Whatever therefore occurs, that cannot be turned to this general end, but relates to only some temporal, occasional, or private matter, is of no more importance to us, than the cloak and parchments which St. Paul speaks of.

How many hundred barns must there be, to hold all the learned volumes, that had never been written, had man looked upon the scriptures as having no other view or end, but to teach him to renounce the tempers of his fallen earthly nature, and live unto God in faith and prayer; to be born again of the divine nature! But this one end being overlooked by learned reason, Hebrew and Syriac, Arabic, Greek, and Latin, have been called in, to torture the scriptures into a chaos of confused opinions, that has covered the Christian world with darkness, and lost the only good that was to be had from the written Word of God. Whereas, standing upon the ground on which you stand, with only this one great point at heart, the scriptures are a plain, easy, and certain instruction; and no honest unlearned heart stands in need of any commentator to help him to all the benefit that can be had from scripture, or secure him from any hurtful error.

Humanus. Indeed, Theophilus, my own experience can bear a full testimony to the truth of all that you have said. For upon my reading now the New Testament, with this key in my hand; viz., of man thus fallen, and thus called to a new birth from heaven; everything I read in it has spirit and life, and overflows my soul with such an unction, and sensibility of sweet doctrine, as I am not able to express. For whilst I consider it only as written to drive all earthly tempers and passions out of the soul, and inflame the heart with love and desire of the grace, the spirit, and the light and life of the heavenly nature, I can say, as the Jewish officers did, never man spoke like Christ and his apostles.

Why was the Son of God made man? It was because man was to be made again a divine creature. Why did man want such a savior? It was because he was become earthly, mortal, gross flesh and blood. Now take Christ in this light, and consider man in this state, and then all that is said in the gospel stands in the fullest light.

Thus, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you." How poor, how mean, and uncertain a sense is there in this, till you know, that man has lost his divine nature, and is fallen into a world that is all labor, burden, and misery! But as soon as this is known, then how easy, how plain, is the full and highest sense of these words, "Come unto me, all that labor, are weary and heavy laden, and I will refresh you!" I will bring to life that first happy state which you have lost. This is the note, the paraphrase, the expositor, the key to the true sense of every doctrine of Christ; which, though variously expressed to awaken the heart, is only one and the same thing. Thus, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." But why so? Because he that is troubled at the corruption, vanity, and impurity of his fallen earthly state, has the comfort of the heavenly life ready for him. Again, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." How plain and great is the sense here, as soon as we know, that Christ is our righteousness; and that the righteous life of Christ in the soul, is that life which our first father lost! Therefore, to hunger and thirst after this righteousness, is the one way to be filled with that divine life, that we had lost. Again, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. And out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." What can the Latin or Greek critic do here? Nothing at all. He will only try to make some excuse for the strangeness of the phrase. But when these words are read by one who knows that he, and all mankind, have lost the divine nature, he tastes and feels the glad tidings which they bring; and is in love with these sweet sounds, which promise such an overflowing return of heaven into his soul. Again, "I beseech you," says the apostle, "as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." The critic looks into his books to see how Latin and Greek authors have used the words

"stranger" and "pilgrim," and so some sense or other is given to the apostle; but the Christian, who knows, that man, wandering out of paradise, a colony of heaven, was taken captive by the stars and elements, to live in labor and toil, in sickness and pain, in hunger and thirst, in heat and cold amongst the beasts of the field; where evil spirits, like roaring lions, seek to devour him; he only knows in what truth and reality man is a poor stranger and distressed pilgrim upon earth. Again, "To the poor," saith Christ, "the gospel is preached." The critic only considers the several kinds of worldly poverty. But the Christian, who knows that the real great poverty of man consists in his having lost the riches and greatness of his first life, knows, that to this poor man the gospel is preached, because he only, who is sensible of this poverty, can hear and receive it. For to man, insensible of his fallen state, the glad tidings of the gospel are but like news from fairy land; and the cross of Christ can only be a stumbling-block and foolishness to him, whether he be a Christian, a Jew, or a Greek. Thus does it appear, that all the doctrines and sayings of Christ and his apostles are full of a comfortable, divine, and exalted sense, or mere empty words, just as the fall of man from a divine life is either owned or disowned. But I have done.

Theophilus. Thus far then, Humanus, we are agreed, that the fall of man into the life and state of this world, is the whole ground of his redemption; and that a real birth of Christ in the soul, is the whole nature of it. Let me now only ask you, how you would endeavor to convince a man of his fallen state?

Humanus. I would not begin with the account that Moses gives of it, for several reasons; but chiefly for these two: first, because the fall is not an historical matter; nor would a mere historical knowledge of it be of any use, or do any real good to him. Secondly, because Moses's account is not the proof of the fall, and therefore not to be appealed to as such.

Moses is the first historian of natural death, and has recorded the death of the first man, and of many others who were born of him: but the proof that man is mortal lies not in Moses's history of the death of the first man, but in the known nature of man, and the world from which he has his life. Again, we do not want Moses to assure us, that there was a first man; that he had something from heaven, and something from the earth in him; and must have come into the world in another manner than all those who have descended from him. For every man is himself the infallible proof of this; Moses is only the historian that has recorded the when, and where, and how this first man came into the world, and what was his name. But the proof and certainty of the fact, that such a first man there must have been, lies not in Moses's account, but stands proved to every man from his own nature and state in this world.

Thus it is with the fall; we have no more occasion to go to Moses, to prove that man and the world are in a fallen state, than to prove that man is a poor, miserable, weak, vain, distressed, corrupt, depraved, selfish, self-tormenting, perishing creature, and that the world is a sad mixture of false goods, and real evils; a mere scene of all sorts of trials, vexations, and miseries; all arising from the frame, and nature, and condition both of man and the world. This is the full infallible proof of the fall of man; which is not a thing learnt from any history, but shows itself everywhere, and every day, with such clearness as we see the sun. Moses is not the prover of the fact, that man is fallen; but is the recorder of the when and how, and the manner in which the fall happened. My first attempt therefore, upon any man, to convince him of the fall, as the ground of the redemption, should be an attempt to do that for him, which affliction, disappointments, sickness, pain, and the

approach of death, have a natural tendency to do; viz., to convince him of the vanity, poverty, and misery of his life and condition in this world. For as this is the true proof of the fallen state of man, so man can only be convinced of it, by having this proof truly set before him. I would therefore appeal at first to nothing but his own nature and condition in the world; and show him how unreasonable, nay, impossible, it is, that a God, who has nothing in himself but infinite goodness and infinite happiness, should bring forth a race of intelligent creatures, that have neither natural goodness, nor natural happiness. The inspired saints of God say thus, "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery." Again, "Man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain." Now if what is here truly said of mankind, could be truly said of any order of the beasts and animals of the field, who could defend the goodness of God in bringing such creatures into such a state of life? Now though the Deist rejects the scriptures, considered as a volume of divine revelation, yet everything that he outwardly sees, and inwardly feels, demonstrates this capital truth of scripture, that man is in this poor and miserable state of life. And therefore, everything that we know of God, and everything that we know of man, is a daily irresistible proof, that man is in a fallen state. Look at the human infant just come out of the womb, you can hardly bear the sight; it is a picture of such deformity, nakedness, weakness, and helpless distress, as is not to be seen amongst the home-born animals of this world: the chicken has its birth from no sin, and therefore it comes forth in beauty; it runs and pecks as soon as its shell is broken: the pig and the calf go both to play, as soon as the dam is delivered of them; they are pleased with themselves, and please the eye that beholds their frolic state and beauteous clothing; whilst the new-born babe of a woman, that is to have an upright form, that is to view the heavens, and worship the God that made them, lies for months in gross ignorance, weakness, and impurity; as sad a spectacle when he first begins to breathe the life of this world, as when in the agonies of death he breathes his last.

What is all this, but the strongest proof, that man is the only creature that belongs not to this world, but is fallen into it through sin? And therefore his birth, in such distress, bears all the marks of shame and weakness. Had he been originally of this world, it is necessary to suppose, that this world had done the highest honor to its highest creature; and that he had begun his life in greater perfection than any other animal, and brought with him a more beautiful clothing than the finest lilies of the field have. But, to go on: when the human infant is set upon his legs, and begins to act for himself, he soon becomes a more pitiable object than when crying in the cradle. The strength of his life is a mere strength of wild passions; his reason is craft, and selfish subtlety; he loves and hates only as flesh and blood prompt him, jails and gibbets cannot keep him from theft and murder. If he is rich, he is tormented with pride and ambition; if poor, with murmuring and discontent: be he which he will, sooner or later, disordered passions, disappointed lusts, fruitless labor, pains and sickness will tear him from this world in such travail as his mother felt, when she brought forth the sinful animal.

Now all this evil and misery are purely the natural and necessary effect of his birth in the bestial flesh and blood of this world, and there is nothing in his natural state that can put a stop to it; he must be evil and miserable so long as he has only the life of this world in him. Therefore the absolute certainty of the fall, and the absolute necessity of a new birth, are truths, independently of scripture, plain to a demonstration. Thus, God is in himself infinite goodness, and infinite happiness; but man, in his present earthly birth and life, can neither have goodness or happiness,

therefore his present state of life could not be brought forth by a God who is all goodness and happiness. Thus every man, that believes in a creator infinitely perfect, is under a necessity of believing the whole ground of Christian redemption, namely, that man hath some way or other lost that perfection of life which he had at first from his creator. But the Christian has yet an additional proof of his matter, because the scriptures, which with him are infallible, so frequently and openly bear witness to it.

Thus, "Let us make man in our image; according to our own likeness." How great, how divine, is this beginning of man? How can there be any evil or misery, any vanity or weakness, in a creature so brought forth? But now what is become of this man? For if you look at man just coming out of the womb, the pitiable object above described, what can be so absurd, as to call this birth, his creation in the likeness and after the image of God? Now what is said of the first man, is not spoken of one person, but of the human nature; for the first man was only the first instance of that which mankind were to be. He had no perfection peculiar to himself, but that of being the first man; and had he stood, all that came from him, had come to life as he did, in the same strength and glory of perfection, and not been born of a bestial womb, like the wild ass's colt. Again, set the following text against Moses's perfection of the first image of God, "Man that is born of a woman hath but a short time to live, and is full of misery." Is not this a full proof, that the first created life of man is quite dead, and that an earthly life of misery is risen up instead of it? Again, the apostle saith, "The natural man knoweth not the things of God; they are foolishness unto him." Can this natural man, the man of earthly flesh and blood, that can have no acquaintance with, or knowledge of God, to whom the "things of God are foolishness"; can this be the man first created in the image and likeness of God? What can be more absurd than such a thought? Or what excuse can be made for that learning which cannot see from so plain a scripture, that human nature, now, is not that human nature, which it was at first created, but is dead to that first life, which it had in the image and likeness of God, or the things of God could not possibly be foolishness to it? But I will end this matter with these borrowed words, "We were no more created to be in the sorrows, burdens, and anguish of an earthly life, than the angels were created to be in the wrath and darkness of hell. It is as contrary to the will and goodness of God towards us, that we are out of paradise, as it is contradictory to the designs and goodness of God towards the angels, that some of them are out of heaven, prisoners of darkness.

"The grossness, impurity, sickness, pain, and corruption of our bodies, is brought upon us by ourselves, in the same manner as the hideous, serpentine, form of the devils are brought upon them. How absurd, and even blasphemous would it be, to say with the scripture and the church, "that we are children of wrath, and born in sin," if we had that nature, which God at first gave us? What a reproach upon God, to say, that this world is a valley of misery, a shadow of death, full of disorders, snares, evils, and temptations, if this was an original creation, or that state of things for which God created us? Is it not as consistent with the goodness and perfection of God, to speak of the misery and disorder that unfallen holy angels find above, and of the vanity, emptiness, and sorrow of their heavenly state, as to speak of the misery of men, and the sorrows of this world, if men and the world were in that order, in which God at first had placed them? If God could make any place poor and vain, and create any beings into a state of vanity and vexation of spirit, he might do so in all places, and to all beings."* {*Serious Answer to Dr.Trapp on the Sin. of being Righteous overmuch, p. 35.}

Theophilus. You have put the fall, Humanus, upon its right proof, and shown great judgment in your intended method of converting anyone to the belief of it. You have set the whole matter in so just a light, that I have nothing that I would add to it.

Humanus. Give me leave, gentlemen, just to put in a word or two concerning another plain indication, that man has lost that life and nature, in which he was first created. Reason has been my god, and is the vain idol of modern Deism, and modern Christianity; and yet human ignorance, infirmity, and mortality; they all began together; they are inseparable; they generate and are generated from one another; they are the life of each other; and they must live and die together, and all bear the same witness to the fallen state of man. For no creature can come from the hands of God into a state of any ignorance of anything, that is fit and proper to be known by it. This is as impossible as for God to have an envious, or evil will. Now all right and natural knowledge, in whatever creature it is, is sensible, intuitive, and its own evidence. But opinion, reasoning, or doubting (for they are all but one thing) can only then begin when the creature has lost its first right and natural state, and is got somewhere, and become somewhat, that it cannot tell what to make of. Then begins doubting, from thence reasoning, from thence debating; and this is the high birth of our magnified reason, as nobly born, as groping is, which has its beginning in and from darkness, or the loss of light. Hence we have a full proof, that man has lost his first natural state in which God created him. For reasoning, doubt, and perplexity in any creature, is the effect of some fall, or departure from its first state of nature, and shows, that it wants, and is seeking, something that its nature would have, but knows not how to come at it. The beasts seek not after truth; a plain proof, that it has no relation to them; has no suitableness to their nature, nor ever belonged to them. Man is in quest of it, in perplexity about it, cannot come at it; takes lies to be truth, and truth to be lies; a plain proof, both that he has it not, and yet has had it, was created in it, and for it; for nothing can seek for anything, but that which is lost, and is wanted; nor could it form the least idea of it, but because it has belonged to it, and ought to be his. The beasts have no ignorance of anything, that concerns them; but have all the sensible, intuitive knowledge of everything that is the good of their nature. But man left to his reason is all over ignorance, doubt, conjecture, and perplexity in matters of the highest moment, about what he himself is, what is his chief good, where he is to seek it, and how to obtain it. For to ask your reason, how God is your God, how you are in him, and from him, what he is in himself, and what he is in you, is but like asking your hands to feel out the thickness, or the thinness, of the light. To ask your reason, whether the soul of man is immortal in its nature, is to as good purpose, is going no father out of the way, than if you was to ask your eyes to show you, where extension begins, and where it ends. To ask your reason, whether man has anything of God, or the divine nature in him, is just as suitable to the nature and power of your reason, as if you was to ask your nose, whether this or that sweet, aromatic smell in the garden, has any heavenly power mixed with, and opening itself in it.

Reason, therefore, is so far from being able to help man to that knowledge, which his nature and condition wants, that it can only help his ignorance to increase and fructify in doubts, fictions, and absurd debates. And the thing cannot be otherwise; man must walk in a vain shadow, so long as reason is his oracle. For nothing can act suitably to nature, find its true state in nature, or answer the end of its creation by the power of reason; because reason is not the life, the power, or former of nature; and therefore has no more power over nature, than over the powers and principles of vegetation, either in the body of man, or any other creature. He therefore who turns to his reason,

as the true power and light of his nature, betrays the same ignorance of the whole nature, power, and office of reason, as if he was to try to smell with his eyes, or see with his nose. For as each of these senses has only its one work or power, which it cannot alter, or exceed; so reason has only its one work or power, which it cannot alter, or exceed; and that one work is, to be a bare observer and comparer of things that manifest themselves to it by the senses. This is as much its one only power, as seeing is the one only power of the eyes. When therefore reason takes upon it to determine on things not manifested to it by the senses, as to judge about divine new birth, a divine light, and divine faith; or how the soul wants, or does not want God. it is then as much out of its place and office, as the eye that takes upon it to smell; and its true name and nature is, whim, humor, caprice, conjecture, opinion, fancy, and every other species of blindness, and passion.

Now suppose man to come thus into the world, with this chief difference from other creatures; that he is at a loss to find out what he is, how he is to live, and what he is to seek, as his chief happiness; what he is to own of a God, of providence, religion. Suppose him to have faculties that put him upon this search, and no faculties, that can satisfy his inquiry; and what can you suppose more miserable to himself, or more unworthy of a good creator? Therefore, if you will not suppose a God, that has been good to all creatures, and given every animal its proper light of nature, except man, you must be forced to own, that man has certainly lost the true light and perfection of his nature, which God at first gave him. But I believe Academicus wants to say something, and therefore I have done.

Academicus. I was only going to say, that every attribute of God, everything that sense and reason force us to see, and know, and feel, both of ourselves, and the world, join with the letter and spirit of all scripture in attesting, that man has certainly had a divine life, to which he has certainly died. But yet I must own it is very difficult to conceive, how a creature brought forth in so high perfection, in such enjoyment of the life, light, and Spirit of God, could either deceive himself, or be deceived by another.

Theophilus. All that we want to know, my friend, is the certainty of the fact, and this is of the greatest moment to us: for this is it, that takes us from the herd of earthly animals, and lays the foundation of religion, and divine virtue. For had not a divine life at first been in us, we should be now at the same distance from all true virtue and goodness, and as incapable of forming the least thought or desire of it, as other animals; and should have nothing to do, but to look to ourselves, live to our earthly nature, and make the most of this world. For this is the only wisdom and goodness, that an earthly nature is capable of, whether it be a man, or a fox. The certainty therefore of the fact, of our first divine birth, is all; nothing more need be inquired after. For on this ground stands all our comfort; hence it is, that, in faith and hope, we can look up to God as our Father, to heaven as our native country, and have the honor to be accounted only as strangers and pilgrims upon earth. But however, to remove your difficulty, I shall give you a little sketch of the possibility of man's falling, although created in the perfection abovementioned.

Now supposing God to have brought a new intelligent creature into a new world, all the attributes of God oblige us to suppose this creature to be created in a perfect state both inwardly and outwardly. As intelligent, it must partake of the divine understanding; as living, it must have a degree of the divine life in it; as good, it must have a birth of the divine goodness in it; as an offspring of divine love, it must have a divine happiness, for the enjoyment of which the love of

God created it. Now there is but one possible way, for this intelligent creature, thus endowed, to fall from, or lose the happiness of its first created state. It cannot knowingly choose misery, or the loss of its happiness: therefore it can only fall by such an ignorance, or power of falling as is consistent with its perfect state. Now this power lay wholly in the newness of its life: it only began to find itself an intelligent being; and yet had a power of looking with the eyes of its understanding either inwards, or outwards; upwards, or downwards. It had a power of acquiescing and rejoicing in that, which it found itself to be, and adoring that power and goodness which had brought it into the possession of such a nature: and it had a power of wandering into conjectures, and reasons about that, which it was not. Now as a free, intelligent creature, it could not be without this power of thus turning its intelligent eye; and yet, as a beginning creature, that had no experience, this power could not be free from a possibility of wandering; and therefore its power of wandering was not a defect, but a necessary part of its first perfect state. Now in this possibility of wandering with its intelligent eye, looking where it ought not, and entering into conjectures about that, which it was not, may be clearly seen the possibility of its falling from a state of high perfection. This is the one only possible way for a good, intelligent, new creature to lose its happiness. And I think it may justly be affirmed, that the Mosaic account of the fall of man is exactly this very case; namely, how the eye of his new unexperienced understanding, beginning to cast a wandering look into that, which he was not, was by an unsuspected subtlety, or serpent, drawn into a reasoning and conjecturing about a certain good and evil, which were no part of his own created state. Which inquiry, being given into, ended in the real knowledge of this good and evil, the sensibility of which became an immediate death to his first divine life, destroyed the angelic image in the likeness of God, and set a gross, earthly, naked, ashamed, frightened, wretched animal of bestial flesh and blood in its place, the only animal to which this new knowledge of good and evil could belong.

Supposing therefore the fall of man, which is a fact attested, and proved by everything we know of God, ourselves, and the world; the Mosaic account of it has every mark of truth, sobriety, and justness, as being a plain and easy description of the one only way, by which a creature so endowed could change or lose its first happy state.

Academicus. Truly, Theophilus, you have given a most natural and full solution of my difficulty, by which, I suppose, you mean as well to explain the fall of angels, as of men. But, sir, if that pride, to which their fall is charged, must have stolen upon them, in that same unsuspected way, in which the longing after the tree of good and evil insinuated itself into man; viz., from a wandering look into that, which they were not, occasioned by the newness of their untried life, in which they had but just began to be; suffer me then, to ask, why the fallen angels were not, at first, the immediate objects of divine mercy and goodness? Why they are to be forever prisoners of a never-ending hell? Or, are you of the opinion, that angels, as well as men, will be at last brought back to their first state?

Theophilus. Your questions, Academicus, seem to have too much of curiosity in them: but, as I hope you will not give way to this temper, so I will, for once, comply with your demands. The fall of angels must be supposed to have been as soon after their creation, as that of Adam. Had they stood any time in their new-created state, they had been in one and the same impossibility of falling, as the angels that are now in heaven. For no pure, intelligent, good, and holy created being, can possibly lose this divine state of perfection, but through the first use of its untried state and powers. The manner of Adam's falling into the life of this world plainly shows the manner how

the angels fell into hell, namely, at first only by looking and conjecturing with their intelligent eye into that, which they were not, which was not opened in them, but was hid in God. This looking went on till it became a lust and strong longing after that somewhat; just as it had done in Adam, who so gazed upon the earthly good and evil, till it opened itself in him. Adam looked only at that which was creaturely, and in a life below him; and therefore only that lower, creaturely, bestial life was brought forth in him. But the angel turning his wandering look into that height and depth which was not creaturely, but hid in God; namely, into the might and strength of eternity, that he might know how the creaturely life was kindled by it; and thinking himself by his exalted nature, to be as near to this great power, and as capable of entering into it, as Adam thought himself near to, and capable of knowing the good and evil of the earthly life; and as Adam thought to be like God in this new knowledge; so the angel imagined to be like God, could he enter into this knowledge, how the might of God kindled the creaturely life, for then he himself should have the power of creating or kindling the creaturely life; and as Adam's imagination brought forth a lust and longing, which could not be stopped, till the earthly knowledge, and earthly life, had opened itself in him; so the angel's imagination begot such a lust and longing to know the ground and original of life, as would not be stopped till the ground and original of life, namely, that depth of darkness and fire, in and from which every creaturely life must begin, was totally opened in him, and he as much swallowed up by hell, as Adam was by the earthly life. Thus you may see, how the same aspiring imagination (but with regard to different matters) rising in the same manner, and from the same cause, in both these creatures, and working itself up into a lust and longing, brought the one from heaven into hell, and the other from paradise into a bestial world.

Now as the lust of Adam, when it had obtained its desire, opened all the properties and tempers of the bestial life in him; so the lust of the angel, when it got what it wanted; viz., the ground and original of the creaturely life, which is darkness and fire; immediately opened all the dreadful properties of darkness and fire in him, which at once swallowed up or extinguished the angelic nature. Hence wrath, hatred, pride, envy, malice, and every enmity to light and love, are the one only life of the fallen angel; and he can will and act nothing else, but as these properties of darkness and fire drive him. To ask therefore, why the fallen angels continue in their state, is to ask, why darkness is not made to be light? For the root and ground of nature is unchangeable; it keeps its own nature, or it could not be the ground; it must stand always in its own place, and be only the ground and root; it cannot rise higher than the root, no more than the root of the tree can be its branches and fruit. The angels, therefore, being fallen into the ground and root of nature, have only the working life of the ground and root of nature in them; and therefore seem to be as unchangeable, and incapable of having any other, as the root itself is. To ask therefore, why the fallen angels were not helped by the mercy and goodness of God, as fallen man was; is like asking, why the refreshing dew of heaven does not do that to flint, which it does to the vegetable plant? For as the nature of the flint is too hard, and too much compacted, to receive any alteration from the sweet softness of refreshing water; so the fallen angel, like the flint, being shut up in the wrathful working of its own hard darkness and fire, the goodness of God can have no entrance into it. For what are we to understand by the mercy and goodness of God? His mercy is his patience. And his goodness, is his light, and Word, and Holy Spirit. Now every creature has the benefit of divine patience; but no creature can have his goodness, but that which is capable of receiving his light, and Holy Spirit. And his light, and Holy Spirit, cannot enter into a creature, as an external, additional thing, that may be given to it, whether it will, or not, but must be brought forth as a birth

in it. For the light, and Spirit of God can be nowhere, but as a birth, whether it be in God, or the creature. And therefore the goodness of God can be imparted to no creature, but that which is capable of a birth of the light and Spirit of God, or, in the words of scripture, unless it be "born of the Word and Spirit of God." This therefore you may rest upon, as a certain truth, that the one only reason, why the fallen angels have as yet had nothing of the Spirit or light of God breathed into, or born in them, is, because they are as yet utterly incapable of such a birth, or of being helped by the divine goodness. For as flame cannot communicate itself to flint, nor the Spirit of God to a beast; because the flint stands in the utmost contrariety to flame, and the beast in a total incapacity of holiness; so the fallen angel is in its working life altogether incapable of receiving the Spirit and life of God into it. Were it not thus, angels had been helped, as early as man: for the goodness, or the light and Spirit of God loses no time, but stands always in the same fullness of communication of itself to every creature that is capable of receiving it. And therefore it is, that fallen man was immediately helped, because he fell only into earthly flesh and blood, in which the light of this world is kindled, which light has something of heaven in it, and was kindled by the light of heaven. And therefore the goodness of God, or his light, and Holy Spirit, could come to man's assistance in the light of this life, and therein begin a covenant of redemption with him. For in this light of his life, which is a ray of heaven, the inspoken Word in paradise could enter, and have communion with it, and make itself to be a beginning of salvation to all those, who by faith and hope should lay hold of it, and endeavor after a new birth from it. Thus stands the ground and reason why men, and not angels, were immediately helped at their fall. As to your last question, whether I believe the final restoration of all the fallen angels; I shall only say, that neither ancient nor modern writers, on either side of the question, have touched the true merits of the cause, or spoke to that point on which the decision of the matter wholly rests. For it can neither be sufficiently affirmed, nor sufficiently denied, by any arguments drawn either from the divine attributes, or texts of scripture; for they cannot come up to the point in question. But the true ground and merit of the cause lies solely in the possibility of the thing, which no one has attempted to prove, nor perhaps is anyone able to do it; namely, to show from a true ground, that the diabolical nature is possible to be altered. Darkness can by no omnipotence be made to be light; it can only be suppressed, or overcome by it, or forced to be hid under it, as heaven hides or overcomes hell; but still the darkness has its first nature, never to be changed.

Now if anyone can show, that the devils are not essentially evil, as darkness is essentially dark, but have only such an accidental difference from goodness, as ice has from water, or a flint from transparent glass; then their restoration is possible, and they will infallibly have all their evil removed out of them by the goodness of God. But unless it could be shown from a true ground in nature, that the fallen angels must have something of the heavenly life in them, though shut up in a thousand times harder death, than fire is in the dark flint, no length of time, or anything else, can produce any alteration, or cessation of their evil nature. For time cannot alter the nature or essence of things; it only suffers that to come to pass which is possible, and consistent with the nature of things. No length of time can make a circle to have, or give forth, the properties of a right line.

Now if the fallen angels have nothing heavenly in them, but stand in as full a contrariety to all that is heavenly, as the circle does to the properties of the right line; then goodness is as impossible to be ever awakened in them, as in a beast. The beast must always be what it was at first; and for

this reason, because nothing but the bestial nature is in it: if therefore the fallen angel is totally hellish, as the beast is bestial, it must always be what it is. But we have launched far enough in a deep that does not belong unto us; and which cannot be sufficiently affirmed or denied but from the known possibility, or the known impossibility, of the thing, which does not yet appear. If it is possible, I am heartily glad of it; and am also sure enough, that it will then come to pass in its own time. For if he could not be thought to be a good man, who did not do all that he could to make sinners become holy and happy in goodness, we may be sure enough that the boundless goodness of God, will set no bounds to itself, but remove every misery from every creature that is capable of it. But let me now return to Humanus, and ask him, that, supposing he could not convince a man of the certainty of his fallen state, how he would farther proceed with him.

Humanus. Truly, Theophilus, I would proceed no farther at all; and for this good reason, because I should then have nothing to proceed upon. Did I certainly know of an infallible remedy for every disorder of the eyes, only to be had by going to China for it, I should not attempt to persuade a man, who believed his eyes to be sound and good, to leave all that he had, and go to China for this infallible remedy for bad eyes.

Now to press a man to deny himself, and leave all that he hath in the enjoyments of flesh and blood, in order to be reconciled to God, who believes himself to be in the same good state, in which God created him, seems to be as wild a project, as to desire him who is well pleased with the goodness of his sight, to go to the Indies to be helped to see. And indeed I very well know, from former experience, that all discourse about the reasonableness of Christianity, the doctrine of the cross, the exceeding love of God in giving so great a savior, with many more things of the like nature, were mere empty sounds, heard with the greatest indifference, and incapable of raising the least seriousness in me, merely because I had not the least notion or suspicion of the truth and greatness of my fallen state, and therefore was not the man who had any fitness to be affected with these matters. And thence it was that Christ said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you"; as plain as if he had said, No one else can come to me, nor anyone else be refreshed by me.

Here therefore, in my humble opinion, should all begin, who would propagate Christianity, or make true converts to it, and here stop, as Christ did. It is only the weary, and heavy laden, that are fitted to be converts, or refreshed; and therefore we can no way help a man to be a Christian, or fit him to be refreshed by Christ, but by bringing him into a full sensibility of the evil, and burden, and vanity of his natural state, till some good providence awakens him out of it; and not make proposals to him of the reasonableness of believing the Holy Trinity, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the necessity of his sufferings and death. for this method is full as absurd, as to enter into solemn debate with a confessed atheist, about the reasonableness of worshiping God in spirit and truth; for, as the excellence of a God is the only ground of proving that he ought to be worshiped in spirit and truth, so the certainty and belief of our fallen state is the only ground of showing the reasonableness of the mysteries of redemption. And he that disowns the fall of man from a divine life, has all the same reasons for rejecting the mysteries of our salvation, as the atheist has to reject the doctrines of a spiritual worship of God. Therefore, to expose the mysteries of our salvation to the wrangle of a debate with an unbeliever of the fall of man, which mysteries have no other ground to stand upon, is not only helping him to an easy triumph over you, but is the most likely method to prevent his ever becoming a Christian. For seeing how easily he can ridicule

mysteries, which, to him in his present state, can have no reasonableness in them, he is put into the most likely way of living and dying in a hardened contempt of them. Whereas if you stick close to the one true ground of Christianity, and only proceed as that proceeds, and make the unbeliever no offers of any other Christianity, but that which is to begin with the acknowledged sensibility of the fall of human nature from its first divine life; you stop where you ought to stop, and rob him of all power and pretense of meddling with the other mysteries of salvation. The one business then upon his hands, if he will hold out against you, must be to deny his reason and senses, and maintain, in spite of both, that man is not fallen, but is by nature holy, just, good, and happy both in body and soul; and that mankind, and the world they are in, have all that goodness and happiness, which they could be supposed to have from an infinitely good and happy God; and who can will nothing in the creature but goodness and happiness. Here you bring the Deist to his proper work, and all the contradiction to sense and reason will lie on his side: you set Christianity upon its true ground; and whoever thus defends it, as it ought to be defended, not only does justice to the Christian cause, but acts the most kind and friendly part towards those who oppose it merely through a misunderstanding of its true ground and nature; which I will venture to say is the case of all the sober well-meaning Deists. For Deism has no natural foundation, or ground of its own, to stand upon; it does not grow from any root or strength within itself, but is what it is merely from the bad state of Christendom, and the miserable use that heathenish learning, and worldly policy, have made of the gospel. If it (Deism) seems to itself to be strong and well-grounded, it is merely because it can so easily object to church-doctrines, and scholastic opinions: if it seems to itself to be good it is because it can so easily lay open the evils which Christians and churches bring upon one another: if it seems to itself to be highly rational, its reason is, because it is free from that number of absurdities and contradictions which Christian churches lay to the charge of one another. Lastly, if it keeps off all fearful forebodings of the consequences of not receiving the gospel, it is because it so plainly sees, that Christians say, "Hail, master," kiss the gospel, and then break every part of it. This is the true height, and depth, and total strength of Deism or infidelity; it never had any other support in myself but this; nor did I ever converse with a Deist, who carried the matter higher or farther than this, to support the cause. Hence it is, that you made so speedy a convert of me, by showing me such a Christianity as I never heard of before; and stripped of everything that gave me power to oppose it. Had you proceeded in the way practiced by most defenders of the gospel, you had left me just as you found me, if not more confirmed in my old way. But as you have justly removed all controversy about doctrines from the merits of the cause, and shown that it all lies in this one short, plain, and decisive point, namely the fall of man; a fall proved and demonstrated to all my senses and reason, by every height and depth of nature, by every kind of misery, evil, and sin in the world, by everything we know of God, ourselves, and the world we live in; the ground and foundation of Christianity is undeniable, and no one can be too speedy a convert to the belief of it. And as you have also shown, that the whole nature of the gospel redemption means nothing but the one, true, and only possible way of delivering man from his miserable state in this world; Christianity is shown to be the most intelligible and desirable thing that the heart of man can think of. And thus, contrary to all expectation, the tables are quite turned; Deism can no longer be founded on argument, and Christianity is as self-evident as our senses: all learning on both sides, either for or against it, is insignificant; Christianity stands upon a bottom quite superior to it, and may be the sure possession of every plain man, who has sense enough to know whether he is happy or unhappy, good or evil. For this natural knowledge, if adhered to, is

every man's sure guide to that one salvation preached by the gospel. Which gospel stands in no more need of learning and critical art now, than it did when Christ was preaching it upon earth. How absurd would it have been for any critics in Greek and Hebrew, to have followed Christ and his apostles, as necessary explainers of their hard words, which called for nothing in the hearers but penitent hearts turned to God; and declared, that they only "who were of God, could hear the Word of God!" How strange, that Christ should choose only illiterate men to preach the gospel of the kingdom of God, if only great scholars could rightly understand what they said! Again, supposing learned men to have only the true fitness to understand the word of scripture, and that the plain man is to receive it from them, how must he know which are the scholars that have the right knowledge? From whence is he to have this information? For no one need be told, that ever since learning has borne rule in the church, learned doctors have contradicted and condemned one another in every essential point of the Christian doctrine. Thousands of learned men tell the illiterate, they are lost in this or that church; and thousands of learned men tell them, they are lost, if they leave it.

If therefore Christianity is in the hands of scholars, how must the plain man come at it? Must he, though unable to understand scripture, for want of learning, tell which learned man is in the right, and which is not? If so, the unlearned man has much the greatest ability, since he is to do that for scholars, which they cannot do for themselves. But the truth of the matter is this; Christian redemption is God's mercy to all mankind; but it could not be so, if every fallen man, as such, had not some fitness and capacity to lay hold of it. It must have no dependence upon times and places, or the ages and several conditions of the world, or any outward circumstance of life; as the first man partook of it, so must the last; the learned linguist, and the blind, the deaf and dumb, have but one and the same common way of finding life in it. And he that writes large commentaries upon the whole Bible, must be saved by something full as different from book knowledge, as they were, who lived when there was neither book nor any alphabet in the world. For this salvation, which is God's mercy to the fallen soul of man, merely as fallen, must be something that meets every man; and which every man, as fallen, has something that directs him to turn to it. For as the fall of man is the reason of this mercy, so the fall must be the guide to it; the want must show the thing that is wanted. And therefore the manifestation of this one salvation, or mercy to man, must have a nature suitable, not to this or that great reader of history, or able critic in Hebrew roots and Greek phrases, but suitable to the common state and condition of every son of Adam. It must be something as grounded in human nature, as the fall itself is, which wants no art to make it known; but to which the common nature of man is the only guide in one man, as well as another. Now this something, which is thus obvious to every man, and which opens the way to Christian redemption in every soul, is a sense of the vanity and misery of this world; and a prayer of faith and hope to God, to be raised to a better state.

Now in this sensibility, which every man's own nature leads him into, lies the whole of man's salvation; here the mercy of God and the misery of man are met together; here the fall and the redemption kiss each other. This is the Christianity which is as old as the fall; which alone saved the first man, and can alone save the last. This is it on which hang all the law and the prophets, and which fulfills them both; for they have only this end, to turn man from the lusts of this life, to a desire, and faith, and hope of a better. Thus does the whole of Christian redemption, considered on the part of man, stand in this degree of nearness and plainness to all mankind; it is as simple

and plain as the feeling our own evil and misery, and as natural as the desire of being saved and delivered from it. This is the Christianity which every man must first be made sensible of, not from hearsay, but as a growth or degree of life within himself, before he can have any fitness, or the least pretense to judge or speak a word about the further mysteries of the gospel. But here I stop.

Theophilus. Well, Humanus, I have now pushed the matter with you, as far as I intended; and you have given me full proof of the truth and solidity of your own conversion, and your ability to do good amongst your old brethren. You must now enter the lists with them; not to charge them with ignorance, ill will, or profaneness of spirit, but only to try, in the spirit of love and meekness, to undeceive them, in the manner you have been undeceived; and to show them, that Christianity is by no means that thing, which you and they have so long disliked.

Nothing can be more right than your resolution not to enter into debate about the gospel doctrines, or propose the reasonableness of them to anyone, till he owns himself sensibly convinced of the forementioned fall of man; and stands in a full desire to be saved, or delivered from it. And if that time never comes, you must leave him, as in the same incapacity to hear or judge of the doctrines of the Holy Trinity, in the incarnation of the Son of God, the operation of the Holy Spirit, as Epicurus would be. For every man that cleaves to this world, that is in love with it, and its earthly enjoyments, is a disciple of Epicurus, and sticks in the same mire of atheism, as he did, whether he be a modern Deist, a Popish or Protestant Christian, an Arian, or an orthodox teacher. For all these distinctions are without any difference, if this world has the possession and government of his heart. For the whole of the matter lies solely in this, whether heaven, or earth, hath the heart and government of man. Nothing divides the worshipers of the true God from idolaters but this: where earth possesses and rules the heart, there all are of one and the same religion, and worship one and the same god, however they may be distinguished by sect or party. And wherever the heart is weary of the evil and vanity of the earthly life, and looking up to God for an heavenly nature, there all are one of the true religion, and worshipers of the true God, however distant they may be from one another, as to time or place. But enough has been said of this matter.

Let me now only, before we break up, observe to you the true ground and nature of gospel Christianity: I call it so by way of distinction from that original universal Christianity, which began with Adam; was the religion of the patriarchs, of Moses and the prophets, and of every penitent man in every part of the world, that had faith and hope towards God, to be delivered from the evil of this world. But when the Son of God had taken a birth in and from the human nature, had finished all the wonders that belonged to our redemption, and was sat down at the right hand of God in heaven, then a heavenly kingdom was set up on earth, and the Holy Spirit came down from heaven, or was given to the flock of Christ in such a degree of birth and life, as never was, nor could be given to the human nature, till Christ, the redeemer of the human nature, was glorified. But when the humanity of Christ, our second Adam, was glorified, and became all heavenly, then the heavenly life, the comfort, and power, and presence of the Holy Spirit, was the gift which he gave to his brethren, his friends and followers, which he had left upon earth. The Holy Ghost descended in the shape of cloven tongues of fire on the heads of those, that were to begin and open the new powers of a divine life set up amongst men. This was the beginning and manifestation of the whole nature and power of gospel Christianity, a thing as different from what was Christianity before, as the possession of the thing hoped for is different from hope, or deliverance different from the desire or expectation of it. Hence the apostles were new men,

entered into a new kingdom come down from heaven, enlightened with new light, inflamed with new love, and preached not any absent or distant thing, but Jesus Christ, as the wisdom and power of God, felt and found within them, and as a power of God ready to be communicated in the same manner, as a new birth from above, to all that would repent and believe in him. It was to this change of nature, of life, and spirit, to this certain immediate deliverance from the power of sin, to be possessed and governed by gifts and graces of an heavenly life, that men were then called to, as true Christianity. And the preachers of it bore witness, not to a thing that they had heard, but to a power of salvation, a renewal of nature, a birth of heaven, a sanctification of spirit, which they themselves had received. Gospel Christianity then stood upon its own true ground; it appeared to be what it was. And what was it? Why, it was an awakened divine life set up amongst men; itself was its own proof; it appealed to its proper judge, to the heart and conscience of man, which was alone capable of being touched with these offers of a new life.

Hence it was, that sinners of all sorts, that felt the burden of their evil natures, were in a state of fitness to receive these glad tidings. Whilst the rigid Pharisee, the orthodox priest, and the rational heathen, though at enmity with one another, and each proud of his own distinction, yet all agreed in rejecting and abhorring a spiritual savior, that was to save them from their carnal selves, and the vanity of their own rational selfish virtues. But when, after a while, Christianity had lost its first glory, appeared no longer as a divine life awakened amongst men, and itself was no longer its own proof of the power and Spirit of God manifested in it; then heathenish learning, and temporal power, was from age to age forced to be called the glory and prosperity of the church of Christ; although in the Revelation of St. John, its figure is that of a scarlet whore riding upon the beast.

Here therefore, my friend, you are to place the true distinction of gospel Christianity from all that went before it, or that is come up after it. It is purely and solely a divine life awakened, and set up amongst men, as the effect and fruit of Christ's glorification in heaven; and has no other promise from him but that of his Holy Spirit, to be with it, as its light, its guide, its strength, its comfort, and protection, to the end of the world. Therefore as gospel Christians, we belong to the new covenant of the Holy Spirit, which is the kingdom of God come down from heaven on the day of Pentecost; and therefore it is, that there is no possibility of seeing or entering into this new kingdom, but by being born again of the Spirit. The apostles and disciples of Christ, though they had been baptized with water, had followed Christ, heard his doctrines, and done wonders in his name; yet as then, stood only near to the kingdom of God, and preached it to be at hand. They had only seen and known Christ according to the flesh; had followed him with great zeal, but with little and very low knowledge either of him or his kingdom; and therefore it was, that they were commanded to stand still, and not act as his ministers in his new glorified state, till they were endued with power from on high: which power they then received, when the Holy Ghost with his cloven tongues of fire came down upon them, by which they became illuminated instruments, that were to diffuse the light of an heavenly kingdom over all the world. From that day began gospel Christianity, with its true distinction from everything that was before it; which was the ministration of the Spirit; and the ministers of it called the world to nothing but gifts and graces of the same Spirit, to look for nothing but spiritual blessings, to trust, and hope, and pray for nothing but the power of that Spirit, which was to be the one life and ruling Spirit of this newly opened kingdom of God. No one could join himself to them or have any part with them but by dying to the wisdom and light of the flesh, that he might live by the Spirit, through faith in Jesus Christ, who had thus called him to his kingdom

and glory. Now this Christianity is its own proof; it can be proved from nothing but itself; it wants neither miracles, nor outward witness; but, like the sun, is only its own discoverer.

He that adheres only to the history of the facts, doctrines, and institutions of the gospel, without being born of its Spirit, is only such a Christian, and is no nearer to Christ, than the Jew, who carnally adhered to the letter of the law. They both stand in the same distance from gospel Christianity.

It is in vain therefore for the modern Christian, to appeal to antiquity, to history, and ancient churches, to prove that he belongs to Christ; for he can only belong to him, by having the power of Christ, and the Spirit of God living and dwelling in his renewed inward man. But a learned Christianity, supported and governed by reason, dispute, and criticism, that is forced to appeal to canons, and councils, and ancient usages, to defend itself, has lost its place, stands upon a fictitious ground, and shows, that it cannot appeal to itself, to its own works, which alone are the certain and only proofs either of a true, or a false Christianity. For the truth of Christianity is the Spirit of God living and working in it; and where this Spirit is not the life of it, there the outward form is but like the outward carcase of a departed soul. For the spiritual life is as much its own proof, as the natural life, and needs no outward, or foreign thing to bear witness to it. But if you please, gentlemen, we will end for this time, and refer what remains to the afternoon. The End of the First Dialogue

10.02 Second Dialogue

Second Dialogue

Academicus. I must take the liberty, gentlemen, of speaking first this afternoon; for though I have been much pleased with what passed betwixt Humanus and Theophilus in the morning, yet I must own to you all, that I was quite disappointed; for I came in full expectation of hearing everything, that I wish, and want to know, concerning Jacob Behmen, and his works. For though I have been reading, for more than two years, some one or other of his books, with the utmost attention, and I everywhere find the greatest truths of the gospel most fundamentally asserted, yet presently I am led into such depths, as I know not where I am, and talked to in such new, intricate, and unintelligible language, as seems quite impossible to be comprehended. Sometimes I almost suspect, that the author understood not himself: for I think, if I knew any truths, though ever so deep or uncommon; yet, if I understand them plainly myself, I could set them before others in the same plainness, that they appeared to me.

All my acquaintance have the same complaint that I here make; but some hope, and others say, that if you live to publish any of his books, you will remove most of his strange and unintelligible words; and give us notes and explications of such as you don't alter. Surely a kind of commentary upon him, would reconcile many to the reading of him, who, in the state he is in, cannot have patience to puzzle their heads about him.

Rusticus. Oh this impatient scholar! How many troubles do I escape, through the want of his learning? How much better does my old neighbor John the shepherd proceed? In winter evenings, when he comes out of the field, his own eyes being bad, the old woman his wife puts on her spectacles, and reads about an hour to him, sometimes out of the scriptures, and sometimes out of Jacob Behmen; for he has had two or three of his books some years. I sat by one evening, when my old dame, reading Jacob, had much ado to get on: "John," said I, "do you understand all this?" "Ah," says he, "God bless the heart of the dear man, I sometimes understand but little of him; and mayhap Betty does not always read right; but that little which I often do understand, does me so much good, that I love him where I don't understand him."

"John," said I, "shall I bring a man to you, that knows the meaning of all of Jacob's hard words, and can make all his high matters as plain to you, as the plainest things in the world?" "No, no," replied John, "I don't want such a man, to make a talking about Jacob's words; I had rather have but a little of his own, as it comes from him, than twenty times as much at second-hand. Madam, the squire's wife, of our town, hearing how Betty and I loved the scriptures, brought us, one day, a huge expounding book upon the New Testament; and told us, that we should understand the scripture a deal better, by reading it in that book, than the Testament alone. The next Lord's Day, when two or three neighbors, according to custom, came to sit with us in the evening; 'Betty,' said I, 'bring out madam's great book, and read the fifth chapter of St. Matthew.' When she had done that, I bid her read the fifteenth chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The next morning, said I to Betty, 'Carry his expounding book again to my mistress, and tell her, that the words of

Christ, and his apostles, are best by themselves, and just as they left them.'

"And, as I was that morning going to my sheep, thought I to myself, this great expounding book seems to have done just as much good to this little book of the Testament, by being added to it, and mixed with it, as a gallon of water would do to a little cup of true wine, by being added to it, or mixed with it. The wine indeed would be all there; but its fine taste, and cordial spirit, which it had, when drank by itself, would be all lost and drowned in the coldness and deadness of the water.

"When my Betty used to read this, or some such words of Christ, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'; she used to stop a little, that my heart might have time to be affected with them, to love the blessed thing there spoken of, and lift up itself to God in desire of it. But this great book takes this good work from my heart; and only calls upon my mind, to behold the many parts which the text may be split into, and the many meanings, some better and some worse, some higher and some lower, that every part has, and may be taken in, by some doctor of some church or other. Therefore, Rusticus, I sent the great book to madam again; and am, for the same reason, utterly against hearing your expounder of Jacob Behmen. If Jacob has more truths than other folks, he is the best able to tell me what they are; and if he has some matters too high for me, I don't desire any lesser man to make them lower.

"When he, like an Elijah, in his fiery chariot, is caught up into such heights, and sees and relates such things, as I cannot yet comprehend; I love and reverence him for having been where I never was; and seeing such things as he cannot make me to see: just as I love and reverence St. Paul for having been caught up into the third heaven, and hearing and seeing things not possible to be uttered in human words.

"As I have but one end in hearing the scriptures read to me, to fill me with the love of God, and every kind of goodness; so every part of scripture, whether plain or mysterious, does me the same good, is alike good to me, and kindles the same heavenly flame in my soul. Thus these plain words, 'Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls'; give me, without any expounder of their meaning, such an aversion and dislike of all vanity and pride, fill me with such sweet contentment in every lowliness of life, that I long to be the servant of every human creature. On the other hand, these lofty words of scripture, 'Behold, a throne was set in heaven; and he that sat thereon, was, to look upon, like a jasper-stone; and there was a rainbow round about the throne; and four-and-twenty seats; and upon the seats, four-and-twenty elders in white raiment, and crowns of gold upon their heads: and out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunders, and voices: and before the throne were seven lamps of fire, which are the seven spirits of God: and before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about it, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind: and the first beast was like a lion, the second like a calf, the third had a face as a man, and the fourth was like a flying eagle: and the four beasts had each of them six wings, and were full of eyes; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when these beasts give glory, and honor, and thanks, to him that sat on the throne, the four-and-twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor, for thou hast created all things.' {Revelation 4:2}

"Now these lofty and mysterious words, instead of puzzling my head, lay hold of my heart, which, all inflamed with them, rises up with the eyes and wings of the beasts in their song of praise and honor; and bows down with the elders that worship the high and mighty Lord of heaven and earth. And thus I want no Hebrew or Greek scholar to tell me this or that, what are the seven spirits of God, why four kinds of beasts, why neither more nor less than six wings, who were the elders, and why twenty-four; but the whole matter, as if a glance of the majesty of heaven had just passed by me, strikes my heart with such good transports of wonder and joy, as makes me all longing and desire to be one of those, who are always singing the praises and wonders of the majesty of God. And thus, Rusticus, all that the scriptures give me to drink, whether high or low, is equally a cup of blessing to me, and equally helps forward the growth of heaven in my soul.

"Bring not therefore your cunning man, that has skill in words, to me; for words are but words; and though they be spoken even by the messengers of God, as angels, or prophets, or apostles; when they do their best, they can only do, as John the Baptist did, bear witness to the light: but the light itself, which can only give light to the soul, is God himself. And therefore not he that can best speak with the tongues of men and angels, but he that most loves God, that is, that most loves the goodness of the divine nature; he has most of God, and the light of God within him."

Thus ended honest old John the shepherd. And now, Academicus, if your learned curiosity could be as much affected with what he has said, as my ignorant simplicity is, you would drop all that you had said, as the effect of such impatience as is much fitter to bring darkness than light into your soul. You own, that, in the works of Behmen, the greatest points of Christianity are most fundamentally opened. And how can you be more self-condemned, than by desiring more? But the truth is, you have only heard these fundamental matters; you have only received them as good notions; are content with the hearsay of them; and are therefore impatient to have more of this hearsay knowledge, that you may become more learned in high matters, and more able to talk about the ground and depth of Christian doctrines. You know, as well as I can tell you, that this is your joy in Jacob Behmen; and thence it is, that you have no patience, when you can't come at his meaning, so as to add it to your number of notions. And thus you forget how often he tells you, and how fundamentally he proves to you, that this notional knowledge, the treasure of human reason, is the very builder of Babel. Whilst you are under the guidance of our own Babylonian reason, you can have no good either from the scriptures, or the writings of Jacob Behmen; but will be hunting after notes and commentaries to help you to notions which only delude your mind with the empty shadows of knowledge. Would you know the truths of Jacob Behmen, you must see that you stand where he stood; you must begin where he began, and seek only, as he tells you he did, the heart of God, that he might be saved from the wrath of sin and Satan; and then it was, that the light of God broke in upon him. But you, full of the power of your own reason, want to stand upon the top of his ladder, without the trouble of beginning at the bottom, and going up step by step. But I believe you had rather have Theophilus speak than me; and therefore I shall now leave you to him.

Theophilus. Truly, Academicus, I am much of the same mind with honest Rusticus, though perhaps I might not have spoken it so bluntly as he has done. You seem to be in the same error, that most of my learned friends are in, with regard to Jacob Behmen, who, though they greatly admire him, yet, of all people, receive the least true benefit from him. They have been trained up in dispute and controversy, accustomed to determine everything by the light of their own reason, and

know no other guide to truth. And therefore, till, sooner or later, they come to know the falseness of this guide, they can have no entrance into the region of divine light; but must be forced to take their part, not of truth, but of some such system of opinions, as their birth and education has placed them in. Thus, a learned Papist has one creed, and the learned Protestant has another; not because truth and light has helped him to it; but because birth and education have given to the one popish, to the other Protestant eyes. For reason, which is the eye or light of both, finds as much to its purpose, and as many good tools to work with, in popish, as in Protestant opinions. Learning and criticism are an open field to both, and he only has the greatest harvest, who is best skilled in reaping.

Academicus. I perceive then, that I must renounce all my learning and reason, if I am to understand Jacob Behmen. I cannot say, that I am resolved to purchase it at so great a price. I hope the knowledge to be had from the scriptures, will be sufficient for me, without his deep matters. I did not expect to find you so great an enemy to learning.

Theophilus. Dear Academicus, be not so uneasy; I am no more an enemy to learning, than I am to that art which builds mills to grind our corn, and houses for ourselves to dwell in. I esteem the liberal arts and sciences as the noblest of human things; I desire no man to dislike or renounce his skill in ancient or modern languages; his knowledge of medals, pictures, paintings, history, geography, or chronology; I have no more dislike of these things in themselves, than of the art of throwing silk, or making lace. But then all these things are to stand in their proper places, and everyone kept within its own sphere.

Now all this circle of science and arts, whether liberal or mechanic, belongs solely to the natural man; they are the work of his natural powers and faculties; and the most wicked, sensual, unjust person, who regards neither God, nor man, may yet be one of the ablest proficient in any or all of them. But now Christian redemption is quite of another nature; it has no affinity to any of these arts or sciences; it belongs not to the outward natural man, but is purely for the sake of an inward, heavenly nature, that was lost, or put to death, in paradise, and buried under the flesh and blood of the earthly, natural man. It breathes a spark of life into this inward, hidden, or lost man; by which it feels and finds itself, and rises up in new awakened desires after its lost Father, and native country. This is Christian redemption; on the one side, it is the heavenly divine life offering itself again to the inward man, that had lost it. On the other side, it is the hope, the faith, and desire of this inward man, hungering, and thirsting, stretching after, and calling upon this divine and heavenly life.

Now, whether this awakened, new man breathes forth his faith and hope towards this divine life, in Hebrew, Greek, or English sounds, or in no one of them, can be of no significancy: a man that can do it only in one, or in all these languages, is neither farther from, nor nearer to, this redeeming life of God. Or can you think, that the heavenly life must more willingly enter into, and open itself in, a man that has many languages, than in him, who knows only one? Or, that a man, who can make high Dutch, Welsh, or Greek grammars, must have a stronger faith, a more lively hope, and a more continual thirst after God, than he who can but poorly spell in his mother tongue? But now, if this is too absurd to be supposed; then, my friend, without the least injury done, or the least enmity shown, to learning, science, reason, and criticism, you must place them just where I have done, amongst the things and ornaments of this earthly life, and such things as, in their own nature, are

as easy to be had, and as highly enjoyed, by men that despise all goodness, as by those who fear God, and eschew evil. And therefore, sir, no truths concerning the divine and heavenly life are to be brought for trial before this learned bar, where both jury and judges are born and bred, live and move and have their being, in another world, which have no more power of feeling the divine life, than an eagle's eyes can look into the kingdom of God. If you, my friend, having read many old Greek and Latin books, should intend to publish Homer, or Caesar's Commentaries, with critical notes, I should have nothing to object to your ability; you might be as well qualified by such means for such a work, as one man is to make baskets, or another traps to catch flies. But if, because of this skill in old Greek and Latin, you should seem to yourself, or others, to be well qualified to write notes upon the spirit and meaning of the words of Christ, I should tell you, that your undertaking was quite unnatural, and as impossible to be free from error, as when a blind man undertakes to set forth the beauty of different colors. For the doctrines of redemption belong no more to the natural man, than the beauty of colors to him, that never saw the light. And from this unnatural procedure it is, that the scriptures are as useful to the Socinian or Arian, the papist or the Protestant; and they can as easily, by the light of reason, charge one another with absurdities, and confute each other's opinion, as two blind men can quarrel and reject each other's notions of red and green.

Jesus Christ is the light of that heavenly man that died in paradise; and therefore nothing in man, but that awakened seed of life, that died in paradise, can have the least sensibility or capacity for receiving the redeeming power of Jesus Christ. But light and life have no dependence upon words or phrases; they both can only proceed from a birth, whether it be the light and life of God, or the light and life of this world. How absurd would it be, to suppose, that a man, naturally blind, must be taught grammar or logic, to fit him for the reception of the light of the sun, and the knowledge of colors? Yet not less absurd, than to think, that skill in Hebrew and Greek words can open the light of God and heaven in the soul. If you now, Academicus, can set this matter in a juster light, I am ready to hear you.

Academicus. Standing upon the ground, that you, Theophilus, stand upon, all that you have said of reason, science, historical knowledge, or critical skill in words, is unanswerable. For what can all these things avail, if redemption is purely a birth of the divine nature, light, and Spirit of God, offered to fallen man; which birth can only be received by the faith, hope, and desire of that inward man, which is divine in us? For nothing else can have any hunger or thirst after the divine nature, but that which is itself born of it.

Now this true ground of the Christian redemption gives the greatest glory to God and comfort to man. It explains the fact, why plain and simple souls, having their inward man kindled into love, hope, and faith in God, are capable of the highest divine illumination; whilst learned students, full of art and science, can live and die without the least true knowledge of God and Christ, and slaves to all the lusts of the flesh. For thus, this redemption belongs only to one sort of people, and yet is common to all. It is equally near, and equally open, to every son of man. There is no difference between learned and unlearned, between Jew or Greek, male or female, Scythian or barbarian, bond or free; but the same Lord is God over all, and equally nigh to all that call upon him. It is told us, as the glory of the divine goodness, that "it giveth fodder to the cattle; and feedeth the young ravens that cry unto it." What cattle? Surely not only to the cattle of Jacob; or only to the young ravens that cry in the land of Judah. Yet this would be much more consistent with the goodness of

the one universal God, than to hold, that only the sons of Jacob, or the children of the circumcision, were in the covenant of God's redemption. But now, though this one ground of Christian redemption stands in the highest degree of plainness from scripture, and is absolutely certain from the very nature of the thing; yet, till I met with honest Rusticus, I never conversed with any man, or read any book, that gave me the least hint of it. When I had taken my degrees, I consulted several great divines, to put me in a method of studying divinity. Had I said to them, "Sirs what must I do to be saved?" they would have prescribed hellebore to me, or directed me to the physician as a vapored enthusiast. And yet I am now fully satisfied, that this one question ought to be the sole enquiry of him, who desires to be a true divine. And was our savior himself on earth, who surely could do more for me, than all the libraries in the world; yet I need have asked no more divinity-knowledge of him, than is contained in the one question.

It would take up near half a day, to tell you the work which my learned friends have cut out for me. One told me, that Hebrew words are all; that they must be read without points; and then the Old Testament is an opened book. He recommended to me a cart load of lexicons, critics, and commentators, upon the Hebrew Bible. Another tells me, the Greek Bible is the best; that it corrects the Hebrew in many places; and refers me to a large number of books learnedly writ in defense of it. Another tells me, that church history is the main matter; that I must begin with the first fathers, and follow them through every age of the church, not forgetting to take the lives of the Roman emperors along with me, as striking great light into the state of the church in their times. Then I must have recourse to all the councils held, and the canons made, in every age which would enable me to see with my own eyes the great corruptions of the Council of Trent. Another, who is not very fond of ancient matters, but wholly bent upon rational Christianity, tells me, I need go no higher than the reformation; that Calvin and Cranmer were very great men; that Chillingworth and Locke ought always to lie upon my table; that I must get an entire set of those learned volumes wrote against popery in King James's reign; and also be well versed in all the discourses which Mr. Boyle's and Lady Moyer's lectures have produced: and then, says he, you will be a match for our greatest enemies, which are the popish priests, and modern Deists. My tutor is very liturgical; he desires me, of all things to get all the collections that I can of the ancient liturgies, and all the authors that treat of such matters; who, he says, are very learned, and very numerous. He has been many years making observations upon them, and is now clear, as to the time, when certain little particles got entrance into the liturgies, and others were by degrees dropped. He has a friend abroad, in search of ancient manuscript liturgies; for, by the bye, said he, at parting, I have some suspicion that our sacrament of the Lord's Supper is essentially defective, for want of having a little water in the wine. Another learned friend tells me, the Clementine Constitutions is the book of books; and that all that lies loose and scattered in the New Testament, stands there in its true order and form; and though he won't say, that Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiston are in the right; yet it might be useful to me to read all the Arian and Socinian writers, provided I stood upon my guard, and did it with caution. The last person I consulted, advised me to get all the histories of the rise and progress of heresies, and of the lives and characters of heretics. These histories, he said, contract the matter; bring truth and error close in view; and I should find all that collected in a few pages, which would have cost me some years to have got together. He also desired me to be well versed in all the casuistical writers, and chief schoolmen; for they debate matters to the bottom; dissect every virtue, and every vice, into its many degrees and parts; and show, how near they can come to one another without touching. And this knowledge, he said,

might be useful to me, when I came to be a parish priest.

Following the advice of all these counselors, as well as I could, I lighted my candle early in the morning, and put it out late at night. In this labor I had been sweating for some years, till Rusticus, at my first acquaintance with him, seeing my way of life, said to me, "Had you lived about seventeen hundred years ago, you had stood just in the same place as I stand now. I cannot read; and therefore," says he, "all these hundreds of thousands of disputing books, and doctrine books, which these seventeen hundred years have produced, stand not in my way; they are the same thing to me, as if they had never been. And had you lived at the time mentioned, you had just escaped them all, as I do now; because, though you are a very good reader, there was then none of them to be read.

"Could you therefore, be content to be one of the primitive Christians, who were as good as any that have been since; you may spare all this labor. Take only the gospel into your hands; deny yourself; renounce the lusts of the flesh; set your affections on things above; call upon God for his Holy Spirit; walk by faith, and not by sight; adore the holy Deity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose image and likeness you was at first created; and in whose name and power you have been baptized, to be again the living likeness, and holy habitation, of his life, and light, and Holy Spirit.

"Look up to Christ, as your redeemer, your regenerator, your second Adam; look at him, as truly he is, the wisdom and power of God, sitting at his right hand in heaven, giving forth gifts unto men; governing, sanctifying, teaching, and enlightening with his Holy Spirit, all those that are spiritually-minded; who live in faith, and hope, and prayer, to be redeemed from the nature and power of this evil world. Follow but this simple, plain spirit of the gospel, loving God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself; and then you are Christ's disciple, and have his authority to let the dead bury their dead.

"God is a spirit, in whom you live and move and have your being; and he stays not till you are a great scholar, but till you turn from evil, and love goodness, to manifest his holy presence, power, and life, within you. It is the love of goodness, that must do all for you; this is the art of arts; and when this is the ruling spirit of your heart, then Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will come unto you, and make their abode with you, and lead you into all truth, though you knew no more books than I do." So ended Rusticus. It is not easy for me, Theophilus, to tell you, how much good I received from this simple instruction of honest Master Rusticus; for master I may well call him, since he, in so few words, taught me a better lesson of wisdom, than ever I had heard before.

What a project was it, to be grasping after the knowledge of all the opinions, doctrines, disputes, heresies, schisms, councils, canons, alterations, additions, inventions, corruptions, reformations, sects, and churches, which 1700 years had brought forth through all the extent of the Christian world! What a project this, in order to be a divine, that is, in order to bear true witness to the power of Christ, as a deliverer from the evil of flesh, and blood, and hell, and death, and a raiser of a new birth and life from above! For as this is the divine work of Christ, so he only is a true and able divine, that can bear a faithful testimony to this divine work of Christ.

How easy was it for me to have seen with Rusticus, that all this labyrinth of learned enquiry into such a dark, thorny wilderness of notions, facts, and opinions, could signify no more to me now, to my own salvation, to my interest in Christ, and obtaining the Holy Spirit of God, than if I had lived

before it had any beginning! But the blind appetite of learning gave me no leisure to apprehend so plain a truth. Books of divinity indeed I have not done with; but I will esteem none to be such, but those that make known to my heart the inward power and redemption of Jesus Christ. Nor will I seek for anything even from such books, but that which I ask of God in prayer; viz., how better to know, more to abhor and resist the evil that is in my own nature; and how to attain a supernatural birth of the divine life brought forth in me: all besides this is pushpin. The shipwrecked man wants only to get to shore. Did we see the truth of our state as he does, we should have but one want, and that would be, to get possession of our first created state. There is no misery but in the evil that is in our own fallen state; this is our shipwreck, and great distress; nor is there any happiness, but in having the first life of God, and all goodness, opened again in the soul. He that is not intent upon this one thing needful, is not a wise Christian, much less a divine, or one qualified to make known to others the mystery of the power of Christ in the work of redemption. But now I go back to that which I first spoke of; and though I give up all that I said of putting out Jacob Behmen in new language, with comments. yet I must still desire, that, some way or other, he may be made more plain and intelligible; call it by what name you please.

Theophilus. Jacob Behmen may be considered, (1.) as a teacher of the true ground of the Christian religion. (2.) As a discoverer of the false anti-Christian church, from its first rise in Cain, through every age of the world, to its present state in all and every sect of the present divided Christendom. (3.) As a guide to the truth of all the mysteries of the kingdom of God. In these three respects, which contain all that anyone can possibly want to know or learn from any teacher; he is the strongest, the plainest, the most open, intelligible, awakening, convincing writer, that ever was. As to all these three matters, he speaks to everyone, as himself saith, in the sound of a trumpet. And here to pretend to be an explainer of him, or make him fitter for our apprehension, in these great matters, is as vain, as if a man should pipe through a straw, to make the sound of a trumpet better heard by us.

Further, he may be considered, (4.) as a relater of depths opened in himself, of wonders which his spirit had seen and felt in his ternario sancto. Now in this respect he is no teacher, nor his reader a learner; but all that he saith is only for the same end as St. Paul spoke of his having been in the third heaven, and hearing things not possible to be spoken in human words. And yet in these matters it is, that most of his readers, especially if they are scholars, are chiefly employed; everyone in his way trying to become masters of them. Thus, when he first appeared in English, many persons of this nation, of the greatest wit and abilities, became his readers; who, instead of entering into his one only design, which was their own regeneration from an earthly to an heavenly life, turned chemists, and set up furnaces to regenerate metals, in search of the philosopher's stone. And yet, of all men in the world, no one has so deeply, and from so true a ground, laid open the exceeding vanity of such labor, and utter impossibility of success in it from any art or skill in the use of fire. And this must with truth be affirmed of him, that there is not any possible error, that you can fall into in the use of his books, but what he gives you notice of beforehand, and warns you against it in the most solemn manner; and tells you, that the blame must be yours, if you fall into it. Neither is there any question that you can put, nor advice or direction that you can ask, but what he has over and over spoke to; telling you, in the plainest manner, what the mystery is which his books contain; how, and by whom, and for what end, they are to be read.

There are two sorts of people to whom he forbids the use of his books, as incapable of any benefit from them, and who will rather receive hurt, than any good from them. The first sort he shows in these words: "Loving reader, if thou lovest the vanity of the flesh still, and art not in an earnest purpose of the way to the new birth, intending to be a new man, then leave the above-written words in these prayers unnamed, or else they will turn to a judgment of God in thee." { *Repent. p. 42} Again, "Reader, I admonish you sincerely, if you be not in the way of the prodigal, or lost son, returning to his father again, that you leave my book, and read it not; it will do you harm. But if you will not take warning, I will be guiltless; blame nobody but yourself." { **Three Prin.} In this advice, so different from that of other writers, he shows the truth and reality of his own regenerated state; and that the very same spirit speaks in him, as formerly said, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Unless a man deny himself, and forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. No man can come unto me, except the Father draweth him. Except a man be born again from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He that is of God, heareth God's word. Come unto me, all ye that labor, are weary and heavy-laden." For all these texts of scripture say that very self-same thing that Jacob Behmen doth, when he absolutely requires his reader to be in the way of the returning prodigal. It is not rules of morality observed, or an outward blameless form of life, that will do: for pride, vanity, envy, self-love, and love of the world, can be, and often are, the heart of such a morality of life. But the state of the lost son is quite another thing; and must be the state of every man: as soon as he comes to himself, and has seeing eyes, he will then, like him, see himself far from home; that he has lost his first paradise, his heavenly Father, and the dignity of his first birth; that he is a poor, beggarly slave in a foreign land, hungry, ragged, and starving, amongst the lowest kind of beasts, not so well fed and clothed as they are: when thus finding himself, he saith, "I will arise, and go to my Father," then has he his first fitness for the mysteries opened in Jacob Behmen's writings; for they are addressed to man only in this supposed state; they have no fitness to him but in this state; and therefore no one, whether Jew, Christian, or Deist, who does not find and feel himself to be the very lost son described in the parable, has any capacity to receive benefit from them, but they will be a continual stumbling block to him. And it is just thus with the gospel itself; wherever it is received and professed, without something of this preparation of heart, without this sensibility of the lost son, there it can only be a stone of stumbling, and help the earthly man to form a religion of notions and opinions from the unfelt meaning of the letter of the gospel.

Secondly, the other sort of people, whom he excludes from his books, and for whom he has writ nothing, are the men of reason, who give themselves up to the light of reason, as the true touchstone of divine truths. To these he declares over and over, that he has not his light from reason; and that he writes nothing to reason. "The rational man," saith he, "understands nothing in reference to God; for it is without and not in God." Again, "The true understanding must flow from the inward ground, out of the living Word of God. In which inward ground, all my knowledge concerning the divine and natural ground, hath taken its rise, beginning, and understanding. I am not born of the school of this world, and am a plain simple man; but by God's Spirit and will am brought, without my own purpose and desire, into divine knowledge in high natural searchings." { *Epist. p. 121.} Again, "He that will learn to understand the true way, let him depart from and forsake his own reason." { **p. 138} "If my writings," says he, "come into your hands, I would that you should look upon them as of a child's, in whom the highest has driven his work; for there is that couched therein, which no reason may understand or comprehend." {Ibid. p. 141.} Again, "Reason must be blinded, kept under, and not allowed to stir." { *p. 68.} Again, "Reason must yield

up its own hearing and life, and give itself up to God, that God may live in the understanding of man, else there is no finding in the divine wisdom. All that is taught and spoken concerning God, without the Spirit of God, is but Babel." {**Epist. p. 9} Again, "We must wholly reject our own reason; it is not available to help us to the light, but is a mere leading astray, and keeping us back. This we intimate to the reader, that he may know what he readeth. Let none account it for a work of outward reason." Again, "Speaking of the mystery, {Three-fold L. p. 68,88.} he saith, "pray to God the most high, that he would be pleased to open the door of knowledge, without which no man will understand my writings; for they surpass the astral reason; they apprehend and comprehend the divine birth; and therefore only the like spirit can understand them aright. No reasoning or speculating reacheth them, unless the mind be illuminated from God, to the finding of which the way is faithfully shown to the seeking reader."* {*Epist. p. 138} And now, Academicus, you may see how needless it is to ask me, or anyone else, to help you to understand his works: he himself has given you all the assistance that can be given: he has laid open before you, in the utmost plainness, both the nature of the mystery, and the one only possible way that you can partake of it.

Academicus. You speak often of the mystery: pray, what am I to understand by it?

Theophilus. You are to understand by it, the deep and true ground of all things. A mystery, in which the birth and beginning of eternal nature, or the first workings of the inconceivable God, opening and manifesting his hidden triune Deity in an outward state of glory in the splendor of united fire, light, and spirit, all kindled and distinguished, all united and beatified by the hidden three. In this eternal nature, all inward powers, all the hidden riches of the incomprehensible Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are from eternity to eternity brought forth into outward majesty, and visible glory. In which triune opening of heavenly glory, power, and majesty, the triune God beholdeth himself as in his own manifestation, is clothed as with his own garment, dwelleth as in his own habitation, and worketh all his wonders of wisdom and omnipotence in and by, and according to, the possible powers of this eternal nature. For this eternal nature is the first possibility of all after-beings and things; for before, or without, this eternal nature, all is an eternal, silent, still, unmovable, unperceivable nothingness; and this eternal nature is the first manifestation, the first opening of the divine omnipotence; and in it are included, in its own infinite bounds, all the height and depth, and extent, of the divine wisdom and powers. All that God is, and can do, or bring forth from himself, is done in and by the working of his triune spirit in this eternal nature. This is the great scene of his eternal wisdom and omnipotence, in which new wonders are eternally rising up, and declaring the fathomless depths of the riches of the invisible triune Deity. And to say, that God can do no more, than what he can do through and by the possible powers of this eternal nature, is only saying, that he can do more than what he can do by himself, because this eternal nature is the eternal manifestation of the total God, or an out-birth of that which the Deity is, in its invisible power and Deity.

Out of this transcendent eternal nature, which is as universal and immense as the Deity itself, do all the highest beings, cherubims and seraphims, all the hosts of angels, and all intelligent spirits, receive their birth, existence, substance, and form. They are all so many different, finite, bounded forms of the heavenly fire, and light of eternal nature, into which creaturely beings the invisible triune God breatheth his invisible Spirit, by which they become both the true children and likeness of the invisible Deity, and also the true offspring of his eternal nature; and are fitted to rejoice with

God, to live in the life of God, and live and work, and have their being, in that eternal nature, or kingdom of heaven, in which the Deity itself liveth and worketh. And they are one, united in one, God in them, and they in God, according to the prayer of Christ for his disciples; that they, and he, and his holy Father, might be united in one.* {*John 16:1-33} This is in part what you are first to understand concerning the mystery.

But, secondly, it is a mystery, in which the creation and fall of angels, with all its consequences in them, and their kingdom; in which the system of this visible universe, why, and from what, and how it came to be as it is; the birth of the sun and the planets, why and how they come to have such difference in nature, place, and office, as also of all the stars; the nature of every creaturely life, and ground of its vast variety; the cause of every inanimate dead thing; a mystery in which the creation, dignity, and perfection, of the first angelic man in paradise; the whole kingdom of nature, and kingdom of grace; their connection, difference, and mutually affecting and working upon one another under the providence of the invisible Spirit of God, from the beginning to the end of time, are all unfolded from their first root and cause.

Thirdly, it is a mystery, in which the ground of Christian redemption, its whole nature, absolute necessity, and the working of all its parts both in the redeemer and in the redeemed, are set forth in the utmost degree of clearness; where the whole process of Christ, as incarnate, living, suffering, dying, rising from the dead, ascending into heaven, and sitting at the right hand of God, and governing his church on earth by his Holy Spirit; and all the practical duties of the gospel, whether of faith and hope, or of self-denial; dying to this world, and strict conformity to the life and Spirit of Christ; are all demonstrated from the deepest ground of the nature of things, to be absolutely necessary to the recovery and redemption of the fallen human nature.

This, sir, is, in some degree, the mystery which it has pleased the Spirit of God to open in this plain and unlearned man.

Academicus. Well, Theophilus, I entirely consent to this account you have given of it, and think it is sufficiently supported by what is to be found in his books; they seem to mean all these great matters which you mentioned. But then, sir, give me leave to tell you, that I think it is impossible for you to defend what you have said above concerning reason; or to show the unreasonableness of my demanding rational illustrations and comments. For if this is the truth, that his works contain the ground and philosophy of nature, and all creatures; surely they must not only allow the use of our reason, but call for the highest and most acute exercise of it. For what can enter into the reasons and philosophy of things, but reason? Or what do all these great matters appeal to, but to our reason? I see no possibility of denying this; and if this be granted, all that has been said about silencing our reason, must be given up.

Theophilus. The conclusion, my friend, that you here think to be so just and strong, as not possible to be denied, is so far from being so, that it is a glaring absurdity; and the quite contrary to that one only true conclusion, which you should have made, and which so easily and naturally flowed from what was said. For if the mystery is the deep ground of all things, of all nature, and all creatures. then the one conclusion that infallibly flows from it, is this, that no acuteness or ability of natural reason can so much as look into it. For natural reason is no older than flesh and blood; it has no higher a nature or birth than natural doubting; it had no existence when nature began its first workings, and therefore can bear no witness to them. It was not present, had no eyes, when things

first came forth; it never stood in the center, from whence the birth of everything must arise; it never saw the forming of the first seeds of every life: and yet the mystery, you see, contains all this: and therefore the one plain and necessary conclusion is this; that natural reason is, and must be, as incapable of entering into this mystery, as flesh and blood is incapable of entering into the kingdom of heaven.

Behold, now, what a flagrant proof you have given of the vanity, weakness, and blindness of natural reason in divine matters. Your reason saw, with the utmost certainty, that the mystery must be an appeal to reason, merely because it contained such an height and depth of a divine philosophy; and yet the height and depth of its matters is the one full proof, that reason can have nothing to do with it. This may show you by what means Babel has built itself all over the Christian world. For, by the light of this Babylonian reason, the defenders and opposers of doctrines confute one another with such a certainty and strength of reason, as you saw, that reason must be the only judge of the mystery, from which it is just as much excluded by its own nature, as the mole under ground is, by its nature, excluded from the flight and sight of the towering eagle.

Academicus. Pray then tell me, how a man is to attain the knowledge of the mystery, or have any share in the light of it.

Theophilus. There is but one possible way, and that is this: it must be born in you. All true knowledge, either of God or nature, must be born in you. You cannot possibly know anything of God, but so far as God is manifested in you; so far as his light and Holy Spirit is born in you, as it is born in him, and liveth and worketh in you, as it liveth and worketh in him. A distant, absent, separate God, is an unknown God. For God can only manifest God, as light can only manifest light, and darkness make darkness to be known.

Again, you can have no real knowledge of nature, and its inward working power, but so far as the workings of nature, and the birth of things, are a working and birth in yourself. Natural reason may trade in the outside of things; it may measure, and make drafts of magnitude, height, and distance of things on the earth, and above the earth; it may make many and fine experiments of the powers of every element: but then this is going no farther into the ground of nature, than when the potter makes curious vessels with his clay and fire. To count the stars, to observe their places or motions, is just the same height of natural knowledge, as when the shepherd counts his sheep, and observes their time of breeding. This world, with all its stars, elements, and creatures, is come out of the invisible world; it has not the smallest thing, or the smallest quality of anything, but what is come forth from thence; and therefore every quality of everything is what it is, and worketh that which worketh, by a secret power and nature in and from the invisible world. Bitter, sweet, sour, hard, soft, hot, cold. have all of them their first seed and birth in the invisible world, called eternal nature. The irrational animals of this world feel all these things: the rational man goes farther; he can reason and dispute about their outward causes and effects: but the mystery of eternal nature must first be opened in man, before he can give the divine philosophy of them. For as they all come from thence, have their nature, birth, and growth, from thence; so no philosophy, but that which comes from thence, can give the true ground of them.

If man himself was not all these three things, viz., (1.) a birth of the holy Deity; (2.) a birth of eternal nature; and, (3.) also a microcosm of all this great outward world; that is, of everything in it, its stars and elements; and if the properties of every creaturely life were not in an hidden birth in him;

no omnipotence of God could open the knowledge of divine and natural things in him. For God can only manifest that, which there is to be manifested; and therefore only open that, which before lay unopened, and as in a state of hiddenness or death. Nothing can come forth from man, or any creature, but that which first had its seed in him; and to think, that any knowledge can be put into him, but that which is a birth of his own life, is as absurd as to think, that the tree and its branches may first grow, and then be brought to the root.

We are led into mistakes about this matter from the common practice of the world, which calls everything knowledge, that the reason, wit, or humor of man prompts him to discourse about; whether it be fiction, conjecture, report, history, criticism, rhetoric, or oratory: all this passes for sterling knowledge; whereas it is only the activity of reason, playing with its own empty notions. From this idea of knowledge it is, that when this rational man turns his thoughts to the study of divinity, he is content with the same knowledge of divine matters, as he had in these exercises of his reason; and he proceeds in the same manner, as when he studied history and rhetoric.

He turns his mind to hearsay, to conjecture, to criticism, and great names; and thinks he is then a member of the true church, when he knows it as plainly as he knows the ancient commonwealth of Rome. His knowledge of the being of God stands upon the same bottom, and is made known to him by the same means and methods of proof, as he comes to be assured, that once upon a time there was a first man, and his name was Adam. His knowledge of the kingdom of heaven is looked upon to be sufficient, as soon as he knows it, as he knows that there is such a place as Constantinople. When he turns his inquiries into the mysteries of Christian redemption, he looks as much out of himself as when he is searching into the antiquities of Greece; and appeals to the same helps for his knowledge, as when he wants to know the inward structure of Solomon's temple, and all its services. This is the great delusion which has long overspread the Christian world; and all countries, and all libraries, are the proof of it. It is this power and dominion of reason in religious matters, that Jacob Behmen so justly calls the anti-Christ in Babel; for it leads men from the life and truth of the mysteries of Christ, to put a carnal trust in a confused multitude of contrary notions, inventions, and opinions. And the thing is unavoidable, it cannot be otherwise with reason; it cannot do more good with, or make a better use of, gospel doctrines; it is anti-Christ as soon as ever it is admitted to debate and state the nature of any divine truth. And that for these two great reasons: first, because it has absolutely the same incapacity for it, as the man that is born blind hath for the light. Wherein now lieth the incapacity of the blind man, to speak or think anything truly about light? It is because he is born and bred in another world, where nothing of light ever did or can enter; it is because there is the gulf of a whole birth betwixt him and the light of this world; and therefore, though he lives ever so long, reasons ever so much, or hears ever so many speeches, about the light, all that he gets by it is only more false ideas of the unknown thing.

Now this is strictly the incapacity of reason, to speak, or think anything truly of the divine life. It is because it is born and bred in another world, in the darkness of flesh and blood, into which no perception or sensibility of God and heaven can enter; it is because there is the gulf of a whole birth betwixt it, and the light of God and heaven; and therefore, let reason, from age to age, hear, read, and dispute ever so much about the light of God and heaven, all that it can get by it, is only to be enriched with more and more fictions and falsities about the unknown thing.

Secondly, natural reason, whenever judging or ruling in divine matters, must be anti-Christ, because it cannot make any other use of the mysteries of religion, or do anything else with them, but in the same spirit, and for the same ends, that it receiveth and useth the things of this world. It matters not, what are the names or natures of the things, whether you call them spiritual or temporal: natural reason can make but one and the same use of them; it can only turn them to an earthly use, to worldly prosperity, to private interest, honor, power, or distinction. And the thing is unavoidable, it is impossible to be otherwise; it is not a fault that reason might amend, if it would; but is as much its own nature, as it is natural to flame to ascend. Now everything must act according to its nature; every kind of life must be for itself, for its own good. Now reason has no higher a birth and nature, than the spirit of this world; it must be as worldly as its birth is, and cannot possibly have anything else but worldly views, and the interests of its own flesh and blood, in everything that it can make any use of. This is as essential to the natural reason of man, as to the natural subtlety of every beast; for they have both the same original from the light and life of this world, have both the same earthly nature, and can act only in an earthly manner, to serve the same ends of an earthly life. The reason of the one has no more of God and the divine nature in it, than the subtlety of the other. And hence it is, that man, following only the cunning of his natural reason, is often more mischievous than the worst of beasts. And thus, you see how reason, ruling in divine things, is and must be anti-Christ: first, as it turns the living mysteries of God into lifeless ideas, and vain opinions; and, secondly, as it sets up a worldly kingdom of strife, hatred, envy, division, and persecution, in defense of them. And therefore it is a fundamental truth, that man has no capacity for divine knowledge, till the particle of divine life, lost in the fall, is awakened; in which alone, the mystery of God and the divine nature can have a birth.

Academicus. You have carried your point, Theophilus, with a high hand, and I rejoice in seeing this matter so well proved. But still I would ask you something, that I know not how to express; I would fain understand more clearly, how this mystery of God, and eternal nature, is to be born in me.

Theophilus. Everything, Academicus, is, and must be, its own proof; and can only be known from and by itself. There is no knowledge of anything, but where the thing itself is, and is found, and possessed. Life, and every kind and degree of life, is only known by life; and so far as life reaches, so far is there knowledge, and no farther. Whatever knowledge you can get by the searching and working of your own active reason, is only like that knowledge, which you may be said to have got, when you have searched for a needle in a load of straw, till you have found it. For nothing that is brought into the mind from without, or is only an idea beheld by our reasoning faculty, is any more our knowledge, than the seeing our natural face in a glass, is seeing our own selves. And all the ideas or images that your reason can form of any absent, unpossessed thing, is no more a part of your own knowledge, than your drawing a picture of your own hand is making a member of your own body. It is therefore a vain and fruitless inquiry, to be asking beforehand for the knowledge of any unpossessed matters; for knowledge can only be yours, as sickness and health is yours, not conveyed into you by a hearsay notion, but the fruit of your own perception and sensibility of that which you are, and that which you have in yourself. How often have you been warned against this procedure, in words like these? "Therefore let the reader be warned not to dive farther into these very deep writings, nor plunge his will deeper, than so far as he apprehendeth: he should always rest satisfied with his apprehension for in his apprehension, he standeth yet in that which hath its reality; and therefore he erreth not, how deep soever the Spirit leadeth him: for to one more will be

given than to another. And this is the only mark to be observed, that every one continue steadfast in humility towards God, and submit himself, that he may make the will and the deed as he pleaseth. When you do that, you are in yourself as dead; for you desire nothing but God's will, and the will of God is your life, which goeth inward even to the opening of the highest mysteries."* {*Threefold L. p. 158.}

One would have thought, Academicus, that this advice, if only from the uncommon nature of it, should have had more effect upon you. For it is not only new to you, but to every reader; there being nothing like it, either for the sense, the sobriety, or the depth of its matter, ever given by the wisest of philosophers to their readers.

Truth, my friend, whatever you may think of it, is no less than the savior and redeemer of the world.

Hear therefore its own language: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and come after me." He does not say, "Let him get a clear and distinct idea of me, what, and how I am God and man in the unity of my person"; he only tells him what he is to part with, what he must put off, to be made a child of the light. Search and look where you will, this denial of self is the one only possible way to the truth. For nothing has separated us from truth, nothing stands betwixt us and truth, but this self of an earthly life, which is not from God, but from our wandering out of our first created state.

God created us in and for the light; and had Adam kept his first state, he had not been an ignorant, blind pilgrim in the darkness of this world, but the illustrious opener of all its wonders in the light of God. But as this light and knowledge was lost in Adam, so it can only be recovered by him who came to restore all that was lost, and who justly called himself the light of the world. Would you therefore be a disciple of truth, you must not, with Pilate, ask, "What is truth?" or consult the schools, how you shall form an idea of it: but you must alter your life, put a stop to all earthly lusts, renounce all that you are, and have from self; give up all the workings of your own reason, and your own will; and then, and then only, are you fitted for that unction from above which can teach you all things. But till Christ, who is the one fountain of life and light, be opened in you; it is in vain, that you rise up early, and late take rest, in quest of truth; for he himself hath said, "Without me, ye can do nothing." And every son of earthly Adam, however naturally enriched with the spirit, and light, and arts of this world, is born, and must remain, a spirit in prison, till Christ is found to be an inward preacher, and light within him. As he is the one resurrection from the dead, so is he the one deliverer from everything that has the nature of death, darkness, and ignorance. And to expect seeing eyes, hearing ears, and sensibility of heart, from anything but that eternal Word, by which we were at first made, is robbing God and Christ of more honor, is a more idolatrous departure from the true worship and dependence upon him, than if we sometimes hoped to have good from this or that saint's praying for us. For this is a truth, that admits of no restriction, but reaches from one end of the earth to the other, that as no man can come unto the Father, but through the Son; so no one can come at any divine knowledge either in grace or nature, but through him alone. The schools of this world are of no higher a nature, than the markets of this world; and, when rightly used, serve only to the end of this earthly life. But as markets and traffic seldom keep within their just bounds, but become serviceable to vanity, earthly lusts, and all the luxury of life; so it mostly happens in our learned labors; we grow old, and blear-eyed, in studies that nourish pride and

envy, division and contention; and only help our old man to be content with the riches of his fallen nature, and feel no necessity of being born again. Would you therefore be a divine philosopher, you must be a true Christian; for darkness is everywhere, but in the kingdom of God, and truth nowhere to be found by man, but in a new birth from above. Man was created in and for the truth; that is, he was created in the truth of the divine light, to see and hear, to taste and feel, to find and enjoy all things in the truth of the divine life brought forth in him. And therefore it is, that for fallen man there is but one remedy; it is only the truth that can make him free. Truth is the one only resting-place of the soul; it is its atonement and peace with God; all is, and must be, disquiet, a succession of lying vanities, till the soul is again in the truth, in which God at first created it. And therefore said the Truth, "Learn of me; for I am meek, and lowly of heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

Academicus. Pray, Theophilus, stop a while: surely your zeal carries you too far. All ages of the world have seemed to agree in this, that the gospel teaches purely the simplicity of a godly life; calls no man to be a philosopher, nor gives the smallest instruction in matters that relate to philosophy.

Theophilus. All this, Academicus, is very true; but then, this very simplicity and plainness of the gospel, turning man only from this world, to a faith, and hope, and desire of God, is the one reason, and full proof, that it alone is a true guide into the highest school of divine wisdom and philosophy; not only because goodness is our greatest wisdom, but because the mysteries of God, of grace, of nature, of time and eternity, can no other possible way be opened in man, but by this simplicity of a godly life taught in the gospel; because only the godly life hath knowledge of God; just as the creaturely life hath only knowledge of the creature, and the painful life hath knowledge of pain. The scripture saith, "that only the Spirit of God knoweth the things of God." And indeed, how can it possibly be otherwise? For since the Spirit of God is the spirit and life that goeth through all nature and creature, and only openeth its own hidden powers therein; since it is that which is the former of everything; that which makes everything to have the life that it hath, and to work as it worketh; nothing but the Spirit of God can possibly know the things of God: and therefore, of necessity, this Spirit of God must be in man, and work in man, as it is in nature, and worketh in nature, before man can enter into the knowledge and working of God in nature. And therefore here you have two immutable, and fundamental truths: (1.) that all our ignorance of God and nature is, and must be, purely and solely, the want of the Spirit and life of God in us: and, (2.) that therefore the one only way to divine knowledge is the way of the gospel, which calls and leads us to a new birth of the divine nature brought forth in us.

Academicus. I have nothing that I can, or would, object to what you have said. But still I must say, that I do not enough apprehend how the Spirit and life of God must thus, of all necessity, be born in us; nor, indeed, do I entirely comprehend how it is done. Human reason, or human instruction, I see plain enough, cannot help me to any divine light. But suppose God should send an angel to instruct me, and that frequently, would not divine knowledge be then imparted to me? And yet this would not be a birth of God in me. Or, will you say, that God cannot sufficiently instruct me, even by the highest of his angels?

Theophilus. An angel, sir, may instruct you, as the scriptures instruct you; but it is only such an instruction, as may direct you where and how to obtain that light, which neither the letter of

scripture, nor the voice of an angel, can bring forth in you. The highest angel neither hath, nor ever can have, any more of a redeeming power in it, than the dead paper on which the scriptures are written. But you are to observe, and mark it well, that you cannot have divine light from any other thing, but that which hath full power to redeem you: for light is not only life, but the perfection, and highest state of it; and therefore nothing can bring forth light, but that which can bring forth the truth and perfection of life.

Every other thing, besides the life and light of God, stands only in a state of ministerial service towards you: whether it be words of message from God, written on paper, engraven on tables of stone, or spoken by the mouth of an angel, a prophet, or apostle; be it what it will, it is only a creaturely thing; and its creaturely service can rise no higher, nor go any farther, than to show the true way to him, who only himself can be the truth, the life, and the light in you. For the light of God cannot, even by God himself, be communicated to you by any creature; and the reason is, because the light of God is God himself: it is the light of his own life: and therefore only himself can bring it forth wherever it is; and no creature can possibly partake of his light, but by having a birth in and from the divine nature: for the light of God can never be separate from the divine nature, or be anywhere but where the divine birth is. And thus you fully see, that all that can be divinely known, either in heaven, or on earth, can only be known in that one way, and by that one means, by which fallen man can be saved; namely, by a new birth of the light and Spirit of God within us. And therefore the simple way of the gospel is the one only way to attain all the knowledge of all that, which can be known of God and nature: for nothing can manifest God and nature, but the Spirit of God working in man, as he worketh in nature, which can only be done by a new birth of the divine nature, brought forth in man: but when man is thus born again of God, then the life and Spirit of God is in him, and worketh in him, as it doth in nature. And thus it is, that man can only be a divine philosopher, when Christ, who is the light of God, and the light of nature, is revealed in him. Then he is in that living Word, and that living Word is in him, by which all things were at first made; and which maketh, createth, and worketh in him, as it worketh in all things, both in heaven and earth.

Academicus. I never expected to have seen the gospel new birth proved to be the only gate to all that divine knowledge which any son of Adam ever had, or can have. But you have proved it to be so, beyond all possibility of denial. And I now only want to have you go on in this doctrine of the new birth; for I am persuaded, you can still add something to that, which has already been said upon it, both as to the ground, and nature, and fruits of it.

Theophilus. You must remember, Academicus, that all that I can by discourse, from the beginning to the end of this matter, do for you, amounts only to thus much: it is like giving you a full assurance of a wonderful pearl of glorious virtues, hidden in the ground of a certain field, and showing you every step of the way you must take to find it. Now, if from month to month, you should be inquiring and hearing of some new powers and virtues of this heavenly pearl; what good does all this discourse and hearsay do you? You are just as far from the pearl itself, and have no more of it, than when you first heard of it; and would be in the same distance from it, though you was always, to the end of your life, loving to hear and talk about it. I have had no other end in all that is said of the new birth, but to assure you of the truth of the thing, and the true way to it. Now the way to the new birth lies wholly in your will to it; and every step that you can take, consists in a continual dying to that selfish corrupt will, which you have from flesh and blood. Nothing can make

any change in you, but the change of your will. For everything, be it what it will, is a birth of that will, which worketh in you. You have nothing therefore to enquire after, nor anything that you can judge of yourself by, but the state of your mind, the working of your will and desire. These will give you more light than all the men or books in the world can give you: where these are, there are you; and what these are, that are you: there you live, and to that you belong; and there you must have all the good or evil that can be called yours. For nothing leads or carries you anywhere, nothing generates either life or death in you, but the working of your mind, will, and desire. If your will is angelic, you are an angel, and angelic happiness must be yours. If your will is with God, you work with God; God is then the life of your soul, and you will have your life with God to all eternity. If you follow an earthly will, every step you take is a departure from God, till you become as incapable of God, and the life of God, as the animals of this world. If your will worketh in pride and self-exaltation, in envy and wrath, in hatred and ill will, in deceit, hypocrisy, and falseness, you work with the devil, you are generating his nature within you, and making yourself ready for the kingdom of hell. And thus it is, that our works follow us; and that everyone will be rewarded according to his works; and none can reap anything else but that which he hath sown. And the seed of everything that can grow in us, is our will. The will maketh the beginning, the middle, and the end of everything; it is the only workman in nature; and everything is its work. It has all power; its works cannot be hindered; it carries all before it; it creates as it goes; and all things are possible to it. It enters wherever it wills, and finds everything that it seeks; for its seeking is its finding. The will overrules all nature, because nature is its offspring, and born of it; for all the properties of nature, whether they be good or evil, in darkness or in light, in love or in hatred, in wrath or in meekness, in pride or humility, in trouble or joy, are all of them the offspring or birth of the will; as that liveth, so they live; and as that changeth, so they change. So that whatever you are, or whatever you feel, is all owing to the working and creating power of your own will. This is your God or your devil, your heaven or your hell; and you have only so much of one, or the other, as your will, which is the first mover, is either given up to the one, or to the other. For where the will of man is not, there he hath nothing; and where his will is, there is all that something, which he hath, be it of what kind it will; and it is inseparable from him, till his will worketh contrary to it.

Academicus. Whence hath the will of man this mighty power, that it can have nothing, but that which itself hath willed?

Theophilus. You might as well ask, why a circle must be perfectly round, or a straight line free from every degree of crookedness. For as it is not a circle till it is perfectly round, nor a straight line till it is free from crookedness; so the will is not in being, but so far as it is free, is its own mover, and can have nothing but that which it willeth. Secondly, the will is not a made thing, which is made out of something, or that came out of some different state, into the state of a will. But the free will of man is a true and real birth from the free, eternal, uncreated will of God, which willed to have a creaturely offspring of itself, or to see itself in a creaturely state. And therefore the will of man hath the nature of divine freedom; hath the nature of eternity, and the nature of omnipotence in it; because it is what it is, and hath what it hath, as a spark, a ray, a genuine birth of the eternal, free, omnipotent will of God. And therefore, as the will of God is superior to, and ruleth over all nature; so the will of man, derived from the will of God, is superior to, and ruleth over all his own nature. And thence it is, that as to itself, and so far as its own nature reacheth, it hath the freedom and omnipotence of that will from which it is descended; and can have or receive nothing, but what

itself doth, and worketh, in and to itself. And herein consisteth the infinite goodness of God, in the birth of all intelligent creatures; and also the exceeding height, perfection, and happiness of their created state: they are descended from God, full of divine power; they can will and work with God, and partake of the divine happiness. They can receive no injustice, hurt, or violence, either from nature or creature; but must be only that, which they generate, and have no evil or hurt, but that which they do in and to themselves. All things stand in the will, and everything animate or inanimate is the effect and produce of that will, which worketh in it, and formeth it to be that which it is. And every will, wherever found, is the birth and effect of some antecedent will; for will can only proceed from will, till you come to the first working will, which is God himself. And here, my friend, you have an easy entrance into the true meaning of many important passages in the books of Jacob Behmen, like those that follow: "All," says he, "is magical; the eternity is magical: Magic is the mother of all things. I speak from a magic ground. Here the reader must have magical eyes. This hath a magical understanding." Vulgar reason is offended at these expressions, because the word "magic" has, for many ages, been mostly used in a bad sense. But don't you be frightened at the sound of these words; they are not only innocent, but truly good and wise, and deeply founded on the truth of things. They have the most Christian and divine meaning; are strictly conformable to the spirit of the gospel, as shall be shown by and by; and are used for the best of ends; namely, to open the true ground of eternal and temporal nature, and the birth of creatures in each of them. They are to show how the hidden, invisible Deity acteth and worketh all its wonders in both these worlds, in one and the same uniform way; as also, how everything in religion, whether it be a mystery of God, a grace of God, or a duty of man, hath its whole ground, and nature and efficacy, therein.

Now magic power meaneth nothing but the working of the will, whether it be the divine, or the creaturely will; and everything that is the work of the will, and is produced by it, is called its magic work, which only means, that it is generated by and from the will, as a birth brought forth by it. The will is the workman, and the work is that, which it bringeth forth out of itself. So that by these words you are always to understand these two things, the working, and the work of the will. And now, you may already sufficiently see, that their meaning is not only innocent and good, but as necessarily, and divinely, to be ascribed to God, as the power of bringing things into existence by the working of his will. For here you have the true ground and original of the creating power of God; how everything that is not God; is yet come from him, and out of him, as so many births of his invisible power, breaking forth into visibility, and sensible qualities of an outward life. The first manifestation of the invisible God, is that which is called, and is, eternal nature; which is the eternity of all possible powers and qualities of life, the first source of every natural power that can be in any creature. All these qualities of life, in their eternal birth, and rising from one another by the working will of God, are the outbirth, or outward glory of God, in which he manifests his triune, invisible Deity in a threefold life of fire, light, and spirit, which are the ground of all the qualities of life, sensibility, power, and spirit, that ever were, or can be found in any creature. Everything that exists, or thinks, or moves, or finds itself in any kind or degree of sensibility, is from, and out of, this glassy sea of these united powers of life. And this whole manifestation of all the possible powers, and perfection of life and glory, is called that kingdom of heaven, in which God dwelleth; and is, as it were, his divine workhouse, out of which he is perpetually giving forth new works, and forms of wonder. This manifestation of God is a magic birth from the triune working will of the hidden Deity, which willed to see itself in this opened, outward show of all the possible powers of

life and glory; and from whence new worlds of finite divine beings, as so many living images of God, might have a possibility of coming forth. For without nature, God must be by himself, and continue an unmanifested God. For no form or creature can be, unless there be something antecedent to it, that can be formed. Life must be, before there can be any finite living creatures; just as light must be, before there can be any seeing eyes. And therefore the manifestation of God in an outward glory of all the possible powers, qualities, perfections of life, called eternal nature, must be, or there could be no possibility for the existence of any creature.

Now this same working will of the triune Deity, which manifested itself in an eternal nature, manifesteth itself in creaturely forms, all generated from, all enlivened and animated with, that same trinity of fire, light, and spirit, that constitutes eternal nature. So that all intelligent creatures are that in their finite being, which eternal nature is in its infinite state. And thus all of them are from God, and from heaven, live in God, and may work with God, as God is in heaven, and heaven in him; one life, one power, one will, and one happiness with God.

Now everything that is not God, but after him, and distinct from him, must be that which it is, from the working will of the Deity. For since it cometh into being, only because it is willed to be, it can have nothing in it, or be any other thing, but that which the working or creating will brought forth. And as all things began in and from this working will; so all things must go on in it; and there can be no other creator, worker, or former of things to all eternity, but the working will of God, either mediately or immediately. Nor can there be any other nature in anything, but that which is the birth, or magic effect, of a working will within it. And everything that is done by the creature, everything which it seeks and likes, or abhors and resists, is all driven on by a working will, or magic power, which stirs, and generates, and works within it. Would you know now the true ground of all this? It is this: it is because will is the first original of all power, and the omnipotence of God consisteth in nothing else but his working will; and therefore no power ever was, or ever can be, anywhere else, but as it is in God, and if the creature hath any power, it must have it, as God hath it, in the working will. For since all nature, with all its qualities, births, and creatures, are all brought into being by the working will of God; it evidently follows, that every creature, with every quality, power, and property in it, is magically born, and therefore must have a magic nature, that is, a nature that cometh from, and standeth in, a working will. And now, sir, you are come into a full view of the most important matter of the mystery of all things; a matter which, if rightly apprehended in the inward ground of your soul, puts an entire end to all the jargon of a false philosophy, and to all those fictions of doctrines and disputes, which reason has built upon the written Word of God. For nothing is effected by fiction and invention, by any contrived arts or searchings of rational inquiries; all this is nothing, because it toucheth not nature, but leaveth it to itself; which carrieth on its own works by its own power, and can only work in its own way; and must bring forth its own births independent of everything but its own working life. But all lieth in the will and working desire of the soul, because will began and brought forth all that nature that lives in the soul, and is the only life in it; and this life can work and grow from nothing else, but that which first brought it forth. Hence you see the full meaning of these words of our author, "All is magical and that magic is the mother of all things," and consequently, the only opener of all divine knowledge. All which expressions only imply thus much, that the will, whether in God, or the creature, is the ground and seed of everything; is the generating working power, which maketh and worketh all things to be in that state and condition which they are; and that everything begins, goes on, and ends, in the working of the will; and that

nothing can be otherwise, than as its will worketh; and therefore eternity and time is magical; and magic is, and must be, the mother of all things.

Now here you see, in the utmost degree of clearness, how all true and false religion divide from one another. For if nothing worketh but the will, if nothing else carries on the work of nature; then all is false and vain in religion but the working of the will; and nothing is saving, or redeeming the life of the soul, but that which helps the will to work towards God.

Hence it is, that our author so often tells his reader, that when he sees and finds this magic birth of things, he is "delivered from Babel"; not by running from one place to another, or from one system of opinions to another, but by inwardly leaving all the workings of the earthly self, all the paper buildings of natural reason, and turning to God with the whole will and working desire of his heart. This is the right coming out of our own Babel of vain opinions into the truth and reality of nature, where the living God of nature is found; not in notions, but in the living working of the soul, and worshiped in spirit and in truth.

I said, into the truth and reality of nature, because nature is the standard of truth, and all is Babel but that which worketh with nature, that is, with eternal nature; for as eternal nature is the manifestation of the unchangeable God, so it must be as unchangeable in itself, and its own workings, as God is; because it hath nothing in it, but what is in and from the unchangeable God. And therefore, God cannot be manifest, or work in any creature, but as he is manifest, and worketh in eternal nature; and therefore all that the creature doth is labor lost, and a vain beating of the air, but that which it worketh with, and according to eternal nature. Because God never was, nor ever can be, or be found, anywhere else but in his own heaven, or eternal nature. And no soul can by any one possible thing find, or be found by God, but by standing before him in the same will and working as eternal nature doth. And therefore all is fiction and Babel but the working of the will, because nothing but the will can work with nature; and that for this reason, because all life, and all nature, eternal and temporal, is what it is, merely and solely, from the working of the will. All things in heaven and in earth stand in this magic birth; and nothing can change its state, either for better or worse, but as the working of its will changes. Justly therefore is it said, that where this truth is found, there is a full and true deliverance from Babel; that is, from all strife, and zeal, and division about opinions, sects, and churches; since the one thing that works either to life, or to death, the one thing that alone opens heaven or hell for us, is with every individual man in every place, and in every age of the world; and that one thing is the working of the will. And when, in any such man, his will is turned from his own earthly self, and this earthly life and worketh with its desire to God, then all these sayings of the scripture are true of him; viz., that he is redeemed from this evil world--that he has his conversation in heaven--that he is of God, and heareth God's Word--that he is saved by faith--that Christ is revealed in him--that he is Christ's, and Christ is his--that Christ is in him of a truth--and that he is led by the Spirit of Christ. All these texts would be true of him, though he had never seen, nor heard, a syllable of the written Word of God. For the Word of God which saveth and redeemeth, which giveth life and light to the soul, is not the word printed on paper, but is that eternal, ever-speaking Word, which is the Son of God, who in the beginning was with God, and was the God by whom all things were made. This is the universal teacher and enlightener of all that are in heaven, and on earth, who from the beginning to the end of time, without respect of persons, stands at the door of every heart of man, speaking into it not human words, but divine goodness; calling and knocking, not with outward sounds, but by the

inward stirring of an awakened divine life. And therefore, as sure as that is true, which St. John saith, that this eternal Word "is the light of men, and the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," so sure is it, that our savior and salvation, our teacher and enlightener, from whom we have every good thought, is Christ within us; not within this or that man, but in every man wherever born, and in whom the light of life ariseth. And indeed how can it be otherwise? For if God is the God of all men; and the Word of God the life and light of all men; and all men are capable of goodness; and all goodness can only be from God; and no goodness can belong to man, but that which is within him; then every man must have the Word, or Christ of God within him, and can have it nowhere else. All teachers therefore, who teach men to look for life or salvation in anything but from the Word and Spirit of God within them, stand chargeable with the blood and death of souls; because, in all the possibility of things, nothing can overcome that death which is in the soul, but the Word, or Christ of God living and working in it. For, observe, man must have goodness in the same way as God hath goodness, that is, from the divine nature; for goodness is nowhere else, neither is anything else capable of it; and therefore, if goodness is to be in man, the divine nature must, of all necessity, be first brought to life within him. But this cannot be, till the working will of our heart turns and gives up itself wholly to the Word and Spirit of God within us. For we can have nothing but that, towards which the earnestness of our will goeth.

Again, see here in a still higher degree of proof the absolute necessity, and unspeakable benefit, of the spirit of prayer; how it does, and must, in spite of all opposition, raise the fallen soul out of the poverty of flesh and blood, into the riches of an heavenly nature brought forth in it. For since all things in heaven and earth stand in a magic birth, or working of the will; the will is that, which hath all power; it unites all that is united in heaven or on earth; it divides and separates all that is divided in nature; it makes heaven, and it makes hell; for there is no hell, but where the will of the creature is turned from God; nor any heaven, but where the will of the creature worketh with God. Therefore, as we pray, so we are; and as our will-spirit secretly worketh, so are we either swallowed up in the vanity of time, or called forth into the riches of eternity. And therefore the spirit of prayer is most justly conceived, and most simply expressed, when it is said to be the rising of the soul out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity: for all the vanity which the soul hath, is from its living in, and loving the things of time; and therefore it can only come out of the vanity of its state, by loving and living in the truths, which are the riches of eternity: for the spirit of prayer is the hunger of the soul; and as every hunger is, so it eats; it always eateth that which it hungereth after, and hath a life suitable to the nature, state, and condition, both of its hunger, and its food. If it hungereth after the things of flesh and blood, it eateth nothing else, and only groweth in the bestial life; and of the flesh must reap the corruption that belongs to flesh: and if it hungereth after God, it eateth the food which giveth life to the angels; it eateth the bread that is come down from heaven; namely, the real heavenly body and blood of Christ, which surely may be called the riches of eternity.

All the mysteries of religion, and the necessity of the whole process of Christ in our redemption, have all of them their ground, and necessity, and efficacy, in this magic nature of things, and are all of them only for this one end; to help fallen man to have a working will towards that first life, which he has lost. And therefore no one joins with the mysteries of redemption, or can have any share in them, but he whose will turns wholly from this world, and hath all its workings towards God and heaven. And now, sir, see the plain, and easy, and certain deliverance from all perplexity

and vain labor in the disputes and divisions of religion. It is but opening your natural eyes, that is, letting simple nature work with its own power, and all difficulties are removed; and the way to God and goodness is as natural, and as free from all perplexity, as the opening our eyes to see the light of the sun. For what is so natural to man as the working of the will? And yet he can have nothing, or be anything, different from that, to which his will worketh. Nor does this at all too much exalt the human will, or make our salvation not to be the pure grace and gift of God to us, but quite the contrary. For the will here spoken of, is not the will of flesh and blood, but that heavenly will, which is the only spark of the Deity in us, given by the free grace of God to all mankind, as soon as fallen, and called in scripture the inspoken Word of God in paradise; which was the beginning of the redemption, when God first entered into a covenant of salvation with Adam, and all his posterity. This inspoken Word is Christ, or the spark of the divine nature, which is the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. And here, in this Christ in us, lieth the will that hath the power of salvation in it; and all its salvation is the salvation of Christ. For it is the will of this heavenly nature, hid in every man, that is the working will, that bringeth forth the new birth of heaven in us; and therefore is the pure free salvation of Christ, given to be a redeemer within us. So that all our salvation, though wrought out by this working will within us, is, from the beginning to the end, the pure grace of God to us, and no salvation of our own. And thus, sir, you see, that every soul of man is partly human, and partly divine; and is united to an earthly and an heavenly nature; and so not only can, but must, always work either with one or the other, and has nothing else to work with; and must and can be, or have nothing else, but as he followeth or worketh with either of these wills. So that, infallibly to know both your present and future state, what you are, and to what you belong, you need only to see, what you cannot help seeing, how, and where, and to what, your will worketh. And thus, from this knowledge of the magic nature of things, which all are that which they are, solely from the working of the will in everything, you are delivered from all vain labor and party zeal; and are brought back to that pure and safe ground, on which God has placed you to work out your own salvation, without any hindrance from any builders of Babel, of whatever denomination. The short is this: the whole matter of religion relates only to life and death. But life and death are both of them immutable, and founded in the unchangeable nature of things. Nothing can alter them, or invent a new way, either to or from either of them. To what purpose then, is all this dividing into so many parties? Why all this strife and zeal about opinions? Death and life go on their way, carry on their own work, and stay for no opinions. Does the stone stop, or alter its tendency towards the earth? Do the sparks and flame cease to fly upwards, because philosophers dispute and quarrel about the reasons of one or the other? No; nature goes on in its own way, let reason say what it will. Now death and life have their own unchangeable nature and working in and from themselves; and are just as distinct from, and independent of, all opinions of men about them, as the things just now mentioned: so that to will and work, as life willeth and worketh, and to will and work, as death willeth and worketh, is the one only possible way to partake either of life or death. What a delusion is it therefore, to grow grey headed in balancing ancient and modern opinions; to waste the precious uncertain fire of life in critical zeal, and verbal animosities; when nothing but the kindling of our working will into a faith, that overcometh the world, into a steadfast hope, and ever -burning love, and desire of the divine life, can hinder us from falling into eternal death!

Academicus. Oh! Theophilus, you have led me into a depth, that I never thought of seeing into. For this magic power of everything, that works in all nature and creature, shows me everything in a

new view. You might well say, that reason has no power in this mystery; that nothing is proposed to it: for since life and death have their own working within themselves, and must at last, when time is at an end, divide and take possession of everything, according as its will has worked either with one or the other, it signifies no more to them what reason has been all this time discoursing about, than in what language a man used to talk. But before you go any farther, I beg a word or two on these matters. First, how I am to understand our author, when he says, "Here the reader must have magical eyes"; and, "This or that hath a magical understanding." And, secondly, that you would, as you promised, show, how the speaking thus of this magical power of life, is strictly conformable to the spirit of the gospel.

Theophilus. As to your first matter, concerning magical eyes; I should have thought the thing plain enough already. But you may understand it thus. When a carpenter cuts timber into various shapes and forms, and then joins one piece to another, till it is formed into the shape of a house; this is no magical work, because one part does not grow from the other, till the whole is brought forth, and therefore there is no need of magical eyes to see what this work is. But when an oak groweth from an acorn, or a plant from a seed in the ground, here the work is magical; that is, it is a birth or product generated from the working will in the acorn and seed, from whence the stem, and all its branches and fruits, grow forth; which working will continueth till the plant or tree hath reached its limit, that is, till the working will in the seed hath spent itself. Now all this is a magical work, and therefore can only be seen by such magical eyes as can see into the beginning, and go on with the working of that which works and generates in the tree or plant. As to your other matter, how this language of the magical working of the will is entirely conformable to the spirit of the gospel; the answer is easy, because the thing is plain. For the first possible beginning of the Christian life, is, by the founder of it, expressly laid in a new birth from above, and therefore plainly declared to be a magical work, and to have no other nature; because a generating work, and a magical work, are only different expressions for the same thing. And as the beginning, so every following advancement in the Christian life, is as really and truly only a growth of life, or magical birth from the powers of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, upon the working will in the soul, as the plant, from its first stirring in the seed, to its last state, is only a growth from the powers of the sun, stars, and elements, upon the working will in the seed.

Everything that is outward in religion, whether it be men or things, planting or watering, is only for the sake of this inward birth; either to direct man to it, to help him to work in it, or warn him of that eternal death, which the will, working according to flesh and blood, must inherit as its own genuine fruit. And whoever fancies the Christian life to be anything else than a birth growing up in God, till it comes to the perfection of the divine life, by the same way of a gradual growth from the seed, has not a syllable in the gospel, nor an instance in nature, to plead in excuse of his fanciful error. For nothing worketh in all nature or grace, but what worketh as a birth, or magical growth of life. For nothing can come from the living God but life, nor for any other end, but to manifest some kind or degree of life. There are no dead forms, or lifeless inventions to be found, till you come to the mechanic works of men's hands, and the cobweb schemes of dead knowledge, brought forth by human reason. For reason is the old serpent called subtlety, the first and the last grand deceiver of mankind, that takes them from the powerful workings of nature, to follow the shadows of empty sounds, till all is swallowed up either by final life or death, which will at last reap everything into its own unchangeable barn.

Again, faith and hope, and love and desire towards God, are the only gospel means of bringing forth the new birth; and therefore all that the gospel requires, is a magical working of the will. For all these powers, whether of faith, hope, love, and desire towards God and the divine life, are only so many different powers of the working of the will, and have all their efficacy, as so many parts of it; and only alter, raise, and bring forth a new life, because the working of the will is magical, and generates as it works, and unites with that which it willeth. And thus Christ, or the new man in Christ Jesus, is formed in us, from a seed of heaven, which is the will that can work towards God, till it becomes a godly birth, as the seed works towards the sun, till it is changed into the birth of a beautiful fragrant flower.

Again, hence it is, namely, from this magic power of the working of the will, that our blessed Lord speaks so often of the omnipotence of faith; viz., "that all things are possible to him that believeth. Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. If ye had faith but as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say to this tree, be thou plucked up by the root; and to this mountain, be thou cast into the sea; and it should be done. Thy faith hath saved thee. According to thy faith, so be it done unto thee."

Hence all these truths plainly follow: first, that faith, which is in itself only the working of the will, is the source of all power; and that all that is done in nature is done by it alone; and that therefore all nature standeth in a magic working of the will. For all things could not be possible to him that believeth, but because faith, or the working of the will, is the true source of all power in or over nature. Secondly, here is a full demonstration of the high and powerful state, in which man was at first created! A lord over all this outward world; who could, by the working of his will, command the obedience of all things about him. This was the dominion he had over all the creatures on the earth, in the sea, and in the air; not such a poor power as invented weapons, or the strength of his hands and feet, could help him to; but a power here mentioned, of standing still, and, by the faith or will of his mind, making every creature to come or go, just as the faithful disciple of Christ was, by his faith, to have power over every outward thing of this world.

Now all this high state of his first power is undeniable from the words of our savior. For it is not to be supposed, that he would turn men's thoughts to any such powers, as to have all things obedient to their faith, or the working will of their minds, if this had not been man's first created state, or such powers as did then belong to it. For no man or creature can have any higher power, than that which belongs to his first created state. And therefore all gospel faith, however wonderful in its power, can only have somewhat of that first powerful faith, which man had when he first came out of the hands of God. And faith now in a redeemer can only be the means of obtaining salvation, for this reason; because faith was then that original high power in man, which could have preserved him in his first perfection and glory of life. Thus, when Christ saith, "Thy faith hath saved thee," it is the same thing as if he had said, faith had always such power; that faith was the strength and glory of the first man, that could have saved him from falling under the power of the stars and elements; that it was faith alone which could and did put an end to his first paradisiacal glory, by turning its strength and desire into the life of this world. Again, when our Lord saith, "According to thy faith, so be it done unto thee"; this was no new thing, or new operation in the power of faith, but was only a declaration of a truth as old as nature and creature, and was in reality so much said of the powerful faith of the first man; and infallibly shows, that as now, so then, nothing was done to him in his fall, but that which was done according to the faith and working of

his will. For this is God's immutable righteous procedure with man, that nothing but his own works can follow him; and that, from first to last, whether standing or falling, according to his faith, and working will, so must it be done unto him. And therefore man's faith, and working will, was his divine power of living superior to, and independent of all the stars and elements of this world, in his own angelic perfection of a divine life. For if the revival of faith, in so small a degree, as to be compared to a grain of mustard seed, could bring forth in man such a divine power over all the things of this world, is it not a sufficient proof of the high power of his first lost faith; which only thus coming again, as the smallest of seeds, yet comes with such mighty power over all outward nature, the flesh and the devil? And thus, all that is said in the gospel, of the power of faith, is, in the strictest truth, so much said of the power and perfection of our first father, over whom this earthly system had no power: but whether he stood, or fell, or was to rise again, all was, and is, and must be done, by his faith, or the working of his will. And thus also, you see, that all that was said of the nature and extent of the magic power of the will, is not only conformable to, but is the very spirit of the gospel, and all the written word of God. For from the first promise made to Adam, to the last written words of scripture, man is only called and directed to the true exercise of these magic, generating powers of the will; namely, to believe, to hope, to trust in God; to love, desire, and expect the renewal of a divine life from the goodness of God.

Humanus. Give me leave only to add, that in these words of our savior, "According to thy faith, so be it done unto thee," and other such-like sayings, he has not only opened the true nature and power of faith, but has discovered more of the true philosophy of nature, than ever was told the world before. Faith is generally considered as a speculative thing, as an assent of the mind to the credibility of things related. This may sometimes, as well in the scriptures, as in other books, be called faith, as the same word may be used in various senses. But the faith in question, about which our savior speaks, and to which he ascribes so much power, and which alone can do a man any real good or harm, is quite of another nature: I say, good or harm; because all that is good or bad proceeds from it, and it carries its power which way it will: as it can work all wonders, and overcome the world, so it alone has power over life and heaven in the soul, can drive them out, and set up the kingdom of hell and death instead of them.

Now this faith may be thus understood; it is that power by which a man gives himself up to anything, seeks, wills, adheres to, and unites with it, so that his life lives in it and belongs to it. Now to whatever the soul gives itself up; whatever it hungereth after; and in which it delights, and seeks to be united there, and there only, is its faith; that faith which can work either life or death, and according to which faith everything is, and must be done to man.

Now this faith is not a matter of choice, so that a man may live without it, if he pleases; but is essential to his life, and altogether inseparable from it. For whatever the life drives at, to whatever it is given up, there is its living and powerful faith. Therefore, be a man given up to what he will, seeking, delighting, and acquiescing in whatever it be, temporal or eternal, whether it be Christianity, idolatry, Deism, or atheism; this is a certain conclusion, that every man in the world is a man of faith, lives by faith, and that equally so; because every man's life is equally given up to the seeking, and delighting in, and uniting itself to, something or other; and therefore every man equally lives by faith, and that in its highest degree. It matters not, whether a man delights and acquiesces in the philosophy of Epicurus, or Spinoza; whether he be given up to luxury and sensuality, or to syllogisms and definitions, to mysteries of redemption, or mysteries of atheism: he

is neither more nor less a man of faith for all this; but is equally under the power of faith, whether it be divine, earthly, sensual, or devilish. For which way soever the life of man tends, or drives; to whatever he gives up himself; there he is, and lives by faith, and that in its highest degree; for no faith can rise higher than this. Nor can a man's faith be anywhere, but where his life is, and to which it belongs; nor can he be said to live to anything, but by faith. For faith is as much the one working power of life, as thought is the one working power of understanding; and the understanding of man may as easily proceed without being led by thought, as the life of man go on without being led by faith; that is, without giving itself up to something, or other, with which it would be united, and to which it would belong, as its desired good; which, as I said before, is the highest degree of the most living faith. The debate therefore, set up by the Deists, about reason and faith, as two principles of life; the one appropriated to Christians, and the other to themselves, is founded on the grossest ignorance of both their natures; as great as that of supposing, that there are two principles of seeing and smelling; viz., reason and the senses. And the Deist, who turns from all faith, to have a life of reason, proceeds as much according to nature, as if he was to leave it to Christians, to see and smell by their senses; but himself and brethren to see and smell by the power of reason. For reason is no more the power of life, than it is the power of the senses; but must stand below them both, and follow them both, in the same degree of inability to alter, increase, or lessen the natural power of either of them, as the eye hath to alter the vegetation, or color, or smell, of the plant on which it looks. For reason like the eye, is only an outward looker on; and can no more form, or model, or alter the life of the soul, than it can alter the life and vegetation of the body. But this saying, "According to thy faith, so be it done unto thee," contains the unchangeable ground, and true philosophy of life, and the power of life. And this saying takes in every individual of human nature and the Deist may as well think of turning death over to the Christians, and reserving immortality for himself, as to think of being anything else, either here or hereafter, but purely and solely that, which his faith has brought to pass in him. He may, indeed, easily enough keep himself free from all Christian faith; but, whether he will or no, a faith must do all in him, and for him, just in the same degree, as it does for the Christian. Let him make ever so many declarations against the superstition and blindness of faith; ever so many encomiums upon the beauty of axioms, syllogisms, and deductions of reason; his life is just as far from being a life of reason, as the Christian's is, who declares only for a life of faith. For as the eye and the nose have just the same nature, office, and power; and he cannot, as such, have either more or less from them, or be more or less helped by them; so reason and faith have just the same nature, office and power, in a man, and are always in him, and will always do the same for him, whether he be Christian or Deist. And was the Deist to change sides, he would be neither more nor less a man of faith and reason, than he was before; nor have got or lost any power either of faith or reason. He would only be under a divine, instead of an earthly and sensual faith; and his reason would not have changed its state, or office, or power, but only be the servant of a better master; that is, of a divine faith.

Now, was not faith the power of life in every man, no man could live by faith, nor could it be the principle or power of life in any man. But seeing every man, whether earthly or heavenly, is that which he is, by faith; and faith will and must have its work in every man; and he cannot live without it, or free from it; hence is the absolute necessity of the one right faith, in order to salvation, and the impossibility of anything else to avail in the stead of it. Thence also it is, that Christianity applies not to the reason of any man, because reason is not the principle of life, or the former of it;

but it calls the heart to a right faith, because man is only lost and separate from God and heaven by his faith in the things and powers of this world. And therefore all salvation does, and only can, arise from a faith turned to God; and also all damnation from faith in the things of this world. And no man can turn either to God, or to this world, but by faith; that is, by giving up himself either to the one, or the other; which is the highest act or power of faith. For there is nothing that works either to life or death, in any man, but that to which he is given up, by faith in it. And reason never had, nor ever can have, or do, anything else, but one and the same underwork, or office, let faith take which way it will. The delusion of the Deist lies here: he refuses an assent to the history of facts and doctrines of the gospel; and this is his proof to himself, that he lives by reason, and that it is the real principle of his life. On the other hand, he that assents to the history of facts and doctrines of the gospel, is, by the Deist, reckoned to be a man of gospel faith, and that lives by it. But this is all mistake on both sides. For this assent on one side, and dissent on the other, touches not the matter either of reason or faith. For both these persons, notwithstanding this difference of assenting, may not only be equally governed by faith; but have strictly one and the same faith. For if the things of this world have the heart of both of them, which very easily may be; then they have but one and the same faith, and are equally governed by it; for they both equally live by a faith in this world. The Deist therefore hath no other possible way of showing, that he is not as much a man of faith, as any Christian can be, but by showing, that he has no will, no desire, no inclination of heart left in him; that his life drives no way, is given up to no one thing, as its end and good; but that reason, without affection, carries him only from syllogism to syllogism, in quest of nothing. Then it is, that he may deem himself to be a man of reason, but not till then; for if he has any heart that hath any inclination to be united with, or belong to anything; then he becomes a man of faith, and he lives by faith in that to which he is given up, as much as any Christian does, who is given up to the mysteries of Christian redemption.

I could not help saying thus much on this delusion, in which I have been so long ensnared myself, and therefore have the utmost good will and earnestness to help others out of it. And, to this end, I shall add the following passages, taken from a book, where this whole matter is justly said to be examined to the bottom. "We have no want of religion, but so far as we want to better our state in God; or so far as we are unpossessed of God, or less possessed of him than we might be, and our nature requires. This is the true and only ground of religion; viz., to alter our state of existence in God, and to have more of the divine nature and perfections communicated to us. Nothing therefore is our good in religion, but that which alters our state of existence in God for the better, and puts us in possession of something of God; or makes us partakers of the divine nature in such a manner and degree, as we wanted it. Everything that is in life, has its degree of life in and from God; it lives and moves and has its being in God. This is as true of devils, as of the highest and most perfect angels. Therefore, all the happiness or misery of all creatures consists only in this; viz., as they are more or less possessed of God, or as they differently partake of the divine nature, or according to their different state of excellence in God. But if this be a truth (and who can deny it?) then we have the certainty of demonstration, that nothing can be our good in religion, but that which communicates to us something of God, or the divine nature, or that which betters our state and manner of existence in God.

"For if devils are what they are, because of their state and manner of existence in God; if blessed angels are what they are, because of their state, and manner of existence in God; then it

undeniably follows, that all that is betwixt angels and devils, all beings, from the happiness of the one, to the misery of the other, must and can have no other happiness or misery, but according to their state and manner of existence in God, or according as they have more or less of the state of angels, or the state of devils, in them. Therefore nothing can be our good in religion, but that which alters our state and manner of existence in God, and renders us possessed of him in a different and better manner.

"Now, if you was to send to the fallen spirits of darkness all the systems of your religion of reason, that have been published, to let them know that they have the power of their own restoration and happiness within themselves; that they need seek to nothing, but their own natural reason and understanding, and the strength and activity of their own powers, to raise them to all the happiness they are capable of; such a religion would be so far from altering or mending their state of existence in God, or doing them any good, that it would add strength to all their chains; and the more firmly they believed and relied upon it, the more would they be confirmed and fixed in their separation from God. And yet, a religion that must necessarily keep them in hell, is the only religion, that you have to carry you to heaven. May God deliver you from this error!

"Hence it sufficiently appears, that your way of natural religion cannot be the way of salvation; because the want of salvation is nothing else, but the wanting to have our state and manner of existence in God altered for the better, or to have something of God communicated to us, which we want, and are capable of receiving. But if this is, and must be, the nature of salvation; then no religion can save us, or do us our proper good, or supply our proper want, but that which has power to alter our state of existence in God, or to communicate to us that of God, which we want, and are capable of. And therefore, nothing but that same power of God, which created us, which gave us our state and manner of existence in God, and communicated to us that which we possess in him, can redeem us, or help us to that state and manner of existence in him, which we have lost, and are in want of.

"There never could have been any dispute about the possibility of saving ourselves by our own natural faculties, had not men lost all true knowledge both of God and themselves. For this dispute cannot happen, till men suppose God to be some outward being; that our relation to him is some outward relation; that religion is an outward thing, that passes between God and us, like terms of behavior between man and man; that sin hurts, and separates us from God, only as a misdemeanor hurts, and separates us from our prince; that an offended God either gives or refuses pardon to us, as an angry prince does to his subjects; and that, what he gives or forgives to us, is something as distinct or different from himself, as when a prince, sitting upon his throne, gives or forgives something to an offender, that is an hundred miles from him.

"Now all this is the same total ignorance of God, what he is in himself, and what he is in relation to us, and the manner of his being our good, as when the old idolators took men to be gods. And yet nothing is more plain, than that your religion of reason is wholly founded upon all these gross and false notions of God. You have not an argument in its defense, but what supposes, that our relation to God is an outward relation, like that of subjects to their prince; and that what we do to and for God, as our service to him, is, and must be done, by our own power, as that which we do to and for our prince, must be done by our own power. And from these errors it is, that you draw this false conclusion, that if our own reason and natural power were not sufficient to obtain for us

all that we want, and God requires of us; God must be less good than a good earthly prince, who requires no more of us, than that which we have a natural strength to do, or can do by our own power. And yet all this is pure absurdity, and has all the grounds of idolatry in it, as soon as you know, that God is no outward or separate being; but that we are what we are, have what we have, and do that which we can do, because he has brought us to this state of life, power, and existence in himself; because he has made us, so far as we are made, partakers or possessors of a life in him, and has communicated to us, such a life in himself; or in the words of scripture, because 'in him we live and move and have our being,' and consequently have no life, motion, or being, out of him. For from this state of our existence in God, it necessarily follows; first, that by the nature of our creation, we are only put into a capacity of receiving good. A creature, as such, can be in no other state; it is as impossible for him to enrich himself, or communicate more good to himself, as it was to create himself. Secondly, that nothing but God can do us any good. Thirdly, that God himself cannot do us any good, but by the communication of himself, in some manner, to us. Hence it is plain, that your religion of reason, which supposes, that we have natural powers, that can put us in possession of that which we want to be possessed of in God; or, that we need no more divine assistance to recover what we have lost of God, than to obtain a pardon from a prince; or, that God need communicate no more of himself to us in our reconciliation to him, than a prince communicates of himself to his pardoned subject; has all the mistakes, error, and ignorance of God, that is in idolatry, when it takes God to be something that he is not; and has all the false devotion that is in idolatry, when it puts the same trust in, and expects the same benefit from, its own powers and faculties, which idolators did in and from their idols. Your religion of reason, therefore, which you esteem as the modern refinement of the human mind, and more excellent and rational, than the faith and humility of the gospel, has all the dregs of the grossest heathen idolatry in it; and has changed nothing in idolatry, but the idol; and only differs in such a degree of philosophy, as the religion of worshiping the sun differs from the religion of worshiping an onion.

"For as soon as it is known and confessed, that God is all in all; that in him we live and move and have our being; that we have nothing separately, or at a distance, from him, but everything in him; that we have no degree of being, nor any degree of good, but in him; that the almighty can give us nothing, but that which is something of himself; nor any degree of amendment or salvation, but in such degree as he communicates something more of himself to us; as soon as this great immutable truth is known, then it is known with the utmost certainty, that to put our trust in the sun, or an onion, or our own reason, if not equally absurd, is yet equally idolatrous, and equally prejudicial to our salvation."* {*A Demonstration of the gross and fundamental Errors of a late Book, entitled, A Plain Account of the Sacrament. p. 161.} And now, Theophilus, if you please, you may proceed in the matter you was upon.

Theophilus. We have discoursed long enough for this time. Let silence, recollection, inward and outward retirement, have their work for a few days. They purify the heart; they weaken and disarm self; they strengthen the spirit of prayer, and help us not only to pray, but to find, to love, and live in God. Let us all desire such an interval as this; and then we shall be fitter to meet again for our mutual benefit. My friends, adieu. The End of the Second Dialogue

10.03 Third Dialogue

Third Dialogue

Academicus. If you please, Theophilus, pray go on, just where you left off at our last meeting. For this mystery seems to be at daybreak with me; and the approach of its light leaves me no power to be content without it.

Theophilus. You have seen, that all nature begins and stands in a magic birth; and is only a large display of its working power in every kind of creature. You now want to see farther into this mystery, how eternal nature begins; and how God, the first, hidden, imperceptible cause of all after-things, manifests himself in the properties of a visible and working nature. Now I would, to the best of my power, gladly assist you in this matter, if I could find out a way of doing it, by opening in your heart a knowledge of God, of nature, and yourself, without helping you to a mere opinion, or increasing your thirst after ideal speculation. Tell me, therefore, what you propose by the gratification of this desire; or what effect you expect from such knowledge, as you here seek.

Academicus. All that I desire by it is, to strengthen and confirm the ground on which I stand; that, seeing the true philosophy of religion, I may have nothing to fear from all that variety of attacks which now, more than ever, are made upon it by infidel reason. I hope, therefore, it is no vain curiosity, to desire to enter into the depth of this mystery, since I only desire thereby strength to resist all the enemies of religion.

Theophilus. All this is right, and very well; provided you do but know who, and what, are the great and powerful enemies of religion. But this, perhaps, you do not so well apprehend, as you may imagine. Your own reason, born, and bred, and governed, by your own flesh and blood, is the most powerful enemy of religion that you have to do with, and whom you have the most to fear from. The men of speculative reason, whom you seem most to apprehend, are powerless enemies, that cannot strike at your religion with the strength of a straw. Did you but rightly see what their power is, you would see it as ridiculous, as that of a few water-engines trying to quench the fiery globe of the sun: for reason stands in the same inability to touch the truth of religion, as the water-engine to affect the sun. Nay, its inability is much greater; for could the water, thrown from the engine, be made to reach the sun, it would have some, though an insignificant, effect upon it; but reason can no more affect the truth of religion, than nothing can affect something. If reason seems to have any power against religion, it is only where religion is become a dead form, has lost its true state, and is dwindled into opinion; and when this is the case, that religion stands only as a well-grounded opinion, then indeed it is always liable to be shaken; either by having its own credibility lessened, or that of a contrary opinion increased. But when religion is that which it should be, not a notion or opinion, but a real life growing up in God, then reason has just as much power to stop its course, as the barking dog to stop the course of the moon. For true and genuine religion is nature, is life, and the working of life; and therefore, wherever it is, reason has no more power over it, than over the roots that grow secretly in the earth, or the life that is working in the highest heavens. If therefore you are afraid of reason hurting your religion, it is a sign, that your

religion is not yet as it should be, is not a self-evident growth of nature and life within you, but has much of mere opinion in it.

Observe the word "self-evident"; for there lies the truth of the matter; for you have no more of the truth of religion than what is self-evident in you. A blind man may be rich in notions and opinions about the nature, power, and good, of light; and in this case, one blind man may perplex another, and unsettle his notions; but when the light manifesteth itself, and is become self-evident, then he is at once delivered from all uncertainty about it. Now religion is light and life; but light and life can only manifest themselves, and can nowhere be known, but where they are self-evident.

You can know nothing of God, of nature, of heaven, or hell, or yourself, but so far as all these things are self-evident in you. Neither could any of these things be of any concern to you, but because they can all of them be self-evident in you. For the bare history, or hearsay of any one thing, signifies no more to you, than the hearsay of any other thing. And if God and heaven, hell and the devil, the world and the flesh, were not all of them self-evident in you, you could have no more good or hurt from any hearsay about them, than from the hearsay of pleasant gardens, and dismal prisons, in the world of the moon.

Let it be supposed, that your ingenious reason should suggest to you, that there are no devils or hell, and therefore no occasion to believe that revelation that gives an account of them: in this case, do but turn to that which is sensible and self-evident in you, and then you must know, in the same certainty as you know yourself to be alive, that there is wrath, self-torment, envy, malice, evil-will, pride, cruelty, revenge. Now say, if you please, there are no other devils but these, and that men have no other devils to resist; and then you will have said truth enough, have owned devils enough, and enough confessed, that you are in the midst of them; that you are everywhere tempted by them; and that flesh and blood is too weak to resist them, and therefore wants some kind of savior, of so contrary a nature, as has power to destroy these works of the devil in you.

Now this is the only knowledge that you can possibly have of an outward hell, and outward devils; and this knowledge is as self-evident in you as your own thoughts, and is as near to you as your own life. But to see and know an outward hell, or outward devils, that are outward living creatures, can never be your own case, till all that is divine and human in you is extinguished; and then you will have knowledge enough, how hell is a place, and how the devils of rage, wrath, envy, and pride, are living creatures.

Again, let it be supposed, that your sceptic reason had brought you into doubt about the being and providence of God in you: you have no occasion to consult the demonstrations which heathen philosophers, school divines, Deists, or atheists, have produced about it, from the existence of things; all concluding, as well Christians, as Deists and atheists, that there must be some eternal first cause from which all has proceeded. For what a God is this, that is only proved to be, because something now is, and therefore something must always have been, an infinite, eternal something, with infinite power to bring forth all that is come into being? What a God, I say, is this, which the Arian, the Deist, and the atheist, is as willing to own as the Christian; and which is as serviceable to the cause of Arianism, Deism, idolatry, and atheism, as it is to Christianity? For the atheist has his omnipotent, eternal, first cause, as well as all the disputers for a God. But now, if you turn from all these idle debates and demonstrations of reason, to that which is sensible and self-evident in you, then you have a sensible, self-evident proof of the true God of life, and light, and love, and

goodness, as manifest to you as your own life. For with the same self-evident certainty, as you know that you think, and are alive, you know that there is goodness, love, benevolence, meekness, compassion, wisdom, peace, joy. Now this is the self-evident God, that forces himself to be known, and found, and felt, in every man, in the same certainty of self-evidence, as every man feels and finds his own thoughts and life. And this is the God, whose being and providence, thus self-evident in us, calls for our worship, and love, and adoration, and obedience to him: and this worship, and love, and adoration, and conformity to the divine goodness, is our true belief in, and sure knowledge of, the self-evident God. And atheism is not the denial of a first omnipotent cause, but is purely and solely nothing else but the disowning, forsaking, and renouncing the goodness, virtue, benevolence, meekness. of the divine nature, that has made itself thus self-evident in us, as the true object of our worship, conformity, love, and adoration. This is the one true God, or the Deity of goodness, virtue, and love. the certainty of whose being and providence opens itself to you in the self-evident sensibility of your own nature; and inspires his likeness, and love of his goodness, into you. And as this is the only true knowledge that you can possibly have of God and the divine nature, so it is a knowledge not to be debated or lessened by any objections of reason, but is as self-evident as your own life. But to find or know God in reality, by any outward proofs, or by anything but by God himself made manifest and self-evident in you, will never be your case either here or hereafter. For neither God, nor heaven, nor hell, nor the devil, nor the world, and the flesh, can be any otherwise knowable in you, or by you, but by their own existence and manifestation in you. And all pretended knowledge of any of these things, beyond or without this self-evident sensibility of their birth within you, is only such knowledge of them, as the blind man hath of that light, that never entered into him. And as this is our only true knowledge, so every man is, by his birth and nature, brought into a certain and self-evident sensibility of all these things. And if we bring ourselves by reasoning and dispute into an uncertainty about them, it is an uncertainty that we have created for ourselves, and comes not from God and nature. For God and nature have made that which is our greatest concern, to be our greatest certainty; and to be known by us in the same self-evidence, as our own pain or pleasure is. For nothing is religion, or the truth of religion, nothing is good or bad to you, but that which is a self-evident birth within you. So that if you call that only God, and religion, and goodness, which truly are so, and can only be known by their self-evident powers and life in you, then you are in the truth, and the truth will make you free from all doubts; and you will no more fear or regard anything that talkative reason can discourse against it, than against your own seeing, hearing, or sensible life. But if you turn from self-evidence to reason and opinion, you turn from the tree of life, and you give yourself up to certain delusion.

Wonder not therefore, my friend, that though the mystery under consideration contains the greatest truths, yet I am unwilling to help you to reason and speculate upon it; for if you attempt to go farther in it than self-evidence leads you, you only go so far out of it, or from it. For the end of this mystery is not to furnish new or better matter for reason and opinion, but to bring man home to that sensibility, which is self-evident in himself, and to lead him only by self-evident principles, to see, and find, and feel the difference between true and false religion in the same degree of self-evident certainty, as he sees and feels the difference between fire and water. This, I say, is the great intent of this mystery, to bring man into a sensibility of God and nature, to know and feel, that good and evil, life and death, are a self-evident growth and birth of nature in man, according as his will enters into and works with that which is unchangeably good, or unchangeably evil, in the working of nature. Now as the workings of nature are unchangeable in their effects, and that which

is naturally good or evil, must always be so; and seeing man's life standeth in nature, and must work with it, must have only that good or evil which is unchangeable in nature; and seeing his state in nature, whether good or evil, is, and can be, only that, which the sensible, self-evident powers of his own life manifest to him; then you see the fitness and necessity of your keeping steadily to that, which is self-evident in you, as the very tree of life, the criterion of all that truth and goodness that belongs to you. Secondly, you see with what good reason Jacob Behmen so often tells you, that all that he has written, was only to help man to seek and find himself, to see and know his place and state in nature, and how to cooperate with God and nature in generating a birth of heaven within himself. Thirdly, you may see how you and I should abase this blessed mystery, should we, instead of only and truly seeking and finding its birth within us, make it a matter of reasoning and opinion.

Academicus. I have neither power nor inclination to object to anything that you have said. But still I must desire you to assist me in your own way, and such as you judge to be suitable to the intention of this mystery. I plainly see, that the whole ground of religion lies in the knowledge of what God is in himself, as distinct from nature; what nature is in itself; what I have from God, and what I am in and from nature; and how I am to work with it, as God himself is and worketh in nature. For if this knowledge can be opened in me, then the why, and the how, of every mystery of redemption must be seen to the bottom.

Theophilus. By nature are meant, all the working, stirring properties of life, or all the various sensibilities which life is capable of finding and feeling in itself. And therefore you need only look at the working sensibilities of your own life, the several kinds and ways of feeling and finding your own state, to know by a self-evident certainty, what nature is in itself. And thus also, in the same self-evident certainty, you may know, that nature is not God. For as you find, that nature is opened in you; that all its properties have their existence in you; and yet that none of these properties of life are their own happiness, or can make themselves to be happy, full of peace, delight, and joy, and free from every want; so you have a full self-evident proof, that God is not nature, but entirely distinct from, and superior to, nature; and that, as considered in himself, he is that which alone can make nature happy, free from want, and full of all delightful satisfaction. And thus you know, not from hearsay, but from a self-evident certainty in yourself, that God, considered as in himself, is the happiness, the rest, the satisfaction, the joy, the fulfilling of all the properties and sensibilities of nature; and also that nature, in itself, is that working life of various properties and sensibilities, which want to be made happy, which reach after something that they are not, and have not, and which cannot be happy or fulfilled, till something of an higher nature than themselves be united with them; that is, the working of nature must be in want, in pain, and dissatisfaction, till God (the blessing and fulfilling of nature) is manifested, found, and enjoyed in it.

Now suppose you knew no more of what God is in himself, distinct from nature, and what nature is as thus distinguished from God, than is already opened in you, you would know enough to be a key to all that which Jacob Behmen speaks of God, and of nature; and enough also to show you how to cooperate with God and nature, in bringing forth a new birth of the divine life within you. For as soon as you know, that nature in itself is only a working life of various sensibilities, which wants something distinct from itself, and higher than itself, to make it happy, then you have a self-evident certainty of these following truths: first, that God, considered as in himself, is the blessing, the satisfaction, the heaven, and happiness, of all and every sensibility of nature. Secondly, that

therefore, as the gospel teaches, only the Word, the light, the Son of God, or Jesus Christ, can redeem fallen nature, restore it to its first state of blessedness in God. Thirdly, that therefore, as the gospel teaches, you have but one thing to do, and that one thing absolutely necessary to be done; viz., to deny yourself; that is, to turn this fallen nature from itself, from all its own wills and workings in the vanity of this life, to give up itself in faith, in hunger and thirst after that light, Word, Son, or Jesus Christ of God, who is the fullness, the satisfaction, the joy, and blessedness, of all nature; who alone can turn every working and sensibility of nature in a participation of heavenly satisfaction and joy. Now what can you desire, or need you to know of God, of nature, and the mystery of Christian redemption, more than this? And yet all this is a self-evident knowledge, born within you as soon as you turn to it.

Academicus. Oh! Sir, you quite transport me with this short, easy, and yet full explication of so great a matter, which has often perplexed me. But now I shall never be at a loss how to understand the distinction between God and nature, and also the absolute necessity of it; which, when rightly known, sets all the doctrines and mysteries of Christian redemption upon such a ground as cannot be removed. But still I must beg of you to help me to the same self-evidence of the birth and generation of the properties of nature, as they are set forth by Jacob Behmen, especially of the three first forms, which I perceive to be the ground of all; and yet their birth and generation, their union with, and distinction from, one another, I do not enough comprehend, as he sets them forth. Thus, the first form of nature is said to be desire; which is the ground and foundation of all things. This desire (the first property), he saith, is astringing, drawing, shutting up, compressing, hardening. Now all this is evident enough; for I have a sufficient sensibility, that this is the nature of desire; that, in its spiritual way, it attracts, draws, compresses, and would shut up, or enclose. But then, it is immediately said, that the second property is attraction, drawing, sting, and motion. Now if the first is attraction and drawing, how can the second be different from it, and yet be attraction and drawing?

Theophilus. The desire is not one property, but is in itself all the properties of nature; it is the ground in which they all dwell, and the mother out of which they are all born: so that all that is said of the three first forms of nature, is only so much said of three forms or properties of the desire. For the desire is not the first property of nature; but every property hath all that it hath in and from the desire. The first property of the desire, of that which is the peculiarity of its nature, as distinguished from the second, is, to compress, enclose, shut up., whence cometh thickness, darkness, hardness. But no sooner does the desire begin to compress, shut up, but it brings forth its own greatest enemy, and the highest resistance to itself: for it cannot compress or thicken, but by drawing or attracting; but drawing and attracting is quite contrary to shutting up, or compressing; because drawing or attracting is motion, and every motion is contrary to shutting up or compressing together. And thus your difficulty is removed: attraction or drawing is rightly ascribed to the desire, and rightly called its second property, because it is born of it; and yet is directly contrary to that which is the desire's first property or intention; viz., to compress, to hold in stillness.

Now as these two properties are two resistances, not in two different things, but are one and the same thing in this contrariety in and to itself, as they are inseparable, generate each other, are equal in strength, and can neither of them overcome the other, so as to go one way, but each of them stops the other in the same manner; and seeing this desire cannot cease to be these two

contrary things; viz. a holding-fast, and moving-away, a shutting-in, and a going-out, both in the same degree of strength; neither able to shut up, or to go out, nor able to cease from either; these two contrarieties become a whirling anguish in itself, and so bring forth a third property of nature. And in these properties lies the true ground of all sensibility of life, and also of every created thing. Matter, motion, darkness, fire, and every natural power or quality of anything, has its beginning from them. Considered in themselves, they are the working powers of that great and strong creaturely life, which cannot be broken, because it begets itself, and every property is included in, and generates each other. It is a band or knot of life, that can never be loosed; nor is capable of annihilation, because it is a birth of eternal nature, which is as unchangeable as God himself. And as it arises from no outward thing, but is generated in and from itself, its work is eternal, and can never be made to cease. For as one property has no power over the other, but that of forcing it to exist; as one property does not weary the other, but always gives strength to it; so there can be no cessation of their working, but they must do, as they do, to all eternity.

Now the life of these three properties is a life of three contrary wills, equally strong and powerful against each other; and therefore is a life of the highest disquiet, torment, and anguish, full of the most horrible sensibility. It is a life that can feel nothing but its own tearing contrariety, that reigns with it. And this is the life of nature separated from God; it is the life of hell, and the devils; and is that life of dark, raging distraction, which every living creature must be in, whose first properties of life are not softened and quieted, either by the light of God, or the light of this world, dwelling and making peace in them. And he that will only seek to his reason, to cool the flame of these raging first properties of life, acts as wisely as he, whose house being on fire, would only have it extinguished, by reading a lecture upon the nature of water to it. And now, sir, you have seen plainly enough the birth, nature, and difference, of these three first properties. But let it be supposed, that you have no feeling, or inward sensibility, of these three properties in the manner they have been here described, according to Jacob Behmen; yet you have no reason to be troubled at it, or put your brain upon the rack how to conceive it, or fear that you must want the benefit of this knowledge, till you have it as above described; for you have in yourself a most self-evident proof, that the thing is really so; and that desire hath all that in it which he so deeply declares, from its first seed, or root. For it is a thing self-evident to you, that every desire, as such, is in itself a restless torment; that it has pain, disquiet, and anguish, in itself; and, as to itself, consists of nothing else. Now, whether you can, with Jacob Behmen, divide this restless, anguishing desire into its three essential parts, of which it consists, matters not, as to the reality of the thing itself; for you have sensibility enough, that the desire is made up of pain and anguish, till the thing desired is obtained: and therefore you have all the certainty and benefit of this knowledge; and it serves the same end, as if you knew the ground of it with the same exactness as he has set it forth.

You have yourself for a proof, that desire and pain begin together; and this is a full proof of what was said; viz. that desire begins with two properties, that resist and strive against one another. Again, you have the same evidence in yourself, that the desire, left to itself, that is, without the least glimpse of any possibility of having that which it desires, is a degree of hell, and quite intolerable to itself: and this is a self-evident proof of what was said; viz. that the third and last property of the desire, is that whirling anguish, brought forth by the two first properties: for these three properties are the whole of the desire; it has nothing more in it. And when your desire cannot

cease, and yet has nothing but itself, without the least mixture or feeling of hope in it, then you have a full self-evidence of all that which the desire is, in its three essential, inseparable properties, and that strictly according to the letter of Jacob Behmen.

Now all that is nature, or natural life within you, is only the working of desire in this painful state; and that which can set this painful life at rest in you, is so much of God, or the divine nature, manifested in you, and changing your restless properties of life into peace and happiness. And as the working properties of desire are your natural life, so the same working properties are the life of eternal nature; from whence, as out of the womb, your natural life is brought forth, and hath neither more nor less in it than that which is in eternal nature. And if the working properties, which constitute the life of eternal nature, could be supposed to be without God in them, eternal nature would be a mere eternal hell: But as the eternal desire, with all its working properties, is brought forth by the magic power of the divine will, only for this end, that the holy Deity may manifest a heaven of glory in them; so eternal nature always was, and always must be, a kingdom of heaven, or the unchangeable manifestation of the invisible God in an outward sensibility of life, happiness, glory, and majesty.

Academicus. I am fully satisfied as to this point; and all that you have said, has the evidence of light at noonday. And I hope you will now go on in the birth of the four remaining properties; and show me, in the same degree of evidence, how these three properties bring forth the four following ones, which turn nature into a kingdom of heaven.

Theophilus. These three properties of nature cannot bring forth the four following ones. They can bring forth nothing but themselves to all eternity, nor can ever be anything else in themselves, but what they were at first. Nature can rise no higher than this painful state; and its painful working contrariety must always be the ground of all life, and all sensibility of life. For if (1.) this shutting-up, or compressing; and (2.) this resistance to it; and (3.) this whirling arising from both, was ever to cease, there life, and all sensibility, must cease with them; and therefore these three properties must always do as they do, as the only possible ground of every kind and degree of creaturely life, both in heaven, and on earth. But if life is to be happy, something else must come into them, not to destroy their natural working, but to make every contrariety in them a strife of joy, and delightful sensibilities. Thus, (1.) compressing, or shutting-up, must find itself only to compress and keep in light and love; (2.) the attraction or drawing- motion, must find itself to be the drawing and motion of love; and, (3.) the whirling anguish must whirl still, but as a transport of joy unavoidably brought forth from the strife of love in the two properties of which it is born. And thus nature remains in its full strength; it compresses, it attracts, and it whirls, as it did at first; and nothing is lost, or taken from it, but its hatred, wrath, and misery. Now here you are to observe, that every thing or creature, either in heaven, hell, or this world, hath its substance, or all that is substantiality in it, solely from these three first properties of nature. The creaturely substance of an angel, a devil, or a dead flint, all stand in these three first forms of nature. And all the difference betwixt high and low, spiritual and material, in the creatures, arises from their different participation of the four following forms of nature. But the four following forms cannot exist, or manifest themselves, but in the three first; and therefore the three first are, and must be, as well in the highest as in the lowest of creatures: they are the first something, or substantiality of nature, in which the light, and love, and Spirit of God could manifest itself; for spirit cannot work without something to work in and upon, and in which it may be found; nor could light shine, unless there was something in nature

thicker than itself, to receive and reflect it: and therefore, thickness or darkness is, and must be, as eternal as the visible or shining light. Darkness is so far from being a mere negation, or only an absence, of the light, that it is the first and only substance, and the ground of all the possible substantiality in nature, and the substantial manifester of light itself, which could have no visibility, shine, or color, but in and through, and by the substantiality of darkness or thickness. This darkness, thickness, or substantiality, is not co-existent with, or independent of, God, but is the compressing, astringing, thickening work of the first property of the desire; which desire comes eternally from God, only as a magic birth from the will of the Deity, which willeth to come out of its hiddenness into an outward visibility of a working life. And therefore the desire is the beginning of nature; it compresseth and thickeneth. But what does it compress and thicken? Why, nothing but itself; viz. its own three properties. And these three properties thus brought forth, tied and bound in one another, are, from eternity to eternity, all the substantiality and thickness, that is or ever can be in nature, or any creature, from the highest to the lowest. And they are thus brought forth in this indissolvable band in and by the desire, that the invisible light and life of the hidden Deity may have its something to move and shine in; his hidden Spirit have something to work and manifest itself in; his hidden love have something into which it may give itself; and his hidden life have something in which it can open itself in a variety of births of life. And this something is the working compressing desire, which includes itself, (1.) a continual thickening, which is darkness and substantiality: (2.) motion or resistance to this thickening, which is the ground of all sensibility; and, (3.) a restless state of whirling from these two properties, which is the very nature and power of life. And thus these three properties of the desire, are that sufficient something, in which the Deity, by entering into it, can manifest his hidden power in all the substances and working properties of nature, by turning them all in their different workings into an endless variety of delightful forms and sensibilities of the creaturely life.

Now this first thickness, darkness, or substantiality, brought forth in the desire, though it is not matter, as matter is seen and found in this world; yet these two things must be affirmed of it: first, that it stands in the same place, answers the same ends, and is distinguished from light and spirit in the eternal world, just as matter in this world stands distinguished from the light and spirit of this world. Secondly, that all the darkness, thickness, and matter of every kind in this world, is nothing else in itself, but the first thickness, darkness, and substantiality in the desire, brought down by various steps into such kinds of materiality as are here to be seen. Look at what kind of materiality you will in this world; it is, in its whole nature, nothing else but the darkness or thickness of the eternal world, brought into a farther degree of thickness and compression. And now we are come to see the true ground; (1.) how the angels could destroy their kingdom, or lose all the light and happiness of heaven in it: and, (2.) how also, their wasted, spoiled, darkened habitation in the divided properties of nature, could be turned, and created by God, as it is, into this new form of a material world. The first three properties of nature were never to have been seen or known, as they are in themselves, by any creature; their thickness, strife, and darkness, were brought forth by God, in union with the light, and glory, and majesty of heaven; and only for that end, that the holy Deity might be made manifest in them. And therefore their own nature, as they are in themselves, without God in them, could only then be first known, when the angels turned their desire backwards to search and find the ground and original of life, which could not be found, till these properties were found, in which the original ground of life lay hid. This turning of their desire into the origin of life, was their whole turning from the light of God; and therefore they found

themselves where they had turned their desire; that is, in the center of nature; viz. in the first properties of nature, which is the dark center, or ground of life, which never should have been known or manifest to any creature. For by the center of nature, or the dark center, you are always to understand these three first properties; which, when without or separate from the light and goodness of the Deity in them, are in themselves only the thickness, and rage, and darkness, of an omnipotent compressing, and omnipotent resistance to it, and omnipotent whirling from these two omnipotent contrarieties. I call them all omnipotent, because they cannot be stopped, but do all that they would; and though they are contrary to one another, yet each of them gives strength to the other; so that the omnipotence of the one, is the omnipotence of the other. And this is the boundless, incessant, strong rage, darkness, and strife, of the hellish life, which only is that, which these three properties of nature, when left to themselves, can feel or find. Now the angels, which turned their desire into the center of nature, fell into the life and working power of these three properties; they felt nothing else in themselves, but these properties; they had no other will or power of working, but as these properties worked; and therefore, as living and active creatures, they could only live, and act, and cooperate, or unite with that ground of nature without them, which was the same and one with their own nature; and therefore, all that they could do, was to stir up, awaken, call forth, and act with that thickness and darkness, and strife, that was hidden in nature, just as the toad, in a fine garden, only sucks the poison that is hid in a good herb. So the fallen angels, though in heaven, having only the center of nature in themselves, could only find and work with that center and root of darkness, on which the heavenly glory stood. But from this power which they had of working in the center of nature, hence came forth a dark, wrathful substantiality, separated from the light and glory of the holy Deity; and thus a new kind of substantiality appeared in their kingdom; and their outward habitation was like their inward life; viz. a manifestation of nature fallen from God. And here now, you clearly see, how the first thickness or compression of the first property of nature, which was only the hidden substantiality of the light and glory of heaven, came into a more outward state, and made its first approach or step towards matter, as you now see it. For there was now a thickness, a darkness, and hardness, which never had been before; for the light being lost, then the first property of nature lost its beatified state of meekness, transparency, and spiritual fluidity; and became stiff, rigid, dark, and hard; and this, as I said, was its first step or descent towards the hardness and darkness of the matter of this world, till it came to be earth and stones, by the creating power of God. And thus it came to pass, as Moses speaks, that darkness was upon the face of the deep. A state, that had no possibility of existence, till the sin of angels had manifested the hidden center of nature, in the working of its three properties, without the light of God in them.

Now as a new thickness of darkness, hardness, or substantiality, was manifested by the strong working powers of the angels in the center, or the first properties of fallen nature; so God, to manifest his wisdom and goodness towards this fallen nature, took all these properties in their own working way; and made them in their own way of working, to stop and overcome the evil that was brought forth by them. For the will of God, joining with the wrathful astringency of the first compressing property of nature, became the divine fiat, which increased this compacting property to such a degree, as created or compacted the darkened substantiality into a globe of earth and stones. And this same divine fiat, or creating power, which coagulated the grossness into earth and stones, compressed or coagulated all that was substantial, or belonged to substantiality through their whole kingdom, as well the heavenly as the earthly part of it; so that all their

kingdom, as to its substantiality, lost its spirituality, and entered into a new created or compacted state of thickness, as well the spoiled as the unspoiled part of their kingdom. And as soon as this was done, the angels lost all their power in it, and over it. They could kindle no more wrath in its heavenly part, nor make any use of that which they had spoiled, because all was shut up together in this new compaction, with which the spirituality of their nature could have no communication. And so they were left prisoners in their own chains of darkness, unable to stir up wrath anywhere but in themselves. All this was done in the first day of the creation, when the fiat of God compressed or created their whole kingdom into a heaven and earth. Hence it is; viz. from a compaction of their whole kingdom into a new-created heaven and earth; that all things in this world, all its elements and stars, are a mixture of good and evil, have something of the wrath and evil of hell in them. Hence is the great variety of metallic ores and precious stones in the earth; the good and bad qualities in fire, air, and water. It is because the divine fiat, or compacting power, came at once in the utmost swiftness upon their whole kingdom, as the good and evil stood in strife against each other, and compressed all into a state of cessation and conjunction with one another, as in the prison of this new-created materiality. And thus the heavenly and hellish part of their kingdom, light and darkness, fluidity and hardness, meekness and wrath, good and evil, were all shut up together in the same sudden compaction; in which they lay, as in a state of death, till the divine fiat should awaken a life in it.

Now the three first properties of nature; the first, a shutting up; the second, a running out; and the third, a whirling; were by the divine fiat, in the three first days of the creation, become the ground of an earthly, a watery, and airy materiality, all according to the working nature of the three properties; and all of them having something of an heavenly nature shut up in them, which wanted to be delivered from its bondage. Hence this threefold materiality of earth, water, and air, became a subject fit for the birth of the fourth property of nature. And therefore, on the fourth day of the creation, the divine fiat kindled in this anguishing materiality, out of that very fire and light that was compacted and hid in it, the fourth property of nature (the eternal fire), as a globe of fire and light, which was to stand as an out-birth of the eternal fire, in the midst of this new- created materiality, and become the opener of all the astral life and light in this world. And as the eternal fire, the fourth property of eternal nature, is not a movable thing that can change its place, but must be always in the place of its birth, standing forever, as a birth, in the midst of the seven properties, forever changing the three first properties of nature into the three last properties of the kingdom of heaven; so the sun, the true out-birth of the eternal fire, and having the same birth and office in this material world, as the eternal fire hath in eternal nature, is not, cannot be, a movable thing, or be in any other place in this world, than where it is; but is, and must be, the center or heart of this whole system, ever separating the three first properties of this material world, from the three that follow, and ever changing the three first forms of material wrath into the three following forms of terrestrial life, light, and all delightful sensibilities; in strict conformity to that, which the eternal fire does in eternal nature, changing the root, or first properties of nature, into a kingdom of God, and heavenly glory. For the sun is not a body of fire brought into the place where it is; but the kindled place is its body and birth; and therefore it is as immovable as place is, and must be as it is; viz. a place giving forth fire and light till all material nature is dissolved. The place is kindled, not by any foreign fire, but thus: in the first compaction of the whole angelic kingdom into this new materiality, the good and bad part, that is, the spoiled and unspoiled substantiality of their whole kingdom, was shut up in this new compression or materiality, in one and the same state of death. Secondly, in the

beginning of the creation, God, said, "Let there be light," and there was light; not a shining light, for that came first from the birth of the sun, but a power or virtue of heavenly light, not yet in a visible, material shine, but as an uncreated power of light, entering into this whole materiality, to stir up, and awaken the good part of the heavenly substantiality, that was shut up in the compaction of this new materiality.

Without these two things, material nature must have continued in its darkness, and no fourth form of fire could ever have come forth in it. But from these two things, viz. the heavenly substantiality, stirred up by the power of light entering into it, the three first properties of darkness were brought into a mere anguishing state; from whence, by the divine fiat, the fourth form of material nature kindled itself, as a fire, and broke forth in the place of the sun, and must be ever burning and flaming in the midst of the material system; because it is born of the three first properties of darkness, and brings forth the three last properties of light, and life, and the joy of nature; and therefore must always be in the midst of the six properties of nature, itself making the number to be seven. And thus the sun, as the fourth form of nature, must always stand in the midst of the whole material system. And this proved, not as Copernicus proved it, from reasonable conjectures, and outward arguments, but from the internal nature of its birth, the first root from which it proceeds, and the absolute impossibility of its being otherwise. And thus it is, that the truth and depth of nature is opened by the Spirit of God, in the mystery made known to our illiterate shoemaker. And thus you have a short sketch, how this world came to be as it is. It is descended as an out-birth of the eternal world, and all the seven properties of eternal nature work in it, as they work in eternity; and the eternity is manifested in the temporary working of a new world, which is only to stand in this state of thickness or compaction for a time, till the goodness of God towards fallen nature has been sufficiently manifested thereby. For as this material system of things may, in a good sense, be said to be an unnatural state, occasioned by the disorders which the fall of angels brought into nature; and as it had no beginning, but from the will of God, commanding the first property of nature to coagulate and compress their disordered kingdom into a new thickness or materiality, only as a remedy to stop, remove, and overcome the evil in nature; so when this remedy shall have had its trial, and the will of God shall no longer will this compressing together; then all that has been brought together by it, must fall back again into its first eternity. And then, without any possibility of being otherwise, every birth in this world, that belongs to the root or center of nature, and has worked with it, must fall down into that eternal abyss of darkness, on which the light of God forever stands, unknown to it. And every life that is born of heaven, and has worked with it, must ascend into the kingdom of God, or abyss of divine glory and majesty.

Oh Academicus! Look now (whilst these thoughts are alive in you) at worldly greatness, fleshly wisdom, and earthly schemes of happiness; and tell me, if you can, what a nothingness, what a folly and delusion, there is in them? Look again at the apostle's pilgrim, abstaining from worldly lusts, desiring to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified; living in the spirit of prayer, and thirst after God; striving in everything after the fullest conformity to the tempers, Spirit, life, and behavior of Christ in this world; and then tell me, whether heaven and earth, God and nature, and all that is great, and wise, and happy, does not call upon you to be this pilgrim.

Academicus. Truly, sir, I enough see, that all worldly wisdom, and ambitious views of a glory of life in the things and concerns of this world, are no better than vain attempts to be blessed and happy from the ruins of the angelic kingdom. For this world is only a thickness and materiality of the

bestial life, built upon the ground of hell; that is, upon the first properties of fallen nature, brought into a harder, more compacted state of existence than they have in hell, and kindled into an astral, terrestrial, bestial life, by the power of the sun. The bestial life, therefore, is the highest good and happiness in it; and the creatures of this world have nothing that they seek for further in it. But man, being not created for it, but by sin fallen into it, is the only creature that makes an unnatural use of it, and seeks for that in it, and by it, which cannot be found in it. Man, having been wise, great, and happy in his creation, though they are all lost, has yet some remaining sensibility of them, though fallen into a world, that cannot help him to them. Hence it is, that he would be wise, and great, and happy in a world, that has no happiness but for beasts; and can only help man to know, that he is poor and miserable, and banished from his true native country.

But, instead of learning this one lesson of truth, from the world he is in, which is all the wisdom, greatness, and happiness, that can be had from it; he gives himself up to a wisdom that is foolishness, a greatness that is all meanness, and a happiness that begins and ends in torment and delusion. Would you see all his greatness, wisdom and happiness united, the sum total of earthly glory! It is, when he has in his cap the feathers of some birds, wears a painted ribband, laced clothes, is called by some new name, and drawn from place to place by a number of beasts. Now, poor, and mean, and unnatural as this fiction of earthly glory is; yet this is the powerful idol, that carries all before it! that destroys all sense of goodness, and divine virtue! and keeps the heart of man so earnestly devoted to it, that he has no sense of the eternity that is in him; that eternity brought him forth, and eternity will take him again!

Theophilus. It is true, Academicus, that the highest good of this world is its bestial life; and therefore it has no more, or other, happiness for a man than for a beast; can give no more to one, than to the other; viz. food and raiment; with which the bestial life in man ought to be content, as well as in the beast. But seeing man, in spite of the nature of things, will have an earthly glory of life; thence it is, that the wisdom of this world is, and must be, foolishness with God, and will be foolishness with man, as soon as he gets but a moderate knowledge of himself. But give me leave just to observe, that though this material world has no higher happiness than the bestial life; yet God hath much higher ends in creating it. For though the dark wrathful properties of fallen nature could only, in their compaction, be made the ground of a vegetable and bestial life; yet you are to observe, that in the creation of this world; viz. in the compaction of the whole angelic kingdom; the unspoiled heavenly part thereof was shut up with that, in which the wrath was kindled: and that for these two great ends; first, that, by this compaction, it might be taken out of the power of the evil angels, that they might not go on in kindling wrath in it. Secondly, that this reserved good part of their kingdom might be the foundation and ground of an heavenly paradisiacal life, and a new host of heavenly creatures, instead of the fallen angels. Now, to do this, God created an human angel, who was to call forth the paradisiacal life out of the compacted heavenly substantiality, as the sun opened a vegetable bestial life, out of the gross substantiality of the material world.

God breathed the triune Spirit of the holy Deity into a body taken out of the earth, that is, into a body of that heavenly substantiality, that was shut up in the earth, as well as in every other part of this material system; and therefore his body is rightly said to be taken or formed out of the earth; because it was formed of that substantiality, that was shut up in the earth. But when his wandering eye had raised a longing desire to know what the earthly life was in its good and evil, and took the certain means of knowing it; then, as his soul lost the light and Spirit of God, so it lost also that

heavenly luminous body, in which the light and Spirit of God could dwell, as it dwelleth in heaven. And when this heavenly luminous corporeity was lost, and shut up again in that earthly bondage and compaction, in which it lay, before it was his body; then the poor fallen soul was only clothed with the gross corruptibility of bestial flesh and blood. You are to understand this matter thus: when his body was formed out of that heavenly substantiality, that was in the compaction of the earth, it was not entirely separated from all earthly materiality (because he was to have a body of this world, as well as of the heavenly world); but its state in the earthly materiality was entirely changed; it was till then shut up in the earthly compaction, but now it is called out of that earthly death into a state of life; it is set free from the power of the earth, in a superiority over it, to be its happiness, and open its own glory in it, and through it. And thus you see the possibility, the truth, and the manner of the thing; how his heavenly body was taken out of the earth at his creation, set in freedom from it, and in a living superiority over it; how, at the fall, it was swallowed up, or compacted again in its own first earth; viz. the earthly body, or materiality of Adam: for as it was not separated from this earthly materiality, but only brought to life in it, and superiority over it; so when the divine light, which was the life of this body, was lost, it then fell again into a state of death in that gross materiality, under which it lay before. And thus, in the strictest truth, the body of Adam returned again to that very earth, or dust, from whence it was taken.

Now, when this happened, the fallen angels entered again into some power in their lost kingdom. There was then something found, with which they could work, and join their own power. For as the soul of man had lost the light and Spirit of heaven, so the same dark center of nature, or the three first wrathful properties, were opened in it, as are opened in the fallen angels. And thus they got entrance into the awakened hell in man, and can work in it. For as often as man stirred, followed, or worked with his will according to these properties, the devil could enter into, and work with him; and so the first son of fallen man was made a murderer. And hence it is, that sin and wickedness have known no bounds; it is because it is the joint work of fallen angels, and fallen man.

Stay a while, sir, in view of these truths: here you see the seat and ground, the birth and growth of all sin and evil; it lies in these three dark, selfish, self-willed, wrathful, hellish properties of the fallen soul. This is the dark center of nature, in which the devils have all their own power in themselves, and all their power in you; and till you resist this hell within you, till you live in contrariety to it, the devils will not flee from you.

Here also you see, in a self-evident light, the deep ground, and absolute necessity, of that one redemption, which is called, and is, the meekness and heavenly blood of the Lamb of God. For these words in their true ground mean only the changing of the three first dark wrathful properties of fallen nature, into the three last properties of the heavenly life, light, and love, which is the life of God restored to the soul, or the light, Spirit, or Word of God born again in it. Let me only add this one word; turn from wrath of every kind, as you would flee from the most horrid devil; for it is his, it is he, and his strength in you. Whether you look at rage and anger in a tempest, a beast, or a man, it is but one and the same thing, from one and the same cause; and therefore your own wrath is to be turned from, as the same with that of hell; and which has its birth and strength from that hell or center of nature, which the fall of angels hath made known; and which only worketh thus differently, whether it be in a man, a beast, or the elements of this world. And this must be, till the center of nature is again in its place of hiddenness, by being wholly overcome by heaven. Embrace therefore every meekness of love and humility with the same eagerness as you would

fall down at the feet of Jesus Christ; for it is his, {"is" missing in printed text, but see sentence 3 of this paragraph for exact parallel} it is he, and his power of salvation in you. Enter into no strife, or self-defense against anyone, that either reproaches you, or your doctrine; but remember, that if you are to join with Christ in doing good, your sword of natural wrath must be locked up in its own sheath; no weapons of the flesh are to be used; but you must work only in the meekness, the sweetness, the humility, the love and patience of the Lamb of God; who, as such, is the only doer of good, the only overcomer of wrath, and the one redemption of fallen nature. If you are reproached as an enthusiast, do not take comfort in thinking, that it is the truth of your own piety, or the want of it in others, that gives occasion to the charge; for though both of these should happen to be the case, yet they are not proper reflections for you; and if you take your peace from them, it is not the peace of God in you: but as in good report, you are to be as though you heard it not, ascribe nothing to yourself from it; so in evil report, self is just as much to be forgotten; and both of them are to be used, only as an occasion to generate humility, meekness, love, and the Spirit of the Lamb of God, both in yourself, and all that speak either well or ill of you. For this is the will and working of heaven; it has but one will, and one work; and that is, to change all the wrath, evil, and disorder of nature, into a kingdom of God. And therefore he that would be a servant of God, and work with heaven, must will all that he willeth, do all that he doth, and bear all that he beareth, in that one Spirit, and one will, with which heaven ruleth over all the earth.

You rejoice to think, that you know the true ground of your redemption; how heaven comes again into the fallen soul, when that property of light and love, which is called the fifth property of nature, is generated in it. It is indeed a blessed knowledge; but its blessedness is only then yours, when yourself are this fifth property, that is, when your life is a life of this fifth property; when, whatever you do, wherever you go, or whatever you meet, you only do as this fifth property doth, give nothing but that which it giveth; viz. its gentle light and love to every man, and everything, whether it be good or bad. For this property hath nothing else to give, and yet is always giving; its nature is, to communicate and impart itself, not here or there, but always and everywhere; it has no other will. When therefore this property (the Christ of God, and the life of heaven) is born in you, friend and foe will have the same from you; you will have lost all resentment; you will love your enemies; bless them that curse you; pray for them that despitefully use you; and have but one will towards every man, and that is, that light and love may do that for him, which they have done for you.

Academicus. Oh! Theophilus, you have given me more than I know how to contain; and yet have increased my thirst after more still. You have so touched the cord of love within me, that all my nature stands in a trembling desire after it; I would fain feel nothing else but the gentle godlike power of love, living in my heart. Pray therefore, of all things, help me to understand how the fire, the fourth property of nature, is born; and how it turns the first three wrathful forms into the three following forms of heavenly joy, triumph, and happiness; the first of which three forms, is this fifth of light and love: therefore, help me here, I beseech you.

Theophilus. What a therefore have you here drawn? That therefore, of all things, I must need help you to an opinion, or notional knowledge, how the fire is born, and how it turns nature into a kingdom of God. For was I to join with you in forming notions of this how, I should only help you to lose all, by being content with the shadow, instead of the substance.

You say, that your nature stands in a trembling desire after the birth of this light and love: if so, you stand in the very place of its birth, and must stand there till it is born in you. It can be born nowhere else, nor in any other manner; and all that Jacob Behmen has written, is only to direct and bring you to this place of its birth. He himself has given you all the hearsay knowledge that you can have of it; for he can give you no more from the plainest words. And therefore, to help anyone to work with his brain for clear notions, and rational conceptions, of what he has written, is helping him to do and be that, which all his works, from the beginning to the end, absolutely declare against, as contrary to the whole nature and end of them. Which speak, as he saith, with the sound of a trumpet; and chiefly to awaken man out of the dream and death of rational, notional, and hearsay knowledge; and to show him, that his own inward hunger and thirst after God, is that alone which can and must open the fountain of light and divine knowledge in him. But to speak a word or two of the fire, whose birth you want to know. You know already, better than any words can tell you, from a self-evident knowledge, that nature is in you; that it is not God, but is that which wants God, or its true good; and must be an emptiness, a pain, and want, till God is manifested in it. If you ask why nature is only a state of want and disquiet, and unable to be content with itself; it is because the eternal, uncreated, incomprehensible light, which no creature can enter into, is that which gave birth to all nature, and from whence all nature hath its hungering, and state of want. For nature had never come into being, but that the eternal, incomprehensible light longed to be manifested in an outspoken life of nature and creatures, and in a visibility and shine of glory: therefore, as nature came forth from this first longing of the light to be manifested in it, so nature is in itself only a want and hungering, which the light alone has raised, and can only satisfy.

Now from this longing on both sides, nature wanting God, and God wanting to be manifested in nature, the union of both is effected; which is the birth of that eternal fire, or fourth form of nature, which is always burning in the same degree, that is, always doing the same thing; viz. always overcoming and shutting up the three first forms of nature, and making them to be the hidden root and center of nature; and always bring forth out of them the three following properties of light and love, and every joyful sensibility of life; that is, changing nature into a kingdom of heaven. Now that which makes this change in the properties of nature is, and is rightly called, fire, in the strictest literal meaning of the word; because all that we can conceive as fire in this world, hath its whole nature, power, and existence, from it. Not only the fire of life in animals and vegetables, but the fire in the kitchen, and the candle, are each of them kindled as it is kindled, and doth all that it doth from this fourth property, or fire of eternal nature. The thickness and darkness in the wood, and the candle, have fire kindled in them, and light from that fire, in no other way, than as the fourth property is a fire from the thickness and darkness of nature, kindled by the light of God entering into union with it. Had the wood, and the candle, no water or oil in them, neither of them could give forth fire and light. Now water and oil have the properties of light in them: when therefore the properties of nature in the wood, and the candle, are put into strife, and begin to work in blackness and darkness (which is the beginning of every fire), they by this strife open an entrance for the properties of light in the water, and the oil, to mix and unite with them; and by this union of darkness and light, that fire is kindled, which turns the darkness of the wood and candle into a shining and light. And thus does every fire kindled in this world bear an infallible witness to the kindling, the nature, and power, of that eternal fire, which, kindled by the oil of divine light, changes the first dark properties of nature into the light and majesty of heaven. Now what would you know more of fire, or its birth, than that it is, and only can be, kindled by the light of God entering into,

and uniting with, the first properties of nature in the soul? Leave off therefore all working with your reason in the way of notions; empty your heart of all vain satisfactions in earthly things, that so the first properties of nature in your soul, finding their misery, and want of God, may make you to be all hunger, and faith, and desire of him. And then the fire must kindle, nothing can hinder it; God will then infallibly come as a fire and light into your soul, changing all the wanting, empty, restless properties of your natural life, into a sweetness of a new birth of rest and peace in him. For nothing works either in God, or nature, or creature, but desire. And as God created angels and men out of eternal nature, only through a longing desire of manifesting his own goodness and happiness in them, so every angel and man must find God, as a life of happiness and goodness in him, as soon as nature, either in angel or man, is become a hunger after God. For hunger does all in all worlds, and finds all that it wants, and hungers after. Everything had its beginning in it, and from it; and everything is led by it to all its happiness.

Academicus. I am quite satisfied in all my demands, and will ask for no more help, as to the use I am to make of our author's writings. Only tell me when they will all come forth in a new edition, or which will be published first; for I want several of them, which I could never get.

Theophilus. If you have but two or three of his books, it is enough; for everyone of them has all in it that you need be taught, and sufficiently opens the ground of the whole mystery of the Christian redemption. He himself thought his books to be too numerous; and expressed his wish, that they were all reduced into one. As he wrote without any art, and had no knowledge of regularity of composition; so whatever particular matter he occasionally entered upon, he always began again afresh from the same first ground, and full opening of the mystery of nature, from whence he explained and determined the matter he was upon. And it was this frequent, and almost constant, repetition of one and the same ground that swelled his writings into so many volumes; though it may be said, that there is nothing separately in any of his books, but what is to be found in almost every other, though not so largely set forth. You have no need therefore to run with eagerness through all his books; but the thing that you are to intend and look for, is the ground and foundation on which all his doctrines are built, which contains the true philosophy, or fundamental opening of all the powers that work both in nature and grace; and that by this knowledge you may become a true workman yourself; and know how to conform to, and concur with, all that the working powers, either of nature or grace, require of you. Now this ground and foundation of all is (as far as words can do it) opened to you in every one of his books: and you have been already also sufficiently brought into the knowledge of it, by what has been said of the birth of nature; what it is, how it works, how it came into being, how it is distinct from God, how it wants God, how God is manifested in it, how every after-thing is from and out of it, is all that it is, and hath all that it hath, in it, and by it, and must have all its happiness or misery, according as it works with, or contrary to nature. From this fundamental ground, or opening of the working powers of nature, you have seen how angels could and did, lose their first state in nature; and how a second new creation could, and did come out of their fallen state and kingdom, all according to the powers of fallen nature, overruled, and governed, and put into a new way by the good creating fiat of God. You have seen how this new creation, with man its lord, could, and did, lose also their first created state in nature; and how God, overruling fallen nature again, did, by his merciful redeeming fiat, or by the means of the holy Jesus, put this fallen new creation in a state of recovery, and all done according to the powers, and workings, and possibilities of nature. So that nothing is done arbitrarily, or by mere

will, but everything in conformity to the unchangeable workings and powers of nature; only directed, assisted, and helped, by the mercy of his redeeming fiat, so far as nature was capable of being helped. This, sir, is the true and fundamental ground of all his doctrines; and, standing upon this ground, you stand in the center of truth, whence everything that you need to know of God, of nature, of heaven, of hell, of the fall of man, of his redemption only and solely in and by the Word or Son of God, is known in such self-evident certainty, as you find and know the workings of your own life: and also, that happiness, or misery, life or death, can only be had, or not had, lost or found, solely as a birth in nature, brought forth by the faith, or magic power of the will of man, working either with, or contrary to, the redeeming fiat of God. To make therefore a right use of his writings, you should, for a sufficient time, keep solely to that part of them, which opens the ground and foundation of the powers that work in grace and nature, till by a self-evident sensibility it is opened in you, and your heart stands in a conformity to it, and true working with it: for it is your own heart, as finding the working powers of nature and grace in itself, and simply given up in faith to work with them, that is to be your key and guide to that knowledge you are to have of them; whether it be from the Holy Scripture, or the writings of this author. For to this end, he tells you, he has written all; viz. to help man to seek and find himself; what is his birth, his state and place in nature; what he is in body, soul, and spirit; from what worlds all these three parts of him are come; how they came to be as they are at present; what his fall is, and how he must rise out of it. And therefore, if, in order to seek and find this ground in yourself, you was, for some sufficient time, to read only to the 10th chapter of his Three Principles, or to the 6th or 8th chapter of his Threefold Life; and proceed no farther, till this ground had made itself manifest in you, and your heart stood in a strict conformity to it, and working with it; you would then be in a true fitness to read farther, and reap the full benefit from any other of his books, that should fall into your hands; whether it was the Way to Christ, or the book upon the Incarnation. But, above all things, remember this advice, as of the last moment to you, Be no reasoner upon the mystery; seek for no commentaries, or rational explications of it, to entertain your reason with: for, as soon as you do this; then, however true and good this mystery may be in itself, it is, with regard to you, of no better use than that very vain philosophy, and science falsely so called, condemned by the apostle. It will only be the same snare and delusion to you, that other learning and philosophy is to other people. For if there is nothing good or divine in you but the faith, and hope, and love, and desire of your heart turned to God; if nothing can do any good, be any blessing or happiness to this faith, and love, and desire turned to God, but only God himself in his holy being; and if nothing can communicate God to you, but God himself; and if God cannot communicate himself to you under a notion, or an idea of reason, but a degree of life, good, and blessing, born or brought to life in your soul; then you see, that to give yourself up to reasoning, and notional conceptions, is to turn from God, and wander out of the way of all divine communications.

Academicus. But if it be strictly thus, Theophilus, had it not been better, that these deep matters had not been communicated to the world, since it is so natural to man to make a wrong use of them?

Theophilus. This objection, Academicus, comes with the same strength against the scriptures themselves. For, excepting the seven thousands unknown in every age, as in the days of Elijah, and a few spiritual fathers and writers in almost every age of the church, bearing faithful witness to the truth and mysteries of religion, it must be said, that human learning, governed by human

reason, hath, from age to age, to this very day, not only mistaken the true end and use of the scriptures, but hath turned them into an occasion of much evil and mischief. The scriptures speak only to the heart and conscience of man, not to amend or enlighten it with notions and opinions formed from the written letter of the Word; but solely to make the being and power of God known and adored, and to awaken in man a sensibility of his want of God; and to turn all the power, and strength, and will of the heart wholly to God, to receive light, and life, and rest, in his holy being. But to speak now directly to your objection: if I knew of any person, who stood in the faith and simplicity of the first Christians, free from all carnal adherence, or vain trust, to party notions, doctrines, and errors, brought forth by the contention of sects and churches; whose soul was dead to the earthly nature, and all the rudiments of this world, seeking only light, life, and salvation, from God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, living and dwelling in him, redeeming and sanctifying his whole body, soul, and spirit; to such a one I could freely say, this mystery was needless; as having all that already which this mystery would do for him. For its only end is, to bring man out of all the labyrinths of false and notional religion, to this very first state and simplicity of the gospel faith and life. And this may pass for a good reason why this mystery was not opened by God in the first ages of the church; since there was then no occasion for it. For religion began, and went on, rightly, in its own true way; it had the faith and heart of man; it stood in its own proper strength and glory, and was an awakened divine life of faith simply given up with joy and gladness to the mysteries of the gospel; not wanting any why's or wherefore's, because in the real possession of all the good, and blessing, and power, of every mystery of salvation. But seeing a worldly spirituality, called in the scripture the whore riding upon the beast, has had its thousand years in the church; since not only every kingdom, but almost every corner of Christendom, has a Babel of its own, built upon some rational interpretation of the letter of scripture; since learned reason, within the church, knows no other use of scriptures, but to reproach and condemn all other Babels, and to find materials to strengthen its own; since reason, without the church, finds it as easy to reproach and condemn all revelation, as it is to reproach all these Babels built upon it; since this is the finished confusion, brought forth by the reason and fleshly wisdom both of those that defend, and those that oppose the gospel; how adorable is the goodness of God in vouchsafing to these last ages of the world such a remedy (viz. the opening the ground and mystery of all things) as is suitable to the distressed and confused state of religion in the world! And how easy is it also to see the greatest reasons, why this remedy was not afforded sooner! For as true faith did not want it, and learned reason, whilst pleased with itself, could not be in a condition to receive it; so it was highly suitable to the goodness and wisdom of God, not to give forth this mystery, till reason, or fleshly wisdom, had made shipwreck of faith; and had so filled up the measure of its folly, as to stand in its last and highest state of distress, perplexity, and confusion. For any remedy is only then likely to be rightly received, when distress and perplexity makes the want of it to be sensibly felt.

Let not therefore the genuine, plain, simple Christian, who is happy and blessed in the simplicity of gospel faith, take offense at this mystery, because he has no need of it. For it is God's goodness to the distressed state of the church, fallen from the life and power of gospel faith, and groaning under the slavery, darkness, and perplexity of bewildered reason and opinions.

Neither let the orthodox divine, who sticks close to the phrases and sentiments of antiquity, reject this mystery as heretical, because it opens a ground of man, and the divine mysteries, not known or found in the primitive writers. For this is the very reason, why he should thankfully receive it with

open arms, as having, and being that very thing, which the distressed divided state of the church now so greatly wants; and yet did not want, till it was fallen from its first simplicity of faith. For whilst faith and life defended the mysteries of religion, the ground and philosophy of it was not wanted. But when orthodoxy had given itself up to reason, and had nothing else for its support but reason and argument from the letter of scripture, without the least knowledge of the first ground of doctrines; then it could only be defended, as it is defended in every sect and division of the Christian world. For if reason will defend the mysteries of redemption, without knowing the true ground on which they stand, or why they must be as they are, from the nature of the thing; the more zealous and learned any man is, the more errors must he fall into in the defense of them. For the greater the strength is, that works without light, the more extravagancies it must produce. This is too visible in all the controversies that have risen in the church. Now, that learned reason, as presiding in the divinity schools, never yet had, nor could have, any knowledge of the ground of man, and the mysteries of redemption, is plain from this one generally received opinion of every age to this day; viz. that all things were created out of nothing. For this maxim entirely excludes all possibility of giving any account of the ground and reason of anything, either in the nature of man, or religion; and is the same thing as saying, that nothing has any ground or reason. For if that which begins to be comes out of nothing, it can only have the nature of that out of which it comes; and therefore can have no more said about it, why it is this or that, than can be said of that nothing, from whence it comes. And if the mystery, or life of the human nature, is out of nothing, has no reality of any antecedent ground in it, out of which it came to be such as it is, and to have that which it hath; then it is most certain, that all the mysteries of the religion of man must come forth from the same nothing, and have no antecedent ground from whence they come, that requires them to be as they are. For man, created out of nothing, cannot have a religion that is of any higher descent than himself, unless he is to have a religion that is quite unnatural to him. But a religion that has its ground in eternity, must be an unnatural religion to man that comes up in time, and out of nothing. If therefore you will hold man to be out of nothing, you must of all necessity hold all the mysteries of the religion of man to be also out of nothing; and that therefore no possible account can be given either of the ground of man, or his religion, or why there can be either right or wrong, good or evil, in either of them.

Hence you may see why the truth has always suffered in every controversy of the church: thus, if you begin with that of St. Austin and Pelagius, about the freedom of the human will; do but suppose, what is fact, that they both of them held the human will to be created out of nothing; and then you need not wonder at that number of volumes and systems of errors, which this dispute has brought forth. For who can say, what the will is, or is not; what nature or power it must have, if it is created out of nothing? Whereas, if either of these disputants had known, from a true ground, what the human will is; that it cannot be a made thing, much less made out of nothing; but that the will of angel or man is the eternal uncreated will become creaturely, as a true direct birth from the divine will, descended from it, born out of it, and from thence come into a creaturely state; then they had known, that the will of angel or man must have the nature and freedom of the eternal will; and that its freedom not only consisted in its self-motion, but chiefly and most gloriously in this, that it could neither receive, nor have, nor be anything, as to its happiness or misery, but according to its own working: and then all that predestinarian learning of decrees. that has tormented the church ever since the time of St. Austin, had been prevented.

Look next at the Socinian controversy. The Socinians, and their opponents, met in the field of reason, to debate about the fall, original sin, its guilt, the vindictive wrath of God, and the necessity of the incarnation, sufferings, death, and satisfaction, of Christ. These were the great points to be tried at the bar of reason. Now all these disputants stood upon the old ground; viz. that the soul of man, as well as all other things, was created out of nothing. And therefore they all stood absolutely excluded from every possibility of touching the true ground or reason of any one doctrine in debate. For the soul, created out of nothing, leaves no room to affirm, or even to suppose, that anything can be affirmed of the ground and reason of Christian redemption. For surely, if the soul of man is created out of nothing, it may and must with as much sense be affirmed, that it may be redeemed by nothing; and he that affirms the one, can have no pretense to deny the other.

Just the same may be said of the present controversy betwixt the Christians and infidels, concerning Christianity itself. You need not wonder, that so many learned volumes have had so little effect; or that the defenders of Christianity seem to lose ground, though the infidels, at the same time, get no advantage to their cause, but that of increasing their numbers. For as neither side can go any higher, than a creation out of nothing; so neither side can say anything from a true ground, either for or against the mysteries of the gospel. If therefore infidelity increases, it is not because it has got more light, sees further into the depths of nature, or stands upon a more rational ground; but merely because the vanity and blindness of the dispute has a natural tendency to beget indifference and infidelity in the hearts of men.

Observe this proposition; viz. "In God we live and have our being." Now, how easy is it for anyone to see, that no one can say anything as to the ground and reasons of the mysteries of the gospel, either for or against them, till he can go to the bottom of this proposition, and plainly show, either how we do, or do not, live and move, and have our being in God! For the truth or falseness of every mystery of the Christian redemption plainly depends upon this matter. If the Christian therefore will speak to the purpose, in defense of the ground of the gospel; he must be able to show, that we so are in God, so have our life in him, as to prove, from thence, the ground, the necessity, and certainty, of the Christian means of redemption. On the other hand, the Deist cannot take one rational step, or have any true ground to stand upon, but so far as he can show, that we are not so from God, have not such a nature in and from him, do not so live and move in him, as to have any want or any fitness for that method of redemption, which the gospel teaches. But as neither side did this, though the one thing necessary to be done; so you also see, that neither side had any possibility of doing it. For the soul, created out of nothing, allows of no inquiry, whether anything of God be in it, or how it has its life in him, or stands related to him. It admits of no searching after any ground or reason of its good or evil, or how it must have its happiness or misery from the nature of the thing. For if the intelligent life itself must be supposed to come from no ground, but to be created out of nothing; then it is certain, that its good and evil, its happiness or misery, with everything else, must be supposed to have no ground or reason for being as it is, but to be created out of nothing; and may go again into nothing, just as the creator pleaseth. And now, sir, you may enough see, how all controversy, both within and without the church, has been so vain a thing. For reason was to support doctrines and mysteries, without the least knowledge of the ground on which they stood; and reason was to oppose them in the same ignorance. You see also, why in these last ages, where literal learning has made so great a figure, that the matter has only been made worse, and division and error more triumphant. For as the ground of the truths

was still wanted, and nothing appealed to, but the letter and phrase of scripture; so the more artful and learned disputants were in reasoning and criticism, the more absurdities must be defended on both sides. Why is not the learned papist shocked at transubstantiation, or the Protestant at predestination and reprobation? It is because each of them have enough of the truth of reason, and the goodness of criticism, to draw the letter of scripture to his side. And this you may be assured of, that reason, and literal learning, have just as good eyes in every other religious matter, and will give just such an account of every other doctrine, when it comes into dispute, as the papist and Protestant have done in these two points. And the thing cannot be otherwise: as Deist and Christian both hold a creation out of nothing, they must both have only an arbitrary God, and arbitrary religion, that has no antecedent ground to stand upon, but is left to the arbitrary proof or reason of both of them. What thanks, therefore, are due to the goodness of God, for opening this great mystery of all things in our author, wherein the right and wrong, the true and false, in religion, is as manifest as anything can be to our senses! Let no one therefore take offense at the opening of this mystery, as if it brought anything new into religion; for it has nothing new in it; it alters no point of gospel-doctrine, nor adds anything to it, but only sets every article of the old Christian faith upon its true ground, and in such a degree of light, as, when seen, is irresistible. It disturbs no one, who is in possession of the truth, because it points at nothing, drives to nothing, but to the opening the heavenly life in the soul. It calls no man from any outward form of religion, as such; but only shows, that no outward form can have any good in it, but so far as it only means, and seeks, and helps, the renewed life of heaven in the soul. "A Christian," says he, "is of no sect, and yet in every sect"; a truth which all sects, as such, will dislike; and therefore a truth equally wanted to be known, and equally beneficial to all sects. For the chief hurt of a sect lies in this, that it takes itself to be necessary to the truth; whereas the truth is only then found, when it is known to be of no sect, but as free and universal as the goodness of God, and as common to all names and nations as the air and light of this world.

Suffer me now, before we part, once more to repeat what I have so often said, that you would not receive this mystery as a system of rational notions; nor do with it, as the world has, for the most part, done with the Bible, only gather opinions of reason and speculation from it. For it opens no depth of nature or grace, but to help you to the heart and spirit of the returning prodigal son, and to show you the blindness and vanity of reason and opinions; and that truth can have no possible entrance into you, but so far as you die to your earthly nature. The gospel saith all this to you in the plainest words; and the mystery only shows you, that the whole system of the universe saith the same thing. To be a true student or disciple of the mystery, is to be a disciple of Christ; for it calls you to nothing but to the plain letter of the gospel; and wherever it enters, either into the height or depth of nature, it is only to confirm the truth of these words of Christ; viz. "He that followeth not me, walketh in darkness: and unless a man deny himself, and forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." This is the philosophy opened in this mystery. It is not to lead you after itself, but to compel you, by every truth of nature, to turn to Christ, as the one way, the one truth, the one life, and salvation of the soul; not as notionally apprehended, or historically known; but as experimentally found, living, speaking, and working, in your soul. Read as long or as much as you will of this mystery, it is all labor lost; if you intend anything else by it, or would be anything else from it, but a man dead to this world, that you may live unto God through Christ Jesus, in the power of faith, and the spirit of prayer. With these words upon our minds, my friends, let us now end this conversation. The End of the Third Dialogue.

FINIS.

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