

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER

by William Law

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THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER;

or

THE SOUL RISING OUT OF THE VANITY OF
TIME, INTO THE RICHES OF ETERNITY

by

William Law, M.A.
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PART I

CHAPTER 1

Treating of Some Matters preparatory to the Spirit of Prayer

The greatest part of mankind, nay of Christians, may be said to be asleep; and that particular way of life, which takes up each man's mind, thoughts, and actions, may be very well called his particular dream. This degree of vanity is equally visible in every form and order of life. The learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, are all in the same state of slumber, only passing away a short life in a different kind of dream. But why so? It is because man has an eternity within him, is born into this world, not for the sake of living here, not for anything this world can give him, but only to have time and place, to become either an eternal partaker of a divine life with God, or to have an hellish eternity among fallen angels: and therefore, every man who has not his eye, his heart, and his hands, continually governed by this twofold eternity, may justly be said to be fast asleep, to have no awakened sensibility of himself. And a life devoted to the interests and enjoyments of this world, spent and wasted in the slavery of earthly desires, may be truly called a dream; as having all the shortness, vanity, and delusion of a dream; only with this great difference, that when a dream is over, nothing is lost but fictions and fancies; but when the dream of life is ended only by death, all that eternity is lost for which we were brought into being. Now there is no misery in this world, nothing that makes either the life or death of man to be full of calamity, but this blindness and insensibility of his state, into which he so willingly, nay obstinately plunges himself. Everything that has the nature of evil and distress in it takes its rise from hence. Do but suppose a man to know himself, that he comes into this world on no other errand, but to rise out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity; do but suppose him to govern his inward thoughts and outward actions by this view of himself, and then to him every day has lost all its evil; prosperity and adversity

have no difference, because he receives and uses them both in the same spirit; life and death are equally welcome, because equally parts of his way to eternity. For poor and miserable as this life is, we have all of us free access to all that is great, and good, and happy, and carry within ourselves a key to all the treasures that heaven has to bestow upon us. We starve in the midst of plenty, groan under infirmities, with the remedy in our own hand; live and die without knowing and feeling anything of the one, only good, whilst we have it in our power to know and enjoy it in as great a reality, as we know and feel the power of this world over us: for heaven is as near to our souls, as this world is to our bodies; and we are created, we are redeemed, to have our conversation in it. God, the only good of all intelligent natures, is not an absent or distant God, but is more present in and to our souls, than our own bodies; and we are strangers to heaven, and without God in the world, for this only reason, because we are void of that spirit of prayer, which alone can, and never fails to unite us with the one, only good, and to open heaven and the kingdom of God within us. A root set in the finest soil, in the best climate, and blessed with all that sun, and air, and rain can do for it, is not in so sure a way of its growth to perfection, as every man may be, whose spirit aspires after all that, which God is ready and infinitely desirous to give him. For the sun meets not the springing bud that stretches towards him with half that certainty, as God, the source of all good, communicates himself to the soul that longs to partake of him.

We are all of us, by birth, the offspring of God, more nearly related to him than we are to one another; for in him we live, and move, and have our being. The first man that was brought forth from God had the breath and spirit of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, breathed into him, and so he became a living soul. Thus was our first father born of God, descended from him, and stood in paradise in the image and likeness of God. He was the image and likeness of God, not with any regard to his outward shape or form, for no shape has any likeness to God; but he was in the image and likeness of God, because the Holy Trinity had breathed their own nature and spirit into him. And as the Deity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are always in heaven, and make heaven to be everywhere, so this spirit, breathed by them into man, brought heaven into man along with it; and so

man was in heaven, as well as on earth, that is, in paradise, which signifies an heavenly state, or birth of life.

Adam had all that divine nature, both as to an heavenly spirit, and heavenly body, which the angels have. But as he was brought forth to be a Lord and ruler of a new world, created out of the chaos or ruins of the kingdom of fallen angels; so it was necessary that he should also have the nature of this new created world in himself, both as to its spirit and materiality. Hence it was, that he had a body taken from this new created earth, not such dead earth as we now make bricks of, but the blessed earth of paradise, that had the powers of heaven in it, out of which the tree of life itself could grow. Into the nostrils of this outward body, was the breath or spirit of this world breathed; and in this spirit and body of this world, did the inward celestial spirit and body of Adam dwell: it was the medium or means through which he was to have commerce with this world, become visible to its creatures, and rule over it and them. Thus stood our first father; an angel both as to body and spirit (as he will be again after the resurrection) yet dwelling in a body and spirit taken from this new created world, which however was as inferior to him, as subject to him, as the earth and all its creatures were. It was no more alive in him, no more brought forth its nature within him, than Satan and the serpent were alive in him at his first creation. And herein lay the ground of Adam's ignorance of good and evil; it was because his outward body, and the outward world (in which alone was good and evil) could not discover their own nature, or open their own life within him, but were kept inactive by the power and life of the celestial man within it. And this was man's first and great trial; a trial not imposed upon him by the mere will of God, or by way of experiment; but a trial necessarily implied in the nature of his state: he was created an angel, both as to body and spirit; and this angel stood in an outward body, of the nature of the outward world; and therefore, by the nature of his state, he had his trial, or power of choosing, whether he would live as an angel, using only his outward body as a means of opening the wonders of the outward world to the glory of his creator; or whether he would turn his desire to the opening of the bestial life of the outward worlding himself, for the sake of knowing the good and evil that was in it. The fact is certain, that he lusted after the knowledge of this good and evil, and made use of the means to obtain it. No sooner had he

got this knowledge, by the opening of the bestial life and sensibility within him; but his soul, an immortal fire that could not die, became a poor slave in prison of bestial flesh and blood. See here the nature and necessity of our redemption; it is to redeem the first angelic nature that departed from Adam; it is to make that heavenly spirit and body which Adam lost, to be alive again in all the human nature; and this is called regeneration. See also the true reason why only the Son, or eternal Word of God, could be our redeemer; it is because he alone, by whom all things were at first made, could be able to bring to life again that celestial spirit and body which had departed from Adam. See also why our blessed redeemer said, "Except a man be born again of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." He must be born again of the spirit, because Adam's first heavenly spirit was lost: he must be born again of water, because that heavenly body which Adam lost, was formed out of the heavenly materiality, which is called water. Thus in the Revelation of St. John, the heavenly materiality, out of which the bodies of angels and also of Adam were formed, is called a glassy sea, as being the nearest and truest representation of it that can be made to our minds. The necessity of our regaining our first heavenly body, is the necessity of our eating the body and blood of Christ. The necessity of having again our first heavenly spirit, is declared by the necessity of our being baptized by the Holy Ghost. Our fall is nothing else, but the falling of our soul from this celestial body and spirit into a bestial body and spirit of this world. Our rising out of our fallen state, or redemption, is nothing else but the regaining our first angelic spirit and body, which in Scripture is called our inward, or new man, created again in Christ Jesus. See here, lastly, the true ground of all the mortifications of flesh and blood, required in the gospel; it is because this bestial life of this outward world should not have been opened in man; it is his separation from God, and death to the kingdom of heaven; and therefore, all its workings, appetites, and desires, are to be restrained and kept under, that the first heavenly life, to which Adam died, may have room to rise up in us.

But to return. That Adam was thus an angel at his first creation, dwelling in an outward body and outward world, incapable of receiving any impressions from them, and able to rule them at his pleasure; that all outward nature was a state of life below him, in subjection to him; that

neither sun, nor stars, nor fire, nor water, nor earth, nor stones, could act upon him, or hurt him, is undeniably plain from hence; because his first and great sin, which cost him his angelic life, and took from him his crown of glory, consisted in this, that he lusted to know, and took the means of knowing, what good and evil are in the bestial life of this world: for this plainly demonstrates, that before his sin, whilst he stood in the first state of his creation, that he was an angel in nature and power, that neither his own outward body, nor any part of outward nature, had any power in him or upon him; for had his own outward body, or any element of outward nature, had any power to act upon him, to make any impressions, or raise any sensations in him, he could not have been ignorant of good and evil in this world. Therefore, seeing that his eating of the forbidden tree, was that alone which opened this knowledge in him, it is a demonstration, that in his first state he was in this world as an angel, that was put into the possession of it only to rule as a superior being over it; that he was to have no share of its life and nature, no feeling of good or evil from it, but to act in it as a heavenly artist, that had power and skill to open the wonders of God in every power of outward nature. An angel, we read, used at a certain time to come down into a pool at Jerusalem; the water stirred by the angel gave forth its virtues, but the angel felt no impressions of weight, or cold from the water. This is an image of Adam's first freedom from, and power over all outward nature. He could wherever he went, do as this angel did, make every element, and elementary thing, discover all the riches of God that were hidden in it, without feeling any impressions of any kind from it. This was to have been the work both of Adam and his offspring, to make all the creation show forth the glory of God, to spread paradise over all the earth, till the time came, that all the good in this world was to be called back to its first state, and all the evil in every part left to be possessed by the devil and his angels. But since he fell from this first state into an animal of this world, his work is changed, and he must now labor with sweat to till the cursed earth, both for himself and the beasts upon it.

Let us now consider some plain and important truths, that follow from what has been said above.

First, it is plain that the sin and fall of Adam did not consist in this, viz., that he had only committed a single act of disobedience, and so might have been just as he was before, if God had pleased to overlook this single act

of disobedience, and not to have brought a curse upon him and his posterity for it. Nothing of this is the truth of the matter, either on the part of God, or on the part of man.

Secondly, it is plain also, that the command of God, not to lust after, and eat of the forbidden tree, was not an arbitrary command of God, given at pleasure, or as a mere trial of man's obedience; but was a most kind and loving information given by the God of love to his new-born offspring, concerning the state he was in, with regard to the outward world: warning him to withdraw all desire of entering into a sensibility of its good and evil; because such sensibility could not be had, without his immediate dying to that divine and heavenly life which he then enjoyed. "Eat not," says the God of love, "of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for in the day thou eatest thereof you will surely die."

As if it had been said, "I have brought thee into this paradise, with such a nature as the angels have in heaven. By the order and dignity of thy creation, everything that lives and moves in this world is made subject to thee, as to their ruler. I have made thee in thy outward body of this world, to be for a time a little lower than the angels, till thou hast brought forth a numerous offspring, fit for that kingdom which they have lost. The world around thee, and the life which is newly awakened in it, is much lower than thou art; of a nature quite inferior to thine. It is a gross, corruptible state of things, that cannot stand long before me; but must for a while bear the marks of those creatures, which first made evil to be known in the creation. The angels, that first inhabited this region, where thou art to bring forth a new order of beings, were great and powerful spirits, highly endowed with the riches and powers of their creator. Whilst they stood (as the order of creation requires) in meekness and resignation, under their creator, nothing was impossible to them; there was no end of their glorious powers throughout their whole kingdom. Perpetual scenes of light, and glory, and beauty, were rising and changing through all the height and depth of their glassy sea, merely at their will and pleasure. But finding what wonders of light and glory they could perpetually bring forth; how all the powers of eternity, treasured up in their glassy sea, unfolded themselves, and broke forth in ravishing forms of wonder and delight, merely in obedience to their call; they began to admire and even adore themselves, and to fancy that there was some infinity of power hidden in

themselves, which they supposed was kept under, and suppressed, by that meekness, and subjection to God, under which they acted. Fired and intoxicated with this proud imagination, they boldly resolved, with all their eternal energy and strength, to take their kingdom, with all its glories, to themselves, by eternally abjuring all meekness and submission to God. No sooner did their eternal potent desires fly in this direction of a revolt from God, but in the swiftness of a thought heaven was lost; and they found themselves dark spirits, stripped of all their light and glory. Instead of rising up above God (as they hoped) by breaking off from him, there was no end of their eternal sinking into new depths of slavery, under their own self-tormenting natures. As a wheel going down a mountain, that has no bottom, must continually keep on its turning, so are they whirled down by the impetuosity of their own wrong turned wills, in a continual descent from the fountain of all glory, into the bottomless depths of their own dark, fiery, working powers. In no hell, but what their own natural strength had awakened; bound in no chains, but their own unbending, hardened spirits; made such, by their renouncing, with all their eternal strength, all meekness, and subjection to God. In that moment, the beautiful materiality of their kingdom, their glassy sea in which they dwelt, was by the wrathful rebellious workings of these apostate spirits broken all into pieces, and became a black lake, a horrible chaos of fire and wrath, thickness and darkness, a height and depth of the confused, divided, fighting properties of nature. My creating fiat stopped the workings of these rebellious spirits, by dividing the ruins of their wasted kingdom, into an earth, a sun, stars, and separated elements. Had not this revolt of angels brought forth that disordered chaos, no such materiality as this outward world is made of had ever been known. Gross compacted earth, stones, rocks, wrathful fire here, dead water there, fighting elements, with all their gross vegetables and animals, are things not known in eternity, and will be only seen in time, till the great designs are finished, for which thou art brought forth in paradise. And then, as a fire awakened by the rebel creature, began all the disorders of nature, and turned that glassy sea into a chaos, so a last fire, kindled at my word, shall thoroughly purge the floor of this world. In those purifying flames, the sun, the stars, the air, the earth and water, shall part with all their dross, deadness, and division, and all become again that first, heavenly materiality, a glassy sea of everlasting light and glory, in which thou and thy offspring shall sing hallelujahs to all

eternity. Look not therefore, thou child of paradise, thou son of eternity, look not with a longing eye after anything in this outward world. There are the remains of the fallen angels in it; thou hast nothing to do in it, but as a ruler over it. It stands before thee, as a mystery big with wonders; and thou, whilst an angel in paradise, hast power to open and display them all. It stands not in thy sphere of existence; it is, as it were, but a picture, and transitory figure of things; for all that is not eternal, is but as an image in a glass, that seems to have a reality, which it has not. The life which springs up in this figure of a world, in such an infinite variety of kinds and degrees, is but as a shadow; it is a life of such days and years, as in eternity have no distinction from a moment. It is a life of such animals and insects, as are without any divine sense, capacity, or feeling. Their natures have nothing in them, but what I commanded this new modeled chaos, this order of stars and fighting elements, to bring forth.

“Now Adam, observe, I will open to thee a great mystery. The heavenly materiality of the angels’ kingdom before their revolt was a glassy sea, a mirror of beauteous forms, figures, virtues, powers, colors, and sounds, which were perpetually springing up, appearing and changing in an infinite variety, to the manifestation of the wonders of the divine nature, and to the joy of all the angelical kingdom. This heavenly materiality had its fruits and vegetables, much more real than any that grow in time, but as different from the grossness of the fruits of this world, as the heavenly body of an angel is different from the body of the grossest beast upon earth. In this angelical kingdom, the one element (which is now in four parts) was then a fruitful mother of wonders, continually bringing forth new forms and figures of life; not animals, beasts, or insects, but beautiful figures, and ideal forms of the endless divisibility, and degrees of life, which only broke forth as delightful wonders of the riches of the divine nature, and to tune the voices of angels with songs of praise to the infinite source of life. And hence, O Adam, is that endless infinite variety both of the animal and vegetable life in this perishable world. For no fruits or vegetables could have sprung up in the divided elements, but because they are the divided parts of that one heavenly materiality, or glassy sea, in which angelical fruits had formerly grown forth. No animal life could have arose from stars, air, and water, but because they are all of them the gross remains of that one element, in which the figures and images of life had once risen up

in such an infinite variety of degrees and kinds. Hence it was, that when my creating fiat spoke to these new ranged stars, and elements, and bid life awake in them all according to its kind, they all obeyed my word, and every property of nature strove to bring forth, after the kind and manner as it had done in the region of eternity. This, my son, is the source and original of all that infinite variety, and degrees of life, both of animals and vegetables, in this world. It is because all outward nature, being fallen from heaven, must yet, as well as it can, do and work as it had done in heaven.

“In heaven, all births and growths, all figures and spiritual forms of life, though infinite in variety, are yet all of a heavenly kind, and only so many manifestations of the goodness, wisdom, beauty, and riches of the divine nature. But in this new modeled chaos, where the disorders that were raised by Lucifer are not wholly removed, but evil and good must stand in strife, till the last purifying fire, here every kind and degree of life, like the world from whence it springs, is a mixture of good and evil in its birth.

“Therefore, my son, be content with thy angelical nature, be content, as an angel in paradise, to eat angels’ food, and to rule over this mixed, imperfect, and perishing world, without partaking of its corruptible, impure, and perishing nature. Lust not to know how the animals feel the evil and good which this life affords them; for if thou couldst feel what they feel, thou must be as they are; thou canst not have their sensibility, unless thou hast their nature: thou canst not at once be an angel and an earthly animal. If the bestial life is raised up in thee, the same instant the heavenly birth of thy nature must die in thee. Therefore turn away thy lust and imagination from a tree, that can only help thee to the knowledge of such good and evil, as belongs only to the animals of this outward world; for nothing but the bestial nature can receive good or evil from the stars and elements; they have no power, but over that life which proceeds from them. Eat therefore only the food of paradise; be content with angels’ bread; for if thou eatest of this tree, it will unavoidably awaken and open the bestial life within thee; and in that moment, all that is heavenly must die, and cease to have any power in thee. And thou must fall into a slavery for life, under the divided fighting powers of stars and elements. Stripped of any angelical garment, that hid thy outward body under its glory, thou wilt become more naked than any beast upon earth, be forced to seek from beasts a covering, to hide thee from the sight of thine own eyes. A

shameful, fearful, sickly, wanting, suffering, and distressed heir of the same speedy death in the dust of the earth, as the poor beasts, whom thou wilt thus have made to be thy brethren.”

This paraphrase I leave to the reflection of the reader, and proceed to show,

Thirdly, that the misery, distress, and woeful condition, which Adam by his transgression brought upon himself, and all his posterity, was not the effect of any severe vindictive wrath in God, calling for justice to his offended sovereignty, and inflicting pains and punishments suitable to the greatness of his just indignation, and anger at the disobedient creature.

If Adam, contrary to the will of God, and for the sake of some new-fancied knowledge, had broken both his own legs, and put out both his eyes, could it with any show of truth and reason have been said, that God, in the severity of his wrath at so heinous an offense, had punished Adam with lameness and blindness? And if it be further supposed, that God seeing Adam lying in this lame and blind condition, came and spoke kindly to him, informing him of a secret of love, which he had in heaven, which he promised to send him immediately by his highest messenger of love; assuring him, that by the use of this heavenly secret or divine power, his legs and eyes should, in some course of time, be infallibly restored to him, even in a better state than they were in at the first; must it not be still more unreasonable and absurd, to charge anything of this lameness and blindness upon a wrath in God kindled against Adam? Nay, is it not clear, in the highest degree, that in all this matter Adam had nothing from God, but the overflowings of mere love and goodness, and that he had no lameness and blindness, but from his own voluntary acts upon himself?

This is a simple, but clear representation of the case, how matters stood betwixt God and our first father, when by his own act and deed he extinguished that divine life, in which God had created him. Adam had not more hurt, no more evil done to him, at his fall, than the very nature of his own action brought along with it upon himself. He lusted to have the sensibility of that good and evil, which the beasts of this world have. He was told, that it could not be had without the loss of his heavenly life; because such loss was as necessarily implied in the nature of the thing

itself, as blindness is implied in the extinction of the eyes. However, he ventured to make the trial, and chose to eat of that, which could and did open this sensibility of earthly good and evil in him. No sooner was this sensibility opened in him, but he found it to be a subjection and slavery to all outward nature, to heat and cold, to pains and sickness, horror of mind, disturbed passions, misery, and fears of death. Which is in other words only saying, that he found it to be an extinction of that divine, angelical nature, which till then had kept him insensible and incapable of any hurtful impressions, from any or all the powers of this world. Therefore, to charge his miserable state, as a punishment inflicted upon him by the severe wrath of an incensed God, is the same absurdity as in the former supposed lameness and blindness. Because the whole nature of all that miserable change, both as to body and soul, which then came upon him, was neither more, nor less, than what was necessarily implied in that which he chose to do to himself. And therefore it had nothing of the nature of a punishment inflicted from without, but was only that which his own action had done in and to himself: just as the man that puts out his own eyes, has only that darkness and blindness, which his own action has brought forth in himself.

From this short, yet plain and true account of this matter, we are at once delivered from a load of difficulties that have been raised about the fall of man, and original sin. It has been a great question, how the goodness of God could punish so small and single an act of disobedience in Adam, with so great a punishment? Here the sovereignty of God has been appealed to, and has set the matter right; and from this sovereignty, thus asserted, came forth the systems of absolute election, and absolute reprobation. But for our comfort it appears, that the question here put concerns neither God nor man, that it relates not at all to the matter, and has no existence, but in the brains of those that formed it. For the action in which Adam's sin consisted, was such an act, as in itself implied all that miserable change that came upon him, and so was not a small, or single act of disobedience, nor had the least punishment, of any kind, inflicted by God upon it. All that God did on this transgression was mere love, compassion, and relief administered to it. All the sovereignty that God here showed, was a sovereignty of love to the fallen creature. So that all the volumes on this question may be laid aside, as quite beside the point. Another, and the

greatest question of all, and which divines of all sorts have been ever solving, and yet never have solved, is this: how it can consist with the goodness of God, to impute the sin of Adam to all his posterity? But here, to our comfort again, it may be said, that this question is equally a vain fiction with the other, and has nothing to do with the procedure of God towards mankind. For there is no imputation of the sin of Adam to his posterity, and so no foundation for a dispute upon it. How absurd would it be to say, that God imputes the nature, or the body and soul of Adam to his posterity? for have they not the nature of Adam by a natural birth from him, and not by imputation from God? Now this is all the sin that Adam's posterity have from him, they have only their flesh and blood, their body and soul from him, by a birth from him, and not imputed to them from God. Instead therefore of the former question, which is quite beside the matter, it should have been asked thus, how it was consistent with the goodness of God, that Adam could not generate children of a nature and kind quite superior to himself? This is the only question that can be asked with relation to God; and yet it is a question whose absurdity confutes itself. For the only reason why sin is found in all the sons of Adam, is this, it is because Adam of earthly flesh and blood, cannot bring forth a holy angel out of himself, but must beget children of the same nature and condition with himself. And therefore here again it may be truly said, that all the laborious volumes on God's imputing Adam's sin to his posterity, ought to be considered as waste paper.

But further, as it is thus evident from the nature of Adam's transgression, that all his misery came from the nature of his own action, and that nothing was inflicted upon him, from a wrath or anger in God at him, so is it still much more so, from a consideration of the divine nature. For it is a glorious and joyful truth, (however suppressed in various systems of divinity) that from eternity to eternity, no spark of wrath ever was, or ever will be in the holy Triune God. If a wrath of God was anywhere, it must be everywhere, if it burned once, it must burn to all eternity. For everything that is in God himself is boundless, incapable of any increase or diminution, without beginning, and without end. It is as good sense, as consistent with the divine nature, to say that God, moved by a wrath in and from himself, began the creation, as that a wrath in God ever punished any part of it. Nature and creature is the only source from whence, and the

seat in which, wrath, pain, and vexation can dwell. Nor can they ever break forth either in nature or creature, but so far as either this, or that, has lost its state in God. This is as certain, as that storms and tempests, thunder and lightnings, have no existence in heaven. God, considered in himself, is as infinitely separate from all possibility of doing hurt, or willing pain to any creature, as he is from a possibility of suffering pain or hurt from the hand of a man. And this, for this plain reason, because he is in himself, in his holy Trinity, nothing else but the boundless abyss of all that is good, and sweet, and amiable, and therefore stands in the utmost contrariety to everything that is not a blessing, in an eternal impossibility of willing and intending a moment's pain or hurt to any creature. For from this unbounded source of goodness and perfection, nothing but infinite streams of blessing are perpetually flowing forth upon all nature and creature, in a more incessant plenty, than rays of light stream from the sun. And as the sun has but one nature, and can give forth nothing but the blessings of light, so the holy Triune God has but one nature and intent towards all the creation, which is, to pour forth the riches and sweetness of his divine perfections, upon everything that is capable of them, and according to its capacity to receive them.

The goodness of God breaking forth into a desire to communicate good, was the cause and the beginning of the creation. Hence it follows, that to all eternity, God can have no thought, or intent towards the creature, but to communicate good; because he made the creature for this sole end, to receive good. The first motive towards the creature is unchangeable; it takes its rise from God's desire to communicate good; and it is an eternal impossibility, that anything can ever come from God, as his will and purpose towards the creature, but that same love and goodness which first created it: he must always will that to it, which he willed at the creation of it. This is the amiable nature of God, he is the good, the unchangeable, overflowing fountain of good, that sends forth nothing but good to all eternity. He is the love itself, the unmixed, unmeasurable love, doing nothing but from love, giving nothing but gifts of love, to everything that he has made; requiring nothing of all his creatures, but the spirit and fruits of that love, which brought them into being. Oh, how sweet is this contemplation of the height and depth of the riches of divine love! With what attraction must it draw every thoughtful man, to return love for love

to this overflowing fountain of boundless goodness? What charms has that religion, which discovers to us our existence in, relation to, and dependence upon this ocean of divine love! View every part of our redemption, from Adam's first sin, to the resurrection of the dead, and you will find nothing but successive mysteries of that first love, which created angels and men. All the mysteries of the gospel are only so many marks and proofs of God's desiring to make his love triumph, in the removal of sin and disorder from all nature and creature.

But to return, and consider further the nature of Adam's fall, we have seen that it consisted of no arbitrary punishment inflicted on him by a wrath raised in God, but was only such a state of misery, as his own action necessarily brought upon him. Let us now see what happened to his soul, a little more distinctly, and how it differed from what it was before his fall, in its heavenly state.

The angels that kept their state, and those that fell from it, were at first of one and the same nature; the angels that fell, did not lose all their nature, for then they must have fallen into nothing; they only lost the heavenly and divine part of it, and therefore there is something still remaining in them, that is also in the holy angels, and which is common to both of them. Now this which they did not lose, because it cannot be lost, is a certain root of life, or ground of their existence, which when once in being, cannot be broken, and in which the unceasing eternity, or immortality of their nature consists, a root or first ground of life, equally capable of a heavenly birth, or of a birth and growth into hell. Now that there is this root of life in angels, and that it is something quite distinct from their heavenly nature, is very plain from hence, that the devils have lost their heavenly, and yet have kept their eternal and immortal nature; therefore that in which their eternity and immortality consists, must be something entirely distinct from their heavenly nature, and must be also the same with that, in which the eternity and immortality of the holy angels consists. For the fallen angels have no other eternal root in them, but that which they had before their fall, and which they brought from heaven; and therefore that which is, and must be eternal and undying their nature, is the same eternal root of life, which is in the angels that kept their state. And consequently, the only difference betwixt an angel and a devil, is this, that in the angel its eternal root of life generates a birth of the Light and Holy

Spirit of God in it; and in a devil, this eternal root of life has lost this birth, and the power of bringing it forth again. Now here is to be truly seen the real difference betwixt the soul of Adam before, and after his fall. Before his fall, it had the nature of an angel of God, in which the divine birth of the Light and Holy Spirit of God sprung up, but when contrary to the will, and command of God, a bestial life was awakened in him, the heavenly life was necessarily extinguished. The soul therefore having lost that heavenly birth which made it like an angel of God, had nothing remaining in it, but that eternal and immortal root of life, which is the very essence of a fallen angel. But here we must observe a great and happy difference, betwixt the soul of Adam, though dead to all that was heavenly, and the soul of a devil. The angels that extinguished the birth of heaven in themselves, fell directly into the horrible depths of their own strong self-tormenting nature, or their own hell, and that for these two reasons.

First, because there was nowhere else for them to fall into, but into this tormenting sensibility of their own fiery, wrathful, darkened nature.

Secondly, because their revolt from God was an attempt, and intent to be higher and greater by awakening, and trusting to their own natural powers, than they had hitherto been by submission to God. They would have a greatness that sprung only from themselves, and therefore they found that which they sought, they found themselves left to all the greatness that was in themselves, and that was their hell, viz., a fiery strength of a self-tormenting nature, because separate from the one source of light and love, of peace and joy.

But Adam, though his soul was as entirely dead to heaven, as the souls of the devils were, yet fell not into their hell, for these two reasons.

First, because his angelical man dwelt in a body taken from this outward world, which body did not die at his transgression, therefore his soul that had lost his heavenly light, did not fall directly into the devil's hell, but it fell into a body of earthly flesh and blood, which being capable of the enjoyments and satisfactions of this life, could, whilst it lasted, keep the soul insensible of its own fallen state, and hellish condition.

Secondly, because Adam not aspiring to be above, or without God by his own proud strength, but only lusting to enter in a sensibility of the good

and evil of the bestial life of this world, he found only that which he sought, and fell into no other state or misery, than that bestial life, which his own actions and desires had opened in him. And therefore this outward world stood him in great stead, it prevented his immediate falling into the state of fallen angels.

But then, as there was nothing that kept him out of the hell of fallen angels, but his body of earthly flesh and blood, and as this was now as mortal in him, as it was in the beasts, and lay at the mercy of a thousand accidents, that could every moment take it from him, so he was in his fallen state, standing as it were on the brink of hell, liable every moment to be pushed into it.

See here the deep ground and absolute necessity of that new birth, of Word, Son, and Spirit of God, which the Scripture speaks so much of. It is because our soul, as fallen, is quite dead to, and separate from the kingdom of heaven, by having lost the Light and Spirit of God in itself; and therefore it is, and must be incapable of entering into heaven, till by this new birth, the soul gets again its first heavenly nature.

If thou hast nothing of this birth when thy body dies, then thou hast only that root of life in thee, which the devils have, thou art as far from heaven, and as incapable of it, as they are; thy nature is their nature, and therefore their habitation must be thine. For nothing can possibly hinder thy union with fallen angels, when thou diest, but a birth of that in thy soul, which the fallen angels have lost.

How pitiable, therefore, or rather how hurtful is that learning, which uses all its art of words, to avoid and lose the true sense of our Savior's doctrine concerning the new birth, which is necessary to fallen man, by holding, that the passages asserting the new birth, are only a figurative, strong form of words concerning something, that is not really a birth, or growth of a new nature, but may, according to the best rules of criticism, signify, either our entrance into the society of Christians, by the rite of baptism, or such new relation, as a scholar may have with his master, who by a conformity to the terms of union, or by copying his ways and manners, may, by a figure of speech, be said to be born again of him.

Now let it here be observed, that no passage of Scripture is to be called, or esteemed as a figurative expression, but where the literal meaning cannot be allowed, as implying something that is either bad in itself, or impossible, or inconsistent with some plain and undeniable doctrines of Scripture. Now that this is not the case here, is very evident. For who will presume to say, that for the soul of fallen man to be born again of the Son, or Light, and Holy Spirit of God, is in the literal sense of the words, a thing bad in itself, or impossible, or inconsistent with any plain and undeniable doctrines of Scripture? The critics therefore, who, in this matter, leave the literal meaning of the words, and have recourse to a figurative sense, are without excuse, and have nothing they can urge as a reason for so doing, but their own skill in words. But it may be further added as a just charge against these critics, that their fixing these passages to a figurative meaning, is not only without any ground, or reason for so doing, but is also a bad meaning, impossible to be true, and utterly inconsistent with the most plain, and fundamental doctrines of Scripture. Now that this is the case here, may in part be seen by the following instance.

Let it be supposed, that a human body had lost the light, and air of this world, and was in a state of death, because both these were quite extinguished in it. Must it not be said, that this human body cannot see, or enter again into the life of this world, unless the light and air of this world get again a new birth in it: is there here any occasion, or any room to form a doubt, how these words are to be understood, or any possibility to mistake the meaning of them? What a philosopher would he be, who for fear of being called an enthusiast, should here deny the literal meaning of a new birth of light and air, and think himself sufficiently justified in flying from it, because in his great reading, he had seen the words, birth, light and air, sometimes, and upon some occasions, used only in a figurative sense?

Now this is exactly, and to a tittle the case of the soul, as fallen, and lying in the same state of death to the kingdom of God, till a new birth of the Light and Spirit of God be again brought forth in it. And therefore the necessity of understanding these words in their literal meaning, the absurdity of flying to a figurative sense of the new birth, and the impossibility of that being the true one, is equally plain, and certain in both these cases.

Now that the soul, as fallen, is in this real state of death, is a doctrine not only plain from the whole tenor of Scripture, but affirmed in all systems of divinity. For all hold, and teach, that man unredeemed, must at the death of his body have fallen into a state of misery, like that of the fallen angels. But how can this be true, unless it be true, that the life of heaven was extinguished in the soul, and that man had really lost that Light, and Spirit of God, which alone can make any being capable of living in heaven? All therefore that I have here, and elsewhere said, concerning the death of the soul by its fall, and its wanting a real new birth of the Son, and Holy Spirit of God in it, in order to its salvation, cannot be denied, but by giving up this great, fundamental doctrine, namely, "That man in his fallen state, and unredeemed, must have been eternally lost." For it cannot be true, that the fall of man unredeemed, would have kept him forever out of heaven, but because his fall had absolutely put an end to the life of heaven in his soul.

On the other hand, it cannot be true that Jesus Christ is his redeemer, and does deliver him from his fallen state, unless it be true, that Jesus Christ helps him to a new birth of that Light and Spirit of God, which was extinguished by his fall. For nothing could possibly be the redemption, or recovery of man, but regeneration alone. His misery was his having lost the life and light of heaven from his soul, and therefore nothing in all the universe of nature, but a new birth of that which he had lost, could be his deliverance from his fallen state.

And therefore if angels after angels had come down from heaven to assure him, that God had no anger at him, he would still have been in the same helpless state; nay, had they told him, that God had pity and compassion towards him, he had yet been unhelped; because in the nature of the thing, nothing could make so much as a beginning of his deliverance, but that which made a beginning of a new birth in him, and nothing could fully effect his recovery, but which perfectly finished the new birth of all that heavenly life which he had lost.

The gospel tells us of a certain man who fell among thieves, who stripped him, and wounded him, and left him half dead; that first a priest, then a Levite coming that way, both of them avoided the poor man, by passing on the other side.

Here it is plain that this priest and Levite left the poor man in the same helpless state in which they found him. Let it now be supposed, that instead of going on the other side of the road, they had come up to him, and poured oil and wine into his wounds, only in a figurative sense of the words, that is, that they had spoken such words to him, words so soft, so oily, and reviving, that in a just figure of speech, they might be called a pouring of wine and oil into his wounds. Now had they done this, must it not still be said, that the poor man's wounds and nakedness were still left in their first helpless state? And all for this plain reason, because the poor man was naked, and wounded, not in a figurative sense of the words, but really and truly, and therefore could have no help or benefit, but from real oil and wine really poured into his wounds. And for the same plain reason, the fallen soul, really dead to the kingdom of heaven, can have no help but by a new birth of the Light and Spirit of heaven, really brought forth again in it. When Adam lay in his death wounds to the kingdom of God, had the highest order of archangels, or seraphims come by that way, they could only have done as the priest and Levite did, go on the other side; or if they had come up to him, and done all they could for him, it could only have been such a good or relief to him, as by a figure of speech might be so called.

For as Adam had extinguished the Light and Spirit of God in himself, so no one could be the good Samaritan to him, or pour that wine and oil into his wounds, which they wanted, but he who was the author and source of light and life to every being that lives in heaven.

One would wonder how any persons, that believe the great mystery of our redemption, who adore the depths of the divine goodness, in that the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, became a man himself, in order to make it possible for man by a birth from him to enter again into the kingdom of God, should yet seek to, and contend for, not a real, but a figurative sense of a new birth in Jesus Christ. Is there anything more inconsistent than this? Or can anything strike more directly at the heart of the whole nature of our redemption? God became man, took upon him a birth from the fallen nature. But why was this done? Or wherein lies the adorable depth of this mystery? How does all this manifest the infinity of the divine love towards man? It is because nothing less than this mysterious incarnation (which astonishes angels) could open a way, or

begin a possibility, for fallen man to be born again from above, and made again a partaker of the divine nature. It was because man was become so dead to the kingdom of heaven, that there was no help for him through all nature. No powers, no abilities of the highest order of creatures, could kindle the least spark of life in him, or help him to the least glimpse of that heavenly light which he had lost. Now when all nature and creature stood round about Adam as unable to help him, for this reason, because that which he had lost, was the life and light of heaven, how glorious, how adorable is that mystery, which enables us to say, that when man laid thus incapable of any relief from all the powers and possibilities of nature, that then the Son, the Word of God, entered by a birth into this fallen nature, that by this mysterious incarnation all the fallen nature might be born again of him according to the spirit, in the same reality, as they were born of Adam according to the flesh? Look at this mystery in this true light, in this plain sense of Scripture, and then you must be forced to fall down before it, in adoration of it. For all that is glorious and happy with regard to man, is manifestly contained in it.

But tell me, I pray, what becomes of all this, what is there left in any part of this mystery, if this new birth, for the sake of which God became man, is not really a new birth in the thing itself, is not, as the Scripture affirms, a real birth of the Son and the Spirit of God in the soul, but something or other, this or that, which the critics say, may be called a new birth, by a certain figure of speech? Is not this to give up all our redemption at once, and a turning all the mysteries of our salvation into mere empty, unmeaning terms of speech? He that should deny the reality of the resurrection, upon pretense, that by the rules of criticism, it needs not signify a real coming out of a state of natural death, might have more to say for himself both from reason and Scripture, than he that denies the reality of the new birth in Jesus Christ. For this new birth is not a part, but the whole of our salvation. Everything in religion, from the beginning to the end of time, is only for the sake of it. Nothing does us any good, but either as it helps forward our regeneration, or as it is a true fruit or effect of it.

All the glad tidings of the gospel, all the benefits of our Savior, however variously expressed in Scripture, all center in this one point, that he is become our light, our life, our resurrection, our holiness and salvation; that

we are in him new creatures, created again into righteousness, born again of him, from above, of the Spirit of God. Everything in the gospel is for the sake of this new creature, this new man in Christ Jesus, and nothing is regarded without it. What excuse therefore can be made for that learning, which, robbing us of the true fruits of the tree of life, leaves us nothing to feed upon, but the dry dust of words?

“I am the vine, ye are the branches.” Here Christ, our second Adam, uses this similitude to teach us, that the new birth that we are to have from him is real, in the most strict and literal sense of the words, and that there is the same nearness of relation, betwixt him and his true disciples, that there is betwixt the vine and its branches, that he does all that in us, and for us, which the vine does to its branches. Now the life of the vine must be really derived into the branches, they cannot be branches, till the birth of the vine is brought forth in them. And therefore as sure as the birth of the vine must be brought forth in the branches, so sure is it, that we must be born again of our second Adam. And that unless the life of the holy Jesus be in us by a birth from him, we are as dead to him, and the kingdom of God, as the branch is dead to the vine, from which it is broken off.

Again our blessed Savior says, “Without me, ye can do nothing.” The question is, when, or how a man may be said to be without Christ? Consider again the vine and its branches: a branch can then only be said to be without its vine, when the vegetable life of the vine is no longer in it. This is the only sense, in which he can be said to be without Christ; when he is no longer in us, as a principle of a heavenly life, we are then without him, and so can do nothing, that is, nothing that is good or holy. A Christ not in us, is the same thing as a Christ not ours. If we are only so far with Christ, as to own and receive the history of his birth, person, and character, if this is all that we have of him, we are as much without him, as much left to ourselves, as little helped by him, as those evil spirits which cried out, “We know thee, who thou art, the holy one of God.” For those evil spirits, and all the fallen angels, are totally without Christ, have no benefit from him, for this one and only reason, because Christ is not in them; nothing of the Son of God is generated, or born in them. Therefore every son of Adam, that has not something of the Son of God generated, or born within him, is as much without Christ, as destitute of all help from

him, as those evil spirits who could only make an outward confession of him.

It is the language of Scripture, that Christ in us is our hope of glory? that Christ formed in us, living, growing, and raising his own life and spirit in us, is our only salvation. And indeed all this is plain from the nature of the thing; for since the serpent, sin, death and hell, are all essentially within us, the very growth of our nature, must not our redemption be equally inward, an inward essential death to this state of our souls, and an inward growth of a contrary life within us? If Adam was only an outward person, if his whole nature was not our nature, born in us, and derived from him into us, it would be nonsense to say, that his fall is our fall. So in like manner, if Christ, our second Adam, was only an outward person, if he entered not as deeply into our nature as the first Adam does, if we have not as really from him a new inward, spiritual man, as we have outward flesh and blood from Adam, what ground could there be to say, that our righteousness is from him, as our sin is from Adam?

Let no one here think to charge me with disregard to the holy Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, or with setting up an inward Savior in opposition to the outward Christ, whose history is recorded in the gospel. No: it is with the utmost fullness of faith and assurance, that I ascribe all our redemption to that blessed and mysterious person, that was then born of the Virgin Mary, and will assert no inward redemption but what wholly proceeds from, and is effected by that life-giving redeemer, who died on the cross for our redemption.

Was I to say, that a plant or vegetable must have the sun within it, must have the life, light, and virtues of the sun incorporated in it, that it has no benefit from the sun, till the sun is thus inwardly forming, generating, quickening, and raising up a life of the sun's virtues in it, would this be setting up an inward sun, in opposition to the outward one? Could anything be more ridiculous than such a charge? For is not all that is here said of an inward sun in the vegetable, so much said of a power and virtue derived from the sun in the firmament? So in like manner, all that is said of an inward Christ, inwardly formed, and generated in the root of the soul, is only so much said of an inward life, brought forth by the power and efficacy of that blessed Christ, that was born of the Virgin Mary.

CHAPTER 2

Discovering the true way of turning to God, and of finding the kingdom of heaven, the riches of eternity in our souls

Thou hast seen, dear reader, the nature and necessity of regeneration, be persuaded therefore fully to believe, and firmly to settle in thy mind this most certain truth, that all our salvation consists in the manifestation of the nature, life, and spirit of Jesus Christ, in our inward new man. This alone is Christian redemption, this alone delivers from the guilt and power of sin, this alone redeems, renews, and regains the first life of God in the soul of man. Everything besides this, is self, is fiction, is propriety, is own will, and however colored, is only thy old man, with all his deeds. Enter therefore with all thy heart into this truth, let thy eye be always upon it, do everything in view of it, try everything by the truth of it, love nothing but for the sake of it. Wherever thou goest, whatever thou dost, at home, or abroad, in the field, or at church, do all in a desire of union with Christ, in imitation of his tempers and inclinations, and look upon all as nothing, but that which exercises, and increases the spirit and life of Christ in thy soul. From morning to night keep Jesus in thy heart, long for nothing, desire nothing, hope for nothing, but to have all this within thee changed into the spirit and temper of the holy Jesus. Let this be thy Christianity, thy church, and thy religion. For this new birth in Christ thus firmly believed, and continually desired, will do everything that thou wantest to have done in thee, it will dry up all the springs of vice, stop all the workings of evil in thy nature, it will bring all that is good into thee, it will open all the gospel within thee, and thou wilt know what it is to be taught of God. This longing desire of thy heart to be one with Christ will soon put a stop to all the vanity of thy life, and nothing will be admitted to enter into thy heart, or proceed from it, but what comes from God and returns to God: thou wilt soon be, as it were, tied and bound in the chains of all holy affections and desires, thy mouth will have a watch set upon it, thy ears would willingly hear nothing that does not tend to God, nor thy eyes be open, but to see, and find occasions of doing good. In a word, when this faith has got both thy head and thy heart, it will then

be with thee, as it was with the merchant who found a pearl of great price, it will make thee gladly to sell all that thou hast, and buy it. For all that had seized and possessed the heart of any man, whatever the merchant of this world had got together, whether of riches, power, honor, learning, or reputation, loses all its value, is counted but as dung, and willingly parted with, as soon as this glorious pearl, the new birth in Christ Jesus, is discovered and found by him. This therefore may serve as a touchstone, whereby everyone may try the truth of his state; if the old man is still a merchant within thee, trading in all sorts of worldly honor, power, or learning, if the wisdom of this world is not foolishness to thee, if earthly interests, and sensual pleasures, are still the desire of thy heart, and only covered under a form of godliness, a cloak of creeds, observances, and institutions of religion, thou mayest be assured, that the pearl of great price is not yet found by thee. For where Christ is born, or his spirit rises up in the soul, there all self is denied, and obliged to turn out; there all carnal wisdom, arts of advancement, with every pride and glory of this life, are as so many heathen idols all willingly renounced, and the man is not only content, but rejoices to say, that his kingdom is not of this world.

But thou wilt perhaps say, How shall this great work, the birth of Christ, be effected in me? It might rather be said, since Christ has an infinite power, and also an infinite desire to save mankind, how can anyone miss of this salvation, but through his own unwillingness to be saved by him? Consider, how was it, that the lame and blind, the lunatic and leper, the publican and sinner, found Christ to be their savior, and to do all that for them, which they wanted to be done to them? It was because they had a real desire of having that which they asked for, and therefore in true faith and prayer applied to Christ, that his spirit and power might enter into them, and heal that which they wanted, and desired to be healed in them. Everyone of these said in faith and desire, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole." And the answer was always this, "According to thy faith, so be it done unto thee." This is Christ's answer now, and thus it is done to everyone of us at this day, as our faith is, so is it done unto us. And here lies the whole reason of our falling short of the salvation of Christ, it is because we have no will to it.

But you will say, Do not all Christians desire to have Christ to be their savior? Yes. But here is the deceit; all would have Christ to be their savior

in the next world, and to help them into heaven when they die, by his power, and merits with God. But this is not willing Christ to be thy savior; for his salvation, if it is had, must be had in this world; if he save thee, it must be done in this life, by changing and altering all that is within thee, by helping thee to a new heart, as he helped the blind to see, the lame to walk, and the dumb to speak. For to have salvation from Christ, is nothing else but to be made like unto him; it is to have his humility and meekness, his mortification and self-denial, his renunciation of the spirit, wisdom, and honors of this world, his love of God, his desire of doing God's will, and seeking only his honor. To have these tempers formed and begotten in thy heart, is to have salvation from Christ. But if thou willest not to have these tempers brought forth in thee, if thy faith and desire does not seek, and cry to Christ for them in the same reality, as the lame asked to walk, and the blind to see, then thou must be said to be unwilling to have Christ to be thy savior.

Again, consider, how was it, that the carnal Jew, the deep-read scribe, the learned rabbi, the religious Pharisee, not only did not receive, but crucified their savior? It was because they willed, and desired no such savior as he was, no such inward salvation as he offered to them. They desired no change of their own nature, no inward destruction of their own natural tempers, no deliverance from the love of themselves, and the enjoyments of their passions; they liked their sate, the gratifications of their old man, their long robes, their broad phylacteries, and greetings in the markets. They wanted not to have their pride and self-love dethroned, their covetousness and sensuality to be subdued by a new nature from heaven derived into them. Their only desire was the success of Judaism, to have an outward savior, a temporal prince, that should establish their law and ceremonies over all the earth. And therefore they crucified their dear redeemer, and would have none of his salvation, because it all consisted in a change of their nature, in a new birth from above, and a kingdom of heaven to be opened within them by the Spirit of God.

Oh Christendom, look not only at the old Jews, but see thyself in this glass. For at this day (Oh sad truth to be told!) at this day, a Christ within us, an inward savior raising a birth of his own nature, life and spirit within us, is rejected as gross enthusiasm, the learned rabbis take council against it. The propagation of popery, the propagation of Protestantism, the

success of some particular church, is the salvation which priests and people are chiefly concerned about.

But to return. It is manifest, that no one can fail of the benefit of Christ's salvation, but through an unwillingness to have it, and from the same spirit and tempers which made the Jews unwilling to receive it. But if thou wouldst still further know, how this great work, the birth of Christ, is to be effected in thee, then let this joyful truth be told thee, that this great work is already begun in everyone of us. For this holy Jesus, that is to be formed in thee, that is to be the savior and new life of thy soul, that is to raise thee out of the darkness of death into the light of life, and give thee power to become a son of God, is already within thee, living, stirring, calling, knocking at the door of thy heart, and wanting nothing but thy own faith and good will, to have as real a birth and form in thee, as he had in the Virgin Mary. For the eternal Word, or Son of God, did not then first begin to be the savior of the world, when he was born in Bethlehem of Judea; but that Word which became man in the Virgin Mary, did, from the beginning of the world, enter as a Word of life, a seed of salvation, into the first father of mankind, was inspoken into him, as an ingrafted Word, under the name and character of a bruiser of the serpent's head. Hence it is, that Christ said to his disciples, "the kingdom of God is within you"; that is, the divine nature is within you, given unto your first father, into the light of his life, and from him, rising up in the life of every son of Adam. Hence also the holy Jesus is said to be the "Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Not as he was born at Bethlehem, not as he had an human form upon earth; in these respects he could not be said to have been the light of every man that cometh into the world; but as he was that eternal Word, by which all things were created, which was the life and light of all things, and which had as a second creator entered again into fallen man, as a bruiser of the serpent; in this respect it was truly said of our Lord, when on earth, that "He was that Light which lighteth every man, that cometh into the world." For he was really and truly all this, as he was the Immanuel, the God with us, given unto Adam, and in him to all his offspring. See here the beginning and glorious extent of the catholic church of Christ, it takes in all the world. It is God's unlimited, universal mercy to all mankind; and every human creature, as sure as he is born of Adam, has a birth of the bruiser of the serpent within him, and so is

infallibly in covenant with God through Jesus Christ. Hence also it is, that the holy Jesus is appointed to be judge of all the world, it is because all mankind, all nations and languages have in him, and through him been put into covenant with God, and made capable of resisting the evil of their fallen nature.

When our blessed Lord conversed with the woman at Jacob's well, he said to her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that talketh with thee, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water." How happy (may anyone well say) was this woman of Samaria, to stand so near this gift of God, from whom she might have had living water, had she but vouchsafed to have asked for it! But, dear Christian, this happiness is thine; for this holy Jesus, the gift of God, first given unto Adam, and in him to all that are descended from him, is the gift of God to thee, as sure as thou art born of Adam; nay, hast thou never yet owned him, art thou wandered from him, as far as the prodigal son from his father's house, yet is he still with thee, he is the gift of God to thee, and if thou wilt turn to him, and ask of him, he has living water for thee.

Poor sinner! consider the treasure thou hast within thee, the savior of the world, the eternal Word of God lies hid in thee, as a spark of the divine nature, which is to overcome sin and death, and hell within thee, and generate the life of heaven again in thy soul. Turn to thy heart, and thy heart will find its savior, its God within itself. Thou seest, hearest, and feelest nothing of God, because thou seekest for him abroad with thy outward eyes, thou seekest for him in books, in controversies, in the church, and outward exercises, but there thou wilt not find him, till thou hast first found him in thy heart. Seek for him in thy heart, and thou wilt never seek in vain, for there he dwells, there is the seat of his Light and Holy Spirit.

For this turning to the Light and Spirit of God within thee, is thy only true turning unto God, there is no other way of finding him, but in that place where he dwelleth in thee. For though God be everywhere present, yet he is only present to thee in the deepest, and most central part of thy soul. Thy natural senses cannot possess God, or unite thee to him, nay thy inward faculties of understanding, will, and memory, can only reach after God, but cannot be the place of his habitation in thee. But there is a root,

or depth in thee, from whence all these faculties come forth, as lines from a center, or as branches from the body of the tree. This depth is called the center, the fund or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity, I had almost said, the infinity of thy soul; for it is so infinite, that nothing can satisfy it, or give it any rest, but the infinity of God. In this depth of the soul, the Holy Trinity brought forth its own living image in the first created man, bearing in himself a living representation of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and this was his dwelling in God and God in him. This was the kingdom of God within him, and made paradise without him. But the day that Adam did eat of the forbidden earthly tree, in that day he absolutely died to this kingdom of God within him. This depth or center of his soul having lost its God, was shut up in death and darkness, and became a prisoner in an earthly animal, that only excelled its brethren, the beasts, in an upright form, and serpentine subtlety. Thus ended the fall of man. But from that moment that the God of mercy inspoke into Adam the bruiser of the serpent, from that moment all the riches and treasures of the divine nature came again into man, as a seed of salvation sown into the center of the soul, and only lies hidden there in every man, till he desires to rise from his fallen state, and to be born again from above.

Awake then, thou that sleepest, and Christ, who from all eternity has been espoused to thy soul, shall give thee light. Begin to search and dig in thine own field for this pearl of eternity, that lies hidden in it; it cannot cost thee too much, nor canst thou buy it too dear, for it is all, and when thou has found it, thou wilt know, that all which thou hast sold or given away for it, is as mere a nothing, as a bubble upon the water.

But if thou turnest from this heavenly pearl, or tramplest it under thy feet, for the sake of being rich, or great, either in church or state, if death finds thee in this success, thou canst not then say, that though the pearl is lost, yet something has been gained instead of it. For in that parting moment, the things, and the sounds of this world, will be exactly alike; to have had an estate, or only to have heard of it, to have lived at Lambeth twenty years, or only have twenty times passed by the palace, will be the same good, or the same nothing to thee.

But I will now show a little more distinctly, what this pearl of eternity is. First, it is the Light and Spirit of God within thee, which has hitherto done

thee but little good, because all the desire of thy heart has been after the light and spirit of this world. Thy reason, and senses, thy heart and passions, have turned all their attention to the poor concerns of this life, and therefore thou art a stranger to this principle of heaven, this riches of eternity within thee. For as God is not, cannot be truly found by any worshippers, but those who worship him in spirit and in truth, so this Light and Spirit, though always within us, is not, cannot be found, felt, or enjoyed, but by those whose whole spirit is turned to it.

When man first came into being, and stood before God as his own image and likeness, this Light and Spirit of God was as natural to him, as truly the light of his nature, as the light and air of this world is natural to the creatures that have their birth in it. But when man, not content with the food of eternity, did eat of the earthly tree, this Light and Spirit of heaven was no more natural to him, no more rose up as a birth of his nature, but instead thereof, he was left solely to the light and spirit of this world. And this is that death, which God told Adam, he should surely die, in the day that he should eat of the forbidden tree.

But the goodness of God would not leave man in this condition. A redemption from it was immediately granted, and the bruiser of the serpent brought the Light and Spirit of heaven once more into the human nature, not as it was in its first state, when man was in paradise, but as a treasure hidden in the center of our souls, which should discover, and open itself by degrees, in such proportion, as the faith and desires of our hearts were turned to it. This Light and Spirit of God thus freely restored again to the soul, and lying in it as a secret source of heaven, is called grace, free grace, or the supernatural gift, or power of God in the soul, because it was something that the natural powers of the soul could no more obtain. Hence it is, that in the greatest truth, and highest reality, every stirring of the soul, every tendency of the heart towards God and goodness, is justly and necessarily ascribed to the Holy Spirit, or the grace of God. It is because this first seed of life, which is sown into the soul, as the gift or grace of God to fallen man, is itself the Light and Spirit of God, and therefore every stirring, or opening of this seed of life, every awakened thought or desire that arises from it, must be called the moving, or the quickening of the Spirit of God; and therefore that new man which arises from it, must of all necessity be said to be solely the work and operation of God. Hence also

we have an easy and plain declaration of the true meaning, solid sense, and certain truth, of all those Scriptures, which speak of the inspiration of God, the operation of the Holy Spirit, the power of the divine light, as the sole and necessary agents in the renewal and sanctification of our souls, and also as being things common to all men. It is because this seed of life, or bruise of the serpent, is common to all men, and has in all men a degree of life, which is in itself so much of the inspiration, or life of God, the Spirit of God, the Light of God, which is in every soul, and is its power of becoming born again of God. Hence also it is, that all men are exhorted not to quench, or resist, or grieve the Spirit, that is, this seed of the Spirit and Light of God that is in all men, as the only source of good. Again, the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh. By the flesh and its lustings, are meant the mere human nature, or the natural man, as he is by the fall; by the spirit is meant the bruise of the serpent, that seed of the Light and Spirit of God, which lies as a treasure hidden in the soul, in order to bring forth the life that was lost in Adam. Now as the flesh has its life, its lustings, whence all sorts of evil are truly said to be inspired, quickened, and stirred up in us, so the spirit being a living principle within us, has its inspiration, its breathing, its moving, its quickening, from which alone the divine life, or the angel that died in Adam, can be born in us.

When this seed of the spirit, common to all men, is not resisted, grieved, and quenched, but its inspirations and motions suffered to grow and increase in us, to unite with God, and get power over all the lusts of the flesh, then we are born again, the nature, spirit, and tempers of Jesus Christ are opened in our souls, the kingdom of God is come, and is found within us. On the other hand, when the flesh, or the natural man has resisted and quenched this spirit or seed of life within us, then the works of the flesh, adultery, fornication, murders, lying, hatred, envy, wrath, pride, foolishness, worldly wisdom, carnal prudence, false religion, hypocritical holiness, and serpentine subtlety, have set up their kingdom within us.

See here in short, the state of man as redeemed. He has a spark of the Light and Spirit of God, as a supernatural gift of God given into the birth of his soul, to bring forth by degrees a new birth of that life which was lost in paradise. This holy spark of the divine nature within him, has a natural, strong and almost infinite tendency, or reaching after that eternal Light and

Spirit of God, from whence it came forth. It came forth from God, it came out of God, it partaketh of the divine nature, and therefore it is always in a state of tendency and return to God. And all this is called the breathing, the moving, the quickening of the Holy Spirit within us, which are so many operations of this spark of life tending towards God. On the other hand, the Deity as considered in itself, and without the soul of man, has an infinite, unchangeable tendency of love, and desire towards the soul of man, to unite and communicate its own riches and glories to it, just as the spirit of the air without man, unites and communicates its riches and virtues to the spirit of the air that is within man. This love, or desire of God towards the soul of man, is so great, that he gave his only begotten Son, the brightness of his glory, to take the human nature upon him, in its fallen state, that by this mysterious union of God and man, all the enemies of the soul of man might be overcome, and every human creature might have a power of being born again according to that image of God, in which he was first created. The gospel is the history of this love of God to man. Inwardly he has a seed of the divine life given into the birth of his soul, a seed that has all the riches of eternity in it, and is always wanting to come to the birth in him, and be alive in God. Outwardly he has Jesus Christ, who as a sun of righteousness, is always casting forth his enlivening beams on this inward seed, to kindle and call it forth to the birth, doing that to this seed of heaven in man, which the sun in the firmament is always doing to the vegetable seeds in the earth.

Consider this matter in the following similitude. A grain of wheat has the air and light of this world enclosed, or incorporated in it: this is the mystery of its life, this is its power of growing, by this it has a strong continual tendency of uniting again with that ocean of light and air, from whence it came forth, and so it helps to kindle its own vegetable life.

On the other hand, that great ocean of light and air, having its own offspring hidden in the heart of the grain, has a perpetual strong tendency to unite, and communicate with it again. From this desire of union on both sides, the vegetable life arises, and all the virtues and powers contained in it.

But here let it be well observed, that this desire on both sides cannot have its effect, till the husk and gross part of the grain falls into a state of

corruption and death, till this begins, the mystery of life hidden in it, cannot come forth. The application here may be left to the reader. I shall only observe, that we may here see the true ground, and absolute necessity, of that dying to ourselves, and to the world, to which our blessed Lord so constantly calls all his followers. An universal self-denial, a perpetual mortification of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not a thing imposed upon us by the mere will of God, is not required as a punishment, is not an invention of dull and monkish spirits, but has its ground and reason in the nature of the thing, and is absolutely necessary to make way for the new birth, as the death of the husk and gross part of the grain, is necessary to make way for its vegetable life.

But secondly, this pearl of eternity is the wisdom and love of God within thee. In this pearl of thy serpent bruiser, all the holy nature, spirit, tempers, and inclinations of Christ, lie as in a seed in the center of thy soul, and divine wisdom and heavenly love will grow up in thee, if thou givest but true attention to God present in thy soul. On the other hand, there is hidden also in the depth of thy nature the root, or possibility of all the hellish nature, spirit, and tempers of the fallen angels. For heaven and hell have each of them their foundation within us, they come not into us from without, but spring up in us, according as our will and heart is turned either to the Light of God, or the kingdom of darkness. But when this life, which is in the midst of these two eternities, is at an end, either an angel, or a devil will be found to have a birth in us.

Thou needest not therefore run here, or there, saying, Where is Christ? Thou needest not say, Who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring down Christ from above? Or who shall descend into the deep, to bring Christ from the dead? For behold the Word, which is the wisdom of God, is in thy heart, it is there as a bruiser of the serpent, as a light unto thy feet and lantern unto thy paths. It is there as an holy oil, to soften and overcome the wrathful fiery properties of thy nature, and change them into the humble meekness of light and love. It is there as a speaking Word of God in thy soul; and as soon as thou art ready to hear, this eternal speaking Word will speak wisdom and love in thy inward parts, and bring forth the birth of Christ, with all his holy nature, spirit, and tempers, within thee. Hence it was (that is, from this principle of heaven, or Christ

in the soul) hence I say it was, that so many eminent spirits, partakers of a divine life, have appeared in so many parts of the heathen world; glorious names, sons of wisdom, that shone, as lights hung out by God, in the midst of idolatrous darkness. These were the apostles of a Christ within, that were awakened and commissioned by the inward bruiser of the serpent, to call mankind from the blind pursuits of flesh and blood, to know themselves, the dignity of their nature, the immortality of their souls, and the necessity of virtue to avoid eternal shame and misery. These apostles, though they had not the Law, or written gospel to urge upon their hearers, yet having turned to God, they found, and preached the gospel, that was written in their hearts. Hence one of them could say this divine truth, viz., that such only are priests and prophets, who have God in themselves. Hence also it is, that in the Christian church, there have been in all ages, amongst the most illiterate, both men and women, who have attained to a deep understanding of the mysteries of the wisdom and love of God in Christ Jesus. And what wonder? Since it is not art or science, or skill in grammar or logic, but the opening of divine life in the soul, that can give true understanding of the things of God. This life of God in the soul, which for its smallness at first, and capacity for great growth, is by our Lord compared to a grain of mustard seed, may be, and too generally is suppressed and kept under, either by worldly cares, or pleasures, by vain learning, sensuality, or ambition. And all this while, whatever church, or profession any man is of, he is a mere natural man, unregenerate, unenlightened by the Spirit of God, because this seed of heaven is choked, and not suffered to grow up in him. And therefore his religion is no more from heaven than his fine breeding; his cares have no more goodness in them than his pleasures; his love is worth no more than his hatred; his zeal for this, or against that form of religion, has only the nature of any other worldly contention in it. And thus it is, and must be with every mere natural man, whatever appearances he may put on, he may, if he pleases, know himself to be the slave, and machine of his own corrupt tempers and inclinations, to be enlightened, inspired, quickened and animated by self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, which is the only life, and spirit of the mere natural man, whether he be heathen, Jew, or Christian.

On the other hand, wherever this seed of heaven is suffered to take root, to get life and breath in the soul, whether it be in man, or woman, young or old, there this new born inward man is justly said to be inspired, enlightened, and moved by the Spirit of God, because his whole birth and life is a birth from above, of the Light and Spirit of God; and therefore all that is in him, has the nature, spirit, and tempers of heaven in it. As this regenerate life grows up in any man, so there grows up a true and real knowledge of the whole mystery of godliness in himself. All that the gospel teaches of sin and grace, of life and death, of heaven and hell, of the new and old man, of the Light and Spirit of God, are things not got by hearsay, but inwardly known, felt and experienced in the growth of his own new born life. He has then an unction from above which teaches him all things, a spirit that knows what it ought to pray for, a spirit that prays without ceasing, that is risen with Christ from the dead, and has all its conversation in heaven, a spirit that has groans and sighs that cannot be uttered, that travaileth and groaneth with the whole creation, to be delivered from vanity, and have its glorious liberty in that God, from whom it came forth.

Again, thirdly, this pearl of eternity is the church, or temple of God within thee, the consecrated place of divine worship, where alone thou canst worship God in spirit, and in truth. In spirit, because thy spirit is that alone in thee, which can unite, and cleave unto God, and receive the workings of his divine Spirit upon thee. In truth, because this adoration in spirit, is that truth and reality, of which all outward forms and rites, though instituted by God, are only the figure for a time, but this worship is eternal. Accustom thyself to the holy service of this inward temple. In the midst of it is the fountain of living water, of which thou mayest drink, and live forever. There the mysteries of thy redemption are celebrated, or rather opened in life and power. There the supper of the lamb is kept; the bread that came down from heaven, that giveth life to the world, is thy true nourishment: all is done, and known in real experience, in a living sensibility of the work of God on the soul. There the birth, the life, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, are not merely remembered, but inwardly found, and enjoyed as the real states of thy soul, which has followed Christ in the regeneration. When once thou art well grounded in this inward worship, thou wilt have learnt to live unto

God above time, and place. For every day will be Sunday to thee, and wherever thou goest, thou wilt have a priest, a church, and an altar along with thee. For when God has all that he should have of thy heart, when renouncing the will, judgment, tempers and inclinations of thy old man, thou art wholly given up to the obedience of the Light and Spirit of God within thee, to will only his will, to love only in his love, to be wise only in his wisdom, then it is, that everything thou doest is as a song of praise, and the common business of thy life is a conforming to God's will on earth, as angels do in heaven.

Fourthly, and lastly, this pearl of eternity is the peace and joy of God within thee, but can only be found by the manifestation of the life and power of Jesus Christ in thy soul. But Christ cannot be thy power and thy life, till in obedience to his call, thou deniest thyself, takest up thy daily cross, and followest him, in the regeneration. This is peremptory, it admits of no reserve or evasion, it is the one way to Christ and eternal life. But be where thou wilt, either here, or at Rome, or Geneva, if self is undenied, if thou livest to thine own will, to the pleasures of thy natural lust and appetites, sense and passions, and in conformity to the vain customs, and spirit of this world, thou art dead whilst thou livest, the seed of the woman is crucified within thee, Christ can profit thee nothing, thou art a stranger to all that is holy and heavenly within thee, and utterly incapable of finding the peace and joy of God in thy soul. And thus thou art poor, and blind, and naked, and empty, and livest a miserable life in the vanity of time; whilst all the riches of eternity, the Light and Spirit, the wisdom and love, the peace and joy of God are within thee. And thus it will always be with thee, there is no remedy, go where thou wilt, do what thou wilt, all is shut up, there is no door of salvation, no awakening out of the sleep of sin, no deliverance from the power of thy corrupt nature, no overcoming of the world, no revelation of Jesus Christ, no joy of the new birth from above, till dying to thy self and the world, thou turnest to the Light, and Spirit, and power of God in thy soul. All is fruitless, and insignificant, all the means of thy redemption are at a stand, all outward forms are but a dead formality, till this fountain of living water is found within thee.

But thou wilt perhaps say, How shall I discover this riches of eternity, this Light, and Spirit, and wisdom, and peace of God, treasured up within

me? Thy first thought of repentance, or desire of turning to God, is thy first discovery of this Light and Spirit of God within thee. It is the voice and language of the Word of God within thee, though thou knowest it not. It is the bruiser of thy serpent's head, thy dear Immanuel, who is beginning to preach within thee, that same which he first preached in public, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." When therefore but the smallest instinct or desire of thy heart calls thee towards God, and a newness of life, give it time and leave to speak; and take care thou refuse not him that speaketh. For it is not an angel from heaven that speaks to thee, but it is the eternal speaking Word of God in thy heart, that Word which at first created thee, is thus beginning to create thee a second time unto righteousness, that a new man may be formed again in thee in the image and likeness of God. But above all things, beware of taking this desire of repentance to be the effect of thy own natural sense and reason, for in so doing thou lovest the key of all the heavenly treasure that is in thee, thou shuttest the door against God, turnest away from him, and thy repentance (if thou hast any) will be only a vain, unprofitable work of thy own hands, that will do thee no more good, than a well that is without water. But if thou takest this awakened desire of turning to God, to be, as in truth it is, the coming of Christ in thy soul, the working, redeeming power of the Light and Spirit of the holy Jesus within thee, if thou dost reverence and adhere to it, as such, this faith will save thee, will make thee whole; and by thus believing in Christ, though thou wert dead, yet shalt thou live.

Now all depends upon thy right submission and obedience to this speaking of God in thy soul. Stop therefore all self-activity, listen not to the suggestions of thy own reason, run not on in thy own will, but be retired, silent, passive, and humbly attentive to this new risen Light within thee. Open thy heart, thy eyes, and ears, to all its impressions. Let it enlighten, teach, frighten, torment, judge, and condemn thee, as it pleases, turn not away from it, hear all it says, seek for no relief out of it, consult not with flesh and blood, but with a heart full of faith and resignation to God, pray only this prayer, that God's kingdom may come, and his will be done in thy soul. Stand faithfully in this state of preparation, thus given up to the Spirit of God, and then the work of thy repentance will be

wrought in God, and thou wilt soon find, that he that is in thee, is much greater than all that are against thee.

But that thou mayest do all this the better, and be more firmly assured, that this resignation to, and dependence upon the working of God's Spirit within thee, is right and sound, I shall lay before thee two great, and infallible, and fundamental truths, which will be as a rock for thy faith to stand upon.

First, that through all the whole nature of things, nothing can do, or be a real good to thy soul, but the operation of God upon it. Secondly, that all the dispensations of God to mankind, from the fall of Adam, to the preaching of the gospel, were only for this one end, to fit, prepare, and dispose the soul for the operation of the Spirit of God upon it. These two great truths well and deeply apprehended, put the soul in its right state, in a continual dependence upon God, in a readiness to receive all good from him, and will be a continual source of light in thy mind. They will keep thee safe from all error, and false zeal in things, and forms of religion, from a sectarian spirit, from bigotry, and superstition; they will teach thee the true difference between the means and end of religion; and the regard thou showest to the shell, will be only so far, as the kernel is to be found in it.

Man, by his fall, had broken off from his true center, his proper place in God, and therefore the life and operation of God was no more in him. He was fallen from a life in God into a life of self, into an animal life of self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking in the poor perishing enjoyments of this world. This was the natural state of man by the fall. He was an apostate from God, and his natural life was all idolatry, where self was the great idol that was worshipped instead of God. See here the whole truth in short. All sin, death, damnation, and hell is nothing else but this kingdom of self, or the various operations of self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, which separate the soul from God, and end in eternal death and hell.

On the other hand, all that is grace, redemption, salvation, sanctification, spiritual life, and the new birth, is nothing else but so much of the life and operation of God found again in the soul. It is man come back again into his center or place in God, from whence he had broken off. The beginning again of the life of God in the soul, was then first made, when the mercy of

God inspoke into Adam a seed of the divine life, which should bruise the head of the serpent, which had wrought itself into the human nature. Here the kingdom of God was again within us, though only as a seed, yet small as it was, it was yet a degree of the divine life, which if rightly cultivated, would overcome all the evil that was in us, and make of every fallen man a new -born son of God.

All the sacrifices and institutions of the ancient patriarchs, the Law of Moses, with all its types, and rites, and ceremonies, had this only end; they were the methods of divine wisdom for a time, to keep the hearts of men from the wanderings of idolatry, in a state of holy expectation upon God, they were to keep the first seed of life in a state of growth, and make way for the further operation of God upon the soul; or, as the apostle speaks, to be as a schoolmaster unto Christ, that is, till the birth, the death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, should conquer death and hell, open a new dispensation of God, and baptize mankind afresh with the Holy Ghost, and fire of heaven. Then, that is, on the day of Pentecost, a new dispensation of God came forth; which on God's part, was the operation of the Holy Spirit in gifts and graces upon the whole church; and on man's part, it was the adoration of God in spirit and in truth. Thus all that was done by God, from the bruiser of the serpent given to Adam, to Christ's sitting down on the right hand of God, was all for this end, to remove all that stood between God and man, and to make way for the immediate and continual operation of God upon the soul; and that man, baptized with the Holy Spirit, and born again from above, should absolutely renounce self, and wholly give up his soul to the operation of God's Spirit, to know, to love, to will, to pray, to worship, to preach, to exhort, to use all the faculties of his mind, and all the outward things of this world, as enlightened, inspired, moved and guided by the Holy Ghost, who by this last dispensation of God, was given to be a comforter, a teacher, and guide to the church, who should abide with it forever.

This is Christianity, a spiritual society, not because it has no worldly concerns, but because all its members, as such, are born of the Spirit, kept alive, animated and governed by the Spirit of God. It is constantly called by our Lord the kingdom of God, or heaven, because all its ministry and service, all that is done in it, is done in obedience and subjection to that Spirit, by which angels live, and are governed in heaven. Hence our blessed

Lord taught his disciples to pray, that this kingdom might come, that so God's will might be done on earth, as it is in heaven; which could not be, but by that same Spirit, by which it is done in heaven. The short is this: the kingdom of self is the fall of man, or the great apostasy from the life of God in the soul; and everyone wherever he be, that lives unto self, is still under the fall and great apostasy from God. The kingdom of Christ is the Spirit and power of God dwelling and manifesting itself in the birth of a new inward man; and no one is a member of this kingdom, but so far as a true birth of the Spirit is brought forth in him. These two kingdoms take in all mankind, he that is not of one, is certainly in the other; dying to one is living to the other.

Hence we may gather these following truths: first, here is shown the true ground and reason of what was said above, namely, that when the call of God to repentance first arises in thy soul, thou art to be retired, silent, passive, and humbly attentive to this new risen Light within thee, by wholly stopping, or disregarding the workings of thy own will, reason, and judgment. It is because all these are false counselors, the sworn servants, bribed slaves of thy fallen nature, they are all born and bred in thy kingdom of self; and therefore if a new kingdom is to be set up in thee, if the operation of God is to have its effect in thee, all these natural powers of self are to be silenced and suppressed, till they have learned obedience and subjection to the Spirit of God. Now this is not requiring thee to become a fool, or to give up thy claim to sense and reason, but is the shortest way to have thy sense and reason delivered from folly, and thy whole rational nature strengthened, enlightened, and guided by that Light, which is wisdom itself.

A child that obediently denies his own will, and own reason, to be guided by the will and reason of a truly wise and understanding tutor, cannot be said to make himself a fool, and give up the benefit of his rational nature, but to have taken the shortest way to have his own will and reason made truly a blessing to him.

Secondly, hence is to be seen the true ground and necessity of that universal mortification and self-denial with regard to all our senses, appetites, tempers, passions and judgments. It is because all our whole nature, as fallen from the life of God, is in a state of contrariety to the

order and end of our creation, a continual source of disorderly appetites, corrupt tempers, and false judgments. And therefore every motion of it is to be mortified, changed and purified from its natural state, before we can enter into the kingdom of God. Thus when our Lord says, "Except a man hateth his father and mother, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple"; it is because our best tempers are yet carnal, and full of the imperfections of our fallen nature. The doctrine is just and good; not as if father and mother were to be hated; but that love, which an unregenerate person, or natural man, has towards them, is to be hated, as being a blind self-love, full of all the weakness and partiality, with which fallen man loves, honors, esteems, and cleaves to himself. This love, born from corrupt flesh and blood, and polluted with self, is to be hated and parted with, that we may love them with a love born of God, with such a love, and on such a motive, as Christ has loved us. And then the disciple of Christ far exceeds all others in the love of parents. Again, our own life is to be hated; and the reason is plain, it is because there is nothing lovely in it. It is a legion of evil, a monstrous birth of the serpent, the world, and the flesh; it is an apostasy from the life and power of God in the soul, a life that is death to heaven, that is pure unmixed idolatry, that lives wholly to self, and not to God; and therefore all this own life is to be absolutely hated, all this self is to be denied and mortified, if the nature, spirit, tempers and inclinations of Christ are to be brought to life in us. For it is as impossible to live to both these lives at once, as for a body to move two contrary ways at the same time. And therefore all these mortifications and self-denials have an absolute necessity in the nature of the thing itself.

Thus when our Lord further says, unless a man forsaketh all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple; the reason is plain, and the necessity absolute. It is because all that the natural man has, is in the possession of self-love, and therefore this possession is to be absolutely forsaken, and parted with. All that he has, is to be put into other hands, to be given to divine love, or this natural man cannot be changed into a disciple of Christ. For self-love in all that it has, is earthly, sensual, and devilish, and therefore must have all taken away from it; and then to the natural man all is lost, he has nothing left, all is laid down at the feet of Jesus. And then all things are common, as soon as self-love has lost the possession of them. And then the disciple of Christ, though having nothing, yet possesseth all things, all

that the natural man has forsaken, is restored to the disciple of Christ an hundred-fold. For self-love, the greatest of all thieves, being now cast out, and all that he had stolen and hidden thus taken from him, and put into the hands of divine love, every mite becomes a large treasure, and mammon opens the door into everlasting habitations. This was the Spirit of the first draft of a Christian church at Jerusalem, a church made truly after the pattern of heaven, where the love that reigns in heaven reigned in it, where divine love broke down all the selfish fences, the locks and bolts of me, mine, my own, etc., and laid all things common to the members of this new kingdom of God on earth.

Now though many years did not pass after the age of the apostles, before Satan and self got footing in the church, and set up merchandise in the house of God, yet this one heart, and one Spirit, which then first appeared in the Jerusalem church, is that one heart and Spirit of divine love, to which all are called, that would be true disciples of Christ. And though the practice of it is lost as to the church in general, yet it ought not to have been lost; and therefore every Christian ought to make it his great care and prayer, to have it restored in himself. And then, though born in the dregs of time, or living in Babylon, he will be as truly a member of the first heavenly church at Jerusalem, as if he had lived in it, in the days of the apostles. This Spirit of love, born of that celestial fire, with which Christ baptizes his true disciples, is alone that Spirit, which can enter into heaven, and therefore is that Spirit which is to be born in us, whilst we are on earth. For no one can enter in heaven, till he is made heavenly, till the Spirit of heaven is entered into him. And therefore all that our Lord has said of denying and dying to self, and of his parting with all that he has, are practices absolutely necessary from the nature of the thing.

Because all turning to self is so far turning from God, and so much as we have of self-love, so much we have of a hellish, earthly weight, that must be taken off, or there can be no ascension into heaven. But thou wilt perhaps say, If all self-love is to be renounced, then all love of our neighbor is renounced along with it, because the commandment is, only to love our neighbor as ourselves. The answer here is easy, and yet no quarter given to self-love. There is but one only love in heaven, and yet the angels of God love one another in the same manner, as they love themselves. The matter is thus: the one supreme, unchangeable rule of love, which is a law

to all intelligent beings of all worlds, and will be a law to all eternity, is this, viz., that God alone is to be loved for himself, and all other beings only in him, and for him. Whatever intelligent creature lives not under this rule of love, is so far fallen from the order of his creation, and is, till he returns to this eternal law of love, an apostate from God, and incapable of the kingdom of heaven.

Now if God alone is to be loved for himself, then no creature is to be loved for itself; and so all self-love in every creature is absolutely condemned.

And if all created beings are only to be loved in and for God, then my neighbor is to be loved, as I love myself, and I am only to love myself, as I love my neighbor, or any other created being, that is only in and for God. And thus the command of loving our neighbor as ourselves, stands firm, and yet all self-love is plucked up by the roots. But what is loving any creature, only in, and for God? It is when we love it only as it is God's work, image, and delight, when we love it merely as it is God's, and belongs to him, this is loving it in God, and when all that we wish, intend, or do to it, is done from a love of God, for the honor of God, and in conformity to the will of God, this is loving it for God. This is the one love that is, and must be the spirit of all creatures that live united to God. Now this is no speculative refinement, or fine-spun fiction of the brain, but the simple truth, and a first law of nature, and a necessary brand of union between God and the creature. The creature is not in God, is a stranger to him, has lost the life of God in itself, whenever its love does not thus begin and end in God.

The loss of this love, was the fall of man, as it opened in him a kingdom of self, in which Satan, the world, and the flesh, could all of them bring forth their own works. If therefore man is to rise from his fall, and return to his life in God, there is an absolute necessity that self, with all his brood of gross affections, be deposed, that his first love in and for which he was created, may be born again in him. Christ came into the world to save sinners, to destroy the works of the devil. Now self is not only the seat and habitation, but the very life of sin. The works of the devil are all wrought in self, it is his peculiar workhouse, and therefore Christ is not come as a savior from sin, as a destroyer of the works of the devil in any of us, but so far as self is beaten down, and overcome in us. If it is literally

true, what our Lord said, that his kingdom was not of this world, then it is a truth of the same certainty, that no one is a member of this kingdom, but he that in the literal sense of the words renounces the spirit of this world. Christians might as well part with half the articles of their creed, or but half believe them, as really to refuse, or but by halves enter into these self-denials.

For all that is in the creed, is only to bring forth this dying and death to all and every part of the old man, that the life and Spirit of Christ may be formed in us.

Our redemption is this new birth; if this is not done, or doing in us, we are still unredeemed. And though the savior of the world is come, he is not come in us, he is not received by us, is a stranger to us, is not ours, if his life is not within us. His life is not, cannot be within us, but so far as the spirit of the world, self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, are renounced, and driven out of us.

Thirdly, hence we may also learn the true nature and worth of all self-denials and mortifications. As to their nature, considered in themselves, they have nothing of goodness or holiness, nor are any real parts of our sanctification, they are not the true food or nourishment of divine life in our souls, they have no quickening, sanctifying power in them; their only worth consists in this, that they remove the impediments of holiness, break down that which stands between God and us, and make way for the quickening, sanctifying Spirit of God to operate on our souls. Which operation of God is the one only thing that can raise the divine life in the soul, or help it to the smallest degree of real holiness, or spiritual life. As in our creation, we had only that degree of a divine life, which the power of God derived into us; as then all that we had, and were, was the sole operation of God in the creation of us; so in our redemption, or regaining that first perfection, which we have lost, all must be again the operation of God; every degree of the divine life restored in us, be it ever so small, must and can be nothing else but so much of the life and operation of God found again in the soul. All the activity of man in the works of self-denial has no good in itself, but is only to open an entrance for the one only good, the Light of God, to operate upon us.

Hence also we may learn the reason, why many people not only lose the benefit, but are even worse for all their mortifications. It is because they mistake the whole nature and worth of them. They practice them for their own sakes, as things good in themselves, they think them to be real parts of holiness, and so rest in them, and look no further, but grow full of self-esteem, and self-admiration, for their own progress in them. This makes them self-sufficient, morose, severe judges of all those that fall short of their mortifications.

And thus their self-denials do only that for them, which indulgences do for other people, they withstand and hinder the operation of God upon their souls, and instead of being really self-denials, they strengthen and keep up the kingdom of self.

There is no avoiding this fatal error, but by deeply entering into this great truth, that all our own activity and working has no good in it, can do no good to us, but as it leads and turns us in the best manner to the Light and Spirit of God, which alone brings life and salvation into the soul. "Stretch forth thy hand," said our Lord to the man "that had a withered hand"; he did so, and "it was immediately made whole as the other."

Now had this man any ground for pride, or a high opinion of himself, for the share he had in the restoring of his hand? Yet just such is our share in the raising up of the spiritual life within us. All that we can do by our own activity, is only like this man's stretching out his hand; the rest is the work of Christ, the only giver of life to the withered hand, or the dead soul. We can only then do living works, when we are so far born again, as to be able to say with the apostle, "Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." But to return, and further show, how the soul that feels the call of God to repentance is to behave under it, that this stirring of the divine power in the soul may have its full effect, and bring forth the birth of the new man in Christ Jesus. We are to consider it (as in truth it is) as the seed of the divine nature within us, that can only grow by its own strength and union with God. It is a divine life, and therefore can grow from nothing but divine power. When the Virgin Mary conceived the birth of the holy Jesus, all that she did towards it herself, was only this single act of faith and resignation to God; "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy Word." This is all that we can do towards the conception

of that new man that is to be born in ourselves. Now this truth is easily consented to, and a man thinks he believes it, because he consents to it, or rather, does not deny it. But this is not enough, it is to be apprehended in a deep, full, and practical assurance, in such a manner as a man knows and believes that he did not create the stars, or cause life to rise up in himself. And then it is a belief, that puts the soul into a right state, that makes room for the operation of God upon it. His Light then enters with full power into the soul, and his Holy Spirit moves and directs all that is done in it, and so man lives again in God as a new creature. For this truth thus firmly believed, will have these two most excellent effects: first, it will keep the soul fixed, and continually turned towards God, in faith, prayer, desire, confidence, and resignation to him, for all that it wants to have done in it, and to it; which will be a continual source of all divine virtues and graces. The soul thus turned to God must be always receiving from him. It stands at the true door of all divine communications, and the Light of God as freely enters into it, as the light of the sun enters into the air. Secondly, it will fix and ground the soul in a true and lasting self-denial. For by thus knowing and owning our own nothingness and inability, that we have no other capacity for good, but that of receiving it from God alone, self is wholly denied, its kingdom is destroyed; no room is left for spiritual pride and self-esteem; we are saved from a Pharisaical holiness, from wrong opinions of our own works and good deeds, and from a multitude of errors, the most dangerous to our souls, all which arise from the something that we take ourselves to be either in nature or grace. But when we once apprehend but in some good degree, the all of God, and the nothingness of ourselves, we have got a truth, whose usefulness and benefit no words can express. It brings a kind of infallibility into the soul in which it dwells; all that is vain, and false, and deceitful, is forced to vanish and fly before it. When our religion is founded on this rock, it has the firmness of a rock, and its height reaches unto heaven. The world, the flesh, and the devil, can do no hurt to it; all enemies are known, and all disarmed by this great truth dwelling in our souls. It is the knowledge of the all of God, that makes cherubims and seraphims to be flames of divine love. For where this all of God is truly known, and felt in any creature, there its whole breath and spirit is a fire of love, nothing but a pure disinterested love can arise up in it, or come from it, a love that begins and ends in God. And where this love is born in any creature, there a seraphic life is born along with it. For

this pure love introduces the creature into the all of God; all that is in God is opened in the creature, it is united with God, and has the life of God manifested in it.

There is but one salvation for all mankind, and that is the life of God in the soul. God has but one design or intent towards all mankind, and that is to introduce or generate his own life, Light, and Spirit in them, that all may be as so many images, temples, and habitations of the Holy Trinity. This is God's good will to all Christians, Jews, and heathens. They are all equally the desire of his heart, his Light continually waits for an entrance into all of them, his wisdom crieth, she putteth forth her voice, not here, or there, but everywhere, in all the streets of all the parts of the world.

Now there is but one possible way for man to attain this salvation, or life of God in the soul. There is not one for the Jew, another for a Christian, and a third for the heathen. No; God is one, human nature is one, salvation is one, and the way to it is one; and that is, the desire of the soul turned to God. When this desire is alive and breaks forth in any creature under heaven, then the lost sheep is found, and the shepherd has it upon his shoulders. Through this desire the poor prodigal son leaves his husks and swine, and hastes to his father: it is because of this desire, that the father sees the son, while yet afar off, that he runs out to meet him, falls on his neck, and kisses him. See here how plainly we are taught, that no sooner is this desire arisen, and in motion towards God, but the operation of God's Spirit answers to it, cherishes and welcomes its first beginnings, signified by the father's seeing, and having compassion on his son, whilst yet afar off, that is, in the first beginnings of his desire. Thus does this desire do all, it brings the soul to God, and God into the soul, it unites with God, it co-operates with God, and is one life with God. Suppose this desire not to be alive, not in motion either in a Jew, or a Christian, and then all the sacrifices, the service, the worship either of the Law, or the gospel, are but dead works, that bring no life into the soul, nor beget any union between God and it. Suppose this desire to be awakened, and fixed upon God, though in souls that never heard either of the Law or the gospel, and then the divine life, or operation of God, enters into them, and the new birth in Christ is formed in those who never heard of his name. And these are they "that shall come from the East, and from the West and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, in the kingdom of God."

Oh my God, just and good, how great is thy love and mercy to mankind, that heaven is thus everywhere open, and Christ thus the common savior to all that turn the desire of their hearts to thee! Oh sweet power of the bruiser of the serpent, born in every son of man, that stirs and works in every man, and gives every man a power, and desire, to find his happiness in God! O holy Jesus, heavenly light, that lightest every man that cometh into the world, that redeemest every soul that follows thy light, which is always within him! O Holy Trinity, immense ocean of divine love in which all mankind live, and move, and have their being! None are separated from thee, none live out of thy love, but all are embraced in the arms of thy mercy, all are partakers of thy divine life, the operation of thy Holy Spirit, as soon as their heart is turned to thee! Oh plain, and easy, and simple way of salvation, wanting no subtleties of art or science, no borrowed learning, no refinements of reason, but all done by the simple natural motion of every heart, that truly longs after God. For no sooner is the finite desire of the creature in motion towards God, but the infinite desire of God is united with it, co-operates with it. And in this united desire of God and the creature, is the salvation and life of the soul brought forth. For the soul is shut out of God, and imprisoned in its own dark workings of flesh and blood, merely and solely, because it desires to live to the vanity of this world. This desire is its darkness, its death, its imprisonment, and separation from God.

When therefore the first spark of a desire after God arises in thy soul, cherish it with all thy care, give all thy heart into it, it is nothing less than a touch of the divine loadstone, that is to draw thee out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity. Get up therefore and follow it as gladly, as the wise men of the East followed the star from heaven that appeared to them. It will do for thee, as the star did for them, it will lead thee to the birth of Jesus, not in a stable at Bethlehem in Judea, but to the birth of Jesus in the dark center of thy own fallen soul.

I shall conclude this first part, with the words of the heavenly illuminated, and blessed Jacob Behmen.

“It is much to be lamented, that we are so blindly led, and the truth withheld from us through imaginary conceptions; for if the divine power in the inward ground of the soul was manifest, and working with its luster in

us, then is the whole Triune God present in the life and will of the soul, and there, in the soul, is the place where the Father begets his Son, and where the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son.

“Christ says, ‘I am the Light of the world, he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness.’ He directs us only to himself, he is the morning star, and is generated and rises in us, and shines in the darkness of our nature. O how great a triumph is there in the soul, when he arises in it! then a man knows, as he never knew before, that he is a stranger in a foreign land.”

A PRAYER

Oh heavenly Father, infinite, fathomless depth of never-ceasing love, save me from myself, from the disorderly workings of my fallen, long corrupted nature, and let my eyes see, my heart and spirit feel and find, thy salvation in Christ Jesus.

O God, who madest me for thyself, to show forth thy goodness in me, manifest, I humbly beseech thee, the life-giving power of thy holy nature within me; help me to such a true and living faith in thee, such strength of hunger and thirst after the birth, life, and Spirit of thy holy Jesus in my soul, that all that is within me, may be turned from every inward thought, or outward work, that is not thee, thy holy Jesus, and heavenly working in my soul. Amen.

PART II

First Dialogue

**between Academicus, Rusticus and Theophilus;
at which Humanus was present**

Academicus. Well met, honest Rusticus. I can now tell you with much pleasure, that we shall soon see a Second Part of The Spirit of Prayer. And as soon as I get it, I will come and read it to you.

Rusticus. I have often told you, Academicus, that I wondered at your eagerness and impatience to see more of this matter. As to my part, I have no such thrift within me, and should make no complaint, if it never came out.

Academicus. My friend Rusticus, you cannot read; and that is the reason, that you are not in my state of impatience, to see another book.

Rusticus. Indeed, Academicus, you quite mistake the matter. The first part of The Spirit of Prayer you read to me more than three or four times, and that is the reason, why I am in no state of eagerness after a second part. I have found in the first part, all that I need to know of God, of Christ, of myself, of heaven, of hell, of sin, of grace, of death, and of salvation: that all these things have their being, their life, and their working, in my own heart: that God is always in me, that Christ is always within me; that he is the inward light and life of my soul, a bread from heaven, of which I may always eat; a water of eternal life springing up in my soul, of which I may always drink. O my friend, these truths have opened a new life in my soul: I am brought home to myself; the veil is taken off my heart; I have found my God; I know that his dwelling-place, his kingdom, is within me. What need we then call out for books written only with pen and ink, when such a book as this, so full of wonders, is once opened in our own hearts? My eyes, my ears, my thoughts, are all turned inwards, because all that God, and Christ, and grace, are doing for me, are only to be

known, and found there. What need then of so much news from abroad, since all that concerns either life or death, are all transacting, and all at work, within me?

How could I be said to have felt these great truths, to be sensible of these riches of eternity treasured up in my soul, to know what a great good the divine nature is in me, and to me, if instead of turning all the desire and delight of my heart towards them, I only felt a longing and desire to read more concerning the spirit of prayer? No, Academicus, another, and a better fire is kindled within me; my heart is in motion, and all that is within me tends towards God; and I find that nothing concerns me more, than to keep my heart from wandering after anything else. I now know to what it is that I am daily to die, and to what it is that I am daily to live; and therefore look upon every day as lost, that does not help forwards both this death, and this life, in me. I have not yet done half, what the first part of *The Spirit of Prayer* directs me to do, and therefore have but little occasion to call out for a second.

Theophilus. Indeed, Academicus, I must own, that honest Rusticus, as you called him, has spoken well. Your education has so accustomed you to the pleasure of reading variety of books, that you hardly propose any other end in reading, than the entertainment of your mind: thus *The Spirit of Prayer* has only awakened in you a desire to see another part upon the same subject. This fault is very common to others, as well as scholars, and even to those who only delight in reading good books.

Philo for this twenty years has been collecting and reading all the spiritual books he can hear of. He reads them, as the critics read commentators and lexicons, to be nice and exact in telling you the style, spirit, and intent of this or that spiritual writer, how one is more accurate in this, and the other in that. Philo will ride you forty miles in winter to have a conversation about spiritual books, or to see a collection larger than his own. Philo is amazed at the deadness and insensibility of the Christian world, that they are such strangers to the inward life and spiritual nature of the Christian salvation; he wonders how they can be so zealous for the outward letter and form of ordinances, and so averse to that spiritual life, that they all point at, as the one thing needful. But Philo never thinks how wonderful it is, that a man who knows regeneration to be the whole, should yet content

himself with the love of books upon the new birth, instead of being born again himself. For all that is changed in Philo, is his taste for books. He is no more dead to the world, no more delivered from himself, is as fearful of adversity, as fond of prosperity, as easily provoked, and pleased with trifles, as much governed by his own will, tempers, and passions, as unwilling to deny his appetites, or enter into war with himself, as he was twenty years ago. Yet all is well with Philo; he has no suspicion of himself; he dates the newness of his life, and the fullness of his light, from the time that he discovered the pearl of eternity in spiritual authors.

All this, Academicus, is said on your account, that you may not lose the benefit of this spark of the divine life that is kindled in your soul, but may conform yourself suitably to so great a gift of God.

It demands at present an eagerness of another kind, than that of much reading, even upon the most spiritual matters.

Academicus. I thank you, Theophilus, for your good will towards me; but did not imagine my eagerness after such books to be so great and dangerous a mistake. And if I do not yet entirely give in to what you say, it is because a friend of yours has told us (and as I thought by way of direction) that he has been a diligent reader of all the spiritual authors, from the apostolical Dionysius down to the illuminated Guion, and celebrated Fenelon of Cambray. And therefore it would never have come into my head, to suspect it to be a fault, or dangerous, to follow his example.

Theophilus. I have said nothing, my friend, with a design of hindering your acquaintance with all the truly spiritual writers. I would rather in a right way help you to a true intimacy with them: for they are friends of God, entrusted with his secrets, and partakers of the divine nature: and he that converses rightly with them, has a happiness, that can hardly be over-valued.

My intention is only to abate, for a time, a spirit of eagerness after much reading, which in your state has more of nature than grace in it; which seeks delight in a variety of new notions, and rather gratifies curiosity, than reforms the heart.

Suppose you had seen an angel from heaven, who had discovered to you a glimpse of its own internal brightness, and of that glorious union in which it lived with God, opening more of itself to the inward sight of your mind, than you could either forget or relate. Suppose it had told you with a piercing word, and living impression, that all its own angelic and heavenly brightness was hid in yourself, concealed from you under a bestial covering of flesh and blood; that this flesh and blood was become the master of it, would not suffer it to breathe, or stir, or come to life in you. Suppose it had told you, that all your life had been spent in helping this flesh and blood to more and more power over you, to hinder you from knowing and feeling this divine life within you. Suppose it had told you, that to this day you had lived in the grossest self-idolatry, loving, serving, honoring, and adoring yourself instead of loving, serving, and adoring God with all your heart, and soul, and spirit: that all your intentions, projects, cares, pleasures, and indulgences, had been only so much labor to bring you to the grave in a total ignorance of that great work, for which alone you were born into the world.

Suppose it had told you, that all this blindness and insensibility of your state, was obstinately and willfully brought upon yourself, because you had boldly slighted and resisted all the daily inward and outward calls of God to your soul, all the teachings, doings, and sufferings, of a Son of God to redeem you. Suppose it left you with this farewell, “O man awake; thy work is great, thy time is short, I am thy last trumpet; the grave calls for thy flesh and blood, thy soul must enter into a new lodging. To be born again, is to be an angel: not to be born again is to become a devil.”

Tell me now, Academicus, what would you expect from a man who had been thus awakened, and pierced by the voice of an angel? Could you think he had any sense left, if he was not cast into the deepest depth of humility, self-dejection, and self-abhorrence? Casting himself, with a broken heart, at the feet of the divine mercy, desiring nothing but that, from that time, every moment of his life might be given unto God, in the most perfect denial of every temper, will, and inclination, that nourished the corruption of his nature: wishing and praying from the bottom of his heart, that God would lead him into and through everything inwardly and outwardly, that might destroy the evil workings of his nature, and awaken all that was holy and heavenly within him; that the seed of eternity, the

spark of life, that he had so long quenched and smothered under earthly rubbish, might breathe, and come to life, in him.

Or would you think he was enough affected with this angelic visit, if all that it had awakened in him, was only a longing and eager desire to hear the same, or another angel talk again?

Academicus. O Theophilus, you have said enough: for all that is within me consents to the truth and justness of what you have said. I now feel in the strongest manner, that I have been rather amused, than edified, by what I have read.

Theophilus. A spiritual book, Academicus, is a call to as real and total a death to the life of corrupt nature, as that which Adam died in paradise, was to the life of heaven. He indeed died at once totally to the divine life in which he was created: but as our body of earth is to last to the end of our lives; so to the end of our earthly life, every step we take, every inch of our road, is to be made up of denial, and dying to ourselves; because all our redemption consists in our regaining that first life of heaven in the soul, to which Adam died in paradise. And therefore the one single work of redemption, is the one single work of regeneration, or the raising up of a life, and spirit, and tempers, and inclinations, contrary to that life and spirit which we derive from our earthly fallen parents. To think therefore of anything, but the continual, total denial of our earthly nature, is to overlook the very one thing on which all depends. And to hope for anything, to trust or pray for anything, but the life of God, or a birth of heaven, in our souls, is as useless to us, as placing our hope and trust in a graven image. Thus saith the Christ of God the one pattern, and author of our salvation: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself, hate his own life, take up his daily cross, and follow me." And again: "Unless a man be born again from above, of water and the Spirit, he cannot see, or enter into, the kingdom of God."

Now is your time, Academicus, to enter deeply into this great truth. You are just come out of the slumber of life, and begin to see with new eyes the nature of your salvation. You are charmed with the discovery of a kingdom of heaven hidden within you, and long to be entertained more and more

with the nature, progress, and perfection of the new birth, or the opening of the kingdom of God in your soul.

But my friend, stop a little. It is indeed great joy, that the pearl of great price is found; but take notice, that it is not yours, you can have no possession of it, till as the merchant did, you sell all that you have, and buy it. Now self is all that you have, it is your sole possession; you have no goods of your own, nothing is yours but this self. The riches of self are your own riches; but all this self is to be parted with before the pearl is yours. Think of a lower price, or be unwilling to give thus much for it, plead in your excuse, that you keep the commandments, and then you are that very rich young man in the gospel, who went away sorrowful from our Lord, when he had said, "If thou wilt be perfect," that is, if thou wilt obtain the pearl, "sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor"; that is, die to all thy possession of self, and then thou hast given all that thou hast to the poor: all that thou hast is devoted and used for the love of God and thy neighbor. This selling all, Academicus, is the measure of your dying to self; all of it is to be given up; it is an apostate nature, a stolen life, brought forth in rebellion against God: it is a continual departure from him. It corrupts everything it touches; it defiles everything it receives; it turns all the gifts and blessings of God into covetousness, partiality, pride, hatred, and envy. All these tempers are born, and bred, and nourished, in self; they have no other place to live in, no possibility of existence, but in that creature which is fallen from a life in God, into a life in self.

Academicus. Pray, sir, tell me more plainly, what this self is, since so much depends upon it.

Theophilus. It is hell, it is the devil, it is darkness, pain, and disquiet. It is the one only enemy of Christ, the great anti-Christ. It is the scarlet whore, the fiery dragon, the old serpent, the devouring beast, that is mentioned in the Revelation of St. John.

Academicus. You rather terrify than instruct me, by this description.

Theophilus. It is indeed a very frightful matter; it contains everything that man has to dread and hate, to resist and avoid. Yet be assured, my friend, that, careless and merry as the world is, every man that is born into it, has all these enemies to overcome within himself. And every man, till he

is in the way of regeneration, is more or less governed by them. No hell in any remote place, no devil that is separate from you, no darkness or pain that is not within you, no anti-Christ either at Rome or England, no furious beast, no fiery dragon, without, or apart from you, can do you any hurt. It is your own hell, your own devil, your own beast, your own anti-Christ, your own dragon, that lives in your own heart's blood, that alone can hurt you.

Die to this self, to this inward nature; and then all outward enemies are overcome. Live to this self, and then, when this life is out, all that is within you, and all that is without you, will be nothing else but a mere seeing and feeling this hell, serpent, beast, and fiery dragon.

See here, Academicus, the twofold nature of every man. He has within him a redeeming power, the meekness of the heavenly life, called the Lamb of God. This seed is surrounded, or encompassed, with the beast of fleshly lusts, the serpent of guile and subtlety, and the dragon of fiery wrath. This is the great trial, or strife of human life, whether a man will live to the lusts of the beast, the guile of the serpent, the pride and wrath of the fiery dragon, or give himself up to the meekness, patience, the sweetness, the simplicity, the humility, of the Lamb of God.

This is the whole of the matter between God and the creature. On one side, fire and wrath, awakened first by the rebellious angels; and on the other side, the meekness of the Lamb of God, the patience of divine love coming down from heaven, to stop and overcome the fire and wrath that is broken out in nature and creature. Your father Adam has introduced you into the fire and wrath of the fallen angels, into a world from whence paradise is departed. Your flesh and blood is kindled in that sin, which first brought forth a murdering Cain. But, dear soul, be of good comfort, for the meekness, the love, the heart, the Lamb of God, is become man, has set himself in the birth from him, heaven and paradise may be again opened both within thee, and without thee, not for a time, but to all eternity.

Once more, Academicus. Every man in this world stands essentially in heaven, and in hell, both as to that which is within him and that which is without him: for man and the world are both in the same fallen state. The

curse in the earth is that same thing in outward nature, that the loss of the divine life was to the soul of Adam. The whole world, in all its nature, is nothing else but a real mixture of heaven and hell. The sun and water of this world, are what keep under and overcome the darkness, wrath, and fire of hell, and carry on the vegetable and animal life that are in it. The light of the sun blesses all the workings of the elements, and the cool softening essence of the water, keeps under the fire and wrath of nature. In all animal creatures, the birth of light in their own life, and the water of their own blood, both produced by the light of the sun, and the water of outward nature, bring forth an order of earthly creatures, that can enjoy the good that is in this world in spite of the wrath of hell, and the malice of devils.

But man has more than all this; for being at first created an angel, and intended by the mercy of God to be an angel again, he has the light of heaven, and the water of eternal life, both given to Adam in that seed of the woman, which was to bruise the head of the serpent that is, to overcome the curse, the fire, and wrath, or hell, that was awakened in the fallen soul. So that man has not only, in common with the other animals, the light and water of outward nature, to quench the wrath of his own life in this mixed world, but he has the meekness, the light, the love, the humility of the holy Jesus, as a seed of life born in his soul, to bring forth that first image of God, in which Adam was created. This, my friend, is the true ground of all true religion: it means nothing, it intends nothing, but to overcome that earthly life, which overcame Adam in the fall, that made him a prisoner of hell, and a slave to the corrupt workings of earthly flesh and blood. And therefore you may see, and know with a mathematical certainty, that the one thing necessary for every fallen soul, is to die to all the life that we have from this world, and the life of heaven may be born again in him. The life of this world is the life of the beast, the scarlet whore, the old serpent and the fiery dragon.

Hence it is that sin rides in triumph over church and state, and from the court to the cottage all is over-run with sensuality, guile, falseness, pride, wrath, envy, selfishness, and every form of corruption. Everyone swims away in this torrent, but he who hears and attends to the voice of the Son of God within him, calling him to die to this life, to take up his cross, and follow him. Much learned pains has been often taken to prove Rome, or

Constantinople, to be the seat of the beast, the anti-Christ, the scarlet whore, etc. But, alas! they are not at such a distance from us, they are the properties of fallen human nature, and are all of them alive in our own selves, till we are dead or dying to all the spirit and tempers of this world. They are everywhere, in every soul, where the heavenly nature, and Spirit of the holy Jesus is not. But when the human soul turns from itself, and turns to God, dies to itself, and lives to God in the Spirit, tempers, and inclinations of the holy Jesus, loving, pitying, suffering, and praying for all its enemies, and overcoming all evil with good, as this Christ of God did; then, but not till then, are these monsters separate from it. For covetousness and sensuality of all kinds, are the very devouring beast; religion governed by a worldly, trading spirit, and gratifying the partial interest of flesh and blood, is nothing else but the scarlet whore; guile, and craft, and cunning, are the very essence of the old serpent; self-interest and self-exaltation are the whole nature of anti-Christ. Pride, persecution, wrath, hatred and envy, are the very essence of the fiery dragon.

This, Academicus, is the fallen human nature, and this is the old man, which is alive in everyone, though in various manners, till he is born again from above. To think therefore of anything in religion, or to pretend to real holiness, without totally dying to this old man, is building castles in the air, and can bring forth nothing, but Satan in the form of an angel of light. Would you know, Academicus, whence it is, that so many false spirits have appeared in the world, who have deceived themselves and others with false fire, and false light, laying claim to inspirations, illuminations, and openings of the divine life, pretending to do wonders under extraordinary calls from God? It is this; they have turned to God without turning from themselves; would be alive in God, before they were dead to their own nature; a thing as impossible in itself, as for a grain of wheat to be alive before it dies.

Now religion in the hands of self, or corrupt nature, serves only to discover vices of a worse kind, than in nature left to itself. Hence are all the disorderly passions of religious men, which burn in a worse flame than passions only employed about worldly matters: pride, self-exaltation, hatred and persecution, under a cloak of religious zeal, will sanctify actions, which nature, left to itself, would be ashamed to own.

You may now see, Academicus, with what great reason I have called you, at your first setting out, to this great point, the total dying to self, as the only foundation of a solid piety. All the fine things you hear or read of an inward and spiritual life in God, all your expectations of the Light and Holy Spirit of God, will become a false food to your soul, till you only seek for them through death to self.

Observe, sir, the difference which clothes make in those, who have it in their power to dress as they please: some are all for show, colors, and glitter; others are quite fantastical and affected in their dress; some have a grave and solemn habit; others are quite simple and plain in their whole manner. Now all this difference of dress, is only an outward difference, that covers the same poor carcass, and leaves it full of all its own infirmities. Now all the truths of the gospel, when only embraced and possessed by the old man, make only such superficial difference, as is made by clothes. Some put on a solemn, formal, prudent, outside carriage; others appear in all the glitter and show of religious coloring, and spiritual attainments; but under all this outside difference, there lies the poor fallen soul, imprisoned, unhelped, in its own fallen state. And thus it must be, if is not possible to be otherwise, till the spiritual life begins at the true root, grows out of death, and is born in a broken heart, a heart broken off from all its own natural life. Then self-hatred, self-contempt, and self-denial, are as suitable to this new-born spirit, as self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, are to the unregenerate man. Let me, therefore, my friend, conjure you, not to look forward, or cast about for spiritual advancement, till you have rightly taken this first step in the spiritual life. All your future progress depends upon it: for this depth of religion goes no deeper than the depth of your malady: for sin has its root in the bottom of your soul, it comes to life with your flesh and blood, and breathes in the breath of your natural life; and therefore, till you die to nature, you live to sin; and whilst this root of sin is alive in you, all the virtues you put on, are only like fine painted fruit hung upon a bad tree.

Academicus. Indeed, Theophilus, you have made the difference between true and false religion as plain to me, as the difference between light and darkness. But all that you have said, at the same time, is as new to me, as if I had lived in a land, where religion has never been named. But pray, sir, tell me how I am to take this first step, which you so much insist upon.

Theophilus. You are to turn wholly from yourself, and to give up yourself wholly unto God, in this or the like twofold form of words or thoughts:

“Oh my God, with all the strength of my soul, assisted by thy grace, I desire and resolve to resist and deny all my own will, earthly tempers, selfish views, and inclinations; everything that the spirit of this world, and the vanity of fallen nature, prompts me to. I give myself up wholly and solely unto thee, to be all thine, to have, and do, and be, inwardly and outwardly, according to thy good pleasure. I desire to live for no other ends, with no other designs, but to accomplish the work which thou requirest of me, an humble, obedient, faithful, thankful instrument in thy hands to be used as thou pleasest.”

You are not to content yourself, my friend, with now and then, or even many times, making this oblation of yourself to God. It must be the daily, the hourly exercise of your mind; till it is wrought into your very nature, and becomes an essential state and habit of your mind, till you feel yourself as habitually turned from all your own will, selfish ends, and earthly desires, as you are from stealing and murder; till the whole turn and bent of your spirit points as constantly to God, as the needle touched with the loadstone does to the North. This, sir, is your first and necessary step in the spiritual life; this is the key to all the treasures of heaven; this unlocks the sealed book of your soul, and makes room for the Light and Spirit of God to arise up in it. Without this, the spiritual life is but spiritual talk, and only assists nature to be pleased with an holiness that it has not.

The necessity of this first step, and the folly of pretending to succeed without it, is thus represented by our blessed Lord: “What man intending to build a house,” etc.

All our ability and preparation to succeed in this great affair, lie in this first step. You may perhaps think this an hard saying. But do not go away sorrowful, like the young man in the gospel, because he had great possessions. For, my friend, you little think what a deliverance you will have from all hardships, and what a flow of happiness is found even in this life, as soon as the soul is thus dead to self, freed from its own

passions, and wholly given up to God; of which I shall speak to you by and by. I have told you the price of the new birth. I shall now leave you to consider, whether you will be so wise a merchant, as to give up all the wealth of the old man for this heavenly pearl. I do not expect your answer now, but will stay for it till tomorrow.

But pray, gentlemen, who is this Humanus? I do not remember to have seen him before; he seems not willing to speak, yet is often biting his lips at what is said.

Rusticus. This Humanus, sir, is my neighbor; but so ignorant of the nature of the gospel, that he is often trying to persuade me into a disbelief of it. I say ignorant (though he is a learned man) because I am well assured, that no man ever did, or can oppose the gospel, but through a total ignorance of what it is in itself; for the gospel, when rightly understood, is irresistible; it brings more good news to the human nature, than sight to the blind, limbs to the lame, health to the sick, or liberty to the condemned slave. But this neighbor of mine has never yet been in sight of the truth, as it is in the gospel; he knows nothing of the grounds and reason of it, but what he has picked up out of books, that have been written against it, and for it. He often makes use of one maxim of the gospel, to overthrow it, and wonders that so plain and honest a man as I am, will not submit to it. He says, if it be a truth, as the gospel saith, "That the tree must be known by its fruit, and that a good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit," we need only look at the lives of Christians, the craft of priests, the wars, contentions, hatreds, sects, parties, heresies, divisions, outrages, and persecutions, which Christianity has brought forth, we need only look at this, to have all our senses and reason assure us, that the gospel must be a bad tree.

But this is enough concerning the man. He comes with me at his own earnest desire, which has lately seized him, and upon his own strict promise, not to interrupt our conversation; but to be a silent hearer, till it is all over. And therefore, if you please, sir, I beg our conversation may for a while turn upon the chief points asserted in *The Spirit of Prayer*, for two reasons; first, that Academicus may see what reasons I had for saying, that book had given me a sufficient instruction; and also that Humanus, hearing these great points, may hear the whole ground and nature, the necessity

and blessedness of the Christian redemption, set forth in such a degree of light, and truth, and amiableness, as he had no notion of before.

Theophilus. Your neighbor is welcome, and I pray God to give him an heart attentive to those truths, which have made so good an impression upon you. The first point that you desire us to speak to, is concerning the original of this temporal world. How God was moved to create it, upon the fall of a whole host, or kingdom of angels, who, by their revolt from God, lost the divine light, and awakened in themselves, and the region in which they dwelt, the dark, wrathful fire of hell: for hell is nothing else, but nature departed, or excluded, from the beams of divine light. The materiality of their kingdom was spiritual, and the light that glanced through it, that filled its transparency with an infinity of glorious wonders, was the Son of God, the brightness of the Father's glory. The spirit that animated the inward life of those glorious angels, and that moved with its sweet breath, through all this glassy sea, opening and changing new scenes in the mirror of divine wisdom, was the Holy Spirit of God, that eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. Thus did these celestial spirits live, move, and have their being, in God. All was heaven, and they all were so many created gods, eternally sinking down, and rising up, into new heights and depths of the riches of the divine nature. With this degree of glory and happiness was the whole extent of the place of this world filled, before the angels fell: and to this degree of happiness, and heavenly glory, will the whole place of this world be again raised, when the love of God shall have finished the great work of the redemption of mankind. Heaven again, and angels again, raised out of the misery of time, to sing eternal praises to the Holy Trinity, and to the Lamb that has overcome sin, and death, and hell, and turned all the wrath, and misery and darkness of this world, into an heaven never more to be changed. Oh Rusticus, what sentiments do these things raise in you?

Rusticus. Indeed, sir, they almost make me to forget, that I am in the body. You have set me upon a mountain, from which, whether I look backwards, or forwards, or downwards, all is equally surprising: backwards, a breach made in heaven, the first opening of hell and darkness, and a new creation out of the ruins of the fallen angels; forwards, time and all temporal nature rising again into its first eternity; downwards, a globe of earth, the seat of war between heaven and hell, where men are born to

partake of the dreadful strife, and have only the little span of life, either to overcome with God, or be overcome by the devil. Oh, sir, what great things are these? I wish that all the world, as well as my neighbor Humanus, were forced to be silent hearers of them. But pray, sir, go on.

Theophilus. When God saw the darkness that was upon the face of the deep, and the whole angelic habitation become a chaos of confusion, the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters; that is, the Spirit of God began to operate again in this outward darkness, that covered this once transparent glassy sea; for from a glassy sea it was become a deep covered with darkness, which was soon to take another nature; to have its fire and wrath converted into sun and stars; its dross and darkness into a globe of earth; its mobility and moisture into air and water; when the Spirit of God began to move and operate in it. But before this chaos had entered into this new order, God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light. This light, my friend, was not the present light of this world, which now governs the night and the day; for the sun, the moon, and stars, were not created till the fourth day. But the light which God then spoke forth, was a degree of heaven, that was commanded to glance into the darkened deep, which penetrated through all the depth of the chaos, and intermixed itself through every part; not turning the whole into a region of light, but only by its quickening virtue fitting, disposing, and preparing every part to take that change, which every following day of the creation was to bring forth, in and out of this darkened deep: for darkness is death, and light is life. This was the nature and work of that first light, which God called forth on the first day: it was God’s baptizing the dead chaos with the Spirit of life, that it might be capable of a resurrection into a new creation.

See here the uniformity of the divine procedure, with regard both to fallen nature and creature. When the creature (man) was fallen, his redemption was begun by God’s speaking a seed of light, called the seed of the woman, into the birth of his life. This alone could qualify him for the new creation in Christ Jesus. When nature was fallen, its restoration was begun in the same manner: light was commanded to enter into it, or rather to rise up in it: this was its power or possibility of coming out of its fallen state.

Marvel not, Rusticus, that I call this first light of the first day, a degree of heaven: for light is natural, essential, and inseparable from heaven; it

belongs only to heaven; and wherever else it is, it is only there as a gift from heaven. And therefore so much as there is of light in this world, so much there is of heaven in it. Darkness is natural, essential, and inseparable from hell; and can be nowhere else, but where hell can in some degree open and discover itself. And wherever, and in what degree, darkness can show itself; there, and in the same degree, is the nature of hell known and felt. This world is made up of light and darkness, not only as it consists of day and night, but because every earthly thing is itself a mixture of light and darkness. The darkness is the evil, and the light is the good, that is in everything. If the darkness was predominant in vegetables, they would all be rank poison; if in animals, they would all be as so many venomous serpents of hell. If the light did quite suppress the darkness in vegetables, they would be like the fruits which were to have been man's food in paradise.

Rusticus. These things, Theophilus, strike a most amazing light into all the mysteries both of nature and grace. But they do not more enlighten, than they edify the mind. They are all reforming truths; they have the nature of alternatives, they purge the heart of all its dross; they force it to drop all its pretensions to earthly things, as the poor deceitful baits of fallen nature; and to long for nothing, but to have that first heaven and life in God, for which angels and men were at first created. But I want to show to my friend Humanus, as it were in one view, that chain of truths, which follows from what you have said: though I had rather you would do it.

Theophilus. Agreed: and I will set them in order thus. First, that the place of this world is the very place, or region, which belonged to Lucifer, and his angels. Secondly, that everything that we see in this world, all its elements, the stars, the firmament, etc., are nothing else but the invisible things of the fallen world, made visible in a new and lower state of existence. Thirdly, that before the rebellion of the angels there was nothing but God, and heaven, and heavenly beings. Light, and love, and joy, and glory, with all the wonders thereof, were the only things seen and felt by the angels. Darkness and fire, with every quality thereof, were absolutely unknown to the angels; they had no more suspicion of them, than of the possibility of sickness, pains, heat, and cold. All they aimed at, was at being higher in the glories, and powers, and light, of that heaven in which they lived. But their turning to their own strength to effect this, was their

whole turning from God, and a falling into nature without God, which was the first discovery of darkness, wrath, and fire, and pain, and torment. Fourthly, hence it appears, that darkness is the ground of the substance, or materiality of nature; fire is its life; and light is its glorious transmutation into the kingdom of heaven; and spirit is the opener of all its wonders. All that can be conceived, is either God, or nature, or creature; God is the Holy Trinity without, or before nature; but nature is the manifestation of the Holy Trinity in a triune life of fire, light, and spirit.

Fifthly. Here we see the plain and true original of all evil, without any perplexity, or imputation upon God: that evil is nothing else but the wrath, and fire, and darkness of nature broken off from God: that the punishment, the pain, or the hell of sin, is no designedly prepared, or arbitrary penalty inflicted by God, but the natural and necessary state of the creature, that leaves, or turns from God. Sixthly, that the will of the creature is the only opener of all evil or good in the creature; the will stands between God and nature, and must in all its workings unite either with God, or nature: the will totally resigned, and given up to God, is one spirit with God, and God dwelleth in it; the will turned from God, is taken prisoner in the wrath, fire, and darkness of nature.

Seventhly. Here we see, how and why a creature can lose, and die to all its happiness and perfection, and, from a beautiful angel become a deformed devil. It is because nature has no beauty, happiness, or perfection, but solely from the manifestation or birth of the Holy Trinity in it. God manifested in nature, is the only blessing, happiness, and perfection of nature. Therefore the creature, that in the working of its will is turned from God, must have as great a change brought forth in it, as that of heaven into hell, forced to live, but to have no other life, but that of its own gnawing worm left to itself.

Eighthly. Hence we see the deep ground, and absolute necessity, of the Christian redemption, by a birth from above, of the Light and Spirit of God, demonstrated in the most absolute degree of certainty. It is because all nature is in itself nothing, but an hungry wrathful fire of life, a tormenting darkness, unless the Light and Spirit of God kindle it into a kingdom of heaven. And therefore the fallen soul can have no possible relief, or redemption, it must be, to all eternity, an hungry, dark, fiery,

tormenting spirit of life, unless the Light, or Son, and Spirit of God, be born again in it.

Hence also it follows, that in all the possibility of things, there is and can be but one happiness, and one misery. The one misery, is nature and creature left to itself; the one happiness, is the life, the Light, and Spirit of God, manifested in nature and creature. This is the true meaning of those words of our Lord, "There is but one that is good, and that is God."

Ninthly. Hence it is also seen, that there is and can be but one true religion for the fallen soul, and that is, the dying to self, to nature and creature; and a turning with all the will, the desire, and delight of the soul to God, sacrifices, oblations, prayers, praises, rites, and ceremonies, without this are but as sounding brass, and tinkling cymbals. Nay, zeal, and constancy, and warmth, and fervor, in the performance of these religious practices, is not the matter; for nature and self-love can do all this. But these religious practices are then only parts of true religion, when they mean nothing, seek nothing, but to keep up a continual dying to self, and all worldly things, and turn all the will, desire, and delight of the soul to God alone. Lastly, there is and can be only one salvation for the fallen soul, and that is heaven opened again in the soul, by the birth of such a life, Light, and Spirit, as is born in angels. For Adam was created to possess that heaven from which the angels fell; but nothing can enter into heaven, but the angelic life, which is born of heaven. The loss of this angelic life was the fall of Adam, or that death which he died, on the day he did eat of the earthly fruit; therefore the regeneration, or new birth of his first angelic life, is the one only salvation of the fallen soul. Ask not therefore, whether we are saved by faith, or by works? for we are saved by neither of them. Faith and works are at first only preparatory to the new birth; afterwards they are the true genuine fruits and effects of it. But the new birth, a life from heaven, the new creature, called Christ in us, is the one only salvation of the fallen soul. Nothing can enter into heaven, but this life which is born of, and comes from heaven.

Rusticus. I thank you, Theophilus, for setting these awakening truths in so strong a light. And I think it is not possible for my friend Humanus to be unaffected with them.

They must needs open in him a new way of thinking about religion, and show him the deep and solid ground of the absolute necessity of the Christian redemption, and incline him to be a willing hearer of that which follows.

Theophilus. I hope it will be so, Rusticus; and what I would here, and through every point we speak of, observe to your friend Humanus, is this: that the Christian religion is the one only true religion of nature, deeply and necessarily founded in the nature of things; that its doctrines are not founded in an arbitrary appointment of God, but have their natural and necessary reason, why they cannot be otherwise, as has here been shown in the one great point of regeneration, which is the whole of man's salvation, and the one only thing intended by all revelation, from the fall of man to the end of the world. Now the true ground of the one true religion or nature cannot be known, or seen into, but by going back to the beginning of things, and showing how they came into their present state. We must find out, why and how religion came to be necessary, and on what its necessity is founded. Now this cannot be done, unless we find out, what sin, and evil, and death, and darkness, are in themselves; and how they came into nature and creature. For this alone can show us, what religion is true, is natural, is necessary, and alone sufficient to remove all evil, sin, and disorder, out of the creation. For this reason, we began with the grounds and reasons of the creation of this world, showing how it came to be as it is. But this could not be done, but by going so far back as the fall of angels. For it was their revolting from God, that brought wrath, and fire, and thickness, and darkness, and death, into nature and creature; and so gave occasion to this new creation, and to its being in such a state, and of such a nature, as it is.

For who does not see, that this first deadness, thickness, wrath, fire, and darkness, caused by the angels' sin, are the very materials out of which this world is made? For are not the fire, the air, the water, the earth, the rocks and stones of this world, the rage of heat and cold, the succession of day and night, the wrath of storms and tempests, an undeniable and daily proof of all this? Now when we thus see what sin, and evil, and death, and darkness, are in nature, and how they came into it, then we see also, how and what they are, and how they came into the creature; because the creature has its forms, its being, in and out of nature. They came into

nature, or rose up in it, by nature's being broken off from God, and so losing the Light and Spirit of God, which made it to be a kingdom of heaven; we see also, that when this disordered nature was to be taken out of its fallen state by a new creation, that, to do this, the Spirit of God moved, or entered again into the darkness of the waters, and the Light of God was called into it. A plain proof, that the malady of nature, was nothing else but its loss of the Light and Spirit of God working in it. This shows us also, that the fallen creature is to be restored, or put into a way of recovery, in one and the same way as fallen nature; viz., by the Spirit, and Light of God entering into it again, and bringing forth a new birth, or creation in Christ Jesus. Just as the Spirit and Light entering into the chaos, created or turned the angels' ruined kingdom into a paradise on earth. God help him, who can see no light or truth here! Your friend Humanus lays claim to a religion of nature and reason: I join with him, with all my heart. No other religion can be right, but that which has its foundation in nature. For the God of nature can require nothing of his creatures, but what the state of their nature calls them to. Nature is his great law, that speaks his whole will both in heaven and on earth; and to obey nature, is to obey the God of nature, to please him, and to live to him, in the highest perfection. God indeed has many after-laws; but it is after his creatures have fallen from nature, and lost its perfection. But all these after-laws have no other end or intention, but to repair nature, and bring men back to their first natural state of perfection. What say you now, Academicus, to all these matters?

Academicus. You, sir, and Rusticus, both of you know, how these matters affected me, ever since I read the book called *The Appeal to all that Doubt*, etc. From that time, I have stood upon new ground; I have seen things in such a newness of light and reality, as makes me take my former knowledge for a dream. A dream I may justly call it, since all my labor was taken up in searching into a seventeen hundred years' history of doctrines, disputes, decrees, heresies, schisms, and sects, wherever to be found, in Europe, Asia, and Africa. From this goodly heap of stuff crowded into my mind, I have been settling matters betwixt all the present Christian divisions both at home and abroad, according to the best rules of criticism; having little or no other idea of a religious man, than that of a stiff maintainer of certain points against all those that oppose them. And

in this respect, I believe I may say, that I only swam away in the common torrent.

And in this laborious dream I had in all likelihood ended my days, had not that book, and some others of the like kind, shown me, that religion lay nearer home, was not to be dug out of disputes, but lay hid in myself, like a seed, which, for want of its proper nourishment, could not come to the birth. But however, though matters stand thus with myself, and I seem to be entered into a region of light, yet I must not forget to tell you, what some of my learned friends object to all this. They say, that in those books, there are many things asserted, which have not the plain letter of Scripture to support them; and therefore men of sober learning, are cautious of giving in to opinions, not strictly grounded on the plain letter of Scripture, however fine and plausible they may seem to be.

Theophilus. Is there not some reason, Academicus, to take this objection of your learned friends to be a mere pretense? For what is more fully grounded upon the plain letter of Scripture, than the doctrine of a real regeneration, a new birth of the Word, the Son, and Holy Spirit of God, really brought forth in the soul? And yet this plain letter of Scripture, upon the most important of all points, the very life, and essence, and whole nature of our redemption, is not only overlooked, but openly opposed, by the generality of men of sober learning. But this point, has not only the plain letter of Scripture for it, but what the letter asserts, is absolutely required by the whole spirit and tenor of the New Testament. All the epistles of the apostles proceed upon the supposed certainty of this one great point.

A Son of God, united with, and born in our nature, that his nature may have birth in us; an Holy Spirit, breathing in the birth and life of our souls, quickening the dead life of fallen Adam, is the letter and spirit of the apostles' writings; grounded upon the plain letter of our Lord's own words, that unless we are born again from above, of the Son, Word, water, and Spirit of God, we cannot enter or see the kingdom of heaven.

Again: is it not the plain letter of Scripture, that Adam died the day that he did eat of the earthly tree? Have we not the most solemn asseveration of God for the truth of this? Was not the change which Adam found in

himself a demonstration of the truth of this fact? Instead of the image and likeness of God in which he was created, the beauty of paradise, he was stripped of all his glory, confounded at the shameful deformity of his own body, afraid of being seen, and unable to see himself uncovered; delivered up a slave to a rage of all the stars and elements of this world, not knowing which way to look, or what to do in a world, where he was dead to all that he formerly felt, and alive only to a new and dreadful feeling at his sad entrance into a world, whence paradise, and God, and his own glory, were departed. Death enough surely!

Death in its highest reality, much greater in its change, than when an animal of earthly flesh and blood is only changed into a cold lifeless carcass.

A death, that in all nature had none like it, none equal to it, none of the same nature with it, but that which the angels died, when, from angels of God, they became living devils, serpentine, hideous forms, and slaves to darkness. Say that the angels lost no life, that they did not die a real death, and then you may say, with the same truth, that Adam did not die, when he lost God, and paradise, and the first glory of his creation, because he afterwards lived and breathed in a world which was outwardly, in all its parts, full of the same curse that was within himself. But further, not only the plain letter of the text, and the change of state, which Adam found in himself, demonstrated a real death to his former state; but the whole tenor of Scripture absolutely requires it; all the system of our redemption proceeds upon it. For tell me, I pray, what need of a redemption, if Adam had not lost his first state of life? What need of the Deity to enter again into the human nature, not only as acting, but taking a birth in it, and from it? What need of all this mysterious method, to bring the life from above again into man, if the life from above had not been lost? Say that Adam did not die, and then tell me, what sense or reason there is in saying, that the Son of God became man, and died on the cross to restore to him the life that he had lost? It is true indeed, that Adam, in his death to the divine life, was left in the possession of an earthly life. And the reason is plain why he was so: for his great sin consisted in his desire and longing to enter into the life of this world, to know its good and evil, as the animals of this world do; it was his choosing to have a life of this world after this new manner, and his entering upon the means of attaining it, that was his death

to the divine life. And therefore it is no wonder, that after his death to heaven and paradise, he found himself still alive as an earthly animal. For the desire of this earthly life was his great sin, and the possession of this earthly life was the proper punishment and misery that belonged to his sin; and therefore it is no wonder that that life, which was the proper punishment, and real discovery of the fruits of his sin, should subsist, after his sin had put an end to the life of paradise and God in him. But wonderful it is to a great degree, that any man should imagine, that Adam did not die on the day of his sin, because he had as good a life left in him, as the beasts of the field have.

For is this the life or is the death that such animals die, the life and death with which our redemption is concerned? Are not all the Scriptures full of a life and death of a much higher kind and nature? And do not the Scriptures make man the perpetual subject to whom this higher life and death belong? What ground or reason therefore can there be to think of the death of an animal of this world, when we read of the death, that Adam was assuredly to die the day of his sin? For does not all that befell him on the day of his sin, show that he lost a much greater life, suffered a more dreadful change, than that of giving up the breath of this world? For in the day of his sin, this angel of paradise, this Lord of the new creation, fell from the throne of his glory (like Lucifer from heaven) into the state of a poor, darkened, naked, distressed animal of gross flesh and blood, unable to bear the odious sight of that which his new-opened eyes forced him to see; inwardly and outwardly feeling the curse awakened in himself, and all the creation, and reduced to have only the faith of the devils, to believe and tremble. Proof enough, surely, that Adam was dead to the life, and Light, and Spirit of God; and that, with this death, all that was divine and heavenly in his soul, his body, his eyes, his mind, and thoughts, was quite at an end. Now this life to which Adam then died, is that life which all his posterity are in want of, and cannot come out of that state of that death into which he fell, but by having this first life of heaven born again in them. Now is there any reason to say, that mankind, in their natural state, are not dead to that first life in which Adam was created, because they are alive to this world? Yet this is as well as to say, that Adam did not die a real death, because he had afterwards an earthly life in him. How comes our Lord to say, that “unless ye eat the flesh, and drink the blood, of the

Son of Man, ye have no life in you?" Did he mean, ye have no earthly life in you? How comes the apostle to say, "He that hath the Son of God has life, but he that hath not the Son of God hath not life"? Does he mean the life of this world? No. But both Christ and his apostle assert this great truth, that all mankind are in the state of Adam's first death, till they are made alive again, by a birth of the Son, and the Holy Spirit of God brought forth in them. So plain is it, both from the express letter, and spirit of Scripture, that Adam died a real death to the kingdom of God in the day of his sin. Take away this death, and all the scheme of our redemption has no ground left to stand upon.

Judge now, Academicus, who leaves the letter of Scripture, your learned friends, or the author of the Appeal? They leave it, they oppose it, in that which is the very life of Christianity.

For without the reality of a new birth, founded on the certainty of a real death in the fall of Adam, the Christian scheme is but a skeleton of empty words, a detail of strange mysteries between God and man, that do nothing, and have nothing to do.

On the other hand, look now at the things set forth in the Appeal, concerning the fall of angels, the nature and effects of their revolt, and the creation of this world as deduced therefrom. They neither leave, nor oppose any letter, or doctrine of Scripture. They add nothing to religion, but the full proof of all its articles; they intend nothing but to open the original ground, and true reason, of the Christian redemption, and the absolute necessity of its being such, as the gospel declares. Now the letter of Scripture does not do this in open words; it sets not forth the why, and how things are, either in nature or in grace; it teaches not the ground or philosophy of the Christian faith; it contents itself with bare facts and doctrines, and calls for simple faith and obedience. No wonder therefore, that when the natural and necessary ground of the Christian redemption is opened, that the letter of Scripture is not step by step appealed to, for everything that is said. And yet many things may be sufficiently grounded on Scripture, that are not so expressed in the letter. The Sadducees denied, that there was any resurrection at all; and this they did, because they could not find it in the express letter of the five books of Moses. And yet it seems, that the resurrection was plainly and strongly taught there: for thus

saith our Lord, That the dead shall rise again, Moses showed at the bush, when he said, “The Lord is the God of Abraham, Isaac, etc. For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” This shows us that a thing may be fully and sufficiently proved from Scripture, which is not plainly expressed in the letter. And thus stands the matter with regard to those great, and edifying truths set forth in the Appeal. They are truly scriptural, they have their ground and authority from Scripture, though not so open and express in the letter, as matters of faith and necessary doctrine are. For is not the fall of angels a Scripture truth? Is not the desolation which their fall brought into nature, and the very place of this world a Scripture-truth? What else can be meant by “darkness upon the face of the deep”? What darkness, or what deep, but in the place of this world? What darkness, or state of the deep, but that, which God was about to raise out of its disordered state? And does not the letter of Scripture show, that out of this darkness and waters, and state of the deep, the Spirit and Light of God entering into them, brought forth the earth, the stars, the sun, and all the elements, into a form of a new world?

To ask for a particular text of Scripture, saying in so many express words, that the place of this world is the very place and extent of the kingdom of the fallen angels, is quite ridiculous, and without the least ground in reason, as is enough shown in the Appeal. For does not our Lord expressly call the devil, a prince of this world? But how could this name belong to him, but because he is here in his own first region and territories, and has still some power, till all the evil that he has raised in it, shall be entirely separated from it? For was not this world raised out of the materials of the fallen angels’ kingdom, and was not the wrath, and fire, and darkness of their fall, still in some degree remaining in every part of this world, they could have no more power in it, than they have in heaven; they must be as entirely incapable of seeing or entering into it, as they are of seeing or entering into the kingdom of heaven: for they have nothing but evil in their nature; they can touch nothing, move nothing, see nothing, feel nothing, taste nothing, act in nothing, but that very evil, darkness, fire, and wrath, and disorder, which they first awakened and kindled both in themselves, and their kingdom. And therefore it is a truth of the utmost certainty, that they can be nowhere, but where there is something of that evil still subsisting which they brought forth. And this may pass for demonstration

(if there be any such thing) that the Scriptures themselves demonstrate the place of this world, to be the very place and region in which the angels fell. And they still are here, because their kingdom is not wholly delivered from all the evil they had raised in it, but is to stand for a time, only in a state of recovery, where they themselves must see, in spite of all the rage and malice of their fiery darts, that the mystery of a Lamb of God, born upon earth, will raise creatures of flesh and blood, amidst the ruins of their spoiled kingdom, to be an host of angels in heaven restored, and themselves plunged into an hell, that is cut off from everything, but their own wrath, fire, and darkness. And all this, Academicus, to make it known through all the regions of eternity, that pride can degrade the highest angels into devils, and humility raise fallen flesh and blood to the thrones of angels. This, this is the great end of God's raising a new creation, out of a fallen kingdom of angels; for this end it stands in its state of war, a war betwixt the fire and pride of fallen angels, and the meekness and humility of the Lamb of God: it stands its thousands of years in this strife, that the last trumpet may sound this great truth, through all the heights and depths of eternity, "That evil can have no beginning, but from pride; nor any end, but from humility."

Oh Academicus, what a blindness there is in the world! What a strife is there amongst mankind about religion, and yet almost all seem to be afraid of that, in which alone is salvation!

Poor mortals! What is the one wish and desire of your hearts? What is it that you call happiness, and matter of rejoicing? Is it not when everything about you helps you to stand upon higher ground, gives full nourishment to self-esteem, and gratifies every pride of life? And yet life itself is the loss of everything, unless pride be overcome. Oh stop a while in contemplation of this great truth. It is a truth as unchangeable as God; it is written and spoken through all nature; heaven and earth, fallen angels, and redeemed men, all bear witness to it. The truth is: pride must die in you, or nothing of heaven can live in you. Under the banner of this truth, give up yourselves to the meek and humble Spirit of the holy Jesus, the overcomer of all fire, and pride, and wrath. This is the one way, the one truth, and the one life. There is no other open door into the sheepfold of God. Everything else is the working of the devil in the fallen nature of man. Humility must sow the seed, or there can be no reaping in heaven. Look

not at pride only as an unbecoming temper; not at humility only as a decent virtue; for the one is death, and the other is life; the one is hell, and the other is all heaven.

So much as you have of pride, so much you have of the fallen angel alive in you; so much you have of true humility; so much you have of the Lamb of God within you. Could you see with your eyes that every stirring of pride does to your soul, you would beg of everything you meet, to tear the viper from you, though with the loss of an hand, or an eye. Could you see what a sweet, divine, transforming power there is in humility, what an heavenly water of life it gives to the fiery breath of your soul, how it expels the poison of your fallen nature, and makes room for the Spirit of God to live in you, you would rather wish to be the footstool of all the world, than to want the smallest degree of it. Excuse, Academicus, this little digression, if it be such, for the subject we were upon, forced me into it.

Academicus. Indeed, sir, the lesson you have here given, is the same that the whole nature of the fall of angels, and the whole nature of the redemption of man, daily reads to every creature; and he, who alone can redeem the world, has plainly shown us, wherein the life and spirit of our redemption must consist, when he saith, “Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.” Now if this lesson is unlearned, we must be said to have left our master, as those disciples did, “who went back, and walked no more with him.” But if you please, Theophilus, we will now break off till the afternoon.

Theophilus. Give me leave first, Academicus, but just to mention one point more, to show you still further, how unreasonably your friends object to the Appeal the want of the plain letter of Scripture. Now let it be supposed, that the account of the fall of angels, the creation, etc., given in the Appeal, has not Scripture enough; take then the contrary opinion, which is that of your friends; viz., that all worlds, and all things, are created out of nothing.

Show me now, Academicus, I do not say a text, but the least hint of Scripture, that by all the art of commenting, can so much as be drawn to look that way. It is a fiction, big with the grossest absurdities, and contrary to everything that we know, either from nature or Scripture,

concerning the rise and birth, and nature of things, that have begun to be. Adam was not created out of nothing; for the letter of Moses tells us in the plainest words, out of what he was created or formed, both as to his inward, and his outward nature. It tells us also as expressly out of what, Eve, the next creature, was created. But from the time of Adam and Eve, the creation of every human creature is a birth out of its parents' body and soul, or whole nature. And to show us how all things, or worlds, as well as all living creatures, are not created out of nothing, St. Paul appeals to this very account, that Moses gives of the woman's being formed out of the man; but "all things" (says he) "are out of God." Here this fiction of a creation out of nothing, is by the plain and open letter of Scripture, absolutely removed from the whole system of created things, or things which begin to be; for St. Paul's doctrine is, that all things come into being, out of God, in the same reality, as the woman was formed or created out of man. So again, "There is to us but one God, out of whom are all things": for so you know the Greek should be translated, not "of," but "out of" God; not "of," but "out of" the man. The fiction therefore, which I speak of, is not only without but expressly contrary to, the plain letter of Scripture. For everything that we see, every creature that has life, is by the Scripture-account a birth from something else. And here, sir, you are to take notice of a maxim that is not deniable, that the reason why anything proceeds from a birth, is the reason why everything must do so. For a birth would not be in nature, but because birth is the only procedure of nature. Nature itself is a birth from God, the first manifestation of the hidden, inconceivable God, and is so far from being out of nothing, that it is the manifestation of all that in God, which was before unmanifest. As nature is the first birth, or manifestation of God, or discovery of the divine powers, so all creatures are the manifestation of the powers of nature, brought into a variety of births, by the will of God, out of nature. The first creatures that are the nearest to the Deity, are out of the highest powers of nature, by the will of God, willing that nature should be manifested in the rise and birth of creatures out of it. Nature, directed and governed by the wisdom of God, goes on in the birth of one thing, out of another. The spiritual materiality of heaven brings forth the bodies, or heavenly flesh and blood of angels, as the materiality of this world brings forth the birth of gross flesh and blood. The spiritual materiality of heaven, so far as the extent of the kingdom of fallen angels reached, has by various changes

occasioned by their fall, gone through a variety of births, or creations, till some of it came down to the thickness of air and water, and the hardness of earth and stones. But when things have stood in this state their appointed time, the last purifying fire, kindled by God, will take away all thickness, hardness, and darkness, and bring all the divided things and elements of this world back again, to be that first glassy sea, or heavenly materiality, in which the throne of God is set, as was seen by St. John, in the revelation made to him.

But the fiction of the creation out of nothing, is not only contrary to the letter and spirit of the Scripture-account of the rise and birth of things, but is in itself full of the grossest absurdities, and horrid consequences. It separates everything from God, it leaves no relation between God and the creature, nor any possibility for any power, virtue, quality, or perfection of God, to be in the creature: for if it is created out of nothing, it cannot have something of God in it. But I here stop: for, as you know, we have agreed, if God permit, to have hereafter one day's entire conversation on the nature and end of the writings of Jacob Behmen, and the right use and manner of reading them, as preparatory to a new edition of his works, so this and some other points shall be adjourned to that time. In the afternoon, we will proceed only on such matters, as may further set the Christian redemption in its true and proper light before your friend Humanus.

Academicus. I am very glad, Theophilus, that I have mentioned these objections to you, though they were of no weight with me, since you have thereby had an occasion of giving so full an answer to them. The matter stands now in this plain and easy point of light.

In the Appeal we have a system of uniform truths, concerning the fall of angels, their spoiled and darkened kingdom, and the creation of this world as raised out of it. We have the creation and fall of man, his regeneration, and the manner of it, all opened and explained according to the letter and tenor of Scripture, from their deepest ground, in such manner, as to give light and clearness into all the articles of the Christian faith; to expel all difficulties and absurdities that had crept into it; and the whole scheme of our redemption is proved to be absolutely necessary, both from Scripture, and all that is seen and known in nature and creature.

On the other hand, the opinion which is, and must be received, if the account in the Appeal is rejected, appears to be a fiction, that has no sense, no reason, no fact, no appearance in nature, nor one single letter of Scripture, to support it, but stands in the utmost contrariety to all that the Scripture saith of the creation of everything, and is in itself full of the grossest absurdities, raising darkness and difficulties in all parts of religion, that can never be removed from it. For a creation that has nothing of God in it, can explain nothing that relates to God: for a creation out of nothing, has no better sense in it, than a creation into nothing. My friends, for this time, adieu.

The end of the first dialogue.

The Second Dialogue

Theophilus. Let us now speak of Adam in his first perfection, created by God to be a Lord and ruler of the new-created world, to people it with an host of angelic men, till time had finished its course, and all things were fitted to be restored to that state, from which they were fallen by the revolt of angels.

For the restoration of all things to their first glorious state, by making the good to overcome evil, was the end which God proposed by the state and manner of this new creation.

Adam was the chosen instrument of God, to conduct this whole affair, to keep up this new-made world in the state in which God had created it, not to till the earth, which we now plow, but to keep that, which is now called the curse of the earth, covered, hid, and overcome, by that paradise in which he was created. For this end, he was created in a twofold nature, of the powers of heaven, and the powers of this world. Inwardly, he had the celestial body and soul of an angel, and he had this angelic nature united to a life and body taken from the stars and elements of this outward world. As paradise overcame, and concealed all the wrath of the stars and elements, and kept that evil, which is called the curse, from being known or felt, so Adam's angelic, heavenly nature, which was the paradise of God within him, kept him quite ignorant of the properties of that earthly nature that was under it. He knew, and saw, and felt nothing in himself, but a birth of paradise, that is, a life, light, and spirit of heaven: for he had no difference from an angel in heaven, but that this world was joined to him, and put under his feet. And this was done, because he was created by God to be the restoring angel, to do all that in this outward world, which God would have to be done in it, before it could be restored to its first state. And therefore he must have the nature of all this world in him, because he was to act in it, and upon it, as its restoring angel; and yet with such distinction from it, with such power upon it, and over it, as the light has upon and over darkness. Does not now the whole spirit of the Scriptures consent to this account of Adam's first perfection? Do not all the chief points of our redemption demand this perfection in Adam unfallen? How

else could his fall bring on the necessity of the gospel-redemption of a new birth from above, of the Word and Holy Spirit of God? For had he not had this perfection of nature at first, his redemption could not have consisted in the revival of this birth and perfection in him. For had it been something less than the loss of an angelic and heavenly life, that had happened to him by his fall, had it been only some evil, that related to a life of this world, nothing else but some remedy from this world, could have been his redemption. But since it is the corner-stone of the gospel, that nothing less than the eternal Word, which was man's creator, could be his redeemer, and that by a new birth from above, it is a demonstration, that he was at first created an angel, born from above, and such a partaker of the divine life, as the angels are; and that his fall was a real death or extinction of his angelic life.

Now the letter of Moses is express for this first perfection of Adam. God said, "Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness." How different is this from the creation of the animals of this world? What can you think or say higher of an angel? Or what perfection can an angel have, but that of being in the image and after the likeness of God? But now what an absurdity would it be, to hold that Adam was created in the image and likeness of God, and yet had not in him so much as the image an likeness of an angel? Again, was not paradise lost, was not evil and the curse awakened in all the elements, as soon as Adam fell? And does not this prove, beyond all contradiction, that Adam was created by God, as I said above, to be the restoring angel; to have power over all the outward world; to keep all its evil from being known or felt; till the fall of angels from heaven had been repaired by a race of angelic men born on earth? But how could he do, and be all this, for which he was created by God, how could he keep up the life of heaven and paradise in himself, and this new world, unless the life of heaven had been his own life? Or how could he be the father of an offspring that were to have no evil, nor so much as the knowledge of what was good and evil in this world? Could anything but an heavenly man bring forth an heavenly offspring? Or could he be said to have the life of this world opened in him in his creation, who was to bring forth a race of beings, insensible of the good and evil in this world? For everything that has the life of this world opened in it, is under an absolute necessity of knowing and feeling its good and evil.

Secondly, that Adam, when he first entered into the world, had the nature and perfection of an angel, is further plain from Moses, who tells us, that he was made at first both male and female in one person; and that Eve, or the female part of him, was afterwards taken out of him. Now this union of the male and female in him, was the purity, or virgin perfection of his life, and is the very perfection of the angelic nature. This we are assured of from our Lord himself, who, in answer to the question of the Sadducees, said unto them, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, and the power of God; for in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven.” Or, as in St. Luke, “for they are equal to the angels of God.” Here we have a twofold proof of the angelic perfection of Adam: (1) Because we are told, that that state in which he was created, neither male nor female, but with both natures in his one person, is the very nature and perfection of the angels of God in heaven. (2) Because everyone who shall have a part in this resurrection, shall then have this angelic perfection again; to be no more male or female, or a part of the humanity, but such perfect, complete, undivided creatures, as the angels of God are. But now this perfection could not belong to the humanity after the resurrection, but because it belonged to the first man before his fall: for nothing will be restored, but that which was first lost; nothing rise again, but that which should not have died; nor anything be united, but that which should not have been parted. The short is this: man is at last to have a nature equal to that of the angels. This equality consists in this, that as they have, so the humanity will have, both male and female nature in one person.

But the humanity was thus created first, male and female in one person, therefore the humanity had at first a nature and perfection equal to that of the angels. Thus is the letter of Moses much more plain for the angelic perfection of Adam in his creation, than it is for the resurrection of the dead; and yet we have our Lord’s word for it, that Moses sufficiently proved the resurrection of the dead. What say you, Academicus, to this matter?

Academicus. I will here just mention what my good old tutor says: The author of the Appeal, says he, founds all his scheme of regeneration or redemption on a supposed threefold life, in which Adam was created. His sole proof of this threefold life is taken from this text of Moses: “God

breathed into man the breath of lives, and man became a living soul.” From this phrase, “the breath of lives,” the Appeal, without any authority from the text, observes thus; “Here the highest, and most divine original is not darkly, but openly, absolutely, and in the strongest form of expression, ascribed to the soul,” etc. A vain assertion, says my tutor; for the breath of life or lives is used by Moses only as a phrase for animal life. This is plainly seen, Genesis 7:21. “And all flesh died,” all in “whose nostrils was the breath of lives.”

Behold, says he, the very phrase, which the Appeal takes to be so full a proof of the high dignity, and threefold life of God in the soul, here made us of to denote the life of every kind of animal. And therefore, says he, if this phrase proves the soul of Adam to be a mirror of the Holy Trinity, it proves the same of every breath in the nostrils of every creature.

Theophilus. To make short work, Academicus, with your tutor’s confutation, as he thinks, of the capital doctrine of the Appeal, I shall only quote the whole period, as it stands in the Appeal. “God breathed into him the breath of lives (*spiraculum vitarum*) and man became a living soul. Here,” says the Appeal, “the notion of a soul, created out of nothing, is in the plainest, strongest manner, rejected by the first written Word of God; and no Jew or Christian can have the least excuse for falling into such an error: here the highest and most divine original is not darkly, but openly, absolutely ascribed to the soul. It came forth as a breath of life, or lives, out of, and from the mouth of God; and therefore did not come out of the womb of nothing, but is what it is, and has what it has in itself, from, and out of, the first and highest of all beings.” Here, Academicus, behold the falseness and weakness of your tutor’s observation. The Appeal, as you plainly see, proves only from the text of Moses, the high original of the soul; and only for this reason, because it is the breath of God, breathed into man. The Appeal makes no use of the expression, “breath of lives,” takes no notice of it, deduces nothing from it, but solely considers the act of God, as breathing the spirit of the soul from himself; and from this act of God, the high birth and dignity of the soul is most justly affirmed. And the Appeal makes this observation solely to prove, that the soul is not created out of nothing. This is the one, sole, open, and declared intent of the Appeal, in all this paragraph. But your tutor, overlooking all this, though nothing else is there, makes the author of the Appeal to affirm the

threefold life of God in the soul, merely from the phrase of the “breath of lives,” when there is not one single word about it. For the Appeal not only has not the least hint in this place of any such matter, to be proved from the “breath of lives,” but through the whole book there is not the smallest regard paid to this expression, nor any agreement ever deduced from it. How strange is all this in your good old tutor!

The matter is plainly this; the author of the Appeal looks wholly to the action of God, breathing his own Spirit into Adam; and from this breathing, he justly affirms the divine nature of the soul; all his argument is deduced from thence. Now if your tutor, or anyone else, could show, that God breathed his own Spirit into every animal, and with this intent, that it might come forth in his own image and likeness, then the distinction and high birth of the soul, pleaded for by the Appeal, would indeed be lost. But till then, the Appeal must, and therefore will forever, stand unconfuted in its assertion of the dignity and divine birth of the soul.

Again; behold, Academicus, a still further weakness chargeable upon your tutor. You have seen, that his reasoning upon the “breath of lives,” is meddling with something that the Appeal meddles not with, makes no account of: but your tutor has conjured it up for his own use; and yet see what a poor use he makes of it. He affirms that Moses uses only the “breath of lives,” as a phrase for animal life. How does he prove this? Why, truly from this reason, because Moses uses the same phrase when he speaks of the lives of all animals.

Now does not every Englishman know, that we make use of the same four letters of the alphabet, when we say the “life” of a man, the “life” of a beast, and the “life” of a plant? That we use the same five letters, when we say the “death” of a man, the “death” of a beast, and the “death” of a plant? But will it thence follow, that the life and death of men, and beasts, and plants, are of the same nature and degree, and have the same good and evil in them? Yet this is full as well, as to conclude, that the breath of life in man, and the breath of life in animals, is of the same nature and degree, has the same goodness and excellence in it, because the same words, made up of the same letters, express them both. Your tutor therefore, Academicus, and not the author of the Appeal, is the person that reasons weakly from the phrase of “the breath of lives”: for that author never so

much as offers to argue from it. His proof of the threefold life of God in the soul, so far as it is deduced from the text of Moses, lies wholly in this; that it is the breath and Spirit of the triune God, breathed forth from this triune Deity into man. This, sure, is no small proof of its having the triune nature of God in it. And this threefold life of the soul, thus plainly deducible from the letter of Moses, is shown to be absolutely certain, from every chief doctrine and institution, nay, from the whole nature of our redemption: and all the gospel is shown to set its seal to this great truth, the threefold life of God in the soul. Nay, everything in nature, fire, and light, and air; everything that we know of angels, of devils, of the animal life of this world; are all in the plainest and strongest manner, from the beginning to the end of the Appeal, made so many proofs of the threefold life of the triune God in the soul. Thus says the Appeal; “No omnipotence can make you a partaker of the life of this outward world, without having the life of this outward world born in your own creaturely being”; the fire, and light, and air of this world, must have their birth in your own creaturely being, or you cannot possibly live in, or have a life from outward nature. And therefore no omnipotence can make you a partaker of the beatific life, or presence of the Holy Trinity, unless that life stands in the same triune state within you, as it does without you. Again: search to eternity, says the Appeal, why no devil or beast can possibly enter into heaven, and there can only this one reason be assigned for it, because neither of them have the triune holy life of God in them. But enough of this mistake of your good old tutor. Rusticus will I am afraid chide you for being the occasion of this long digression from the point we were speaking to.

Rusticus. Truly, sir, I do not know what to make of these great scholars; they seem to have more love for the shadow of an objection, than for the most substantial truths. I think I here see a great reason, why our savior chose poor and illiterate fishermen to be his apostles. St. Paul was the only man that had some learning, and he was a persecutor of Christ, till such time as God made as it were scales to fall from his eyes; and then he became a powerful apostle. But let us return to your account of the first created perfection of man, and the degree of his falling from it. It is one of the best doctrines that I ever heard in my life. It not only stirs up everything that is good, and makes me hate everything that is evil, in me;

but it gives so good a sense, so sound a meaning to every mystery of the gospel, that it makes everything our savior has done for us, and everything he requires of us, to be equally necessary and beneficial to us. But suppose now our fall not to be a change of nature, not a death to our first life, but only a single sin or mistake in the first man; what a difficulty is there in supposing so great a scheme of redemption to set right a single mistake in one single creature? Again, what could man have to do with angels and heaven, if he had not, at his creation, had the nature of heaven and angels in him? But pray, sir, begin again just where you left off.

Theophilus. I was indeed, Rusticus, at that time just going to say, that Adam had lost much of his first perfection before his Eve was taken out of him; which was done to prevent worse effects of his fall, and to prepare a means for his recovery, when his fall should become total, as it afterwards was, upon the eating of the earthly tree of good and evil.

“It is not good that man should be alone,” saith the Scripture: this shows, that Adam had altered his first state, had brought some beginning of evil into it, and had made that not to be good, which God saw to be good, when he created him. And therefore as a less evil, and to prevent a greater, God divided the first perfect human nature into two parts, into a male and a female creature; and this, as you shall see by and by, was a wonderful instance of the love and care of God towards this new humanity. It was at first, the total humanity in one creature, who should in that state of perfection, have brought forth his own likeness out of himself, in such purity of love, and such divine power, as he himself was brought forth by God: the manner of his own birth from God, was the manner that his own offspring should have had a birth from him; all done by the pure power of a divine love. Man stood no longer in the perfection of his first state, as a birth of divine love, than whilst he loved himself only as God loved him, as in the image, and after the likeness of God. This purity of love, and delight in the image of God, would have carried on the birth of the humanity, in the same manner, and by the same divine power, as the first man was brought forth: for it was only a continuation of the same generating love that gave birth to the first man. But Adam turned away his love from the divine image, which he should only have loved, and desired to propagate out of himself. He gazed upon this outward world, and let in an adulterate love into his heart, which desired to know the life that was in

this world. This impure desire brought the nature of this world into him. His first love and divine power, had no strength left in it; it was no longer a power of bringing forth a divine birth from himself. His first virginity was lost by an adulterate love, which had turned its desire into this world. This state of inability, is that which is called his falling into a deep sleep: and in this sleep, God divides this overcome humanity into a male and female.

The first step therefore towards the redemption or recovery of man, beginning to fall, was the taking his Eve out of him, that so he might have a second trial in paradise; in which if he failed, another effectual redeemer might arise out of the seed of the woman. Oh my friends, what a wonderful procedure is there to be seen in the divine providence, turning all evil, as soon as it appears, into a further display and opening of new wonders of the wisdom and love of God! Look back to the first evil, which the fall of angels brought forth. The darkness, wrath, and fire, of fallen nature, were immediately taken from them, and turned into a new creation, where those apostate angels were to see all the evil that they had raised in their kingdom, turned against them, and made the ground of a new race of beings, which were to possess those thrones which they had lost. Look now at Adam brought into the world in such angelic nature, as he, and all his redeemed sons, will have after the resurrection; an angel at first, and an angel at last; with time, and misery, and sin, and death, and hell, all of them felt, and all overcome betwixt the two glorious extremes. When this first human angel, through a false, impure love, lost the divine power of generating his own likeness out of himself, God took part of his nature from him, that so the eye of his desire, which was turned to the life of this world, might be directed to that part of his nature which was taken from him. And this is the reason of my saying before, that this was chosen as a less evil, and to avoid a greater; for it was a less degree of falling from his first perfection, to love the female part of his own divided nature, than to turn his love towards that, which was so much lower than his own nature. And thus, at that time, Eve was an help, that was truly and properly meet for him, since he had lost his first power of being himself the parent of an angelic offspring, and stood with a longing eye, looking towards the life of this world.

But the most glorious effect of this division into male and female is yet to come. For when Adam and Eve had joined in the eating of the tree of good and evil, and so were totally fallen from God and paradise, into the misery and slavery of the bestial life of this world; when this greatest of all evils had thus happened to these two divided parts of the humanity; when all the angel was lost, and nothing but a shameful, frightened animal of this world, was to be seen in this divided male and female; then in, and by, and through this division, did God open and establish the glorious scheme of an universal redemption to these fallen creatures, and all their offspring, by the mysterious seed of the woman.

Had Adam stood in his first state of perfection, as a birth of divine love, and loving only the divine image and likeness in himself, this love would have been itself the fruitful parent of an holy offspring; no Eve had been taken out of him, nor any male or female ever known in human nature: all his posterity had been in him secured, and the earthly tree of good and evil had never been seen in paradise. But though he lost this first generating power of divine love, and stood as a barren tree, yet seeing God's purpose of raising an offspring, God took from him that, which is called the female part of his nature, that by this means, both a posterity, and a savior, might proceed from him: for through this division of man, God would, in a wonderful manner, do that which Adam should have done, before he was divided.

For out of this female part, and after the fall, God would raise, without the help of Adam, that same glorious angelic man, which Adam should have brought forth before and without his Eve; which glorious man is therefore called the second Adam:

1. As having in his humanity that very perfection, which the first Adam had in his creation.
2. Because he was to do all that for mankind, by a birth of redemption from him, which they should have had by a birth of nature from Adam, had he kept his first state of perfection.

What say you, Academicus, to all this?

Academicus. Truly, sir, there seems to be so much light, and truth, and Scripture, for all this account that you have given of these matters, as must

even force one to consent to it. But then all our systems of divinity, to which learned men are chained, are quite silent of these matters. I never before heard of this gradual fall of Adam, nor this angelic state of his first creation, and power of bringing forth his own offspring, and therefore can hardly believe it so strongly as I would, and as the truth seems to demand of me.

Rusticus. Pray, sir, let me speak to Academicus: he seems to be so hampered with learning, that I can hardly be sorry, that I am not a great scholar.

Can anything be more punctually related in Scripture than the gradual fall of Adam? Do not you see, that he was created first with both natures in him? Is it not expressly told you, that Eve was not taken out of him, till such time as it was not good for him to be as he then was, and yet God saw that it was good when he created him? Is it not plain therefore, that he had fallen from the goodness of his first creation, and therefore his fall was not at once, nor total, till his eating of the earthly tree? Again, as to his being an angel at his first creation, because of both natures in him, is it not sufficiently plain from his being designed to be an angel of the same nature at last, in the resurrection? For this is an axiom that cannot be shaken, that nothing can rise higher, than its first created nature; and therefore an angel at last, must have been an angel at first. Do you think it possible for an ox in tract of time to be changed into a rational philosopher? Yet this is as possible, as for a man that has only by his creation the life of this world in him, to be changed into an angel of heaven. The life of this world can reach no further than this world; no omnipotence of God can carry it further; and therefore, if man is to be an angel at the last, and have the life of heaven in him, he must of all necessity, in his creation, have been created an angel, and had his life kindled from heaven; because no creature can possibly have any other life, or higher degree of life, than that which his creation brought forth in him.

Theophilus. Marvel not, Academicus, at that which has been said of the first power of Adam, to generate in a divine manner an holy offspring, by the power of that divine love which gave birth to himself; for he was born of that love for no other end, than to multiply births of it; and whilst his love continued to be one with that love, which brought him into being,

nothing was impossible to it. For love is the great creating fiat that brought forth everything, that is distinct from God, and is the only working principle that stirs, and effects everything that is done in nature and creature. Love is the principle of generation from the highest to the lowest of creatures; it is the first beginning of every seed of life; everything has its form from it; everything that is born is born in the likeness, and with the fruitfulness, of that same love that generates and bears it; and this is its own seed of love within itself, and is its power of fructifying in its kind.

Love is the holy, heavenly, magic power of the Deity, the first fiat of God; and all angels, and eternal beings, are the first births of it. The Deity delights in beholding the ideal images, which rise up and appear in the mirror of his own eternal wisdom. This delight becomes a loving desire to have living creatures in the form of these ideas; and this loving desire is the generating heavenly parent, out of which angels, and all eternal beings are born. Every birth in nature is a consequence of this first prolific love of the Deity, and generates from that which began the first birth. Hence it is, that through all the scale of beings, from the top to the bottom of nature, love is the one principle of generation of every life; and everything generates from the same principle, and by the same power, by which itself was generated. Marvel not therefore, my friend, that Adam, standing in the power of his first birth, should have a divine power of bringing forth his own likeness. But I must now tell you, that the greatest proof of this glorious truth is yet to come: for I will show you that all the gospel bears witness to that heavenly birth, which we should have had from Adam alone. This birth from Adam is still the one purpose of God, and must be the one way of all those, that are to rise with Christ to an equality with the angels of God. All must be children of Adam; for all that are born of man and woman, must lay aside this polluted birth, and be born again of a second Adam, in that same perfection of an holy angelic nature, which they should have had from the first Adam, before his Eve was separated from him. For it is an undeniable truth of the gospel, that we are called to a new birth, different in its whole nature, from that which we have from man and woman, or there is no salvation; and therefore it is certain from the gospel, that the birth which we have from Adam, divided into male and female, is not the birth that we should have had, because it is the one reason, why we are under a necessity of being born again of a birth from a

second Adam, who is to generate us again in that purity and divine power, in and by which we should have been born of the first angelic Adam.

A divine love in the first and holy Adam, united with the love of God, willing him to be the father of an holy offspring, was to have given birth to a race of creatures from him. But Adam fulfilled not this purpose of God; he awakened in himself a false love, and so all his offspring were forced to be born of man and woman, and thereby to have such impure flesh and blood as cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. Is not this proof enough, that this birth from Adam and Eve is not the first birth that we should have had? Will anyone say, How could Adam have such a power to bring from a birth in such a spiritual way, and so contrary to the present state of nature? The whole nature of the gospel is a full answer to this question. For are we not all to be born again in the same spiritual way, and are we not, merely by a spiritual power, to have a birth of heavenly flesh and blood? The strangeness of such a power in the first Adam, is only just so strange, and hard to be believed, as the same power in the second Adam; who is called the second Adam for no other reason, but because he stands in the place of the first, and is to do that, which the first should have done. And therefore our having from him a new heavenly flesh and blood raised in us by a spiritual power, superior to the common way of birth in this world, is the strongest of proofs, that we should have been born of Adam in the same spiritual power, and so contrary to the birth of animals into this world. For all that we have from the second Adam, is a proof that we should have had the same from Adam the first: a divine love in Adam the first, was to have brought forth an holy offspring. A divine faith now takes its place, in the second birth, and is to generate a new birth from the second Adam, is to eat his flesh, and drink his blood, by the same divine power, by which we should have had a birth of the angelic flesh and blood of our first parent. Thus, Academicus, is this birth from Adam alone no whimsy, or fiction, or fine-spun notion, but the very birth that the gospel absolutely requires, as the substance of our redemption. There is no room to deny it, without denying the whole nature of our redemption. One the other hand, the birth that we have from Adam divided into male and female, is through all Scripture declared to be the birth of misery, of shame, of pollution, of sinful flesh and blood; and is only a ground and reason, why we must be born again of other flesh and blood, before we can

enter the kingdom of heaven. This truth therefore, that we were to have had an heavenly birth from Adam, depends not upon this, or that particular text of Scripture, but is affirmed by the whole nature of our redemption, and the whole spirit of Scripture, representing our birth from this world as shameful, as that of the wild ass's colt, and calling for a new birth from above, as absolutely necessary, if man is to have a place among the angels of God. And therefore it may be affirmed, that so sure as it is from Scripture, that Christ is become our second Adam, to help us to such a birth, so sure is it from Scripture, that we should have had the same birth from our first parent, who, if not fallen, could have wanted no redeemer of his offspring, and therefore must have brought forth that same birth, which we have from Christ, but could not have from the birth of man and woman. I shall now only just mention to you a passage much to the matter in hand, taken from the second epistle of St. Clemens, a bishop of Rome, who lived in the very time of the apostles. He relates, that Christ being asked, when his kingdom should come, gave this answer: "When two things shall become one, and that which is outward be as that which is inward, the male with the female, and neither man nor woman." There wants no comment here: I shall only observe, that the meaning of the words, "When that which is outward shall be as that which is inward," seems plainly to be this, when the outward life or birth is come to be as the inward angelic life is, then the birth will be one, the male and female in one, and then the kingdom of God is come. These words were in the next century quoted by Clemens of Alexandria, though with some alteration. The same author also relates another answer given by our Lord, to much the same question, put by Salome, where our Lord's answer was thus: "When ye shall have put off, or away, the garment of shame and ignominy, and when two shall become one, the male and the female united, and neither man nor woman." The garment of shame and ignominy, is plainly that clothing of flesh and blood, at the sight of which both Adam and Eve were ashamed.

Academicus. I am fully satisfied, Theophilus, with the account you have given of the first perfection, and divine state of our first parent. And I think nothing can be plainer, than that we were to have been born of him to the same heavenly birth, which we now are to receive from Christ, our second Adam. But I must still say, that I am afraid, your critical

adversaries will here find some pretense, to charge you with a tendency, at least, to that heresy, which held marriage to be unlawful, since you here hold that it came in by Adam's falling from his first perfection.

Theophilus. I own, my friend, that there is no knowing when one is safe from men of that stamp. But as for me my eye is only upon truth; and wherever that leads, there I follow; they, if they please, may persecute it with objections. Here is not the least pretense for the charge you speak of: for here is no more condemnation of marriage, as unlawful, than there is a condemnation of God, for keeping up the state, and life of this world. The continuation of the world, though fallen, is a glorious proof and instance of the goodness of God, that so a race of new-born angels may be brought forth in it. Happy therefore is it, that we have such a world as this to be born into, since we are only born, to be born again to the life of heaven. Now marriage has the nature of this fallen world; but it is God's appointed means of raising the seed of Adam to its full number. Honorable therefore is marriage in our fallen state, and happy is it for man to derive his life from it, as it helps him to a power of being eternally a son of God.

Nor does this original of marriage cast the smallest reflection upon the sex, as if they brought all, or any impurity into the human nature. No, by no means. The impurity lies in the division, and that which caused it, and not in either of the divided parts. And the female part has this distinction, though not to boast of, yet to take comfort in, that the savior of the world is called the seed of the woman, and had his birth only from the female part of our undivided nature. But Rusticus, I see, wants to speak.

Rusticus. Indeed, sir, I do. But it is only to observe to you, what a system of solid, harmonious, and great truths are here opened to our view, by this consideration of the first angelic state of Adam, and his falling from it into an earthly animal life of this world; created at first an human angel, with an host of angels in his loins, and then falling from this state, with this particular circumstance, that he had not only undone himself, but had also involved an innocent, and almost numberless posterity in the same misery, who now must all be born of him in his fallen condition. Thus looking at this creation of so noble and high a creature, and his fall, as introducing so extensive a train of misery, how worthy of God, how becoming a love and wisdom that are infinite, does all the stupendous

mystery of our redemption appear! It was to restore an angel, big with an angelic offspring, an angel that God had created to carry on the great work of his new creation, to bring time with all its conquests back into eternity, an angel in whom, and with whom, were fallen an innocent, numberless posterity, that had not yet begun to breathe.

What a sense and reasonableness does this state of things give to all those passages of Scripture, which bring a God incarnate from heaven, to remedy this sad scene of misery, that was opened on earth! What less than God, could awaken again the dead angelic life! What less than God's entering into the human birth itself, and becoming one of it, and with it, could generate again the life of God in every human birth? The Scripture saith, "God so loved the world"; "God spared not his only Son": "Christ laid down his life for us"; etc. How glorious a sense is there in all these sayings, when it is considered, that all this was done for so high and divine a creature, created by God for such great ends, and full of a posterity, that was to have filled an heaven restored? In this light, every part of our redemption gives a glory, a wisdom, and goodness to God, which far surpasses every other view we can possibly take of them: whereas if you lessen this angelic dignity of the first man, if you suppose his fall to be less than that of falling, with all his posterity, from an angelic life, into the earthly, animal life of this world, slaves to sin and misery, all the fabric of our redemption is full of such wonders, as can only be wondered at. Thus, if you consider this world, and man its highest inhabitant made out of nothing, and with only the breath of this earthly life breathed into his nostrils, what is there to call for this great redemption from heaven?

Again, if you consider the fall of man, only as a single act of disobedience to a positive, arbitrary command of God, this is to make all the consequences of his fall inexplicable. For had the first sin been only a single act of disobedience, it had been more worthy of pardon, than any other sin, merely because it was the first, and by a creature that had as yet no experience. But to make the first single act of disobedience, not only unpardonable, but the cause of such a curse and variety of misery entailed upon all his posterity, from the beginning to the end of time; and to suppose, that so much wrath was raised in God at this single act of disobedience, that nothing could make an atonement for it, but the stupendous mystery of the birth, sufferings, and death, of the Son of God;

is yet further impossible to be accounted for. In this case, the supposed wrath, and goodness of God, are equally inexplicable. And from hence alone, have sprung up the detestable doctrines, about the guilt and imputation of the first sin, and the several sorts of partial, absolute elections, and reprobations, of some to eternal happiness, and others to be firebrands of hell to all eternity. Detestable may they well be called, since if Lucifer could truly say, that God from all eternity determined, and created him to be that wicked hellish creature that he is, he might then add, not unto him, but unto his creator, must all his wickedness be ascribed. How innocent, how tolerable is the error of transubstantiation, when compared with this absolute election and reprobation! It indeed cannot be reconciled to our senses and reason, but then it leaves God, and heaven, possessed of all that is holy and good; but this reprobation-doctrine, not only overlooks all sense and reason, but confounds heaven and hell, takes all goodness from the Deity, and leaves us nothing to detest in the sinner, but God's eternal irresistible contrivance to make him to be such.

But now, when we take this matter of the creation, and fall of man, as truth, and fact, and Scripture, plainly represent it, everything that can awaken in ourselves a love, and desire to be like unto God, is to be found in it. Whilst man stood in his first perfection, unturned from God, this world was under his feet; paradise was the element in which he lived; the Spirit of God was his life; the Son of God was his light; he was in the world, as much above it, and with as full distinction from it, as incapable of being hurt by it, as an angel, that only comes with a divine commission into it. The whole world was a gift, put into his hands; the standing, or fall of it was left to him; as his will and mind should work so should either paradise, or a cursed earth overcome. God, by his new creation, had so altered the wrathful state of Lucifer's fallen kingdom, that the evil that had been raised in it, was hid and overcome by the good. It was thus created, and put into this new state, for this sole end, that a human angel might keep paradise alive, and bring forth a paradisiacal host of angels, in the very place, where the fallen angels had brought forth their evil. But all these great things, depended upon Adam's conforming to the designs of God, and living in this world in such a state, as God had created him in. He could not conform to the designs of God any other way, than by the

rectitude of his will, willing that which God willed, both in the creation of him, and the world.

Whilst his will stood thus inclined, the new creation was preserved, himself was an angel, and the world a paradise. No evil would have been known either in plant, or fruit, or animal, nor could have been known, but by the declining will, and desire of man calling it forth. His first longing look towards the knowledge of the life of this world, was the first loosening of the reins of evil. It began to be earthly; hence the curse, or evil, hid in the earth, could begin to show itself, and got a power of giving forth an evil tree, whose fruit was the key to the knowledge of good and evil; a tree which could not have grown, had he willed nothing, but that which God willed in the creation of him.

He was not the creator of this bad tree, no more than he was the creator of the good trees, that grew in paradise. But as the heavenly rectitude of his will kept up the heavenly powers of paradise in the earth, so when his will began to be earthly, it opened a passage for the natural evil; that was hid in the earth, to bring forth a tree in its own likeness. The earth as now, had then a natural power of bringing forth a tree of its own nature, viz., good and evil, but paradise was that heavenly power, which hindered it from bringing forth such productions: but when the keeper of paradise turned a wish from God, and paradise, after a bad knowledge, then paradise lost some of its power, and the curse, or evil, hid in the earth, could give forth a bad tree. But see now the goodness, and compassion of God towards this mistaken creature; for no sooner had Adam, by the abuse of his power and freedom, given occasion to the birth of this evil tree, but the God of love informs him of the dreadful nature of it, commands him not to eat of it, assuring him, that death was hid in it, that death to his angelic life, would be found in the day that he should eat of it. A plain proof, if anything can be plain, that this tree came not from God, was not according to his own will and purpose towards Adam, but from such a natural power in the earth, as could not show itself, till the strong will and desire of Adam, beginning to be earthly, worked with that, which was the evil hid in the earth. But pray, Theophilus, do you now speak again.

Theophilus. The short of the matter then, my friend, is this: neither Adam, nor any other creature, has at its creation, or entrance into life, any

arbitrary trial imposed upon it by God. The natural state of every intelligent creature is its one only trial; and it cannot sin, but by departing from that nature, or falling from that state in which it was created. Adam was created an human angel in paradise, and he had no other trial but this, whether he would live in paradise, as an angel of God, insensible of the life, or the good and evil, of this earthly world. This was the tree of life, and the tree of death, that must stand before him; and the necessity of his choosing either the one, or the other, was a necessity founded in his own happy nature.

The true account therefore of the fall of Adam, is a gradual declension, or tendency of his will, from the life of paradise into the life of this world, till he was at last wholly fallen into it, and swallowed up by it. The first beginning of his lust towards this world, was the first beginning of his fall, or departure from the life of heaven and paradise; and his eating of the earthly tree, was his last and finishing step of his entrance into, and under the full power of this world. This was the true nature of his fall. On the other hand, all that we see on the part of God, is a gradual help, administered by God to this falling creature, suitable to every degree of his falling, till at last, in the fullness of his fall, an universal redeemer of him, and his posterity, was given by a second Adam, to regenerate again the whole seed of Adam the first.

Thus, the first degree of his lust towards this world had some stop put to it, by the taking his Eve out of him; that so his desire into the life of this world, might be in some measure lessened. When his lust into this world still went on, and gave occasion to the birth of the evil tree, a suitable remedy was here given by God; for God laid a prohibition upon it, and declared the death that must be received from it. When he was further so overcome by his lusting and so lost his first life, and angelic clothing, then God, even then all goodness and mercy to him, only told him of the curse and misery that was opened in nature; that himself and posterity must be sweating, laboring animals, in a fallen world, till their sickly, shameful, naked, new-gotten bodies mixed and moldered in the corruption of that earth, whose fruits they had chosen to know, instead of those of paradise.

Now all this is nothing of a penalty wrathfully inflicted by God, but was the natural state of Adam, as soon as his own lust had led him out of an

heavenly paradise, into the earthly life of this world. God brings no misery upon him, but only shows the misery that he had opened in himself, by not keeping to the state in which he was created. And no sooner had God informed this miserable pair of the state they had brought upon themselves, but, in that moment, his eternal love begins a covenant of redemption, that was to begin in them, and in and through them extend itself to all their posterity. A beginning of a new birth, called the seed of the woman, as the remains of the first breath of life, was treasured up, or preserved in the light of their life, which, as an Immanuel, or God with them, should be born in all their posterity, and be their power of becoming again such sons of God, as should fulfill the first designs of the creation of Adam, and fill heaven again with that host of angels which it had lost. Thus from the creation of Adam, through all the degrees of his fall to the mystery of his redemption, everything tells you, that God is love. Nay the very possibility of his having so great a fall, gives great glory to the goodness and love of God towards him. He was created an angel, and therefore had the highest perfection of an angel, which is a freedom of willing. Secondly. He was created to be the restoring angel of this new creation. Now these two things, which were his highest glory, and greatest marks of the divine favor, were the only possibility of his falling. Had he not had an angelic freedom of will, he could not have had a false will; had he not had all power given unto him over this world, he could not have fallen into it? It was this divine and high power over it, that opened a way for his entrance, or falling into it. Thus, Academicus, from this view of man, we come to the utmost certainty of a threefold nature or life in him.

1. He is the son of a fallen angel.
2. He is the son of a male and female of this bestial world.
3. He is a son of the Lamb of God, and has a birth of heaven again in his soul.

Hence we see also, that all that we have to fear, to hate, and renounce; all that we have to love, to desire, and pray for; is all within ourselves. No man can be miserable, but by falling a sacrifice to his own inward passions and tempers; nor anyone happy, but by overcoming himself. How ridiculous would a man seem to you, who should torment himself, because the land in America was not well tilled? Now everything that is not within you, that has not its birth and growth in your own life, is at the same

distance from you, is as foreign to your own happiness or misery, as an American story. Your life is all that you have; and nothing is a part of it, or makes any alteration in it, but the good or evil that is in the workings of your own life. Hence you may see why our savior, who, though he had all wisdom, and came to be the light of the world, is yet so short in his instructions, and gives so small a number of doctrines to mankind, whilst every moral teacher, writes volumes upon every single virtue. It is because he knew what they knew not, that our whole malady lies in this, that the will of our mind, the lust of our life, is turned into this world; and that nothing can relieve us, or set us right, but the turning the will of our mind, and the desire of our hearts to God, and that heaven which we had lost. And hence it is, that he calls us to nothing, but a total denial of ourselves, and the life of this world, and to a faith in him, as the worker of a new birth and life in us. Did we but receive his short instructions with true faith, and simplicity of heart, as the truth of God, we should not want anyone to comment or enlarge upon them. A traveler that has taken a wrong road, does not want an orator to discourse to him on the nature of roads, but to be told, in short, which is his right way. Now this is our case; it was not a number of things that brought about our fall; Adam only took up a wrong will; that will brought him, and us into our present state, or road of life; and therefore our savior uses not a number of instructions to set us right; he only tells us to renounce the false will, which brought Adam into the life of this world, and to take up that will, which should have kept him in paradise. Observe now, my friend, the great benefit that we have from the foregoing account of man's original perfection, and the nature of his fall. It opens the true ground of our religion, and the absolute necessity of it; it forces us to know, that our whole natural life is a mistaken road, and that Christ is alone our true guide out of it. It teaches us every reason for renouncing ourselves, and loving the whole nature of our redemption, as the greatest joy and desire of our hearts. We are not only compelled, as it were, to hunger after it, to run with eagerness into its arms, but are also delivered from all mistakes about it, from all the difficulties and perplexities, which divided sects and churches have brought into it. For, from this view of things, we see, not uncertainly, but with the fullest assurance, that our will, and our heart is all, that nothing else either finds or loses God; and that all our religion is only the religion of the heart. We see with open eyes, that as a spirit of longing after the life

of this world, made Adam and us to be the poor pilgrims on earth that we are, so the spirit of prayer, or the longing desire of the heart after Christ, and God, and heaven, breaks all our bonds asunder, casts all our cords from us, and raises us out of the miseries of time, into the riches of eternity. Thus seeing and knowing our first and our present state, everything calls us to prayer; and the desire of our heart becomes the spirit of prayer. And when the spirit of prayer is born in us, then prayer is no longer considered, as only the business of this or that hour, but is the continual panting or breathing of the heart after God. Its petitions are not picked out of manuals of devotion; it loves its own language, it speaks most when it says least. If you ask what its words are, they are spirit, they are life, they are love, that unite with God.

Academicus. I apprehend, sir, that what you here say of the spirit of prayer, will be taken by some people for a censure upon hours and forms of prayer; though I know you have no such meaning.

Rusticus. Pray let me speak again to Academicus: his learning seems to be always upon the watch, to find out some excuse for not receiving the whole truth. Does not Theophilus here speak of the spirit of prayer, as a state of the heart, which is become the governing principle of the soul's life? And if it is a living state of the heart, must it not have its life in itself, independent of every outward time and occasion? And yet must it not, at the same time, be that alone which disposes and fits the heart to rejoice and delight in hours, and times, and occasions of prayer? Suppose he had said, that honesty is an inward living principle of the heart, a rectitude of the mind, that has all its life and strength within itself: could this be thought to censure all times and occasions of performing outward acts of honesty? St. John saith, "If any man hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother hath need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion to him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Just so, and with the same truth, it may be said, if a man overlooks, neglects, or refuses, times and hours of prayer, how dwelleth the spirit of prayer in him? And yet, its own life and spirit is vastly superior to, independent of, and stays for no particular hours, or forms of words. And in this sense it is truly said, that it has its own language, that it wants not to pick words out of manuals of devotion, but is always speaking forth spirit and life, and love towards God. But pray, Theophilus, do you go on, as you intended.

Theophilus. I shall only add, before we pass on to another point, that, from what has been said of the first state and fall of man, it plainly follows, that the sin of all sins, or the heresy of all heresies, is a worldly spirit. We are apt to consider this temper only as an infirmity, or pardonable failure; but it is indeed the great apostasy from God and the divine life. It is not a single sin, but the whole nature of all sin, that leaves no possibility of coming out of our fallen state, till it be totally renounced with all the strength of our hearts. Every sin, be it of what kind it will, is only a branch of the worldly spirit that lives in us. "There is but one that is good," saith our Lord, "and that is God." In the same strictness of expression it must be said, there is but one life that is good, and that is the life of God and heaven. Depart in the least degree from the goodness of God, and you depart into evil; because nothing is good but his goodness.

Choose any life, but the life of God and heaven, and you choose death; for death is nothing else but the loss of the life of God. The creatures of this world have but one life, and that is the life of this world: this is their one life, and one good. Eternal beings have but one life, and one good, and that is the life of God. The spirit of the soul is in itself nothing else but a spirit breathed forth from the life of God, and for this only end, that the life of God, the nature of God, the working of God, the tempers of God, might be manifested in it. God could not create man to have a will of his own, and a life of his own, different from the life and will that is in himself; this is more impossible than for a good tree to bring forth corrupt fruit. God can only delight in his own life, his own goodness, and his own perfections; and therefore cannot love or delight, or dwell, in any creatures, but where his own goodness and perfections are to be found. Like can only unite with like, heaven with heaven, and hell with hell; and therefore the life of God must be the life of the soul, if the soul is to unite with God. Hence it is, that all the religion of fallen man, all the methods of our redemption, have only this one end, to take from us that strange and earthly life we have gotten by the fall, and to kindle again the life of God and heaven in our souls; not to deliver us from that gross and sordid vice called covetousness, which heathens can condemn, but to take the whole spirit of this world entirely from us, and that for this necessary reason, because "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father," that is, is not that life, or spirit of life,

which we had from God by our creation, “but is of this world,” (1 John 2:16) is brought into us by our fall from God into the life of this world. And therefore a worldly spirit is not to be considered, as a single sin, or as something that may consist with some real degrees of Christian goodness, but as a state of real death to the kingdom and life of God in our souls. Management, prudence, or an artful trimming betwixt God and mammon, are here all in vain; it is not only the grossness of an outward, visible, worldly behavior, but the spirit, prudence, the subtlety, the wisdom of this world, that is our separation from the life of God.

Hold this therefore, Academicus, as a certain truth, that the heresy of all heresies is a worldly spirit. It is the whole nature and misery of our fall; it keeps up the death of our souls, and, so long as it lasts, makes it impossible for us to be born again from above. It is the greatest blindness and darkness of our nature, and keeps us in the grossest ignorance both of heaven and hell. For though they are both of them within us, yet we feel neither the one, nor the other, so long as the spirit of this world reigns in us. Light and truth, and the gospel, so far as they concern eternity, are all empty sounds to the worldly spirit. His own good, and his own evil, govern all his hopes and fears; and therefore he can have no religion, or be further concerned in it, than so far as it can be made serviceable to the life of this world. Publicans and harlots are all born of the spirit of this world; but its highest birth, are the scribes, and Pharisees, and hypocrites, who turn godliness into gain, and serve God for the sake of mammon; these live, and move, and have their being, in and from the spirit of this world. Of all things therefore, my friend, detest the spirit of this world, or there is no help; you must live and die an utter stranger to all that is divine and heavenly. You will go out of the world in the same poverty and death to the divine life, in which you entered it. For a worldly, earthly spirit can know nothing of God; it can know nothing, feel nothing, taste nothing, delight in nothing, but with earthly senses, and after an earthly manner. “The natural man,” saith the apostle, “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him. He cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned”; that is, they can only be discerned by that spirit, which he has not. Now the true ground and reason of this, and the absolute impossibility for the natural man to receive and know them, how polite, and learned, and acute soever he be, is this; it is because all real

knowledge is life, or a living sensibility of the thing that is known. There is no light in the mind, but what is the light of life; so far as our life reaches, so far we understand, and feel, and know, and no further. All after this, is only the play of our imagination, amusing itself with the dead pictures of its own ideas. Now this is all that the natural man, who has not the life of God in him, can possibly do with the things of God. He can only contemplate them, as things foreign to himself, as so many dead ideas, that he receives from books, or hearsay; and so can learnedly dispute and quarrel about them, and laugh at those as enthusiasts, who have a living sensibility of them. He is only the worse for his hearsay, dead ideas of divine truths; they become a bad nourishment of all his natural tempers: he is proud of his ability to discourse about them, and loses all humility, all love of God and man, through a vain and haughty contention for them. His zeal for religion is envy and wrath; his orthodoxy is pride and obstinacy; his love of the truth is hatred and ill-will to those who dare to dissent from him. This is the constant effect of the religion of the natural man, who is under the dominion of the spirit of this world. He cannot know more of religion, nor make a better use of his knowledge, than this comes to; and all for this plain reason, because he stands at the same distance from a living sensibility of the truth, as the man that is born blind, does from a living sensibility of light. Light must first be the birth of his own life, before he can enter into a real knowledge of it. Yet so ignorant is the natural man with all his learned acuteness, that he does not so much as know, that there is, and must be, this great difference between real knowledge, and dead ideas of things; and that a man cannot know anything, any further than as his own life opens the knowledge of it in himself.

The measure of our life is the measure of our knowledge; and as the spirit of our life works, so the spirit of our understanding conceives. If our will works with God, though our natural capacity be ever so mean and narrow, we get a real knowledge of God, and heavenly truths; for everything must feel that in which it lives.

But if our will works with Satan, and the spirit of this world, let our parts be ever so bright, our imaginations ever so soaring, yet all our living knowledge, or real sensibility, can no higher or deeper, than the mysteries of iniquity, and the lusts of flesh and blood. For where our life is, there, and there only, is our understanding; and that for this plain reason, because

as life is the beginning of all sensibility, so it is and must be the bounds of it; and no sensibility can go any further than the life goes, or have any other manner of knowledge, than as the manner of its life is. If you ask what life is, or what is to be understood by it? It is in itself nothing else but a working will; and no life could be either good or evil, but for this reason, because it is a working will: every life, from the highest angel to the lowest animal, consists in a working will; and therefore as the will works, as that is with which it unites, so has every creature its degree, and kind, and manner of life; and consequently as the will of its life works, so it has its degree, and kind, and manner of conceiving and understanding, of liking and disliking. For nothing feels, or tastes, or understands, or likes, or dislikes, but the life that is in us. The spirit that leads our life, is the spirit that forms our understanding. The mind is our eye, and all the faculties of the mind see everything according to the state the mind is in. If selfish pride is the spirit of our life, everything is only seen, and felt, and known, through this glass. Everything is dark, senseless, and absurd to the proud man, but that which brings food to this spirit. He understands nothing, he feels nothing, he tastes nothing, but as his pride is made sensible of it, or capable of being affected with it. His working will, which is the life of the soul, lives and works only in the element of pride; and therefore what suits his pride, is his only good; and what contradicts his pride, is all the evil that he can feel or know. His wit, his parts, his learning, his advancement, his friends, his admirers, his successes, his conquests, all these are the only God and heaven, that he has any living sensibility of. He indeed can talk of a Scripture-God, a Scripture-Christ, and heaven; but these are only the ornamental furniture of his brain, whilst pride is the God of his heart. We are told, that "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." This is not to be understood, as if God, by an arbitrary will, only chose to deal thus with the proud and humble man. Oh no. The true ground is this, the resistance is on the part of man. Pride resisteth God, it rejects him, it turns from him; whereas humility leaves all for God, falls down before him, and opens all the doors of the heart for his entrance into it. This is the only sense, in which God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. And thus it is in the true ground and reason of every good and evil that rises up in us; we have neither good nor evil, but as it is the natural effect of the workings of our own will, either with, or against God; and God only interposes with his threatenings and instructions, to direct us to

the right use of our wills, that we may not blindly work ourselves into death, instead of life. But take now another instance like that already mentioned. Look at a man whose working will is under the power of wrath. He sees, and hears, and feels, and understands, and talks wholly from the light and sense of wrath. All his faculties are only so many faculties of wrath; and he knows of no sense or reason, but that which his enlightened wrath discovers to him. I have appealed, Academicus, to these instances, only to illustrate and confirm that great truth, which I before asserted, namely, that the working of our will, or the state of our life, governs the state of our mind, and forms the degree and manner of our understanding and knowledge; and that as the fire of our life burns, so is the light of our life kindled: and all this only to show you the utter impossibility of knowing God, and divine truths, till your life is divine, and wholly dead to the life and spirit of this world; since our light and knowledge can be no better, or higher, than the state of our life and heart is. Tell me now, do you feel the truth of all this? I say feel, because no truth is possessed, till you have a feeling and living sensibility of it.

Academicus. Oh! Sir, you have touched every string of my heart; and I now wish, with the psalmist, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might fly away, and be at rest; fly away from the spirit of this world, to be at rest in the sweet tranquillity of a life born again of God. You know, sir, that in the morning you told me of a certain first step, that all necessity must be the beginning of a spiritual life; you gave me till tomorrow to speak my mind and resolution about it. But you have now extorted my answer from me, I cannot stay a moment longer: with all the strength that I have, I turn from everything that is not God, and his holy will; with all the desire, delight, and longing of my heart, I give up myself wholly to the life, Light, and Holy Spirit of God; pleased with nothing in this world, but as it gives time, and place, and occasions, of doing and being that, which my heavenly Father would have me to do, and be; seeking for no happiness from this earthly fallen life, but that of overcoming all its spirit and tempers. But I believe, Theophilus, that you had something further to say.

Theophilus. Indeed, Academicus, there is hardly any knowing, when one has said enough of the evil effects of a worldly spirit. It is the canker that eats up all the fruits of our other good tempers; it leaves no degree of goodness in them, but transforms all that we are, or do, into its own

earthly nature. The philosophers of old, began all their virtue in a total renunciation of the spirit of this world. They saw with the eyes of heaven, that darkness was not more contrary to light, than the wisdom of this world was contrary to the spirit of virtue; therefore they allowed of no progress in virtue, but so far as a man had overcome himself, and the spirit of this world.

This gave a divine solidity to all their instructions, and proved them to be masters of true wisdom. But the doctrine of the cross of Christ, the last, the highest, the most finishing stroke given to the spirit of this world, that speaks more in one word than all the philosophy of voluminous writers, is yet professed by those, who are in more friendship with the world, than was allowed to the disciples of Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, or Epictetus.

Nay, if those ancient sages were to start up amongst us with their divine wisdom, they would bid fair to be treated by the sons of the gospel, if not by some fathers of the church, as dreaming enthusiasts.

But, Academicus, this is a standing truth, the world can only love its own, and wisdom can only be justified of her children. The heaven-born Epictetus told one of his scholars, that then he might first look upon himself, as having made some true proficiency in virtue, when the world took him for a fool; an oracle like that, which said, "The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."

If you were to ask me, What is the apostasy of these last times, or whence is all the degeneracy of the present Christian church? I should place it all in a worldly spirit. If here you see open wickedness, there only forms of godliness; if here superficial holiness, political piety, crafty prudence, there haughty sanctity, partial zeal, envious orthodoxy; if almost everywhere you see a Jewish blindness, and hardness of heart, and the church trading with the gospel, as the old Jews bought and sold beasts in their temple; all these are only so many forms and proper fruits of the worldly spirit. This is the great net, with which the devil becomes a fisher of men; and be assured of this, my friend, that every son of man is in this net, till through and by the Spirit of Christ, he breaks out of it.

I say the Spirit of Christ, for nothing else can deliver him from it. Trust now to any kind, or form of religious observances, to any number of the

more plausible virtues, to any kinds of learning, or efforts of human prudence, and then I will tell you what your case will be; you will overcome one temper of the world, only and merely by cleaving to another. For nothing leaves the world, nothing renounces it, nothing can possibly overcome it, but singly and solely the Spirit of Christ. Hence it is, that many learned men, with all the rich furniture of their brain, live and die slaves to the spirit of this world; and can only differ from gross worldlings, as the scribes and Pharisees differ from publicans and sinners: it is because the Spirit of Christ, is not the one only thing that is the desire of their hearts; and therefore their learning only works in, and with the spirit of this world, and becomes itself, no small part of the vanity of vanities. Would you further know, Academicus, the evil nature and effects of a worldly spirit, you need only look at the blessed power and effects of the spirit of prayer; for the one goes downwards with the same strength, as the other goes upwards; the one betroths and weds you to an earthly nature, with the same certainty, as the other espouses, and unites you to Christ, and God, and heaven. The spirit of prayer, is a pressing forth of the soul out of this earthly life; it is a stretching with all its desire after the life of God; it is a leaving, as far as it can, all its own spirit, to receive a Spirit from above, to be one life, one love, one Spirit with Christ in God. This prayer, which is an emptying itself of all its own lusts, and natural tempers, and an opening itself for the Light and love of God to enter into it, is the prayer in the Name of Christ, to which nothing is denied. For the love which God bears to the soul, his eternal, never-ceasing desire to enter into it, stays no longer, than till the door of the heart opens for him. For nothing does, or can keep God out of the soul, or hinder his holy union with it, but the desire of the heart turned from him. And the reason of it is this; it is because the life of the soul is in itself nothing else but a working will; and therefore wherever the will works or goes, there, and there only, the soul lives, whether it be in God, or in the creature.

Whatever it desires, that is the fuel of its fire; and as its fuel is, so is the flame of its life. A will, given up to earthly goods, is at grass with Nebuchadnezzar, and has one life with the beasts of the field: for earthly desires keep up the same life in a man and an ox. For the one only reason, why the animals of this world have no sense or knowledge of God, is this; it is because they cannot form any other than earthly desires, and so can

only have an earthly life. When therefore a man wholly turns his working will to earthly desires, he dies to the excellence of his natural state, and may be said only to live, and move, and have his being, in the life of this world, as the beasts have. Earthly food, etc., only desired and used for the support of the earthly body, is suitable to man's present condition, and the order of nature: but when the desire, the delight, and longing of the soul is set upon earthly things, then the humanity is degraded, is fallen from God; and the life of the soul is made as earthly and bestial, as the life of the body: for the creature can be neither higher nor lower, neither better nor worse, than as the will worketh: for you are to observe, that the will has a divine and magic power; what it desires, that it takes, and of that it eateth and liveth. Wherever, and in whatever, the working will chooses to dwell and delight, that becomes the soul's food, its condition, its body, its clothing, and habitation: for all these are the true and certain effects and powers of the working will.

Nothing does, or can go with a man into heaven, nothing follows him into hell, but that in which the will dwelt, with which it was fed, nourished, and clothed, in this life. And this is to be noted well, that death can make no alteration of this state of the will; it only takes off the outward, worldly covering of flesh and blood, and forces the soul to see, and feel, and know, what a life, what a state, food, body, and habitation, its own working will has brought forth for it. Oh Academicus, stop a while, and let your hearing be turned into feeling. Tell me, is there anything in life that deserves a thought, but how to keep this working of our will in a right state, and to get that purity of heart, which alone can see, and know, and find, and possess God? Is there anything so frightful as this worldly spirit, which turns the soul from God, makes it an house of darkness, and feeds it with the food of time, at the expense of all the riches of eternity?

On the other hand, what can be so desirable a good as the spirit of prayer, which empties the soul of all its own evil, separates death and darkness from it, leaves self, time, and the world, and becomes one life, one light, one love, one Spirit with Christ, and God, and heaven?

Think, my friends, of these things, with something more than thoughts; let your hungry souls eat of the nourishment of them as a bread of heaven; and desire only to live, that with all the working of your wills, and the

whole spirit of your minds, you may live and die united to God: and thus let this conversation end, till God gives us another meeting.

The end of the second dialogue.

The Third Dialogue

Rusticus. I have brought again with me, gentlemen, my silent friend, Humanus, and upon the same condition of being silent still. But though his silence is the same, yet he is quite altered. For this twenty years I have known him to be of an even cheerful temper, full of good-nature, and even quite calm and dispassionate in his attacks upon Christianity, never provoked by what was said either against his infidelity, or in defense of the gospel. He used to boast of his being free from those four passions and resentments, which, he said, were so easy to be seen, in many or most defenders of the gospel-meekness. But now he is morose, peevish, and full of chagrin, and seems to be as uneasy with himself, as with everybody else: whatever he says, is rash, satirical, and wrathful. I tell him, but he will not own it, that his case is this: the truth has touched him; but it is only so far, as to be his tormentor. It is only as welcome to him, as a thief that has taken from him all his riches, goods, and armor, wherein he trusted. The Christianity he used to oppose is vanished; and therefore all the weapons he had against it, are dropped out of his hands. It now appears to stand upon another ground, to have a deeper bottom, and better nature, than what he imagined; and therefore he, and his scheme of infidelity, are quite disconcerted. But though his arguments have thus lost all their strength, yet his heart is left in the state it was; it stands in the same opposition to Christianity as it did before, and yet without any ideas of his brain to support it. And this is the true ground of his present, uneasy, peevish state of mind. He has nothing now to subsist upon, but the resolute hardness of his heart, his pride, and obstinacy, to continue as he is. These, I own, are severe and hard words: but, hard as they are, I am sure Humanus knows, that they proceed from the softness and affection of my heart towards him, from a compassionate zeal to show him where his malady lies, and the necessity of overcoming himself, before he can have the blessing of light, and truth, and peace. Though it is with some reluctance, yet I have chosen thus to make my neighbor known both to myself, and to you, that you may speak of such matters as may give the best relief to the state he is in.

Theophilus. Indeed, Rusticus, I much approve of the spirit you have here shown, with regard to your friend, and hope he will take in good part all that you have said. As for me, I embrace him with the utmost tenderness of affection. I feel and compassionate the trying state of his heart, and have only this one wish, that I could pour the heavenly water of meekness, and the oil of divine love, into it. Let us force him to know, that we are the messengers of divine love to him; that we seek not ourselves, nor our own victory, but to make him victorious over his own evil, and become possessed of a new life in God. His trial is the greatest and hardest that belongs to human nature: and yet it is absolutely necessary to be undergone.

Nature must become a torment and burden to itself, before it can willingly give itself up to that death, through which alone it can pass into life. There is no true and real conversion, whether it be from infidelity, or any other life of sin, till a man comes to know, and feel, that nothing less than his whole nature is to be parted with, and yet finds in himself no possibility of doing it. This is the inability that can bring us at last to say, with the apostle, “When I am weak, then am I strong.” This is the distress that stands near to the gate of life; this is the despair by which we lose all our own life, to find a new one in God. For here, in this place it is, that faith, and hope, and true seeking to God and Christ, are born. But till all is despair in ourselves, till all is lost that we had any trust in as our own; till then, faith and hope, and turning to God in prayer, are only things learnt and practiced by rule and method; but they are not born in us, are not living qualities of a new birth, till we have done feeling any trust or confidence in ourselves. Happy therefore is it for your friend Humanus, that he is come thus far, that everything is taken from him on which he trusted, and found content in himself. In this state, one sigh or look, or the least turning of his heart to God for help, would be the beginning of his salvation. Let us therefore try to improve this happy moment to him, not so much by arguments of reason, as by the arrows of that divine love which overflows all nature and creature.

For Humanus, though hitherto without Christ, is still within the reach of divine love: he belongs to God; God created him for himself, to be an habitation of his own life, Light, and Holy Spirit; and God has brought him

and us together, that the lost sheep may be found, and brought back to its heavenly shepherd.

Oh Humanus, love is my bait; you must be caught by it; it will put its hook into your heart, and force you to know, that of all strong things, nothing is so strong, so irresistible, as divine love.

It brought forth all the creation; it kindles all the life of heaven; it is the song of all the angels of God. It has redeemed all the world; it seeks for every sinner upon earth; it embraces all the enemies of God; and from the beginning to the end of time, the one work of providence, is the one work of love.

Moses and the prophets, Christ and his apostles, were all of them messengers of divine love. They came to kindle a fire on earth, and that fire was the love which burns in heaven. Ask what God is? His name is love; he is the good, the perfection, the peace, the joy, the glory, and blessing, of every life. Ask what Christ is? He is the universal remedy of all evil broken forth in nature and creature. He is the destruction and life of all fallen nature. He is the unwearied compassion, the long-suffering pity, the never-ceasing mercifulness of God to every want and infirmity of human nature.

He is the breathing forth of the heart, life, and Spirit of God, into all the dead race of Adam. He is the seeker, the finder, the restorer, of all that was lost and dead to the life of God. He is the love, that, from Cain to the end of time, prays for all its murderers; the love that willingly suffers and dies among thieves, that thieves may have a life with him in paradise; the love that visits publicans, harlots, and sinners, and wants and seeks to forgive, where most is to be forgiven.

Oh, my friends, let us surround and encompass Humanus with these flames of love, till he cannot make his escape from them, but must become a willing victim to their power. For the universal God is universal love; all is love, but that which is hellish and earthly. All religion is the spirit of love; all its gifts and graces are the gifts and graces of love; it has no breath, no life, but the life of love. Nothing exalts, nothing purifies, but the fire of love; nothing changes death into life, earth into heaven, men into angels, but love alone. Love breathes the Spirit of God; its words and works are

the inspiration of God. It speaketh not of itself, but the Word, the eternal Word of God speaketh in it; for all that love speaketh, that God speaketh, because love is God. Love is heaven revealed in the soul; it is light, and truth; it is infallible; it has no errors, for all errors are the want of love. Love has no more of pride, than light has of darkness; it stands and bears all its fruits from a depth, and root of humility. Love is of no sect or party; it neither makes, nor admits any bounds; you may as easily enclose the light, or shut up the air of the world into one place, as confine love to a sect or party. It lives in the liberty, the universality, the impartiality of heaven. It believes in one, holy, catholic God, the God of all spirits; it unites and joins with the catholic Spirit of the one God, who unites with all that is good, and is meek, patient, well-wishing, and long-suffering over all the evil that is in nature and creature. Love, like the Spirit of God, rideth upon the wings of the wind; and is in union and communion with all the saints that are in heaven and on earth Love is quite pure; it has no by-ends; it seeks not its own; it has but one will, and that is, to give itself into everything, and overcome all evil with good. Lastly, love is the Christ of God; it comes down from heaven; it regenerates the soul from above; it blots out all transgressions; it takes from death its sting, from the devil his power, and from the serpent his poison. It heals all the infirmities of our earthly birth; it gives eyes to the blind, ears to the deaf, and makes the dumb to speak; it cleanses the lepers, and casts out devils, and puts man in paradise before he dies. It lives wholly to the will of him, of whom it is born; its meat and drink is, to do the will of God. It is the resurrection and life of every divine virtue, a fruitful mother of true humility, boundless benevolence, unwearied patience, and bowels of compassion. This, Rusticus, is the Christ, the salvation, the religion of divine love, the true church of God, where the life of God is found, and lived, and to which your friend Humanus is called by us. We direct him to nothing but the inward life of Christ, to the working of the Holy Spirit of God, which alone can deliver him from the evil that is in his own nature, and give him a power to become a son of God.

Rusticus. My neighbor has infinite reason to thank you, for this lovely draft you have given of the spirit of religion; he cannot avoid being affected with it. But pray let us now hear how we are to enter into this religion of

divine love, or rather what God has done to introduce us into it, and make us partakers again of his divine nature.

Theophilus. The first work, or beginning of this redeeming love of God, is in that Immanuel, or God with us, treasured up, or preserved in the first Adam, as the seed of the woman, which in him, and all his posterity, should bruise the head, and overcome the life of the serpent in our fallen nature. This is love indeed, because it is universal, and reaches every branch of the human tree, from the first to the last man, that grows from it. Miserably as mankind are divided, and all at war with one another, everyone appropriating God to themselves, yet they all have but one God, who is the Spirit of all, the life of all, and the lover of all. Men may divide themselves, to have God to themselves; they may hate and persecute one another for God's sake; but this is a blessed truth, that neither the hater, nor the hated, can be divided from the one, holy, catholic God, who with an unalterable meekness, sweetness, patience, and good-will towards all, waits for all, calls them all, redeems them all, and comprehends all in the outstretched arms of his catholic love. Ask not therefore how we shall enter into this religion of love and salvation? for it is itself entered into us, it has taken possession of us from the beginning. It is Immanuel in every human soul; it lies as a treasure of heaven, and eternity in us; it cannot be divided from us by the power of man; we cannot lose it ourselves; it will never leave us nor forsake us, till with our last breath we die in the refusal of it. This is the open gate of our redemption; we have not far to go to find it. It is every man's own treasure; it is a root of heaven, a seed of God, sown into our souls by the Word of God; and, like a small grain of mustard-seed, has a power of growing to be a tree of life. Here, my friend, you should, once for all, mark and observe, where and what the true nature of religion is; for here it is plainly shown you, that its place is within; its work and effect is within; its glory, its life, its perfection, is all within; it is merely and solely the raising of a new life, new love, and a new birth, in the inward spirit of our hearts. Religion (which is solely to restore man to his first and right state in God) had its beginning, and first power, from the seed of the woman, the treader on the serpent's head; and therefore all its progress, from its beginning to its last finished work, is, and can be nothing else, but the growing power and victory of the seed of the woman, over all the evil brought by the serpent into human nature. For the seed of the

woman is the Spirit, and power, and life of God, given or breathed again into man, to be the raiser and redeemer of that first life, which he had lost. This was the spiritual nature of religion in its first beginning, and this alone is its whole nature to the end of time; it is nothing else, but the power, and life, and Spirit of God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, working, creating, and reviving life in the fallen soul, and driving all its evil out of it. This is the true rock, on which the church of Christ is built; this the one church out of which there is no salvation, and against which the gates of hell can never prevail.

Here therefore we are come to this firm conclusion, that let religion have ever so many shapes, forms, or reformations, it is no true divine service, no proper worship of God, has no good in it, can do no good to man, can remove no evil out of him, raise no divine life in him, but so far as it serves, worships, conforms, and gives itself up to this operation of the holy, triune God, as living and dwelling in the soul. Keep close to this idea of religion, as an inward, spiritual life in the soul; observe all its works within you, the death and life that are found there; seek for no good, no comfort, but in the inward awakening of all that is holy and heavenly in your heart; and then, so much as you have of this inward religion, so much you have of a real salvation. For salvation is only a victory over nature; so far as you resist and renounce your own vain, selfish, and earthly nature, so far as you overcome all your own natural tempers of the old man, so far God enters into you, lives, and operates in you, he is in you the Light, the life, and the Spirit, of your soul; and you are in him that new creature, that worships him in spirit, and in truth. For divine worship or service is, and can be only performed by being like-minded with Christ; nothing worships God, but the Spirit of Christ his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. This is as true, as that “no man hath known the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth him.” Look now at anything as religion, or divine service, but a strict, unerring conformity to the life and Spirit of Christ, and then, though every day was full of burnt-offerings, and sacrifices, yet you would be only like those religionists, who drew near to God with their lips, but their hearts “were far from him.”

For the heart is always far from God, unless the Spirit of Christ be alive in it. But no one has the living Spirit of Christ, but he who in all his conversation walketh, as he walked. Consider these words of the apostle,

“My little children, of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you.” This is the sum total of all, and, if this is wanting, all is wanting. Again, says he, “He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the new creature is all.” Nay, see how much further he carries this point, in the following words: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, though I have the gift of prophecy, though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,” etc. “and have not charity” (that is, have not the Spirit of Christ) “it profiteth me nothing.” For by charity here, the apostle means neither more nor less, but strictly that same thing, which, in other places, he calls the new creature, Christ formed in us, and our being led by the Spirit of Christ. According to the apostle, nothing avails but the new creature, nothing avails but the Spirit of charity here described; therefore this charity, and the new creature, are only two different expressions of one and the same thing, viz., the birth, and formation of Christ in us. Thus saith he, “If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his”; nay, though he could say of himself (as our Lord says many will) Have I not prophesied in the Name of Christ, cast out devils, and done many wonderful works? yet such a one not being led by the Spirit of Christ, is that very man, whose high state the apostle makes to be a mere nothing, because he has not that Spirit of charity, which is the Spirit of Christ. Again, “There is no condemnation to those, who are in Christ Jesus”; therefore to be in Christ Jesus, is to have that spirit of charity, which is the spirit, and life, and goodness of all virtues. Now here you are to observe, that the apostle no more rejects all outward religion, when he says circumcision is nothing, than he rejects prophesying, and faith, and alms-giving, when he says they profit nothing; he only teaches this solid truth, that the kingdom of God is within us, and that it all consists in the state of our heart; and that therefore all outward observances, all the most specious virtues, profit nothing, are of no value, unless the hidden man of the heart, the new creature, led by the Spirit of Christ, be the doer of them.

Thus, says he, “They who are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God.” And therefore none else, be they who, or where, or what they will, clergy, or laity, none are, or can be, sons of God, but they who give up themselves entirely to the leading and guidance of, the Spirit of God, desiring to be moved, inspired, and governed solely by it.

Again, “We are of the circumcision, who worship God in spirit”; and to show, that this is not a vain pretense, he says in another place, “The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” Therefore no profit from anything else; all preaching and hearing is vain, and all preachers and hearers stand chargeable with the vanity of their religious performances, who think of preaching, or hearing profitably, any other way, or by any other power, than in and by the Holy Spirit of God dwelling and working in them. Thus again, “If the Spirit of him, who raised Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he also shall quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit, which dwelleth in you.” In vain therefore is life expected, either for body or soul, but by the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Again, “Through him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father”; therefore this one Spirit is the one only way to God, and salvation. Thus does all Scripture bring us to this conclusion, that all religion is but a dead work, unless it be the work of the Spirit of God; and that sacraments, prayers, singing, preaching, hearing, are only so many ways of being fervent in the spirit, and of giving up ourselves more and more to the inward working, enlightening, quickening, sanctifying Spirit of God within us; and all for this end, that the curse of the fall may be taken from us, that death may be swallowed up in victory, and a true, real, Christ-like nature formed in us, by the same Spirit, by which it was formed in the holy Virgin Mary. Now for the true ground, and absolute necessity, of this turning wholly and solely to the Spirit of God, you need only know this plain truth; namely, that the Spirit of God, the spirit of Satan, or the spirit of this world, are, and must be, the one or the other of them, the continual leader, guide, and inspirer, of everything that lives in nature. There is no going out from some one of these; the moment you cease to be moved, quickened, and inspired by God, you are infallibly moved and directed by the spirit of Satan, or the world, or by both of them. And the reason is, because the soul of man is a spirit, and a life, that in its whole being is nothing else but a birth both of God and nature; and therefore, every moment of its life, it must live in some union and conjunction, either with the Spirit of God governing nature, or with the spirit of nature fallen from God, and working in itself. As creatures therefore, we are under an absolute necessity of being under the motion, guidance, and inspiration of some spirit, that is more and greater than our own. All that is put in our own power, is only the choice of our leader; but led and moved we must be, and by that spirit,

to which we give up ourselves, whether it be to the Spirit of God, or the spirit of fallen nature. To seek therefore to be always under the inspiration and guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and to act by an immediate power from it, is not proud enthusiasm, but as sober and humble a thought, as suitable to our state, as to think of renouncing the world, and the devil: for they never are, or can be, renounced by us, but so far as the Spirit of God is living, breathing, and moving in us: and that for this plain reason, because nothing is contrary to the spirit of Satan, and the world, nothing works, or can work, contrary to it, but the Spirit of heaven.

Hence our Lord said, "He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth"; plainly declaring, that not to be with him, and led by his Spirit is to be led by the spirit of Satan, and the world. Ask now, what hell is? It is nature destitute of the Light and Spirit of God, and full only of its own darkness; nothing else can make it to be hell. Ask what heaven is? It is nature quickened, enlightened, blessed, and glorified, by the Light and Spirit of God dwelling in it. What possibility therefore can there be, of our dividing from hell, or parting with all that is hellish in us, but by having the life, Light, and Spirit of God living and working in us? And here again, my friends, you may see in the greatest clearness, why nothing is available, nothing is salvation, but the new birth of a Christ-like nature; it is because everything else but this birth, and life of the spirit, is only the spirit of Satan, or the spirit of this world. Have you anything to object to these things?

Academicus. Truly, sir, all objections are over with me; you have taken from me every difficulty or perplexity that I had, either about religion, or the providence of God. I can now look back into the first origin of things with satisfaction: I have seen how the world and man began to be, in a way highly worthy of the divine wisdom, and how they both came into their present condition, and how they both are to rise out of it, and return back to their first state in a glorious eternity. It now appears to me with the utmost clearness, that to look for salvation in anything else, but the Light of God within us, the Spirit of God working in us, the birth of Christ really brought forth in us, is to be as carnally minded, as ignorant of God, and man, and salvation, as the Jews were, when their hearts were wholly set upon the glory of their temple-service, and a temporal savior to defend it, by a temporal power. For everything but the Light and Spirit of God

bringing forth a birth of Christ in the soul, everything else, be it what it will, has and can have no more of salvation in it, than a temporal fighting savior. For what is said of the impossibility of the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins, must with the same truth be said of all other outward creaturely things; they are all at the same distance from being the salvation of the soul, and in the same degree of inability to take away sins, as the blood of bulls and goats.

And all this for this plain reason, because the soul is a spirit breathed forth from God himself, which therefore cannot be blessed but by having the life of God in it; and nothing can bring the life of God into it, but only the Light and Spirit of God. Upon this ground I stand in the utmost certainty, looking wholly to the Light and Spirit of God for an inward redemption from all the inward evil that is in my fallen nature. All that I now want to know is this, what I am to do, to procure this continual operation of the Spirit of God within me. For I seem to myself, not to know this enough; and I am also afraid of certain delusions, which I have heard many have fallen into, under pretenses of being led by the Spirit of God. Pray therefore, Theophilus, give me some instructions on this head.

Rusticus. Pray, gentlemen, let an unlearned man speak a word here. Suppose, Academicus, you had a longing earnest desire, to be governed by a spirit of plainness and sincerity in your whole conversation. Would this put you upon asking for art, and rules, and methods, or consulting some learned man, or book, to direct you, and keep you from delusion? Would you not know and feel in yourself, that your own earnest desire, and love of sincerity and plainness, and your own inward aversion to everything that was contrary to it, must be the one and only possible way of attaining it, and that you must have it in that degree, as you loved and liked to act by it? Now there is no more of art, or any secret required to bring and keep you under the direction of the Spirit of God, than under the spirit of plainness and sincerity. The longing earnest desire of the heart, brings you into the safe possession of the one, as it does of the other. For it has been enough proved, that the spirit of prayer forms the spirit of our lives, and every man lives as the spirit of prayer leads him. Nay every prayer for the Holy Spirit, is the Spirit itself praying in you. For nothing can turn to God, desire to be united to him, and governed by him, but the Spirit of God. The impossibility of praying for the Spirit of God in vain, is thus

shown by our blessed Lord: “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask for it?” But here I stop.

Academicus. I do not know how to understand what Rusticus has said. For do not all good Christians daily pray for the Spirit of God? yet how few are led by it? Pray, Theophilus, do you speak here.

Theophilus. People may be daily at the service of the church, and read long prayers at home, in which are many petitions for the Holy Spirit, and yet live and die, led and governed by the spirit of the world; because all these prayers, whether we hear them read by others, or read them ourselves, may be done in compliance only to duties, rules, and forms of religion, as things we are taught not to neglect; but, being only done thus, they are not the true, real working of the spirit of the heart, nor make any real alteration in it. But you are to observe, that Rusticus spoke of the spirit of prayer, which is the heart’s own prayer, and which has all the strength of the heart in it. And this is the prayer that must be affirmed to be always effectual; it never returns empty; it eats and drinks that, after which it hungers and thirsts; and nothing can possibly hinder it from having that, which it prays for. This we are assured of from these words of truth itself; “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” But this blessedness could not belong to hungering, if the truly hungry and thirsty, could ever be sent empty away. Every spirit necessarily reaps that which it sows, it cannot possibly be otherwise, it is the unalterable procedure of nature. Spirit is the first power of nature, everything proceeds from it, is born of it, yields to it, and is governed by it. If the spirit soweth to the flesh, it reapeth that corruption which belongs to the flesh; if it soweth to the Spirit, it reapeth the fruits of the Spirit, which are eternal life. The spirit of prayer therefore is the opener of all that is good within us, and the receiver of all that is good without us; it unites with God, is one power with him; it works with him, and drives all that is not God, out of the soul. The soul is no longer a slave to its natural impurity and corruption, no longer imprisoned in its own death and darkness, but till the fire from heaven, the spirit of prayer is kindled in it.

Then begins the resurrection, and the life; and all that which died in Adam comes to life in Christ. Ask not therefore, Academicus, what you are to do to obtain the Spirit of God, to live in it, and be led by it? For your power of having it, and your measure of receiving it, are just according to that faith and earnestness with which you desire to be led by it. For the hungry spirit of prayer is that faith, to which all things are possible, to which all nature, though as high as mountains, and as stiff as oaks, must yield and obey. It heals all diseases, breaks the bands of death, and calls the dead out of their graves. Look at the small seeds of plants, shut up in their own dead husks, and covered with thick earth, and see how they grow. What do they do? They hunger and thirst after the light and air of this world. Their hunger eats that which they hunger after, and this is their vegetation. If the plant ceases to hunger, it withers and dies, though surrounded with the air and light of this world.

This is the true nature of the spiritual life; it is as truly a growth or vegetation, as that of plants; and nothing but its own hunger can help it to the true food of its life. If this hunger of the soul ceases, it withers and dies, though in the midst of divine plenty. Our Lord, to show us that the new birth is really a state of spiritual vegetation, compares it to a small grain of mustard-seed, from whence a great plant arises. Now every seed has a life in itself, or else it could not grow. What is this life? It is nothing else but an hunger in the seed, after the air and light of this world; which hunger, being met and fed by the light and air of nature, changes the seed into a living plant. Thus it is with the seed of heaven in the soul. It has a life in itself, or else no life could arise from it. What is this life? It is nothing else but faith, or an hunger after God and heaven; which no sooner stirs, or is suffered to stir, but it is met, embraced, and quickened, by the Light and Spirit of God and heaven; and so a new man in Christ, is formed from the seed of heaven, as a new plant from a seed in the earth. Let us suppose now, that the seed of a plant had sense and reason, and that, instead of continually hungering after, and drawing in the virtue of the light and air of our outward nature, it should amuse, and content its hunger with reasoning about the nature of hunger, and the different powers and virtues of light and air; must not such a seed of all necessity wither away, without ever becoming a living plant? Now this is no false similitude of the seed of life in man: man has a power of drawing all the virtue of heaven into

himself, because the seed of heaven is the gift of God in his soul, which wants the Light and Spirit of God to bring it to the birth, just as the seed of the plant wants the light and air of this world; it cannot possibly grow up in God, but by taking in light, life, and spirit from heaven, as the creatures of time take in the light, and life, and spirit of this world. If therefore the soul, instead of hungering after heaven, instead of eating the flesh and blood of the Christ of God, contents and amuses this seed of life with ideas, and notions, and sounds, must not such a soul of necessity wither, and die, without ever becoming a living creature of heaven? Wonder not therefore, Academicus, that all the work of our salvation and regeneration is, by the Scripture, wholly confined to the operation of the Light and Spirit of God, living and working in us. It is for the same reason, and on the same necessity, that the life and growth of the creatures of this world, must be wholly ascribed to the powers of this world, living and working in them. Nor does all this, in the least degree, make a man a machine, or without any power with regard to his salvation. He must grow in God, as the plants grow in this world, from a power that is not his own, as they grow from the powers of outward nature. But he differs entirely from the plants in this, that an uncontrollable will, which is his own, must be the leader and beginner of his growth either in God, or nature. It is strictly true, that all man's salvation depends upon himself; and it is as strictly true, that all the work of his salvation, is solely the work of God in his soul. All his salvation depends upon himself, because his will-spirit has its power of motion in itself. As a will, it can only receive that which it willeth; everything else is absolutely shut out of it. For it is the unalterable nature of the will, that it cannot possibly receive anything into it, but that which it willeth; its willing is its only power of receiving; and therefore there can be no possible entrance for God or heaven into the soul, till the will-spirit of the soul desires it; and thus all man's salvation depends upon himself. On the other hand, nothing can create, effect, or bring forth, a birth or growth of the divine life in the soul, but that Light and Spirit of God, which brings forth the divine life in heaven, and all heavenly beings. And thus the work of our salvation is wholly and solely the work of the Light and Spirit of God, dwelling and operating in us. Thus, Academicus, you see that God is all; that nothing but his life and working power in us, can be our salvation; us to have it, or be capable of it. And therefore neither you, nor any other human soul, can be without

the operation of the Light and Spirit of God in it, but because its will-spirit, or its spirit of prayer, is turned towards something else; for we are always in union with that, with which our will is united. Again: look, Academicus, at the light and air of this world, you see with what a freedom of communication they overflow, enrich, and enliven everything; they enter everywhere, if not hindered by something that withstands their entrance. This may represent to you the ever-overflowing free communication of the Light and Spirit of God, to every human soul. They are everywhere; we are encompassed with them; our souls are as near to them, as our bodies are to the light and air of this world; nothing shuts them out of us, but the will and desire of our souls, turned from them, and praying for something else. I say, praying for something else; for you are to notice this, as a certain truth, that every man's life is a continual state of prayer; he is no moment free from it, nor can possibly be so. For all our natural tempers, be they what they will, ambition, covetousness, selfishness, worldly-mindedness, pride, envy, hatred, malice, or any other lust whatever, are all of them in reality, only so many different kinds, and forms of a spirit of prayer, which is as inseparable from the heart, as weight is from the body. For every natural temper is nothing else, but a manifestation of the desire and prayer of the heart, and shows us, how it works and wills. And as the heart worketh, and willeth, such, and no other, is its prayer. All else is only form, and fiction, and empty beating of the air. If therefore the working desire of the heart is not habitually turned towards God, if this is not our spirit of prayer, we are necessarily in a state of prayer towards something else, that carries us from God, and brings all kind of evil into us. For this is the necessity of our nature; pray we must, as sure as our heart is alive; and therefore when the state of our heart is not a spirit of prayer to God, we pray without ceasing to some, or other part of the creation. The man whose heart habitually tends towards the riches, honors, powers, or pleasures of this life, is in a continual state of prayer towards all these things. His spirit stands always bent towards them; they have his hope, his love, his faith, and are the many gods that he worships: and though when he is upon his knees, and uses forms of prayer, he directs them to the God of heaven; yet these are in reality the God of his heart, and, in a sad sense of the words, he really worships them in spirit, and in truth. Hence you may see, Academicus, how it comes to pass, that there is so much praying, and yet so little of true piety amongst

us. The bells are daily calling us to church, our closets abound with manuals of devotion, yet how little fruit! It is all for this reason, because our prayers are not our own; they are not the abundance of our own heart; are not found and felt within us, as we feel our own hunger and thirst; but are only so many borrowed forms of speech, which we use at certain times and occasions. And therefore it is no wonder that little good comes of it. What benefit could it have been to the Pharisee, if, with an heart inwardly full of its own pride and self-exaltation, he had outwardly hung down his head, smote upon his breast, and borrowed the publican's words, "God be merciful to me a sinner"? What greater good can be expected from our praying in the words of David, or singing his psalms seven times a day, if our heart has no more the spirit of David in it, than the heart of the Pharisee had of the spirit of the humble publican?

Academicus. O Theophilus, truth and reason force me to consent to what you say; and yet I am afraid of following you: for you here seem to condemn forms of prayer in public, and manuals of devotion in private. What will become of religion, if these are set aside or disregarded?

Theophilus. Dear Academicus, abate your fright. Can you think, that I am against your praying in the words of David, or breathing his spirit in your prayers, or that I would censure your singing his psalms seven times a day? Remember how very lately I put into your hands the book called, *A Serious Call to a Devout Life* etc., and then think how unlikely it is, that I should be against times and methods of devotion. At three several times, we are told, our Lord prayed, repeating the same form of words; and therefore a set form of words are not only consistent with, but may be highly suitable to, the most divine spirit of prayer. If your own heart, for days and weeks, was unable to alter, or break off from inwardly thinking and saying, "hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done"; if at other times, for weeks and months, it stood always inwardly in another form of prayer, unable to vary, or depart from saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with all thy holy nature, spirit, and tempers, into my soul, that I may be born again of thee, a new creature"; I should be so far from censuring such a formality of prayer, that I should say, blessed and happy are they, whose hearts are tied to such a form of words. It is not therefore, sir, a set form of words that is spoken against, but an heartless form, a form that has no relation to, or correspondence with, the

state of the heart that uses it. All that I have said is only to teach you the true nature of prayer, that it is only the work of the heart, and that the heart only prays in reality (whatever its words are) for that which it habitually wills, likes, loves, and longs to have. It is not therefore the using the words of David, or any other saint, in your prayers, that is censured, but the using them without that state of heart, which first spoke them forth, and the trusting to them, because they are a good form, though in our hearts we have nothing that is like them. It would be good to say incessantly with holy David, "My heart is athirst for God. As the hart desireth the waterbrooks, so longeth my soul after thee, O God." But there is no goodness in saying daily these words, if no such thirst is felt, or desired in the heart. And, my friend, you may easily know, that dead forms of religion, and numbers of repeated prayers, keep men content with their state of devotion, because they make use of such holy prayers; though their hearts, from morning to night, are in a state quite contrary to them, and join no further in them, than in liking to use them at certain times.

Academicus. I acquiesce, Theophilus, in the truth of what you have said, and plainly see the necessity of condemning what you have condemned; which is not the form, but the heartless form. But still I have a scruple upon me: I shall be almost afraid of going to church, where there are so many good prayers offered up to God, as suspecting they may not be the prayers or language of my own heart, and so become only a lip-labor, or, what is worse, an hypocrisy before God.

Theophilus. I do not, Academicus, dislike your scruple at all; for you do well to be afraid of saying anything of yourself, or to God, in your prayers, which your heart does not truly say. It is also good for you to think, that many of the prayers of the church may go faster, and higher, than your heart can in truth go along with them. For this will put you upon a right care over yourself, and so to live, that, as a true son of your mother the church, your heart may be able to speak her language, conform to her service, and find the delight of your soul in the spirit of her prayers. But this will only then come to pass, when the spirit of prayer is the spirit of your heart; then every good word, whether in a form, or out of a form, whether heard, or read, or thought, will be a suitable to your heart, as gratifying to it, as food is to the hungry, and drink to the thirsty soul.

But till the spirit of the heart is thus renewed, till it is emptied of all earthly desires, and stands in an habitual hunger and thirst after God (which is the true spirit of prayer) till then, all our forms of prayer will be, more or less, but too much like lessons that are given to scholars; and we shall mostly say them, only because we dare not neglect them. But be not discouraged, Academicus; take the following advice, and then you may go to church without any danger of a mere lip-labor or hypocrisy, although there should be an hymn, or a psalm, or a prayer, whose language is higher than that of your own heart. Do this: go to the church, as the publican went into the temple; stand inwardly in the spirit of your mind, in that form which he outwardly expressed, when he cast down his eyes, smote upon his breast, and could only say, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" Stand unchangeably (at least in your desire) in this form and state of heart; it will sanctify every petition that comes out of your mouth; and when anything is read, or sung, or prayed, that is more exalted and fervent than your heart is, if you make this an occasion of a further sinking down in the spirit of the publican, you will then be helped, and highly blessed, by those prayers and praises, which seem only to fit, and belong to, a better heart than yours.

This, my friend, is a secret of secrets; it will help you to reap where you have not sown, and be a continual source of grace in your soul. This will not only help you to receive good from those prayers, which seem too good for the state of your heart, but will help you to find good from everything else: for everything that inwardly stirs in you, or outwardly happens to you, becomes a real good to you, if it either finds or excites in you this humble form of mind: for nothing is in vain, or without profit, to the humble soul; like the bee, it takes its honey even from bitter herbs; it stands always in a state of divine growth; and everything that falls upon it, is like a dew of heaven to it. Shut up yourself therefore in this form of humility, all good is enclosed in it; it is a water of heaven, that turns the fire of the fallen soul, into the meekness of the divine life, and creates that oil, out of which the love to God and man gets its flame. Be enclosed therefore always in it; let it be as a garment wherewith you are always covered, and the girdle with which you are girt; breathe nothing but with its ears; and then, whether you are in the church, or out of the church; hearing the praises of God, or receiving wrongs from men, and the world,

all will be edification, and everything will help forward your growth in the life of God.

Academicus. Indeed, Theophilus, this answer to my scruple is quite good: I not only like, but I love it much: it gives as well an unction to my heart, as a light to my mind. All my desire now is, to live no longer to the world, to myself, my own natural tempers and passions, but wholly to the will of the blessed and adorable God, moved and guided by his Holy Spirit.

Theophilus. This resolution, Academicus, only shows that you are just come to yourself; for everything short of this earnest desire to live wholly unto God, may be called a most dreadful infatuation or madness, an insensibility that cannot be described. For what else is our life, but a trial for the greatest evil, or good, that an eternity can give us? What can be so dreadful, as to die possessed of a wicked immortal nature, or to go out of this world with tempers, that must keep us forever burning in our own fire, and brimstone? What has God not done to prevent this? His redeeming love began with our fall, and kindles itself as a spark of heaven in every fallen soul. It calls every man to salvation, and every man is forced to hear, though he will not obey his voice. God has so loved the world, that his only Son hung and expired, bleeding on the cross, not to atone his own wrath against us, but to extinguish our own hell within us, to pour his heavenly love into us, to show us that meekness, suffering, and dying to our own fallen nature, is the one, only possible way, for fallen man to be alive again in God. Are we yet sons of pride, and led away with vanity? Do the powers of darkness rule over us? Do impure evil spirits possess and drive on our lives? Has sin lost all its power of frightening us? Is remorse of conscience no longer felt? Are falsehood, guile, debauchery, profaneness, perjury, bribery, corruption, and adultery, no longer seeking to hide themselves in corners, but openly entering all our high places, giving battle to every virtue, and laying claim to the government of the world? Are we thus near being swallowed up by a deluge of vice and impiety? All this is not come upon us, because God has left us too much without help from heaven, or too much exposed us to the powers of hell; but it is because we have rejected and despised the whole mystery of our salvation, and trampled under foot the precious blood of Christ, which alone has that omnipotence, that can either bring heaven into us, or drive hell out of us. O Britain, Britain, think that the Son of God saith unto thee,

as he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate." And now let me say, What aileth thee, O British earth, that thou quakest, and the foundations of thy churches that they totter? Just that same aileth thee, as ailed Judah's earth, when the divine savior of the world, dying on the cross, was reviled, scorned, and mocked, by the inhabitants of Jerusalem; then the earth quaked, the rocks rent, and the sun refused to give its light. Nature again declares for God; the earth, and the elements can no longer bear our sins: Jerusalem's doom for Jerusalem's sin, may well be feared by us. Oh ye miserable pens dipped in Satan's ink, that dare to publish the folly of believing in Jesus Christ, where will you hide your guilty heads, when nature dissolved, shall show you the rainbow, on which the crucified savior shall sit in judgment, and every work receive its reward? O tremble! ye apostate sons that come out of the schools of Christ, to fight Lucifer's battles, and do that for him, which neither he, nor his legions can do for themselves. Their inward pride, spite, wrath, malice and rage against God, and Christ, and human nature, have no pens but yours, no apostles but you. They must be forced to work in the dark, to steal privately into impure hearts, could they not beguile you into a fond belief, that you are lovers of truth, friends of reason, detectors of fraud, great geniuses, and moral philosophers, merely and solely, because ye blaspheme Christ, and the gospel of God. Poor deluded souls, rescued from hell by the blood of Christ, called by God to possess the thrones of fallen angels, permitted to live only by the mercy of God, that ye may be born again from above! my heart bleeds for you. Think, I beseech you, in time, what mercies ye are trampling under your feet. Say not that reason, and your intellectual faculties, stand in your way; that these are the best gifts, that God has given you, and that these suffer you not to come to Christ. For all this is as vain a pretense, and as gross a mistake, as if ye were to say, that you had nothing but your feet to carry you to heaven. For your heart is the best and greatest gift of God to you; it is the highest, greatest, strongest, and noblest power of your nature; it forms your whole life, be it what it will; all evil, and all good, comes from it; your heart alone has the key of life and death; it does all that it will; reason is but its plaything, and whether in time or eternity, can only be a mere beholder of the wonders of

happiness, or forms of misery, which the right, or wrong working of the heart is entered into.

I will here give you an infallible touchstone, that will try all to the truth. It is this: retire from the world, and all conversations, only for one month; neither write, nor read, nor debate anything in private with yourself; stop all the former workings of your heart and mind; and, with all the strength of your heart, stand all this month as continually as you can, in this following form of prayer to God. Offer it frequently on your knees; but, whether sitting, standing, or walking, be always inwardly longing, and earnestly praying this one prayer to God: "That, of his great goodness, he would make known to you and take from your heart, every kind, and form, and degree of pride, whether it be from evil spirits, or your own corrupt nature; and that he would awaken in you the deepest depth and truth of all that humility, which can make you capable of his Light, and Holy Spirit." Reject every thought, but that of wishing, and praying in this manner from the bottom of your heart, with such truth and earnestness, as people in torment, wish and pray to be delivered from it. Now if you dare not, if your hearts will not, cannot give themselves up in this manner to the spirit of this prayer, then the touchstone has done its work, and you may be as fully assured, both what your infidelity is, and from what it proceeds, as you can be of the plainest truth in nature. This will show you, how vainly you appeal to your reason, and speculation, as the cause of your infidelity; that it is full as false and absurd, as if thieves and adulterers should say, that their theft and adultery was entirely owing to their bodily eyes, which showed them external objects, and not to anything that was wrong or bad in their hearts. On the other hand, if you can, and will give yourselves up in truth and sincerity to this spirit of prayer, I will venture to affirm, that if you had twice as many evil spirits in you, as Mary Magdalen had, they will all be cast out of you, and you will be forced with her, to weep with tears of love, at the feet of the holy Jesus.

But here, my friends, I stop, that we may return to the matter we had in hand.

Rusticus. You have made no digression, Theophilus, from our main point, which was to recommend Christianity to poor Humanus. He must, I am

sure, have felt the death-blows, that you have here given to the infidel scheme. The idol of reason, which is the vain God, that they worship in vain, is here like Dagon fallen to the ground, never to rise up again. Humanus is caught by your bait of love, and I dare say he wants only to have this conversation ended, that he may try himself to the truth, by this divine touchstone, which you have put into his hands.

Academicus. Give me leave, gentlemen, to add one word to this matter. Theophilus has here fairly pulled reason out of its usurped throne, and shown it to be a powerless, idle toy, when compared to the royal strength of the heart, which is the kingly power, that has all the government of life in its hands. But if Humanus, or anyone else, would see reason fully maintained in all its just rights, and yet entirely disarmed of all its pretenses to a religion of its own, and the truth of the gospel fully proved to every man, learned, or unlearned, from the known state of his own heart; if he would see all this set forth in the strongest, clearest light, he need only read about an hundred pages of a book (A Demonstration of the Gross and Fundamental Errors of a Late Book called A Plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper) published about twelve years ago, to which no answer has, nor, it may be, ever will be given by any patron of reason, and infidelity. And if part of that book (as I have often wished) beginning at page 70 to 117, was printed by itself, and known and read in every part of the kingdom, all Christians, though no scholars, would have learning enough both to see the deep, true, and comfortable foundation of their gospel faith, and the miserable folly, and ignorance of those, who would set up a religion of human reason instead of it. But now, Theophilus, I beg we may return to that very point concerning prayer, where we left off. I think my heart is entirely devoted to God, and that I desire nothing but to live in such a state of prayer, as may best keep me under the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. Assist me therefore, my dear friend, in this important matter; give me the fullest directions that you can; and if you have any manual of devotion, that you prefer, or any method that you would put me in, pray let me know it.

Rusticus. I beg leave to speak a word to Academicus. I am glad, sir, to see this fire of heaven, thus far kindled in your soul; but wonder that you should want to know, how you are to keep up its flame, which is like wanting to know, how you are to love and desire that, which you do love

and desire. Does a blind, or sick, or lame man want to know, how he shall wish and desire sight, health, and limbs? or would be at a loss, till some form of words taught him how to long for them? Now you can have no desire or prayer for any grace, or help from God, till you in some degree as surely feel the want of them, and desire the good of them, as the sick man feels the want, and desires the good of health. But when this is your case, you want no more to be told how to pray, than the thirsty man wants to be told what he shall ask for. Have you not fully consented to this truth, that the heart only can pray, and that it prays for nothing but that, which it loves, wills, and wishes to have? But can love or desire want art, or method, to teach it to be, that which it is? If from the bottom of your heart you have a sincere, warm love for your most valuable friend, would you want to buy a book, to tell you, what sentiments you feel in your heart towards this friend, what comfort, what joy, what gratitude, what trust, what honor, what confidence, what faith, are all alive, and stirring in your heart towards him? Ask not therefore, Academicus, for a book of prayers; but ask your heart what is within it, what it desires? and then, instead of calling upon Theophilus for assistance, stand in the same form of petition to God.

For this turning to God according to the inward feeling, want, and motion of your own heart, in love, in trust, in faith of having from him all that you want, and wish to have, this turning thus unto God, whether it be with, or without words, is the best form of prayer in the world. Now no man can be ignorant of the state of his own heart, or a stranger to those tempers, that are alive and stirring in him, and therefore no man can want a form of prayer; for what should be the form of his prayer, but that which the condition and state of his heart demands? If you know of no trouble, feel no burden, want nothing to be altered, or removed, nothing to be increased or strengthened in you, how can you pray for anything of this kind? But if your heart knows its own plague, feels its inward evil, knows what it wants to have removed, will you not let your distress form the manner of your prayer? or will you pray in a form of words, that have no more agreement with your state, than if a man walking above-ground, should beg every man he met, to pull him out of a deep pit. For prayers not formed according to the real state of your heart, are but like a prayer to be pulled out of a deep well, when you are not in it. Hence you may see, how

unreasonable it is to make a mystery of prayer, or an art, that needs so much instruction; since every man is, and only can be, directed by his own inward state and condition, when, and how, and what he is to pray for, as every man's outward state shows him what he outwardly wants. And yet it should seem, as if a prayer book was highly necessary, and ought to be the performance of great learning and abilities, since only our learned men and scholars make our prayer books.

Academicus. I did not imagine, Rusticus, that you would have so openly declared against manuals of devotion, since you cannot but know, that not only the most learned, but the most pious doctors of the church, consider them as necessary helps to devotion.

Rusticus. If you, Academicus, were obliged to go a long journey on foot, and yet through a weakness in your legs could not set one foot before another, you would do well to get the best traveling crutches that you could.

But if, with sound and good legs, you would not stir one step, till you had got crutches to hop with, surely a man might show you the folly of not walking with your own legs, without being thought a declared enemy to crutches, or the makers of them. Now a manual is not so good an help, as crutches, and yet you see crutches are only proper, when our legs cannot do their office. It is, I say, not so good an help as crutches, because that which you do with crutches, is that very same thing, that you should have done with your legs; you really travel; but when the heart cannot take one step in prayer, and you therefore read your manual, you do not do that very same thing, which your heart should have done, that is, really pray. A fine manual therefore is not to be considered as a means of praying, or as something that puts you in a state of prayer, as crutches help you to travel; but its chief use, as a book of prayers to a dead and hardened heart that has no prayer of its own, is to show it, what a state and spirit of prayer it wants, and at what a sad distance it is from feeling all that variety of humble, penitent, grateful, fervent, resigned, loving sentiments, which are described in the manual, that so, being touched with a view of its own miserable state, it may begin its own prayer to God for help. But I have done. Theophilus may now answer your earnest request.

Theophilus. Your earnest desire, Academicus, to live in the spirit of prayer, and be truly governed by it, is a most excellent desire; for to be a man of prayer is that which the apostle means by living in the Spirit, and having our conversation in heaven. It is to have done, not only with the confessed vices, but with the allowed follies and vanities of this world. To tell such a soul of the innocence of levity, that it needs not run away from idle discourse, vain gaiety, and trifling mirth, as being, the harmless relief of our heavy natures, is like telling the flame, that it needs not always be ascending upwards. But here you are to observe, that this spirit of prayer is not to be taught you by a book, or brought into you by an art from without, but must be an inward birth, that must arise from your own fire and light within you, as the air arises from the fire and light of this world. For the spirit of every being, be it what or where it will, or be its spirit of what kind it will, is only the breath or spirit that proceeds from its own fire and light. In vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual creatures, it is all in the same manner; spirit is the third form of its life, and is the birth that proceeds from the other two; and is the manifestation of their nature and qualities. For such as the fire and light are, such and no other, neither higher nor lower, neither better nor worse, is the spirit that proceeds from them. Now the reason why all, and every life does, and must stand in this form, is wholly and solely from hence, because the Deity, the one source and fountain of all life, is a triune God, whose third form is, and is called, the Spirit of God, proceeding from the Father, and the Son.

The painful sense and feeling of what you are, kindled into a working state of sensibility of the Light of God within you, is the fire and light from whence your spirit of prayer proceeds. In its first kindling nothing is found or felt, but pain, wrath, and darkness, as is to be seen in the first kindling of every heat or fire. And therefore its first prayer is nothing else but a sense of penitence, self-condemnation, confession, and humility. It feels nothing but its own misery, and so is all humility. This prayer of humility is met by the divine love, the mercifulness of God embraces it; and then its prayer is changed into hymns, and songs, and thanksgivings. When this state of fervor has done its work, has melted away all earthly passions and affections, and left no inclination in the soul, but to delight in God alone, then its prayer changes again. It is now so near to God, has found such union with him, that it does not so much pray as live in God.

Its prayer is not any particular action, is not the work of any particular faculty, not confined to times, or words, or place, but is the work of his whole being, which continually stands in fullness of faith, in purity of love, in absolute resignation, to do and be, what and how his beloved pleases. This is the last state of the spirit of prayer, and its highest union with God in this life. Each of these foregoing states has its time, its variety of workings, its trials, temptations, and purifications, which can only be known by experience in the passage through them. The one only and infallible way to go safely through all the difficulties, trials, temptations, dryness, or opposition, of our own evil tempers, is this: it is to expect nothing from ourselves, to trust to nothing in ourselves, but in everything expect, and depend upon God for relief. Keep fast hold of this thread, and then let your way be what it will, darkness, temptation, or the rebellion of nature, you will be led through all, to an union with God: for nothing hurts us in any state, but an expectation of something in it, and from it, which we should only expect from God. We are looking for our own virtue, our own piety, our own goodness, and so live on and on in our own poverty and weakness; today pleased and comforted with the seeming strength and firmness of our own pious tempers, and fancying ourselves to be somewhat; tomorrow, fallen into our own mire, we are dejected, but not humbled; we grieve, but it is only the grief of pride, at the seeing our perfection not to be such as we vainly imagined. And thus it will be, till the whole turn of our minds is so changed, that we as fully see and know our inability to have any goodness of our own, as to have a life of our own.

For since nothing is, or can be, good in us, but the life of God manifested in us, how can this be had but from God alone? When we are happily brought to this conviction, then we have done with all thought of being our own builders; the whole spirit of our minds is become a mere faith, and hope, and trust in the sole operation of God's Spirit, looking no more to any other power, to be formed in Christ new creatures, than we look to any other power for the resurrection of our bodies at the last day. Hence may be seen, that the trials of every state are its greatest blessings; they do that for us, which we most of all want to have done, they force us to know our own nothingness, and the all of God.

People who have long dwelt in the fervor of devotion, in an high sensibility of divine affections, practicing every virtue with a kind of greediness, are frightened, when coldness seizes upon them, when their hymns give no transport, and their hearts, instead of flaming with the love of every virtue, seem ready to be overcome by every vice. But here, keep fast hold of the thread I mentioned before, and all is well. For this coldness is the divine offspring, or genuine birth, of the former fervor; it comes from it as a good fruit, and brings the soul nearer to God, than the fervor did. The fervor was good, and did a good work in the soul; it overcome the earthly nature, and made the soul delight in God, and spiritual things; but its delight was too much an own delight, a fancied self-holiness, and occasioned rest and satisfaction in self, which if it had continued uninterrupted, undiscovered, an earthly self had only been changed into a spiritual self. Therefore I called this coldness, or loss of fervor, its divine offspring, because it brings a divine effect, or more fruitful progress in the divine life. For this coldness overcomes, and delivers us from spiritual self, as fervor overcame the earthly nature. It does the work that fervor did, but in an higher degree, because it gives up more, sacrifices more, and brings forth more resignation to God, than fervor did; and therefore it is more in God, and receives more from him. The devout soul therefore is always safe in every state, if it makes everything an occasion either of rising up, or falling down into the hands of God, and exercising faith, and trust, and resignation to him. Fervor is good, and ought to be loved; but tribulation, distress, and coldness, in their season are better, because they give means and power of exercising an higher faith, a purer love, and more perfect resignation to God, which are the best state of the soul. And therefore the pious soul that eyes only God, that means nothing but being his alone, can have no stop put to its progress; light and darkness equally assist him; in the light he looks up to God; in the darkness he lays hold on God; and so they both do him the same good.

This little sketch, Academicus, of the nature and progress of the spirit of prayer, may show you, that a manual is not so great a matter as you imagined.

The best instruction that I can give you, as helpful, or preparatory to the spirit of prayer, is already full given, where we have set forth the original perfection, the miserable fall, and the glorious redemption of man. It is the

true knowledge of these great things that can do all for you, which human instruction can do. These things must fill you with a dislike of your present state, drive all earthly desires out of your soul, and create an earnest longing after your first perfection. For prayer cannot be taught you, by giving you a book of prayers, but by awakening in you a true sense and knowledge of what you are, and what you should be; that so you may see, and know, and feel, what things you want, and are to pray for. For a man does not, cannot pray for anything, because a fine petition for it is put into his hands, but because his own condition is a reason and motive for his asking for it. And therefore it is that the spirit of prayer, in the first part, began with a full discovery and proof of these high and important matters, at the sight of which the world, and all that is in it, shrinks into nothing, and everything past, present, and to come, awakens in our hearts a continual prayer, and longing desire, after God, Christ, and eternity.

Academicus. I perceive then, Theophilus, that you direct me entirely to my own prayer in my private devotions, and not to the use of any book. But surely you do not take this to be right in general, that the common people, who are unlearned, and mostly of low understandings, should kneel down in private, without any borrowed form of prayer, saying only what comes then into their own heads.

Theophilus. It would be very wrong, Academicus, to condemn a manual as such, or to tell any people, learned or unlearned, that they ought not to make any use of it. This would be quite rash and silly: but it cannot be wrong, or hurtful to anybody, to show, that prayer is the natural language of the heart, and, as such, does not want any form, or borrowed words. Now all that has been said of manuals of prayers, only amounts to thus much; that they are not necessary, nor the most natural and excellent way of praying. If they happen to be necessary to any person, or to be his most excellent way, it is because the natural, real prayer of his heart is already engaged, loving, wishing, and longing after, the things of this life; which makes him so insensible of his spiritual wants, so blind and dead as to the things of God, that he cannot pray for them, but so far as the words of other people are put into his mouth. If a man is blind, and knows it not, he may be told to pray for health: so if the soul is in this state, with regard to its spiritual wants, a manual may be of good use to it, not so much by

helping it to pray, as by showing it, at what a miserable distance it is from those tempers which belong to prayer.

But when a man has had so much benefit from the gospel, as to know his own misery, his want of a redeemer, who he is, and how is he to be found; there everything seems to be done, both to awaken and direct his prayer, and make it a true praying in and by the Spirit. For when the heart really pants and longs after God, its prayer is a praying, as moved and animated by the Spirit of God; it is the breath or inspiration of God, stirring, moving and opening itself in the heart. For though the early nature, our old man, can oblige or accustom himself to take heavenly words at certain times into his mouth, yet this is a certain truth, that nothing ever did, or can have the least desire or tendency to ascend to heaven, but that which came down from heaven; and therefore nothing in the heart can pray, aspire, and long after God, but the Spirit of God moving and stirring in it. Every breath therefore of the true Spirit of prayer, can be nothing else but the breath of the Spirit of God, breathing, inspiring, and moving the heart, in all its variety of motions and affections, towards God. And therefore every time a good desire stirs in the heart, a good prayer goes out of it, that reaches God as being the fruit and work of his Holy Spirit. When any man, feeling his corruption, and the power of sin in his soul, looks up to God, with true earnestness of faith and desire to be delivered from it, whether with words, or without words, how can he pray better? What need of any change of thoughts, or words, or any variety of expressions, when the one faith and desire of his heart made known to God, and continued in, is not only all, but the most perfect prayer he can make? Again suppose the soul in another state, feeling with joy its offered redeemer, and opening its heart for the full reception of him; if it stands in this state of wishing and longing for the birth of Christ, how can its prayer be in an higher degree of request? Or if it breaks out frequently in these words, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with all thy holy nature, Spirit, and tempers into my soul," is there any occasion to enlarge, or alter these words into another form of expression? Can he do better, or pray more, than by continually standing from time to time in this state of wishing to have Christ formed in him? Nay, is it not more likely, that his heart should be more divided and dissipated by a numerous change of expressions, than by keeping united to one expression that sets forth all that he wants? For it is the reality, the

steadiness, and continuity of desire, that is the goodness of prayer, and its qualification to receive all that it wants. Our Lord said to one that came to him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" He answered, "Lord, that I may receive my sight": and he received it. Another said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.": and he was cleansed. Tell me what learning, or fine parts, are required to make such prayers as these? and yet what wonders of relief are recorded in Scripture, as given to such short prayers as these! Or tell me what blessing of prayer, or faith, or love, may not now be obtained in the same way, and with as few words, as then was done? Every man therefore that has any feeling of the weight of his sin, or any true desire to be delivered from it by Christ, has learning and capacity enough to make his own prayer. For praying is not speaking forth eloquently, but simply, the true desire of the heart; and the heart, simple and plain in good desires, is in the truest state of preparation for all the gifts and graces of God. And this I must tell you, that the most simple souls, that have accustomed themselves to speak their own desires and wants to God, in such short, but true breathings of their hearts to him, will soon know more of prayer, and the mysteries of it, than any persons who have only their knowledge from learning, and learned books.

Academicus. You seem to me, Theophilus, to have much truth in what you say, and yet to be in a way by yourself. I cannot take you to be with those who place all in many and long forms; and now I take you to be even more against those, who make much account of what they call a gifted man, and make that to be the one true gift of prayer, when anyone is able to pray extempore, or with his own words, for an hour or two at a time.

Theophilus. I have shown you, Academicus, that prayer is purely the desire of the heart; that it has not the nature of praying, but so far as it is the true language of the heart. I have shown you the great benefit that all people must receive from this true prayer of the heart. And to remove all pretense of want of ability in the lowest sort of people to pray from their own hearts, I have shown, that the most simple, short petitions, when truly spoken by the heart, have all the perfection that prayer can have.

But mark, sir, why or when I ascribe this perfection to it. It is when the heart stands continually in this state of wishing to have that, which is expressed in so few words. It is then, that I said, there was no occasion to

enlarge, or alter the words into another or longer form, because the reality, the steadiness, and the continuity of the desire, is the goodness and perfection of the prayer. Now, sir, let us suppose two men; the one is frequently an hour, or two, or a whole night, on his knees, in silent prayer, in high acts of love, and faith, and resignation to God, not outwardly spoken by his mouth; the other is as long a time pouring forth the devotion of his heart in a variety of fervent expressions. May not both these men justly appeal to me, not only as not condemning, but as asserting, the goodness of their length and manner of prayer, since I make a short simple petition to be only then a good prayer, when it proceeds from a steady, continued desire of the heart? It is not therefore silence, or a simple petition, or a great variety of outward expressions, that alters the nature of prayer, or makes it to be good, or better, but only and solely the reality, steadiness, and continuity of the desire; and therefore whether a man offers this desire to God in the silent longing of the heart, or in simple short petitions, or in a great variety of words, is of no consequence; but all of them are equally good, when the true and right state of the heart is with them.

Thus you see, Academicus, that I am so far from being, as you said, in a way by myself, that I am with every man in every way, whose heart stands right towards God. But if you would know what I would call a true and great gift of prayer, and what I most of all wish for to myself, it is a good heart, that stands continually inclined towards God.

Academicus. I am not sorry, Theophilus, that I have made so unreasonable an observation upon what you said, since it has occasioned you to give so good and just an answer to it. But yet this silent prayer you speak of, is what I never read nor heard anything of before; and it seems to me but like ceasing to pray; and yet you seem to like it in its turn, as well as any other way of praying.

Theophilus. All that I have said of prayer, Academicus, has been only to this end, to show you its true and real nature, whence it is to arise, where it is to be found, and how you are to begin, and become a true proficient in it. If, therefore, you were at present to look no further, than how to put yourself in a state of beginning to practice a prayer proceeding from your own heart, and continuing in it, leaving all that you are further to know of

prayer, to be known in its own time by experience, which alone can open any true knowledge in you, this would be much better for you, than to be asking beforehand about such things, as are not your immediate concern.

Begin to be a man of prayer, in this easy, simple, and natural manner, that has been set before you; and when you are faithful to this method, you will then need no other instructor in the art of prayer. Your own heart thus turned to God, will want no one to tell it, when it should be simple in its petitions, or various in its expressions, or prostrate itself in silence before God. But his (this?) hastiness of knowing things, before they become our concern, or belong to us, is very common. Thus a man that has but just entered upon the reformation of his life, shall want to read or hear a discourse upon perfection, whether it be absolutely attainable or not; and shall be more eager after what he can hear of this matter, though at such a distance from himself, than of such things as concern the next step that he is to take in his own proper state.

You, my friend, have already rightly taken the first step in the spiritual life; you have devoted yourself absolutely to God, to live wholly to his will, under the light and guidance of his Holy Spirit, intending, seeking nothing in this world, but such a passage through it, as may tend to the glory of God, and the recovery of your own fallen soul. Your next step is this, it is a looking to the continuance of this first resolution, and donation of yourself to God, to see that it be kept alive, that everything you do may be animated and directed by it, and all the occurrences of every day, from morning to night, be received by you, as becomes a spirit that is devoted to God. Now this second step cannot be taken, but purely by prayer; nothing else has the least power here but prayer: I do not mean you must frequently read or say a number of prayers (though this in its turn may be good and useful to you) but the prayer I mean and which you must practice, if you would take this second step in the spiritual life, is prayer of the heart, or a prayer of your own, proceeding from the state of your heart, and its own tendency to God. Of all things therefore look to this prayer of the heart; consider it as your infallible guide to heaven; turn from everything that is an hindrance of it, that quenches or abates its fervor; love and like nothing but that which is suitable to it; and let every day begin, go on, and end, in the spirit of it. Consider yourself as always wrong, as having gone aside, and lost your right path, when any delight,

desire, or trouble, is suffered to live in you, that cannot be made a part of this prayer of the heart to God. For nothing so infallibly shows us the true state of our heart, as that which gives us either delight or trouble; for as our delight and trouble is, so is the state of our heart: if therefore you are carried away with any trouble or delight, that has not an immediate relation to your progress in the divine life, you may be assured your heart is not in its right state of prayer to God. Look at a man who is devoted to some one thing, or has some one great worldly matter at heart, he stands turned from everything that has not some relation to it; he has no joy or trouble but what arises from it; he has no eyes nor ears, but to see or hear something about it. All else is a trifle, but that which some way or other concerns this great matter. You need not tell him of any rules or methods to keep it in his thoughts; it goes with him into all places and companies; it has his first thoughts in the morning; and every day is good or bad, as this great matter seems to succeed or not. This may show you how easily, how naturally, how constantly, our heart will carry on its own state of prayer, as soon as God is its great object, or it is wholly given up to him, as its one great good. This may also show you, that the heart cannot enter into a state of the spirit of prayer to God, till that which I call the first step in the spiritual life is taken, which is the taking God for its all, or the giving itself up wholly to God. But when this foundation is laid, the seed of prayer is sown, and the heart is in a continual state of tendency to God; having no other delight or trouble in things of any kind, but as they help or hinder its union with God. Therefore, Academicus, the way to be a man of prayer, and be governed by its spirit, is not to get a book full of prayers; but the best help you can have from a book, is to read one full of such truths, instructions, and awakening informations, as force you to see and know who, and what, and where, you are; that God is your all; and that all is misery, but a heart and life devoted to him. This is the best outward prayer book you can have, as it will turn you to an inward book, and spirit of prayer in your heart, which is a continual longing desire of the heart after God, his divine life, and Holy Spirit. When, for the sake of this inward prayer, you retire at any time of the day, never begin till you know and feel, why and wherefore you are going to pray; and let this why and wherefore, form and direct everything that comes from you, whether it be in thought or in word. As you cannot but know your own state, so it must be the easiest thing in the world to look up to God, with such desires as

suit the state you are in; and praying in this manner, whether it be in one, or more, or no words, your prayer will always be sincere, and good, and highly beneficial to you. Thus praying, you can never pray in vain; but one month in the practice of it, will do you more good, make a greater change in your soul, than twenty years of prayer only by books, and forms of other people's making.

No vice can harbor in you, no infirmity take any root, no good desire can languish, when once your heart is in this method of prayer; never beginning to pray, till you first see how matters stand with you; asking your heart what it wants, and having nothing in your prayers, but what the known state of your heart puts you upon demanding, saying, or offering, unto God. A quarter of an hour of this prayer, brings you out of your closet a new man; your heart feels the good of it; and every return of such a prayer, gives new life and growth to all your virtues, with more certainty, than the dew refreshes the herbs of the field: whereas, overlooking this true prayer of your own heart, and only at certain times taking a prayer that you find in a book, you have nothing to wonder at, if you are every day praying, and yet every day sinking further and further under all your infirmities. For your heart is your life, and your life can only be altered by that which is the real working of your heart. And if your prayer is only a form of words, made by the skill of other people, such a prayer can no more change you into a good man, than an actor upon the stage, who speaks kingly language, is thereby made to be a king: whereas one thought, or word, or look, towards God, proceeding from your own heart, can never be without its proper fruit, or fail of doing a real good to your soul. Again, another great and infallible benefit of this kind of prayer is this; it is the only way to be delivered from the deceitfulness of your own hearts.

Our hearts deceive us, because we leave them to themselves, are absent from them, taken up in outward rules and forms of living and praying. But this kind of praying, which takes all its thoughts and words only from the state of our hearts, makes it impossible for us to be strangers to ourselves. The strength of every sin, the power of every evil temper, the most secret workings of our hearts, the weakness of any or all our virtues, is with a noonday clearness forced to be seen, as soon as the heart is made our

prayer book, and we pray nothing, but according to what we read, and find there.

Academicus. O Theophilus, you have shown me, that it is almost as easy and natural a thing to pray, as to breathe; and that the best prayer in the world, is that which the heart can thus easily send forth from itself, untaught by anything, but its own sense of God and itself. And yet I am almost afraid of loving this kind of prayer too much. I am not free from suspicions about it: I apprehend it to be that very praying by the Spirit, or as moved by the Spirit, or from a Light within, which is condemned as Quakerism.

Theophilus. There is but one good prayer that you can possibly make, and that is a prayer in and from the Spirit, or as the Spirit of God moves you in it, or to it. This, this alone, is a divine prayer; no other prayer has, or can possibly have any communion with God. Take the matter thus: man is a threefold being; he has three natures; he partakes of the divine, the elementary, and the diabolical nature. Had he not these three natures in a certain degree in him, he could have no communion with God, he could not enjoy the elements, nor could the evil spirits have the least power of access to him.

Now the astral, elementary nature of man, in this world, cannot have a longing after the pure Deity; it cannot hunger, and thirst after the divine image, nor desire to be perfect as God is perfect; this is as impossible, as for the beasts of the field to long to be angels. Therefore flesh and blood in us, can no more make a divine prayer, than in any other animal of this world.

The diabolical nature which is in us, can do nothing but that which the devils do: it can only rise up in its own pride, envy, and self-exaltation, and only hate all the goodness that is either in heaven, or on earth. And therefore it is a truth of the greatest certainty, that no man ever did, or can send up a divine and heavenly prayer to God, or such a prayer as can reach God, but in and by the Spirit of God in him. Our astral, elementary man, and our proud, subtle, serpentine nature, can read, or say a prayer full of good words and wishes, as easily as Satan could use Scripture-language in the temptation of Christ; but nothing can wish to be

like God, or to unite with his goodness and holiness, but that spirit in us, which partakes of his divine nature. Therefore to ridicule praying by the Spirit, or as moved by the Spirit, is ridiculing the one only prayer that is divine, or can do us any divine good; and to reject and oppose it, as a vain conceit, is to quench, and suppress all that is holy, heavenly, and divine, within us. For if this Holy Spirit does not live, and move in us, and bring forth all the praying affections of our souls, we may as well think of reaching heaven with our hands, as with our prayers.

Academicus. I know not, Theophilus, how to deny anything that you have here said: yet this account seems to make no distinction between our own good spirit, and the Holy Spirit of God, I took the inspirations, and graces of the Holy Spirit to be something, that came into us from without, and to be as distinct from our own good spirit, as God is distinct from the creature.

Theophilus. The Holy Spirit of God is as necessary to our divine life, or the life of grace, as the air of this world is necessary to our animal life; and is as distinct from us, and as much without us, as the air of this world is distinct from, and without, the creatures that live in it. And yet our own good spirit is the very Spirit of God, moving and stirring in us. No animal can unite with, or breathe the air of this world, till it has first the air of this world brought forth, as the true birth of its own life in itself; this is its only capacity to live in the spirit of this world; and the breath or spirit that thus arises in its own life, is the very same breath, that is in outward nature, in which it lives. It is strictly thus, with the Spirit of God in our souls; it must first have a birth within us, arising from the life of our souls, and as such, is our only capacity to have life, and live in the Spirit of God himself, and is the very breath of the Spirit of God, who is yet as distinct from us, as the breath of our animal life, that arises from our own fire, is distinct from the air of the world in which it lives. And thus, Academicus, our own good spirit is the very Spirit of the Deity, and yet not God, but the Spirit of God, breathed or kindled into a creaturely form; and this good spirit, divine in its origin, and divine in its nature, is that alone in us, that can reach God, unite with him, cooperate with him, be moved, and blessed by him, as our earthly spirit is, by the outward spirit of this elementary world.

Academicus. Indeed, Theophilus, you have, in few words, so gone to the bottom of this matter, that nothing is left either for any further doubt, or inquiry about it. My own good spirit is the Breath of God in me, and so related to God, as the breath of my animal life is related to the air, or spirit of this outward world. It is from God, has the nature, the eternity, the Spirituality of God, as the breath of my flesh and blood, has the grossness, the earthly, transitory nature of the spirit of this world. And as all my communication with this world arises from the breath of this world, kindled in my own life, so all my possibility of communication with God, arises solely from the Breath of his Holy Spirit brought forth in the life of my soul; and I can only live in God, by his Spirit having a birth in me, as I can only live in this world, by having its spirit born in me. This plain truth sets all the Scripture-doctrine, concerning the necessity, power, and operation of the Holy Spirit, in the greatest and most edifying degree of clearness. Thus, what can be a more plain, sober, and palpable truth, than when the apostle says, "They only are the sons of God, who are led by the Spirit of God"? It is only like saying, that those creatures only belong to this world, who live in, and by its spirit. I shall here, sir, only add, that my gospel-faith stands now upon a most solid, and comfortable foundation; my heart is all delight, and devotion to God, when I consider, first, that Christ my redeemer is the first seed of the woman, or power of salvation preserved in fallen Adam; the Immanuel; the God within every man; "the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Secondly, that the Holy Spirit of God, the breath of eternity, has also its seed of life in my soul; for where the Word, or Son of God is, there is the Spirit of God in the same state; if one is only a seed of life, a spark of heaven, the other is so also; and these two, thus considered, are the glorious pearl of eternity, hidden in every man's soul, and so often spoken of before. And thus we understand, how the whole of our redemption (according to the plain language of Scripture) is inwardly and outwardly solely the work of the Light and Spirit of God, a kingdom of God within and without us, and to which we do not, cannot live, but so far as we are inspired, moved, and led, by the Spirit of God. Earnestly, therefore, to pray, humbly to hope, and faithfully to expect, to be continually inspired, and animated by the Holy Spirit of God has no more of vanity, fanaticism, or enthusiastic wildness in it, than to hope and pray, to act in everything from and by a good spirit. For as sure as the lip of truth hath told us, that

there is but one that is good, so sure is it, that not a spark of goodness, nor a breath of piety, can be in any creature, either in heaven, or on earth, but by that divine Spirit, which is the Breath of God, breathed from himself into the creature. The matter is not about appearances of goodness, forms of virtue, rules of religion, or a prudential piety, suited to time, and place, and character; all these are degrees of goodness, that our old man can as easily trade in, as in any other matters of this world. But so much as we have of an heavenly and divine goodness, or of a goodness that belongs to heaven, and has the nature of heaven in it, so much we must have of a divine inspiration in us. For as nothing can fall to the earth, but because it has the nature of earth in it; so it is a truth of the utmost certainty, that nothing can ascend towards heaven, or have the least power to unite with it, but that very Spirit which came down from heaven, and has the nature of heaven in it. This truth, therefore, that the kingdom of God is within us, that its light is solely the Lamb of God, its spirit solely the Spirit of God, stands upon a rock, against which all attempts are in vain. All that I now further desire to know, is only this; how I may keep free from all delusions in this matter, and not take my own natural abilities, tempers, and passions, or the suggestions of evil spirits, to be the working of the Spirit of God in me. Pray, sir, tell me how I shall safely know when, and how far, I am led and governed by the Spirit of God?

Theophilus. You may know this, Academicus, just as you know, when you are governed by the spirit of wrath, envy, guile, craft, or covetousness. Every man knows this of himself, as easily, and as certainly as he knows when he is hungry, pleased, or displeased. Now it is the same thing with regard to the Spirit of God; the knowledge of it is as perceptible in yourself, and liable to no more delusion. For the Spirit of God is more distinguishable from all other spirits and tempers, than any of your natural affections or tempers are, from one another; as I will here plainly show you.

“God is unwearied patience, a meekness that cannot be provoked; he is an ever-enduring mercifulness; he is unmixed goodness, impartial, universal love; his delight is in the communication of himself, his own happiness, to everything, according to its capacity he does everything that is good, righteous and lovely, for its own sake, because it is good, righteous, and lovely. He is the good from which nothing but good comes, and resisteth

all evil, only with goodness.” This, sir, is the nature and Spirit of God, and here you have your infallible proof, whether you are moved, and led by the Spirit of God. Here is a proof that never can fail you; is always at hand; and is liable to no mistake or delusion. If it be the earnest desire, and longing of your heart, to be merciful as he is merciful; to be full of his unwearied patience, to dwell in his unalterable meekness; if you long to be like him in universal, impartial love; if you desire to communicate every good, to every creature that you are able; if you love and practice everything that is good, righteous, and lovely, for its own sake, because it is good, righteous, and lovely; and resist no evil, but with goodness; then you have the utmost certainty, that the Spirit of God lives, dwells, and governs in you. Now all these tempers are as capable of being known to every man, as his own love and hatred; and therefore no man can be deceived as to the possession of them, but he that chooses to deceive himself. Now if you want any of these tempers, if the whole bent of your heart and mind is not set upon them, all pretenses to an immediate inspiration, and continual operation of the Spirit of God in your soul, are vain and groundless. For the Spirit of God is that which I have here described; and where his Spirit dwells and governs, there all these tempers are brought forth, or springing up, as the certain fruits of it. What room therefore, Academicus, for so much uncertainty, or fear of delusion, in this matter? Keep but within the bounds here set you; call nothing a proof of the Spirit or work of God in your soul, but these tempers, and the works which they produce; and then, but not till then, you may safely and infallibly say, with St. John, “Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us.”

Academicus. Indeed, Theophilus, you have given me a short, but very full and satisfactory answer to my question. I now perceive, that, as a spiritual man, or one devoted to the Spirit of God, I am not to look after any extraordinaries, any new openings, illuminations, visions, or voices, inward or outward, from God, as proofs of the Spirit of God dwelling and working in me; but that all my proof and security of being governed by the Spirit of God, is to be grounded on other matters: that the boundless humility and resignation of the holy Jesus; the unwearied patience, the unalterable meekness, the impartial, universal love of God, manifested in

my soul; are its only proofs, that God is in me of a truth. Thus far all is right and good.

But yet, sir, surely it must be said with truth, that the Spirit of God often discovers itself, and operates in good souls in very extraordinary ways, in uncommon illuminations, and openings of divine light and knowledge, in the revelation of mysteries, in strong impulses and sallies of a wonderful zeal, full of highest gifts and graces of God: and that these have frequently been God's gracious methods of awakening a sinful world.

Theophilus. What you say, Academicus, is very true; and almost every age of the church is a sufficient proof of it. By the goodness of God, the church has always had its extraordinary persons, highly gifted from above, made burning, and shining lights, and carried into as uncommon ways of life, by the same Spirit, and for the same ends, as John the Baptist was; and as different from common Christians, as he was from the common Jews. But, my friend, these extraordinary operations of God's Holy Spirit, and the wonders of his gifts and graces showing themselves at certain times, and upon certain persons, through all the ages of the church, are not matters of common instruction; they belong not to our subject; it would be ignorance and vanity in me, to pretend to let you into the secret of them; it would be the same thing in you, to think yourself ready for it.

Would you know the sublime, the exalted, the angelic, in the Christian life, see what the Son of God saith: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thy neighbor as thyself. On these two," saith he, "hang all the Law and the prophets." And without these two things, no good light ever can arise, or enter into your soul. Take all the sciences, shine in all the accomplishments of the lettered world, they will only lead you from one vain passion to another; everything you send out from within you is selfish, vain, and bad; everything you see or perceive from without, will be received with a bad spirit; till these two heavenly tempers have overcome the natural perverseness of fallen nature. Till then, nothing pure can proceed from within, nor anything be received in purity from without.

Think yourself therefore unfit, incapable of judging rightly, or acting virtuously, till these two tempers have the government of your heart.

Then every truth will meet you; no hurtful error can get entrance into your heart; you will neither deceive, nor be deceived; but will have a better knowledge of all divine matters, than all the human learning in the world can help you to.

Would you know what it is to love God with all your heart and soul, etc., you need only look back to that, which has been said of the nature and Spirit of God. For when with all your heart and soul you love, and long to have, that nature and Spirit, to be wholly united to it, possessed and governed by it, then you love God with all your heart and soul, etc. And then you are first capable of loving yourself and your neighbor rightly. For so much as you have of the divine nature and Spirit in you, just so much power have you of loving equally, that in yourself and your neighbor, which the Deity only and equally loves, both in you, and him. But it is time to part, when we have only told our silent friend, Humanus, that if we live to meet again, we shall, with all our hearts, receive him as a speaker among us. And so, gentlemen, once more, adieu.

The end of the third dialogue.

FINIS