

COLLECTION OF LETTERS

by William Law

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A
COLLECTION
OF
LETTERS

*On the Most
Interesting and Important SUBJECTS,
AND ON
SEVERAL OCCASIONS.*

By
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An Advertisement to the Reader

The Letters in this Collection having been experimentally found of great private Benefit, the consent of the Author has been obtained to their being made Public. And as they contain a rich Treasure of Divine Truths, and come home to the Bosoms of Men, comprehending the Fullness of Religion, and resolving a great Variety of important Points, the Editors have great Pleasure, in being allowed to publish them.

T.L. G.W.

A COLLECTION OF LETTERS

Letter I

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, etc., 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 enclosures.

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.

Letter II

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-quickening 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 inquiry. 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.

Letter III

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 does 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,” etc. 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,” etc. 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, etc., 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, etc., 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, etc., 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, etc., 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.

Letter IV

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," etc. 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.

Letter V

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, etc., 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 letters, 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 inquiry 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, etc., etc. 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, etc., 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 inquiry, 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.

Letter VI

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, etc., 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, etc., 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 Christ-like 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, etc., 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,” etc. 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.

Letter VII

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 inquiring 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 inquire 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.

Letter VIII

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.

Letter IX

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.

Letter X

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 inquiry, 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, etc., 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 reprovener of sin. It is the infallible proof of his holy presence within you.

Hear him, reverence him, submit to him as a discoverer and reprovener 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 inquiry 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, etc., 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, etc., 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.

Letter XI

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-abhorrence 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 off-springs 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, traveling 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 inquiries 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 straitest 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 inveniat, 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.

Letter XII

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 inquiry 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 blasphemer 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.

Letter XIII

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.

Letter XIV

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.

Letter XV

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.

Letter XVI

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.

Letter XVII

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.

Letter XVIII

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."

Letter XIX

To the same.

My dear Friend,

Your strictures upon messieurs of the foundery, the tabernacles, etc., 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.

Letter XX

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 everything, is the best regimen, you can enter into, both for soul and body. Every good wish attends my dear fellow-traveler out of time, into eternity.

Farewell.

Oct. 10, 1756.

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, etc.

May 8, 1750.

Letter XXII

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

Letter XXIII

To the same.

My dear Friend,

The charge of Spinozism brought against me by Dr. Warburton, has all the folly and weakness, etc., etc., 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.

Letter XXIV

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.

Letter XXV

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, etc., etc., 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, etc.,

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, etc., etc. 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, etc., 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