

The Spirit of Love - Part 4

by William Law

William Law's sermon discusses the profound nature of divine love and the necessity of inner transformation for true spiritual experience.

Scripture: Galatians 5:22, 1 John 4:8

Topics: "Divine Love", "Transformation through Surrender"

Description

William Law discusses the profound nature of Divine Love, emphasizing that true love is not merely an emotional response but a transformative birth within the soul. He explains that many may feel they possess love due to their appreciation of its doctrine, yet they may only be experiencing a superficial understanding rather than the genuine birth of love that requires a complete surrender of the fallen nature. Law highlights the necessity of relinquishing all that is derived from Adam's fallen state to truly embody the Spirit of Love, which is characterized by peace, joy, and a profound connection to God. He encourages a deeper understanding of love as a divine force that transcends mere human affection, urging listeners to seek the true essence of love that aligns with God's purpose.

Transcript

THE

THIRD DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

Theogenes, Eusebius, and Theophilus.

[Love-2.3-1] 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?

[Love-2.3-2] 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.

[Love-2.3-3] 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.

[Love-2.3-4] 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?

[Love-2.3-5] 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.

[Love-2.3-6] Eusebius. What is the Price that I must give for it?

[Love-2.3-7] 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.

[Love-2.3-8] 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.

[Love-2.3-9] 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.

[Love-2.3-10] 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.

[Love-2.3-11] 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.

[Love-2.3-12] 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.

[Love-2.3-13] 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.

[Love-2.3-14] 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.

[Love-2.3-15] 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.

[Love-2.3-16] 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.

[Love-2.3-17] 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.

[Love-2.3-18] 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.

[Love-2.3-19] 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.

[Love-2.3-20] 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.

[Love-2.3-21] 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.

[Love-2.3-22] 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.

[Love-2.3-23] 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.

[Love-2.3-24] 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.

[Love-2.3-25] But now I stop, for you may perhaps think that I have here made a Digression from our proposed Subject.

[Love-2.3-26] 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.

[Love-2.3-27] 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.

[Love-2.3-28] 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.

[Love-2.3-29] 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.

[Love-2.3-30] 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.

[Love-2.3-31] 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.

[Love-2.3-32] Eusebius. I cannot deny what you say, and yet it seems to me to derogate from Scripture.

[Love-2.3-33] 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?

[Love-2.3-34] 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."

[Love-2.3-35] 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.

[Love-2.3-36] Eusebius. There is no Possibility of doing that.

[Love-2.3-37] 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.

[Love-2.3-38] But to come now closer to our Subject in Hand.

[Love-2.3-39] 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.

[Love-2.3-40] 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.

[Love-2.3-41] 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.

[Love-2.3-42] 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.

[Love-2.3-43] 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.

[Love-2.3-44] 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.

[Love-2.3-45] 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.

[Love-2.3-46] 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?

[Love-2.3-47] Eusebius. Would you have me tell you that I am an Angel, and without the Infirmities of human Flesh and Blood?

[Love-2.3-48] 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.

[Love-2.3-49] 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.

[Love-2.3-50] 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.

[Love-2.3-51] 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.

[Love-2.3-52] 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.

[Love-2.3-53] 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.

[Love-2.3-54] Eusebius. I am quite delighted with this. But tell me now, how it is that Light can only be manifested in, and by Darkness.

[Love-2.3-55] 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.

[Love-2.3-56] 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.

[Love-2.3-57] Eusebius. What is it then, that you understand by the Materiality of Light?

[Love-2.3-58] 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.

[Love-2.3-59] 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.

[Love-2.3-60] 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.

[Love-2.3-61] 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.

[Love-2.3-62] 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.

[Love-2.3-63] 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.

[Love-2.3-64] 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.

[Love-2.3-65] Theogenes. I could willingly hear you, Theophilus, on this Subject till Midnight, though it seems to lead us away from our proposed Subject.

[Love-2.3-66] 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.

[Love-2.3-67] 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.

[Love-2.3-68] Theogenes. What is this Darkness in itself, or where is it?

[Love-2.3-69] 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.

[Love-2.3-70] Theogenes. What are the Powers of Darkness?

[Love-2.3-71] 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.

[Love-2.3-72] 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.

[Love-2.3-73] 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?

[Love-2.3-74] 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.

[Love-2.3-75] 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.

[Love-2.3-76] 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.

[Love-2.3-77] 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.

[Love-2.3-78] 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.

[Love-2.3-79] 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.

[Love-2.3-80] 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.

[Love-2.3-81] 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.

[Love-2.3-82] 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!

[Love-2.3-83] 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.

[Love-2.3-84] 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.

[Love-2.3-85] 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.

[Love-2.3-86] 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.

[Love-2.3-87] 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.

[Love-2.3-88] 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.

[Love-2.3-89] 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.

[Love-2.3-90] 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.

[Love-2.3-91] 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.

[Love-2.3-92] 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.

[Love-2.3-93] 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.

[Love-2.3-94] 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.

[Love-2.3-95] 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.

[Love-2.3-96] 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.

[Love-2.3-97] 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.

[Love-2.3-98] 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.

[Love-2.3-99] 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.

[Love-2.3-100] 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.

[Love-2.3-101] 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.

[Love-2.3-102] 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.

[Love-2.3-103] 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.

[Love-2.3-104] 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.

[Love-2.3-105] 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.

[Love-2.3-106] 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.

[Love-2.3-107] 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.

[Love-2.3-108] 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.

[Love-2.3-109] 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?

[Love-2.3-110] 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?

[Love-2.3-111] Theogenes. I don't understand why you put this Question; nor do I see how it can possibly relate to the Matter before us.

[Love-2.3-112] Theophilus. It not only relates to, but is the very Heart and Truth of the Matter before us: It is not

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