

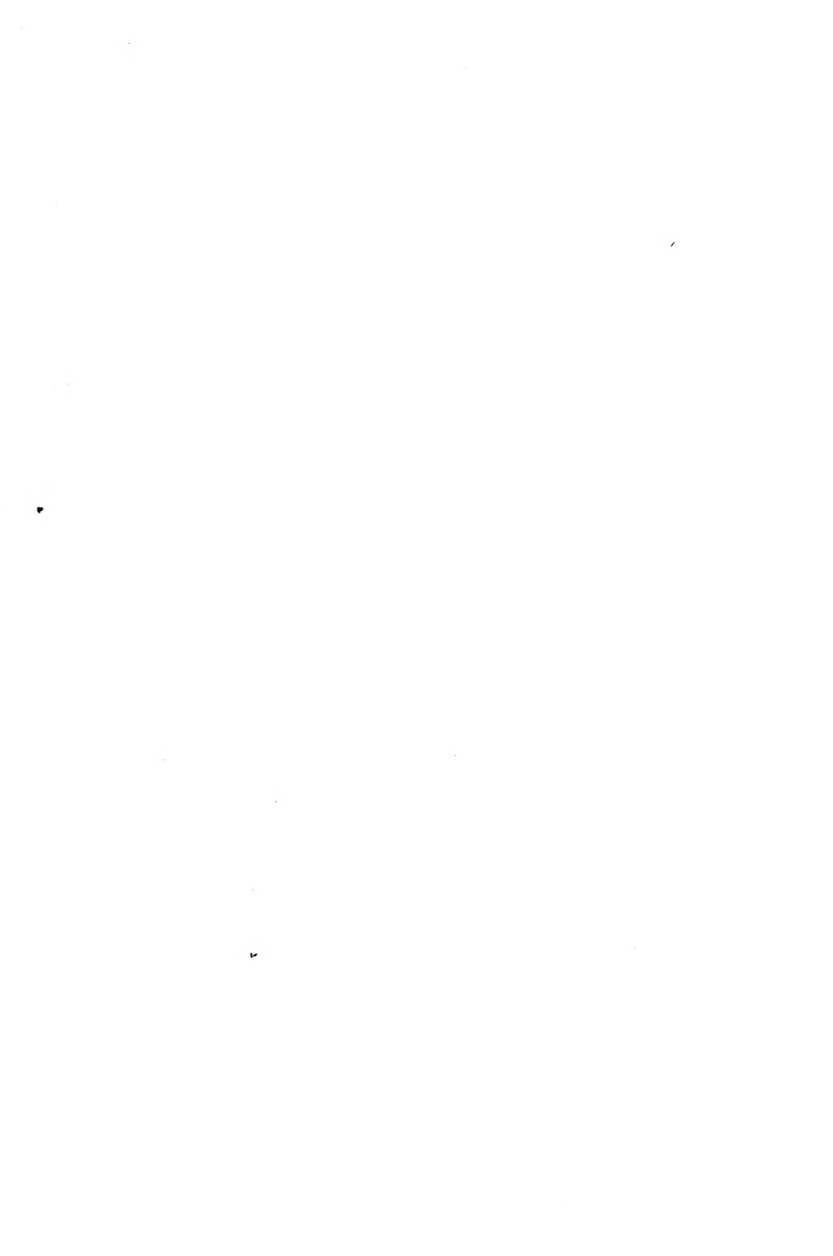
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WILLIAM SCOTT PALMER

AND A PREFACE

BY

W. P. DuBOSE, M.A., S.T.D.

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39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON
NEW YORK, BOMBAY AND CALCUTTA

1908

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PREFACE

THE advance sheets of this book are sent to me without explanation, comment, or suggestion—with a simple request for what I may have to say about it. I am not in the secret and know nothing of the reason of its appearance. I am free therefore to use conjecture, to speculate at will upon what may be, upon what I devoutly hope is, the meaning of it. Does it indicate a want? Does it announce a movement? There is no truth so needed, there is no way to it so plain and direct, as the truth and the way which we do well to associate with the name of William Law.

Before me, too, the real William Law stands here for the first time. I have indeed from childhood owned *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*, but I have never really known it, and I have known nothing else of its author. Personally he is not one of the influences that have entered into my mind or my life. And I am grateful for it; for I see now that to have known him would have too much forestalled the blessed labour of a lifetime. What of truth or of method identical with his I may have attained, I would not forego having wrought out with toil and pain of my own, or at the feet of masters higher than he, even the Highest. I speak not individually but representatively; I trust I am only one of more than seven thousand who know that, whether in William Law or in themselves, the One Way will always lead to the One Truth and the One Life.

The simple re-publication of William Law would have much interest and profit for me personally, but I shall be

sorely disappointed if it is an end and not a new beginning. We want, after all, not William Law, but what William Law stands for, or stood for in his day. Essentially that is the same thing then and now; but it needs to be stood for now as well as then. A living truth wants living, and not only dead, witnesses. Is this the beginning of a movement to raise up a more living testimony to the Reality of God—God in His World, God in His Christ, God in His Church, God in us all if we would but know it? Simply that is all that Law stands for; simply that is all we need to stand for—but simply that is All.

As I am free to conjecture a movement in this matter, so I shall be free to speculate a little upon a programme for the movement; but to avoid all appearance of speaking with either knowledge or authority, I shall have to speak more than I would like in the first person only.

If this is to be a revival of mysticism, we shall have to consider a little what mysticism is, or at least what we are going to mean by it—what our mysticism is going to be. The ordinary sensational or rational conception is that all we know of reality is by inference, deduction, or induction from the known facts of sensible experience. Mysticism, on the contrary, is supposed to involve a direct or immediate communication to the receptive soul of a reality outside of and above the possibility of mere sensible experience. As the heavens are reflected and repeated in the answering depths of a placid lake, so the Heaven of God is mirrored in the responsive soul of man. For one, that is not my mysticism; that is not the way in which reality comes to me. It comes to me all out of the fathomless depths of myself. There are but two things that I know directly and immediately, and therefore really know at all: myself and God—God and myself. When I speak of knowing either myself or God I assume a measureless distinction between knowing and adequate or complete knowing. I shall only in eternity

adequately know myself; but in my first sensation as an infant there was an actual beginning of all that self-knowledge, of the direct and immediate experience of myself to which there is no temporal or finite limit.

Noverim Te, Domine, noverim me! Noverim me, noverim Te! That is the only immediate and real knowledge. I have the immediate experience, the direct knowledge of myself—but what is myself? To say that I cannot know myself in myself—because in fact I am not in myself—is only half a truth; the other half truth is that I am never only myself but always immeasurably more than myself. What is that more, the universal of which I am a particular, the whole of which I am a part? I can think out myself only on the lines of myself, and I cannot think out myself on the true lines of myself, I cannot follow the true way that leads from initial to adequate and complete knowledge of myself, without coming straight to God. What is God but the infinite Me, the infinite All of us, the infinite All in all? When I try to think myself out to perfection, or to the limit, what conception can I come to but that of infinite intelligence or wisdom, infinite feeling, affection, or love, infinite energy, activity, or freedom, infinite order, beauty, or law—in a word, infinite selfhood or personality? And what is all that but God in whom I am, and Who in my measure is in me? Is there any other alternative to that than to think of myself as part in the fortuitous play of eternal so-called matter? And can that ever explain or express Me?

I know that Jesus Christ is the Truth, because as a matter of fact only Jesus Christ perfectly expresses and reveals to me the truth of God and myself, myself in God and God in myself. That which is the truth of us is necessarily truth to us, if we will let ourselves know the truth. Incarnation, redemption, completion, at-one-ment, resurrection, eternal life are self-evident facts in Christ. Not to know that truth is not to see the light. Jesus Christ is the only and infallible

proof of Himself to every one who will let himself know; because in Christ we are revealed to ourselves as the finite of God, and God is revealed to us as the Universal or Infinite of ourselves.

The faith of William Law is identical with that for which we would stand now, and can hardly be repeated in better terms than those used by him two centuries ago. His mentality, too, to use a recent distinction, is in many respects singularly modern. But considering the particular centuries that separate us from him, it will be seen that he can speak to us to-day only by awaking and raising successors to himself in and of this Twentieth Century. Mysticism has been regarded hitherto in the light of a retreat or refuge from the world. It has been the part of the reflective or contemplative life, beside and quite apart from what is considered the actual life of men. Any mysticism that would come forward now must be of another sort: it must be of the practical, active kind, like St. Paul's, or better still the living, searching, quickening sort of our Lord's. We want a real God, the living Christ, not only in meditation but in action, not in our retreats only but in our furthest advances, in our most active enterprises and our most enterprising activities.

It is the greatest of mistakes to suppose that all that is true in mysticism is not applicable to action, and is not indeed necessary to all truest and highest action. Mysticism means God or Reality in all life, and there most where life is most active and most urgent and most real. Our Lord was never more a mystic than in the act, the moment of supreme action as well as passion, in which He conquered and destroyed sin and death and hell, and brought life and immortality to light.

It was said long ago that life is lived in the leisure that follows labour: meaning by labour the natural and necessary toil of our earthly life. And the saying has been interpreted to make a clear separation between the making a living in

this world and living a quite other life in the imagination or in the affections or in the spirit. But the interpretation might be with more truth quite reversed by emphasizing not the word *follows*, which divides, but the word *labour*, which unites and identifies the two things spoken of. The life here, and the toil and pain and earning of it, is the antecedent and condition of any other life that can follow or go beyond it. The leisure in which alone the latter is lived would have no meaning, and could have no existence, out of vital connection with the labour that preceded and prepared it. We cannot live either a contemplative life apart from an active one, or a heavenly one apart from the earthly one. The one is the necessary condition, the only opportunity, instrument, or means we have of working out or in any way attaining the other. There is a natural and there is a spiritual. Howbeit, that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and (only) *afterward* that which is spiritual. Life is lived only in a leisure that follows *labour*. Only he who knows how to live this will know how to live that. And the *follows* here is only logical and not necessarily chronological. The meaning is, that it is only as we truly live all our natural life that we can by means of it live our divine or heavenly life.

What is the heavenly life, the life of God in us? It is not defined for us in thought, it is expressed for us in action: it is the life of Christ. And the expression of it in Him is as simple and plain in meaning as it is thorough and complete in fact. The Son of Man is come not to be served, but to serve: to spend His life, to give Himself, in service: to be not Lord of all, but servant of all—or Lord only as servant. The point is, that in that simple statement we have the scientifically exact and complete expression of the meaning of human life—of all its truth, its beauty, or its blessedness. The necessary Spirit of all real Service is Love, the universal Form of it is Sacrifice. In these few words we have all the

secret of the life of Christ : all the truth of God in Christ and Christ in us, which is Christianity. We can realize this in thought only as we realize it in life : we can know it only as we do it, and in doing we cannot but know it. Christ comes to us indeed at first as an idea or an ideal, as a sentiment and a hope ; but the idea becomes knowledge, and the hope possession and fruition, only in the actual participation of the life.

What we need to remember is that the common sense of humanity recognizes this truth, however little it realizes it. There is no part of life which is not actual service, and which is not perfect just in proportion as it is real service—that is, as its spirit is love, and its form is sacrifice. The moment human labour really begins, it begins to differentiate and specialize : it enters upon that division of labour which is co-operation and service. What occupation or business, what trade, calling, or profession is there which does not call itself, does not profess to be, a service of others : which does not go upon the avowed principle that as a matter of fact we serve ourselves only in serving others? The merchant serves his customers, the lawyer his clients, the physician his patients, the legislator his constituents ; and all the world knows perfectly well that the true principle and direction of service is, not, He serves others best who most serves himself, but, He only truly serves himself who best serves others. Self is most in the result, the reward, where it has been least in the motive or the thought. We shall never get deeper in either fact or terms than this, that only he who loses himself shall find himself. Our life is not in ourself but in others, in All, in God. Ourself is indeed everything to us ; but we must find it where it is, we must seek that in which it is, or which is it.

This is of course the mere commonplace of Christianity, but the point to note is that it is equally the language and the profession of commonsense. The world at every point wants to serve us, it says. Does it?—or does it not? Is it we or

itself that it wants to serve? What a little question and what an immeasurable distinction! In that difference lies all the reality of God, all the life of Christ, all the kingdom of heaven. Now this distinction is to be made, this difference is to be attained by us only in the natural conditions and experiences of the every day earthly life. We shall not find that kingdom of heaven in any escape from the world, in the wilderness or the desert, in mystic contemplation or divine abstraction and absorption.

Mysticism means for us the immediacy and reality of God in us; and this age wants God in us in all the complex relations and activities of our intense social life, in our homes, in our business, in our politics and our statesmanship. How the trite truth that public office is a public trust has been made to come home to us by timely and practical emphasis in these late years! But what part in the universal division and co-operation of labour and of life falls to any one of us that is not in its measure an office from and a trust for a lesser or a larger public? All life, seen in the true human light of Jesus Christ, is an office, a ministry, a divine service, wherein we find ourselves in the only way and place of giving ourselves to God and others.

We say this over and over again, and the world knows it and feels it, and says it with us,—when it lets itself think and feel and speak the truth. But where are we the nearer to bridging the chasm between ideas or ideals and sentiments on the one side, and God, Reality, the Life of Christ on the other side? Seek ye first the kingdom and righteousness of God, and all things else shall be yours. How true that is, and how well we know it! Who gainsays the fact that the first condition of any real success in act or life, or of any resultant real reward or blessedness, is that it shall be a right act or the right life? How well we know it, how easily we ignore it! A man may gain the whole world and lose his soul, his life, himself,—and that upon a construction which

the world itself will put upon what constitutes the man's life, soul, self. On the other hand there is such a thing as losing, giving up the whole world, and thereby, not merely finding, but in reality making or attaining oneself, the real and true Self of God in us.

If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye will do them : the blessedness of Christianity is inseparably connected, not with the knowing, but with the doing it. It ceases to be valued within or respected without because we have lost out of it the element of the heroic, which is the mark of its divinity. What does Christianity do for you?—they say ; or, for us?—we ourselves say. Here is the answer : What does Christ say to faith? Be it unto thee even as thou wilt : it will be to thee all that thou wilt take it and make it ; it can be no more. How can Christ be in us what we will not be in Him—or more than we will be in Him? What we want to give to our age is the mysticism not of thought or feeling only but of power, the immediacy and reality of Christ and of God in us, a present actuality of eternal divine life. We want our new mystics among men in the world, not outside of it ; men in business, in society, in politics, in public position. It is absurd to say that when common sense and common consent agree with divine revelation in asserting that the first law or principle of human act or activity is the fundamental one of right, rightness, or righteousness ; that the only actual or conceivable possible principle of righteousness is the principle of that service which is itself love and takes everywhere the divine form of sacrifice ; that this is what we mean by God and Christ,—or rather that this is what God and Christ themselves mean in the world ;—it is absurd, I say, to imagine that the introduction of such a mysticism as that is a thing not to be attempted and not to be accomplished, or that the accomplishment or even the attempt will make us less men, or the world less the world, or business less business, or life less life. Nothing is ever lessened by the real and heroic attempt

to make it what every one knows it ought to be. We ought never to despair of heroism or surrender the hope of reality. What ought to be can be; and as things are here, according to their definite and determined constitution in this world, what ought to be can be only through us: only we can make it possible or actual. God works in ways and by agencies which, because they are His, will remain what they are. We are His agents in the world for making the world what it ought to be and is to be: He will not make it unless we will make it, or until we will make it. God is not going to do any part of our work instead of us—that would be to unmake us; He waits, and will hasten, to do all our work in us and with us, just so soon and just so far as we will do it in and with Him.

The type of mysticism we want is that of St. Paul; the immediacy and reality of God in Christ, and that, not instead of, but in, and one with, himself too; such a being of God in him and himself in God as brooks no possibility of ultimate opposition or defeat. If God is with me what can be against me? In all these things, in all that can befall me, I am more than conqueror; I can do all and endure all and become and be all, through Him that loved me and gave Himself for me and dwells in me. It is only a true living, active, working mysticism of the most actual and practical kind that can understand or interpret St. Paul. We must not associate with such a mysticism the conception of an impatient and impracticable optimism. St. Paul's victory was often enough matter not of sensible experience, but of invincible and indestructible faith and hope. It had this foundation which could never be removed: I know in Whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him.

As the tendency of mysticism in general has been to detach itself from the world, so has it been also to detach itself from the Church. Its immediate contact and dealing with God

has made it more or less independent of the help of any intermediary between God and itself. It is true that the primary and essential truth of mysticism is prior to Sacrament or Church or even to the historical event of the Incarnation itself. It lies in the nature of God and of man and of their natural relation and potential relationship. It is the nature of things that man is in God and that God should be in man. Man is necessarily in God, but only potentially is God in man in the full sense in which He is destined to be so. The actualization of that potentiality must of necessity wait and depend upon man. We are sons of God; but it is equally true that we are not His sons until we become so. We are so by nature *potentiâ*; we are so *actu* only by grace through faith; that is to say, only by the actual birth and nature and life of God in us. It is not a natural relation only, but an actualized living relationship, a personal participation of common life, that makes us sons in all the meaning and reality of sonship.

The Incarnation was an act in time only because it was a truth in eternity. It was the predestined truth of the whole and ultimate—not only relation but—relationship between God and His world. Men become One in Christ because it was their nature and therefore their destinature so to become one. The necessary truth and the self-evidence of the Incarnation as an historical fact rest upon its entire connection and identity with the prior truth of the related natures and the predestined relationship of God and man. It has been possible for mysticism to be so absorbed in the higher and prior truth as to be neglectful of the lower and temporal act and fact of the Incarnation.

As the truth of the Incarnation consisted in the perfection of its connection with and its actualization of prior and eternal processes, so the Church has no reason or meaning other than the continuation and completion of the work of the Incarnation. There is no other truth or justification of

it than as part of the eternal process of the unification of God and His world, God and man. But we must not, through absorption in the prior and what we may consider the higher significance of this process, forget or neglect the later and what may seem to us the lower stages of it. We want not only meanings but means, not only truth but application. Although Christ in one sense is in us all, yet in an equally important sense He will not come in us unless He comes to us. All ourselves were eternally in Christ; but we should never have come to ourselves in Christ if Christ had not come to us in Himself, and did not continue to come to us in His Church. He must be an immediate and living reality to us, as in His eternal truth, so no less in His temporal manifestation and in His continued presence and operation. We shall never develop into God and ourselves immanently or by natural process, except as we foresee God and ourselves transcendently, without us and ever before us, to be sought, overtaken, and attained in the eternity it will need, by the spiritual and moral processes of grace, faith, and personal self-realization.

As therefore our mysticism must be in the world, so must it be in the Church. We may have yet to define what the Church is; but if we need to understand, or even in a sense to discover it, we can never by possibility dispense with or discard it. I will go further and say that we can never materially alter its own essential notes of itself: in its true and ultimate nature it can never be other than One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. We may have to revise, we may not yet have half comprehended, all or any of these terms. But they are all truer than we know, and our further task is to interpret and realize them, not to outgrow or discard.

I have suggested certain emphases, not as lacking in the volume before us, but as seeming specially needful for the times. I have forgotten William Law in the thought of the Mystics of the 20th Century, who seem to me already to be

in existence, known to God and needing only, like the seven thousand, to be known to themselves. May this reappearance of William Law help to reveal and begin to combine and unite them!

I would say in conclusion that in the introduction to this volume, and in other writings by the same author, now for the first time before me, I see indications of leadership which greatly encourage me, and a spirit, direction, and method with which I thoroughly sympathize and concur. And the great gratification and hope of it is, that this call to us to come up higher and make our Christianity more real comes to us out of the heart of the Laity of the Church.

W. P. DuBOSE.

Liberal and Mystical Writings of William Law

INTRODUCTION.

WE are losers by the fact that William Law wrote *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life*. The book is a masterpiece in its way; it has elements too of popularity; it is stirring and terrible, if one is of Law's mind when he wrote it; and it may be amusing if one is not. But great and even lasting as are its merits, it conceals Law; it misrepresents the man as he himself desired to be known by us; and because it is so far and so justly renowned, it blots out for us by sheer magnitude of appearance the wise, profound, and tender things of the message he gave after his gift of religious insight had developed. That he ever became a great seer of truth is due to the influence of Jacob Behmen's mystical and theosophical teaching, which turned him from the mind in which he wrote *A Serious Call*, to the larger mind in which he wrote those "golden books," *The Spirit of Prayer* and *The Spirit of Love*, and *The Way to Divine Knowledge*. In this larger mind he interpreted Behmen as no one else has interpreted him. And he not only did this, but in so doing he anticipated much of the religious Liberalism which surrounds us to-day, and in which the growing life of the Church is finding new expression. True Christian mysticism, in every place and time, is at one with this movement; but the mysticism of Law is not only peculiarly easy for men who are not mystics to lay hold of intelligently; it illustrates and even illuminates both the psychology and the philosophy that are now effecting momentous changes in our thought. Law uses in his own manner the language of that kind of pragmatism which

is being absorbed by Catholic thinkers; he accepts and applies the principle and the method of immanence; and his philosophy is one of intuition and action as opposed to a bare intellectualism, and to the abstract reason of rationalists. By his continual appeal to the plain man's experience he leads him to discover what these things should mean to him; and in these matters and this appeal he is a modern of moderns. But I have found that in spite of his plainness, and of the pertinence of his message in the present day, it is almost impossible to induce people to read him. They are discouraged by the occasional intrusion of Behmen's repellent symbolism, and by the argumentative use he often makes both of this, and of the symbolism and allegory of the Old Testament. Of course, he was of his passing age, although he was also of the perennial age of the prophets. He knew nothing of the enlightening product of a co-ordinated Biblical criticism which we enjoy; and which has shown us the manner and the means of the revelation of God in man, with a force, clearness, and penetration that cannot be resisted, and must go on to transform even our own manner of speaking and thinking of religious truth. The new scientific knowledge of man, also, as given to us in the progress of psychology, and in the biological investigation of origins, was out of his reach. He knew nothing of racial evolution, or of the derivation of the nature of man from his pre-human ancestors. And so, in his interpretation of the obvious facts of universal *actual* sin, he had nothing to oppose to a doctrine of the corruption of human *nature*, and its inheritance by every descendant of an Adam who had fallen from original righteousness in Paradise. This had come to him in a curious form in the cosmological speculation of Behmen, who, as a Lutheran, had been taught to hold a view of natural corruption much more extreme and disproportionate to facts than Catholic teaching permits. The effect upon Law was in certain respects very serious. Behmen's erroneous doctrine pervades his later writings, and determines the form given to his arguments. But it is exceedingly interesting to find that, in spite of the stress laid by him upon original righteousness and transmitted corruption of nature, these speculative mistakes are quite

unessential to his teaching, and the whole force and meaning of it is preserved if we translate them into the language of our own thought, and in terms of a profounder knowledge of the history and constitution of mankind. We can do this without loss, because Law was fully aware that actual sin is entirely an affair of the will; and because he conceived redemption as a process of the indwelling Christ, affecting both the inherited nature and every operation of man, volitional or otherwise. But we may reasonably think that he would have welcomed such teaching as is given, for instance, in Mr. Tennant's admirable Hulsean Lectures on *The Origin and Propagation of Sin*; and would have found it at least as congruous with his general body of thought as were the speculative extravagancies of Behmen. If we translate an occasional allusion here and there, the passages given in this book will be found harmonious with the now growing belief that, as Mr. Tennant says, "we find the ground of the possibility and occasion for sin in our natural constitution regarded as the perfectly normal result of a process of development through which the race has passed previously to the acquisition of full personality; and . . . we assign the rise of evil itself simply to the difficulty of the task which has to be encountered by every individual person alike, the task of enforcing his inherited organic nature to obey a moral law which he has only gradually been enabled to discern."*

In many passages, however, which I have omitted, Behmen's speculations obtrude themselves so much as to become irritating to us who are seeking the mind of Law, as well as the noble thoughts of Behmen himself, in which he tries to embody his deep spiritual experience. All such parts of Law's books I have omitted, but every omission is marked by spaces.

Only two of the books which I have used are now in print—*The Spirit of Prayer* and *The Spirit of Love*. This fact alone justifies me, I think, in presenting a large part of *The Way to Divine Knowledge* and other writings, in order that we who know him, if we know him at all, as only the author

* Tennant: "The Origin and Propagation of Sin," p. 81. Cambridge University Press.

of a literary classic, or a religious book that is no longer alive for us, may have a further opportunity to discover him in his different manner. He has, indeed, much to give and to teach. He is able to show us that the *principle* and the *method* of that immanence, of which we hear every day, do not, when rightly conceived and used, lead to the *doctrine* of immanence justly said to share the perils of Pantheism. It is true that he was accused during his lifetime of being a follower of Spinoza; but this was almost inevitable for a mystic in the eighteenth century, and he repudiated the charge in set terms and not only by the real meaning of the whole body of his teaching. His sense of moral distinctions, of holiness and of sin, is alone enough to show him as no Pantheist; and while he teaches that God is immanent in the life of man, he recognises, fully and practically, that in His personal relations with man He is, and must be, transcendent. Law always pictures man as sought by his Heavenly Father, meeting, freely co-operating with, and being permeated by, Him; and reconciled to Him by the redeeming power of love. The Christian principle and method of immanence should lead to a doctrine of transcendence, and Law illustrates this connection. But we have many preachers of the immanence of God and the process of His revelation, who are either knowingly, or in ignorance, drifting into some sort of Pantheism; and these men need the corrective that Law may help to give. He shows that it is not necessary to go back to the errors of the Neoplatonists, as well as to their truth, in order to escape Deistic formalism, supernatural mechanics, and religious legalism. Here, in these almost forgotten books, wherein he tried to give Behmen's theosophy and religious psychology to the English world, is a cure for much religious disease. He meant it as a cure for the crude Deism of his century; it will do well for the more subtle kind prevalent in our own; it will do at least equally well for our new Pantheism. The common root of both is abstract thinking, and the rejection or ignoring of great tracts of living experience. Law is a prophet of full reality, and of the wholeness of vital truth. He sees that man—that is, the whole concrete marvel-working man—is at once the theatre of real events, the field of the only happenings

that have significance for human life, and the owner of the power by which their course is determined in himself, and for the world. He is for ever insisting upon the fact from which men are for ever trying to escape, the fact that in matters of religion only those things which happen *in* a man happen *for* him. A Christ that is not in him cannot be for him. Transactions, enactments, laws, commands, win living efficacy, if they have it at all, from the individual man's interior acceptance, and the consequent transformation of their suggestive opportunity and outwardness, into his personal action. They are nothing for him unless he uses them as means to his own real ends. The teaching of authority, if it is merely external, is nothing, because it has its only efficacy in his life; the reason of rationalism is a toy, unless he makes it a tool, for his life. And even his own intellectual operations are only mechanical operations, if and in so far as they fail to become translated into inward and vital change of his whole self.

Spiritual and religious truth which the individual man does not find at work within him, he never finds at all; it is not his, and it cannot be made to be his. God cannot save, unless the man will be saved; and salvation is the new birth into the divine life of a son of God, who is destined to live in organic personal harmony with God, and perishes apart from Him. The righteousness that is essential to this harmony must be a man's proper righteousness, however embryonic and merely prophetic it seem to be; or he never will be righteous through time or in eternity. If the sinner is forgiven and set in the way of salvation, it is by no decree, convention, *fiat*, or even gift; it is because he has become forgiveable. He can hold the love of God at arm's length and never be forgiven, never become righteous, although the whole power of God is at work to forgive him and to make him righteous. Living reality, living effective truth, a living effective Christ—the Son of God who is Truth, who is the only Way, and the only divine-human Life—these are the great affairs of Law's discourse. When he decries reason he has in his mind's eye rationalism; and he does not always stop to remind us that there is a reason to which the divine Word makes appeal, a reason that rationalism does not know,

the reason that embraces reasons of the heart and of the activity of man, as well as those of his discursive head. But he knows this reason; and indeed is fighting for it against that other, which was the enemy in his day. He is making his appeal to it for judgement against an abstract rationality which usurps its place and name. So we must bear in mind when we read his denunciations of the rationalist's reason and its work, that he is not pleading for unreason, but for the higher, true, reality-working reason of man, in his "magical," mysterious life in God.

The liberal Christians of our own day are making the same protest, bearing the same testimony. They and Law will be mutual interpreters; through them, perhaps, he will at last come into his own; and where he is partial their larger range will extend him. I am sure that they will enable us to understand him as he has never before been understood, except perhaps by a disciple here or there. He was in advance of his time, like every seer; and, like all the seers, he is now being interpreted to us by the men of our new Christian and Catholic thought, by Newman and Tyrrell and DuBose, by Laberthonnière and Loisy. He will be charged, as some of these are charged, with individualism; but the charge is as baseless as that of unreason. Law's Christian Body of individual persons is the Catholic Church. It is inspired by the one Spirit, formed in the one Christ, filled with, and operating by, the one including Love; even the world is not for him individualistic, although he recognizes more than most of us the true significance of the fact that it is a world of individuals. He sees that his prophetic mission is to call men to the recognition of the far-reaching vital fact, that truth held in common among men, in the body to which they belong, has mysterious and mystical, as well as rational, sources and corroboration in individual men. He shows them that when it is externalized and corruptly rationalized, and when its sources are forgotten, it is in danger of being lost both to the individual man and to the body of men. He shows them that the operation of God among men is carried on within men; that there, and there alone, the natural is being penetrated and permeated by the supernatural, the manhood being

uplifted into God and made to partake of its general inheritance of truth, and light, and life in the free work of a common Sonship and Communion in Christ. His time called for this sublime teaching; our time calls for it now.

The one meeting-place of God with men is in the life of men. There, a wonderful process, which no man can wholly analyze or adequately describe, goes on; good and truth prevail, and error and evil are expelled, by the power of God mysteriously become power of man. There Christ is born ever anew, and there He grows towards the fulness and completeness of divine manhood—the measure of His own stature. And because He is one, and because men are one in Him and God, the common Holy Spirit of wisdom and truth and power becomes manifest among men, and has authority, which takes visible shape, in the Church of Christ. This authority, instrumental and more or less organized, bears witness among men to the truth of the God-Man, the truth of both the individual and the common life of men. It is valuable, it is necessary. But its value issues with its truth from the inner life of the sons of God, and as that life grows, embodied authority must grow; as the sons of God learn to embrace new aspects of the truth, it also must embrace them. And when the bearers of authority forget the sacred place from which it springs, the sons of God must bring their individual witness, and recall them to the working out of the proper function of authority, dogmatic or ecclesiastical, in relation to the divine humanity which it exists to serve.

This corrective witness is required of Christian men in our own day; but it is the same work that Law in his day was called to perform, in face of the formalism and rationalism which he knew as dominating powers. He too pointed to the truth of the life of individual men, as we must point now. It is the ever-needed and ever-recurring witness to the truth of Christ. And for both Law and ourselves it has now a new support. The rationalism, the intellectualism, of the Church is with us still, the rationalism of opponents of the Church is perhaps as active as it ever was. But new forces have come to our aid. These forces are a developed physical science, which has begun to learn the limitation of its methods (although it has not yet taught them to the

world at large); a developed historical and literary criticism, which has removed many stationary landmarks, and has made the position of theologizing rationalists in the Church very difficult to maintain; and a growing recognition, in the highest intellectual ranks, of the mystery behind knowledge, and of those mysterious powers and interpenetrations of human life to which Law makes appeal, and which, for the men of the eighteenth century, seemed mere superstitious nonsense. These things have come since Law wrote, and they are beginning to change the whole outlook of our time. They are providing a fruitful soil for such seed-ideas as those which he gave to the world, and they are protecting us against the mystic's danger of individualism, and against the opposite danger of an external absolutism in authority. The Catholic ideal of a Body in which all men are members, and all members are indwelt by God in Christ, is the one ideal that can match the demands of religious men, if they have learnt the lesson of modern thought, and feel the pressure of the new forces of our day. That ideal has no place for either absolutism or individualism; and it is likely to save us now from the excessive swing of the pendulum to one side or the other, which has done so much harm in past epochs of reformation in religion, and which, to some extent, gives a one-sided appearance to the teaching of William Law. That it is appearance only is due to his own profound religious experience, and to his intellectual hold on the oneness of our life in Christ. But for this he would probably have fallen into the pit that awaits every mystic who abstracts himself from the whole to which he belongs; and seeks God by excluding, instead of including, the things of God and the common life of the sons of God.

Looking broadly at Law's teaching, and at the admirable and effective use that he made of Behmen's theosophy, it is difficult to repress a wish that he had not been born, as he was, out of due time; but had lived in our own day. It is surely permissible to regret that we cannot have his interpretation of Monsieur Bergson's remarkable *Évolution Créatrice*, when we read what he derived from *Aurora* and *The Threefold Life of Man*. He had a mind at one with

our best thoughts, and with all our knowledge. And he triumphed, as very few men have ever triumphed, over grave, although of course only relative, disabilities; therefore he comes to us now to be recognized, as he has never before been recognized, as a great teacher. We may put aside all pride in the thought of those modern advantages, of which most of us are making little use, while we read what he says; and we may perhaps begin to learn from him, not only to appropriate and incorporate in our lives something of his wisdom and his truth, but to profit by the work of our own great thinkers and seers as he profited by Jacob Behmen.

WM. SCOTT PALMER.

THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

WE starve in the midst of plenty, groan under infirmities, with the remedy in our own hands; 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 earth 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.

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?

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

have Christ to be their Saviour 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 Saviour; for His salvation, if it is had, must be had in this world; if He saves 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 honours of this world, His love of God, His desire of doing God's will and seeking only His honour. 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 Saviour.

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 every one of us. For this holy Jesus, that is to be formed in thee, that is to be the Saviour 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.

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 unto her, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that talketh with thee, thou wouldst 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 into 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 Saviour 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 Saviour, its God, within itself. Thou seest, hearest, and feelest nothing of God, because thou seekest for Him abroad with thine 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 dwelleth, there is the seat of His Light and Holy Spirit.

For this turning to the Light and Spirit of God within thee is thine 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, thine 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 centre, or as branches from the body of a tree. This depth is called the centre, 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.

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

But if thou turnest from this heavenly Pearl, and 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 to have twenty times passed by the palace, will be the same good or the same nothing to thee.

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.

This Light and Spirit of God thus freely restored again to the soul, and lying in it as a secret source of heaven, is called grace, free grace, or the supernatural gift, or power of

God in the soul, because it was something that the natural powers of the soul could no more obtain. Hence it is, that in the greatest truth, and highest reality, every stirring of the soul, every tendency of the heart towards God and goodness, is justly and necessarily ascribed to the Holy Spirit, or the grace of God. It is because this first Seed of life, which is sown into the soul as the gift or grace of God to fallen man, is itself the Light and Spirit of God; and therefore every stirring or opening of this Seed of Life, every awakened thought or desire that arises from it, must be called the moving, or the quickening of the Spirit of God; and therefore that new man which arises from it must of all necessity be said to be solely the work and operation of God. Hence also we have an easy and plain declaration of the true meaning, solid sense, and certain truth of all those Scriptures which speak of the inspiration of God, the operation of the Holy Spirit, the power of the Divine Light, as the sole and necessary agents in the renewal and sanctification of our souls, and also as being things common to all men. It is because this Seed of Life, or Bruiser of the serpent, is common to all men, and has in all men a degree of life which is in itself so much of the inspiration or Life of God, the Spirit of God, the Light of God, which is in every soul and is its power of becoming born again of God. Hence also it is, that all men are exhorted not to quench, or resist, or grieve the Spirit; that is, this Seed of the Spirit and Light of God that is in all men as the only source of good.

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 hath 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.

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 Christ down from above? or who shall descend into the deep, to bring Christ up from the dead?" For behold the Word, which is the Wisdom of God, is in thy heart; it is there as a Bruiser of thy 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 the divine Life in the soul, that can give true understanding of the things of God.

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 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 hath it upon His shoulders. Through this desire the poor prodigal son leaveth his husks and swine, and hasteth to his Father; it is because of this desire that the Father seeth the son while yet afar off, that He runs out to meet him, falleth on his neck, and kisseth 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 Gospel, and then the divine Life, or operation of God, enters into them, and the new birth in Christ is formed in those that 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."

O 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 Saviour to all that turn the desire of their hearts to Thee! O 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 followeth 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! O 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 Judæa, but to the birth of Jesus in the dark centre of thine own fallen soul.

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.

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

But if, with sound and good legs, you would not stir one step till you had got crutches to hop with, surely a man might show you the folly of not walking with your own legs, without being thought a declared enemy to crutches or the makers of them. Now a Manual is not so good an help as crutches, because that which you do with the crutches is the 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.

The painful sense and feeling of what you are, kindled into a working state of sensibility by 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 it 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. 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 fervour 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 come so near to God, has found such an 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 its whole being, which continually stands in fulness of faith, in purity of love, in absolute resignation, to do, and be, what and how its beloved pleases. This is the last state of the Spirit of Prayer, and is its highest union with God in this life.

II.

APPENDIX TO THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

IN A LETTER TO A FRIEND.

THE schools have given us very accurate definitions of every vice, whether it be covetousness, pride, wrath, envy, etc., and shown us how to conceive them as notionally distinguished from one another. But the Christian has a much shorter way of knowing their nature and power, and what they all are, and do, in and to himself. For, call them by what names you will, or distinguish them with ever so much exactness, they are all, separately and jointly, just that same one thing, and all do that same one work, as the Scribes, the Pharisees, hypocrites, and rabble of the Jews, who crucified Christ, were all but one and the same thing, and all did one and the same work, however different they were in outward names. If you would therefore have a true sense of the nature and power of pride, wrath, covetousness, envy, etc., they are in their whole nature nothing else but the murderers and crucifiers of the true Christ of God; not as the High Priests did many hundred years ago, nailing His outward humanity to an outward cross, but crucifying afresh the Son of God, the holy Immanuel, who is the Christ that every man crucifies as often as he gives way to wrath, pride, envy, or covetousness, etc. For every temper or passion that is contrary to the new birth of Christ, and keeps the holy Immanuel from coming to life in the soul, is, in the strictest truth of the words, a murderer and killer of the Lord of life. And where pride, and envy, and hatred, etc., are suffered to live, there the same thing is done as when Christ was killed and Barabbas was saved alive.

This Christ of God hath many names in Scripture; but they all mean only this, that He is, and alone can be, the light,

and life, and holiness of every creature that is holy, whether in heaven or on earth. Wherever Christ is not, there is the wrath of nature, or nature left to itself and its own tormenting strength of life, to feel nothing in itself but the vain, restless contrariety of its own working properties. This is the one only origin of hell, and every kind of curse and misery in the creature. It is nature without the Christ of God, or the Spirit of Love, ruling over it. And here you may observe that wrath has in itself the nature of hell; and that it can have no beginning or power in any creature, but so far as it has lost the Christ of God. And when Christ is everywhere, wrath and hatred will be nowhere. Whenever, therefore, you willingly indulge wrath, or let your mind work in hatred, you not only work without Christ, but you resist Him, and withstand His redeeming power over you; you do in reality what those Jews did when they said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us." For Christ never was, nor can be, in any creature, but purely as a Spirit of Love.

Now, the difficulty which you find in attaining to this purity and universality of the Spirit of Love is because you seek for it, as I once told you, in the way of reasoning; you would be possessed of it only from a rational conviction of the fitness and amiableness of it. And as this clear idea does not put you immediately into the real possession of it, your reason begins to waver, and suggests to you that it may be only a fine notion, that has no ground but in the power of imagination. But this, Sir, is all your own error, and as contrary to nature as if you would have your eyes do that which only your hands or feet can do for you. The Spirit of Love is a spirit of nature and life; and all the operations of nature and life are according to the working powers of nature; and every growth and degree of life can only arise in its own time and place from its proper cause, and as the genuine effect of it. Nature and life do nothing by chance, or accidentally, but everything in one uniform way. Fire, air, and light do not proceed sometimes from one thing and sometimes from another; but, wherever they are, they are always born in the same manner, and from the same working in the properties of nature. So,

in like manner, Love is an immutable birth, always proceeding from the same cause, and cannot be in existence till its own true parents have brought it forth.

How unreasonable would it be to begin to doubt whether strength and health of body were real things, or possible to be had, because you could not by the power of your reason take possession of them? Yet this is as well as to suspect the purity and perfection of Love to be only a notion, because your reason cannot bring forth its birth in your soul. For reason has no more power of altering the life and properties of the soul than of altering the life and properties of the body. That, and that only, can cast devils and evil spirits out of the soul that can say to the storm, "Be still," and to the leper, "Be thou clean."

Hold it, therefore, for a certain truth, that you can have no good come into your soul but only by the one way of a birth from above, from the entrance of the Deity into the properties of your own soulish life. Nature must be set right, its properties must enter into the process of a new birth, it must work to the production of light, before the Spirit of Love can have a birth in it. For love is delight, and delight cannot arise in any creature till its nature is in a delightful state, or is possessed of that in which it must rejoice. And this is the reason why God must become Man; it is because a birth of the Deity must be found in the soul giving to nature all that it wants, or the soul can never find itself in a delightful state, and only working with the Spirit of Love. For whilst the soul has only its natural life it can only be in such a state as nature, without God, is in, viz., a mere hunger, want, contrariety, and strife for it knows not what. Hence is all that variety of blind, restless, contrary passions which govern and torment the life of fallen man. It is because all the properties of nature must work in blindness, and be doing they know not what, till the Light of God is found in them. Hence also it is, that that which is called the wisdom, the honour, the honesty, and the religion of the natural man, often does as much hurt to himself and others as his pride, ambition, self-love, envy, or revenge, and is

subject to the same humour and caprice; it is because nature is no better in one motion than in another, nor can be so, till something supernatural is come into it.

The Deity must become Man, take a birth in the fallen nature, be united to it, become the life of it, or the natural man must of all necessity be for ever and ever in the hell of his own hunger, anguish, contrariety, and self-torment; and all for this plain reason, because nature is, and can be, nothing else but this variety of self-torment till the Deity is manifested and dwelling in it.

And now, Sir, you see also the absolute necessity of the Gospel doctrine of the Cross, viz., of dying to self, as the one only way to life in God. This Cross, or dying to self, is the one morality that does man any good. Fancy has as many rules as you will of modelling the moral behaviour of man; they all do nothing because they leave nature still alive, and therefore can only help a man to a feigned, hypocritical art of concealing his own inward evil, and seeming to be not under its power. And the reason why it must be so is plain: it is because nature is not possible to be reformed; it is immutable in its workings, and must be always as it is, and never any better, or worse, than its own untaught workings are. It can no more change from evil to good than darkness can work itself into light. The one work, therefore, of morality is the one doctrine of the Cross, viz., to resist and deny nature, that a supernatural power, or divine goodness, may take possession of it, and bring a new light into it.

In a word, there are, in all the possibility of things, but two states, or forms of life; the one is nature, and the other is God manifested in nature; and as God and nature are both within you, so you have it in your power to live and work with which you will, but are under a necessity of doing either the one or the other. There is no standing still; life goes on, and is always bringing forth its realities, which way soever it goeth. You have seen that the properties of nature are, and can be, nothing else in their own life, but a restless hunger, disquiet, and blind strife for they know not what, till the property of light and love has got possession of them.

Now, when you see this, you see the true state of every natural man, whether he be Cæsar or Cato; whether he gloriously murders others, or only stabs himself, blind nature does all the work, and must be the doer of it, till the Christ of God is born in him. For the life of man can be nothing else but an hunger of covetousness, a rising up of pride, envy, and wrath, a medley of contrary passions, doing and undoing it knows not what, because these workings are essential to the properties of nature; they must be always hungering, and working one against another, striving to be above one another; and all this in blindness till the light of God has helped them to one common good, in which they all willingly unite, rest, and rejoice. In a word, goodness is only a sound, and virtue a mere strife of natural passions, till the Spirit of Love is the breath of everything that lives and moves in the heart. For Love is the one only blessing, and goodness, and God of nature; and you have no true religion, are no worshipper of the one true God, but in and by that Spirit of Love which is God Himself living and working in you.

III.

THE SPIRIT OF LOVE.

Now this is the one will and work of God in and through nature and creature. From eternity to eternity He can will and intend nothing towards them, in them, or by them, but the communication of various degrees of His own Love, Goodness, and Happiness to them, according to their state and place, and capacity in nature. This is God's unchangeable disposition towards the Creature; He can be nothing else but all goodness towards it, because He can be nothing towards the Creature but that which He is, and was, and ever shall be in Himself.

Now there is in the nature of the things an absolute necessity of this twofold life in every creature that is to be good and happy; and the twofold life is this—it must have the life of nature and the life of God in it. It cannot be a creature and intelligent, but by having the life and properties of nature; that is, by finding itself to be a life of various *sensibilities*, that has a power of *understanding*, *willing*, and *desiring*. This is its creaturely life, which, by the creating power of God, it has in and from nature.

Now this is all the life that is, or can be, creaturely, or be a creature's natural own life; and all this creaturely natural life, with all its various powers and sensibilities, is only a life of various *appetites*, *hungers*, and *wants*, and cannot possibly be anything else. God Himself cannot make a creature to be *in itself*, or as to its own nature, anything else but a state of emptiness, of want, of appetite, etc. He cannot make it to be good and happy in and from its natural state: this is as impossible as for God to cease to be the one only Good. The highest life therefore, that is natural and creaturely, can go no higher than this; it can only be a bare *capacity* for goodness and happi-

ness, and cannot possibly be a good and happy life but by the life of God dwelling in and in union with it. And this is the twofold life, that of all necessity must be united in every good and perfect and happy creature.

The difference then of a good and a bad man does not lie in this, that the one wills that which is good, and the other does not; but solely in this, that the one concurs with the living, inspiring Spirit of God within him, and the other resists it, and is, and can be only, chargeable with evil because he resists it.

Therefore, whether you consider that which is good or bad in a man, they equally prove the perpetual indwelling and operation of the Spirit of God within us, since we can only be bad by resisting, as we are good by yielding to, the Spirit of God; both which equally suppose a perpetual operation of the Spirit of God within us.

And thus also you have the fullest proof in what your salvation precisely consists. Not in any historic faith, or knowledge of any thing absent or distant from you, not in any variety of restraints, rules, and methods of practising virtues, not in any formality of opinion about faith and works, repentance, forgiveness of sins, or justification and sanctification, not in any truth or righteousness that you can have from yourself, from the best of men or books; but wholly and solely in the life of God, or Christ of God, quickened, and born again in you.

And thus it is, that you are to conceive of the holy Jesus, or the Word of God, as the hidden treasure of every human soul, born as a Seed of the Word in the birth of the soul, immured under flesh and blood, till as a Day-Star it arises in our hearts and changes the son of an earthly Adam into a Son of God.

The faith of the first patriarchs could not have been in being, Moses and the prophets had come in vain, had not

the Christ of God lain in a state of hiddenness in every son of man. For faith, which is a will and hunger after God, could not have begun to be, or have any life in man, but because there was something of the divine nature existing and hid in man. For nothing can have any longing desire but after its own likeness, nor could anything be made to desire God, but that which came from Him and had the nature of Him.

The Deity is an infinite plenitude, or fulness of riches and powers, in and from itself; and it is only want and desire that is excluded from it, and can have no existence in it. And here lies the true immutable distinction between God and nature, and shows why neither can ever be changed into the other; it is because God is an universal *all*; and nature, or desire, is an universal *want*, viz., to be filled with God.

Depart from this idea of God as an infinity of mere love, wisdom, and goodness, and then everything in the system of Scripture and the system of nature only helps the reasoning mind to be miserably perplexed, as well with the mercies as with the judgements of God.

But when God is known to be Omnipotent Love, that can do nothing but works of love, and that all nature and creature are only under the operation of love, as a distempered person under the care of a kind and skilful physician who seeks nothing but the perfect recovery of his patient; then, whatever is done, whether a severe caustic or a pleasant cordial is ordered; that is, whether, because of its difference, it may have the different name of mercy or judgement; yet all is equally well done, because Love is the only doer of both, and does both, from the same principle and for the same end.

The Scriptures frequently say, "Christ gave Himself for us." But what is the full meaning, effect, and benefit of His thus giving Himself for us? The apostle puts this out of all doubt, when he says, "Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to

Himself a peculiar people; that He might deliver us from this present evil world—from the curse of the Law—from the power of Satan—from the wrath to come:” or, as the Apostle says in other words, “that He might be made unto us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification.”

The whole truth, therefore, of the matter is plainly this: Christ given *for us* is neither more nor less than Christ given *into us*. And He is in no other sense our full, perfect, and sufficient atonement, than as His Nature and Spirit are born and formed in us, which so purges us from our sins, that we are thereby in Him, and by Him dwelling in us become new creatures, having our conversation in heaven.

A late writer, who has as much knowledge, and zeal, and wit in the cause of Deism as any of his predecessors, is forced to attack our redemption by giving this following false account of it.

“That a perfectly innocent being, of the highest order among intelligent natures, should personate the offender, and suffer in his place and stead, in order to take down the wrath and resentment of the Deity against the criminal, and dispose God to show mercy to him,—the Deist conceives to be both unnatural and improper, and therefore not to be ascribed to God without blasphemy.”

And again, “The common notion of redemption among Christians seems to represent the Deity in a disagreeable light, as implacable and revengeful,” etc.

What an arrow is here, I will not say, shot beside the mark, but shot at nothing! Because nothing of that which he accuses is to be found in our redemption. The God of Christians is so far from being, as he says, implacable and revengeful, that you have seen it proved, from text to text, that the whole form and manner of our redemption comes wholly from the free, antecedent, infinite love and goodness of God towards fallen man. That the innocent Christ did not suffer to quiet an angry Deity, but merely as co-operating, assisting, and uniting with that love of God which desired our salvation. That He did not suffer in our place or stead, but only on our account, which is a quite different matter.

And to say that He suffered in our place or stead is as absurd, as contrary to Scripture, as to say that He rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, in our place and stead, that we might be excused from it. For His sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension are all of them equally *on our account*, for our sake, for our good and benefit, but none of them possible in our stead.

And as Scripture and truth affirm that He ascended into heaven for us, though neither Scripture nor truth will allow it to be in our place and stead; so, for the same reasons, it is strictly true that He suffered and died *for us*, though no more in our place or stead, nor any more desirable to be so, than His ascension into heaven for us should be in our place and stead.

A religion that is not founded in nature is all fiction and falsity, and as mere a nothing as an idol. For as no creature can be, or have anything in it, but what it is and has from the nature of things, nor have anything done to it, good or harm, but according to the unalterable workings of nature; so no religion can be of any service but that which works with and according to the demands of nature. Nor can any fallen creature be raised out of its fallen state, even by the omnipotence of God, but according to the nature of things, or the unchangeable powers of nature; for nature is the opening and manifestation of the divine omnipotence; it is God's Power-world: and therefore all that God doth is and must be done in and by the powers of nature. God, though omnipotent, can have no existence to any creature, but it must have that existence in space and time.—Time comes out of eternity, and space comes out of the infinity of God.—God has an omnipotent power over them, in them, and with them, to make both of them set forth and manifest the wonders of His supernatural Deity. Yet time can only be subservient to the omnipotence of God according to the nature of time, and space can only obey His will according to the nature of space; but neither of them can, by any power, be made to be in a supernatural state, or be anything but what they are in their own nature.

Now right and wrong, good and evil, true and false, happiness and misery, are as unchangeable in nature as time and space. And every state and quality that is creaturely, or that can belong to any creature, has its own nature, as unchangeably as time and space have theirs.

Nothing, therefore, can be done to any creature *supernaturally*, or in a way that is *without*, or *contrary to*, the powers of nature; but every thing or creature that is to be helped, that is to have any good done to it, or any evil taken out of it, can only have it done so far as the powers of nature are able and rightly directed to effect it.

And this is the true ground of all divine revelation, or that help which the supernatural Deity vouchsafes to the fallen state of man. It is not to appoint an arbitrary system of religious homage to God, but solely to point out and provide for man, blinded by his fallen state, that one only religion that, according to the nature of things, can possibly restore to him his lost perfection. This is the truth, the goodness, and the necessity of the Christian religion; it is true and good and necessary, because it is as much the one only natural and possible way of overcoming all the evil of fallen man, as light is the one only natural, possible thing that can expel darkness.

And therefore it is that all the mysteries of the Gospel, however high, are yet true and necessary parts of the one religion of nature; because they are no higher nor otherwise than the natural state of fallen man absolutely stands in need of. His nature cannot be helped, or raised out of the evils of its present state, by anything less than these mysteries; and therefore they are in the same truth and justness to be called his natural religion, as that remedy which alone has full power to remove all the evil of a disease may be justly called its natural remedy.

For a religion is not to be deemed natural because it has nothing to do with revelation; but then is it the one true religion of nature, when it has everything in it that our natural state stands in need of; everything that can help us out of our present evil, and raise and exalt us to all the happiness which our nature is capable of having. Supposing, therefore, the Christian scheme of redemption to be all, and nothing else in itself but, that which the nature of things

absolutely requires it to be, it must, for that very reason, have its mysteries.

For the fallen, corrupt, mortal state of man absolutely requires these two things as its only salvation. *First*, the divine life, or the life of God, must be quickened again, or revived in the soul of man. *Secondly*, there must be a resurrection of the body in a better state after death. Now nothing in the power of man, or in the things of this world, can effect this salvation. If, therefore, this is to be the salvation of man, then some interposition of the Deity is absolutely necessary, in the nature of the thing, or man can have no religion that is sufficiently natural; that is to say, no religion that is sufficient, or equal to the wants of his nature.

Now this necessary interposition of the Deity, though doing nothing but in a natural way, or according to the nature of things, must be mysterious to man, because it is doing something more and higher than his senses or reason ever saw done, or possible to be done, either by himself, or any of the powers of this world.

And this is the true ground and nature of the mysteries of Christian redemption. They are, in themselves, nothing else but what the nature of things requires them to be, as natural efficacious means of our salvation, and all their power is in a natural way, or true fitness of cause for its effect; but they are mysterious to man, because brought into the scheme of our redemption, by the interposition of God, to work in a way and manner above and superior to all that is seen and done in the things of this world.

The mysteries, therefore, of the Gospel are so far from showing the Gospel not to be the one true religion of nature, that they are the greatest proofs of it, since they are that alone which can help man to all that good which his natural state wants to have done to it.

For instance, if the salvation of man absolutely requires the revival or restoration of the divine life in the human nature, then nothing can be the one sufficient, true religion of nature but that which has a natural power to do this.

What a grossness of error is it, therefore, to blame that doctrine which asserts the incarnation of the Son of God, or the necessity of the Word being made Flesh; when, in the

nature of the thing, nothing else but this very mystery can be the natural, efficacious cause of the renewal of the divine life in the human nature, or have any natural efficacy to effect our salvation !

And thus stands the matter between the Deists and myself. If I knew how to do them or the subject more justice, I would gladly do it, having no desire, either for them or myself, but that we may all of us be delivered from everything that separates us from God, all equal sharers of every blessing that He has for human nature, all united in that Spirit of Love and Goodness for which He created us, and all blessed with that faith and hope to which the God of Love has called us, as the one only possible, natural, and full means of ever finding ourselves saved, and redeemed from all the evils both of time and eternity.

Love is the Christ of God ; wherever it comes, it comes as the blessing and happiness of every natural life, as the restorer of every lost perfection, a redeemer from all evil, a fulfiller of all righteousness, and a peace of God which passeth all understanding. Through all the universe of things, nothing is uneasy, unsatisfied, or restless, but because it is not governed by love, or because its nature has not reached or attained the full birth of the spirit of love. For when that is done, every hunger is satisfied, and all complaining, murmuring, accusing, resenting, revenging, and striving, are as totally suppressed and overcome, as the coldness, thickness, and horror of darkness are suppressed and overcome by the breaking forth of the light. If you ask why the spirit of love cannot be displeased, cannot be disappointed, cannot complain, accuse, resent, or murmur, it is because divine love desires nothing but itself ; it is its own good, it has all when it has itself, because nothing is good but itself and its own working ; for love is God ; " and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God."

For divine love is a new life and new nature, and introduces you into a new world ; it puts an end to all your former

opinions, notions, and tempers; it opens new senses in you, and makes you see high to be low, and low to be high; wisdom to be foolishness, and foolishness wisdom; it makes prosperity and adversity, praise and dispraise, to be equally nothing. "When I was a child," says the apostle, "I thought as a child, I spake as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things." Whilst man is under the power of nature, governed only by worldly wisdom, his life (however old he may be) is quite childish; everything about him only awakens childish thoughts and pursuits in him; all that he sees and hears, all that he desires or fears, likes or dislikes; that which he gets, and that which he loses; that which he has, and that which he has not, serve only to carry him from this fiction of evil to that fiction of good, from one vanity of peace to another vanity of trouble. But when divine love is born in the soul, all childish images of good and evil are done away, and all the sensibility of them is lost, as the stars lose their visibility when the sun is risen.

Nature has all evil, and no evil, in itself. Nature, as it comes forth from God, is darkness without any evil of darkness in it; for it is not darkness without or separate from light, nor could it ever have been known to have any quality of darkness in it, had it not lost that state of light in which it came forth from God, only as a manifestation of the goodness, virtues, and glories of light. Again, it is nature, viz., a strife and contrariety of properties, for this only end, that the supernatural Good might thereby come into sensibility, be known, found, and felt, by its taking all the evil of strife and contrariety from them, and becoming the union, peace, and joy of them all. Nor could the evil of strife and contrariety of will ever have had a name in all the universe of nature and creature, had it all continued in that state in which it came forth from God. Lastly, it is self, viz., an own life, that so, through such an own life, the universal, incomprehensible goodness, happiness, and perfections of the Deity might be possessed as properties and qualities of an own life in creaturely finite beings.

And thus, all that is called nature, darkness, or self has not

only no evil in it, but is the only true ground of all possible good.

But when the intelligent creature turns from God to self, or nature, he acts unnaturally, he turns from all that which makes nature to be good; he finds nature only as it is in itself, and without God. And then it is, that nature, or self, hath all evil in it. Nothing is to be had from it, or found in it, but the work and working of every kind of evil, baseness, misery, and torment, and the utmost contrariety to God and all goodness. And thus, also, you see the plainness and certainty of our assertion, that nature, or self, hath all evil, and no evil, in it.

Covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath are the four elements of self, or nature, or hell, all of them inseparable from it. And the reason why it must be thus, and cannot be otherwise, is because the natural life of the creature is brought forth for the participation of some high, supernatural good in the Creator. But it could have no fitness or possible capacity to receive such good, unless it was in itself both an extremity of want, and an extremity of desire of some high good. When, therefore, this natural life is deprived of or fallen from God, it can be nothing else in itself but an extremity of want continually desiring, and an extremity of desire continually wanting. And hence it is that its whole life can be nothing else but a plague and torment of covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath, all which is precisely nature, self, or hell.

Now covetousness, pride, and envy are not three different things, but only three different names for the restless workings of one and the same will or desire, which, as it differently torments itself, takes these different names, for nothing is in any of them but the working of a restless desire; and all this because the natural life of the creature can do nothing else but work as a desire. And therefore, when fallen from God, its three first births, which are quite inseparable from it, are covetousness, envy, and pride; it must covet, because it is a desire proceeding from want; it must envy, because it is a desire turned to self; it must assume and arrogate, because it is a desire founded on a real want of exaltation, or a higher state.

Now wrath, which is a fourth birth from these three, can have no existence till some or all of these three are contradicted, or have something done to them that is contrary to their will; and then it is that wrath is necessarily born, and not till then.

And thus you see, in the highest degree of certainty, what nature or self is as to its essential constituent parts. It is the three forementioned, inseparable properties of a desire, thrown into a fourth of wrath that can never cease, because their will can never be gratified. For these four properties generate one another, and therefore generate their own torment. They have no outward cause nor any inward power of altering themselves. And therefore all self, or nature, must be in this state till some supernatural good comes into it, or gets a birth in it. And therefore every pain or disorder in the mind or body of any intelligent creature is an undeniable proof that it is in a fallen state, and has lost that supernatural good for which it was created. So certain a truth is the fallen state of all mankind. And here lies the absolute, indispensable necessity of the one Christian redemption. Till fallen man is born again from above, till such a supernatural birth is brought forth in him by the eternal Word and Spirit of God, he can have no possible escape or deliverance from these four elements of self or hell.

Whilst man, indeed, lives amongst the vanities of time, his covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath may be in a tolerable state, may help him to a mixture of peace and trouble; they may have at times their gratifications as well as their torments. But when death has put an end to the vanity of all earthly cheats, the soul that is not born again of he supernatural Word and Spirit of God must find itself unavoidably devoured or shut up in its own insatiable, unchangeable, self-tormenting covetousness, envy, pride, and wrath.

There is no need of a number of practices or methods in this matter. For to die to self, or to come from under its power, is not, cannot be done by any active resistance we can make to it by the powers of nature. For nature can no more overcome or suppress itself, than wrath can heal wrath. So long as nature acts, nothing but natural works are brought

forth, and therefore the more labour of this kind, the more nature is fed and strengthened with its own food.

But the one true way of dying to self is most simple and plain, it wants no arts or methods, no cells, monasteries, or pilgrimages, it is equally practicable by everybody, it is always at hand, it meets you in everything, it is free from all deceit, and is never without success.

If you ask, What is this one, true, simple, plain, immediate, and unerring way? It is the way of patience, meekness, humility, and resignation to God. This is the truth and perfection of dying to self; it is nowhere else, nor possible to be in anything else, but in this state of heart.

Could I help you to perceive or feel what a good there is in this state of heart, you would desire it with more eagerness than the thirsty hart desires the water-brooks, you would think of nothing, desire nothing, but constantly to live in it. It is a security from all evil and all delusion; no difficulty or trial, either of body or mind, no temptation, either within you or without you, but what has its full remedy in this state of heart. You have no questions to ask of anybody, no new way that you need inquire after, no oracle that you need to consult; for whilst you shut up yourself, in patience, meekness, humility, and resignation to God, you are in the very arms of Christ, your whole heart is His dwelling-place, and He lives and works in you.

IV.

AN APPEAL TO ALL WHO DOUBT THE TRUTHS OF THE GOSPEL.

IT is not for notional or speculative mistakes that man will be rejected by God at the last day, or for any crimes that God could overlook if He was so pleased; but because man has continued in his unregenerate state, and has resisted and suppressed that Birth of Life, by which alone he could become a member of the Kingdom of Heaven. The goodness and love of God have no limits or bounds but such as His omnipotence hath: and everything that hath a possibility of partaking of the Kingdom of Heaven will infallibly find a place in it.

God comes not to judgement to display any wrath of His own, or to inflict any punishment as from Himself upon man: He only comes to declare that all temporary nature is at an end, and that, therefore, all things must be and stand in their own place in eternal nature: His sentence of condemnation is only a leaving them that are lost, in such a misery of their own nature as has finally rejected all that was possible to relieve it.

You fancy that God will not reject you at the last day for having not received this or that mode, or kind, of religion: but here all is mistake again. You might as well imagine that no particular kind of element was necessary to extinguish fire, or that water can supply the place of air in kindling it, as suppose that no particular kind of religion is absolutely necessary to raise up such a divine life in the soul as can only be its salvation; for nature is the ground of all creatures, it is God's manifestation of Himself, it is His instrument in and by which He acts in the production and government of every life; and therefore a life that is to belong to this world must be raised according to temporal nature, and a life that

is to live in the next world must be raised according to eternal nature.

Therefore, all the particular doctrines, institutions, mysteries, and ordinances of a revealed religion that comes from the God of nature, must have their reason, foundation, and necessity in nature; and then your renouncing such a revealed religion is renouncing all that the God of nature can do to save you.

When I speak of nature as the true ground and foundation of religion I mean nothing like that which you call the religion of human reason, or nature; for I speak here of eternal nature, which is the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven, or that eternal state where all redeemed souls must have their eternal life, and live in eternal nature by a life derived from it, as men and animals live in temporal nature by a life derived from it; for seeing man stands with his soul in eternal nature as certainly as he lives outwardly in temporal nature, and seeing man can have nothing in this world, neither happiness, nor misery, from it, but what is according to temporal nature, so he can with his soul attain nothing, nor suffer nothing in the next world, but what is according to the eternal nature of that world; and therefore it is an infallible truth that that particular religion can alone do us any good, or help us to the happiness of the next world, which works with and according to eternal nature, and is able to generate that eternal life in us. But your notion of a goodness of God that may be expected at the last day is as groundless as if you imagined that God would then stand over his creatures in a compassionate kind of weighing, or considering who should be saved, and who damned, because a good-natured Prince might do so towards a variety of offenders.

Your notion of a goodness of God at the last day supposes that if a man has erroneously chosen death instead of life, fire instead of water, that God will not suffer such a creature to be deprived of salvation through a mistaken choice; but that in such a creature He will make death to be life, and fire to be water. But you might as well expect that God should make a thing to be, and not to be, at the same

time; for this is as possible as to make Hell to be Heaven, or Death to be Life; for darkness can no more be light, death can no more be life, fire can no more be water, in any being through a compassion of God towards it, than a circle could be a square, a falsehood a truth, or two to be more than three, by God's looking upon them.

Our salvation is an entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven : now, the life, light and spirit of Heaven must as necessarily be in a creature before it can live in Heaven, as the life, light, and spirit of this world must be in a creature before it can live in this world; therefore the one only religion that can save any one son of fallen Adam must be that which can raise or generate the life, light and spirit of Heaven in his soul, that when the light and spirit of this world leaves him, he may not find himself in eternal death and darkness.

Now if this light and spirit of Heaven is generated in your soul as it is generated in Heaven, if it arises up in your nature within you, as it does in eternal nature without you, (which is the Christian new birth, or regeneration) then you are become capable of the Kingdom of Heaven, and nothing can keep you out of it; but if you die without this birth of the Eternal Light and Spirit of God, then your soul stands in the same distance from, and contrariety to, the Kingdom of Heaven, as Hell does : if you die in this unregenerate state, it signifies nothing how you have lived, or what religion you have owned, all is left undone that was to have saved you; it matters not what form of life you have appeared in, what a number of decent, engaging, or glorious exploits you have done, either as a scholar, a statesman, or a philosopher; if they have proceeded only from the light and spirit of this world they must die with it, and leave your soul in that eternal darkness which it must have, so long as the light and spirit of eternity is not generated in it.

And this is the true ground and reason why an outward morality—a decency and beauty of life and conduct with respect to this world, arising only from a worldly spirit—has nothing of salvation in it; he that has his virtue only from this world is only a trader of this world, and can only have a worldly benefit from it. For it is an undoubted truth that everything is necessarily bounded by, or kept within, the

sphere of its own activity; and therefore, to expect heavenly effects from a worldly spirit is nonsense. As water cannot rise higher in its streams than the spring from whence it cometh, so no actions can ascend further in their efficiency, or rise higher in their value, than the spirit from whence they proceed. The spirit that comes from Heaven is always in Heaven, and whatsoever it does, tends to, and reaches Heaven. The spirit that arises from this world is always in it; it is as worldly when it gives alms, or prays in the church, as when it makes bargains in the market. When, therefore, the Gospel saith, "He that gives alms to be seen of men, hath his reward," it is grounded on this general truth: that every thing, every shape, or kind or degree of virtue that arises from the spirit of this world has nothing to expect but that which it can receive from this world; for every action must have its nature and efficacy according to the spirit from whence it proceeds. He that loves to see a crucifix, a worthless image, solely from this principle, because from his heart he embraces Christ as his suffering Lord and pattern, does an action poor and needless in itself, which yet, by the spirit from whence it proceeds, reaches Heaven and helps to kindle the heavenly life in the soul. On the other hand, he that from a selfish heart, a worldly spirit, a love of esteem, distinguishes himself by the most rational virtues of an exemplary life, has only a piety that may be reckoned amongst the perishable things of this world.

You think it a partiality unworthy of God, when you hear that the salvation of mankind is attributed and appropriated to faith and prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. It must be answered, first, that there is no partiality of any kind in God; everything is accepted by Him according to its own nature, and receives all the good from Him that it can possibly receive: secondly, that a morality of life not arising from the power and spirit of Jesus Christ, but brought forth by the spirit of this world, is the same thing, has the same nature and efficacy, in a heathen as a Christian, does only the same worldly good to the one as it does to the other; therefore there is not the least partiality in God with respect to the moral works of mankind, considered as arising from, and directed by, the spirit of this world.

Now, were these the only works that man could do, could he only act from the spirit of this world, no flesh could be saved—that is, no earthly creature, such as man is, could possibly begin to be of a heavenly nature, or have a heavenly life brought forth in him; so it is only a spirit from Heaven derived into the fallen nature, that makes any beginning of a heavenly life in it, that can lay the possibility of its having the least ability, tendency, and disposition towards the Kingdom of Heaven. This spirit derived from Heaven is the Birth of the Son of God, given to the soul as its Saviour, Regenerator, or Beginner of its return to Heaven; it is that Word of Life, or Bruiser of the Serpent, that was in-spoken into the first fallen Father of men; 'tis this alone that gives to all the race of Adam their capacity for salvation, their power of being again sons of God.

Therefore, though Jesus Christ is the one only Saviour of all that can anywhere, or at any time, be saved, yet there is no partiality in God; because this same Jesus Christ, who came in human flesh to the Jews in a certain age, was that same Saviour who was given to Adam when all mankind were in his loins; and who, through all ages, and in all countries, from the first patriarchs to the end of the world, is the common Saviour, as He is the common Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and that principle of life both in Jews and heathens by which they had any relation to God, or any power, or right, or ability to call Him Father. When, therefore, you look upon the Gospel as narrowing the way of salvation or limiting it to those who only know and believe in Jesus Christ since His appearance in the flesh, you mistake the whole nature of the Christian redemption.

When the Gospel saith that man fallen from the state of his creation, and become an earthly animal of this temporal world, must be born again of the Son and Holy Spirit of God, in order to be a heavenly creature, it is because all nature saith that an immortal, eternal soul must have an immortal, eternal light and spirit to make it live in eternal nature, as every animal must have a temporal light and spirit in order

to live in temporary nature. Must you not, therefore, either deny the immortality of the soul, or acknowledge the necessity of its having an eternal light and spirit? When the Gospel saith that nothing can kindle or generate the heavenly life but the operation of the light and spirit of heaven, it is because all nature saith that no temporal life can be raised but in the same manner in temporary nature. Must you not therefore be forced to confess that nature and the Gospel both preach the same truths?

Light and Spirit must be wherever there are living beings; and there must be the same difference betwixt the light and spirit of different worlds, as there is betwixt the worlds themselves. Hell must have its light, or it could have no living inhabitants; but its light is not so refreshing, not so gentle, not so delightful, not so comfortable, as flashing points of fire in the thickest darkness of night; and therefore their light is called an eternal darkness, because it can never disperse, but only horribly discover darkness. Hell also must have its spirit; but it is only an incessant sensibility of wrathful agitations, of which the thunder and rage of a tempest is but a low shadowy resemblance, as being only a little outward eruption of that wrath which is the inward, restless essence of the spirit of Hell; and therefore that life, though it be a living spirit, is justly called an eternal death.

The Light and Spirit of God admit of no delineation or comparison, they are only so far known to anyone as they are brought into the soul by a birth of themselves in it.

Now consider, I pray you: the light and spirit of this world can no more be the light and spirit of immortal souls, than grass and hay can be the food of angels; but is as different from the light and spirit of heaven as an angel is different from a beast of the field. When therefore the soul of a man departs from his body, and is eternally cut off from all temporal light and spirit, what is it that can keep such a soul from falling into eternal darkness, unless it have in itself that light and spirit which is of the same nature with the light and spirit of eternity, so that it may be in the light of Heaven or Eternal Nature, as it was in the light of this world in temporary nature?

Light and spirit there must be in every thing that lives,

but the death of the body takes away the light and spirit of this world; if therefore the light and spirit of Heaven be not born in the soul when it loses the body, it can only have that light and spirit which is the very death and darkness of Hell.

Now, seeing the light and spirit of Heaven, or Eternal Nature, is as different from the light and spirit of this world as an angel is from an animal of the field, if you have lived here only to the spirit and temper of this world, governed by its goods and evils, and only wise according to its wisdom, you must die as destitute of the light and spirit of Heaven as the beasts that perish. You have now an aversion and dislike, or at least, a disbelief of the doctrines of Christian regeneration, you struggle against this kind of redemption, you would have no salvation from the light and spirit of eternity regenerated in your soul; where then must you be, when the light and spirit of this world leaves you?

Do you think that the light and spirit of God will then seize upon you, shine up in you by an outward force, though they never could be born in you? Or do you think that the light and spirit of God can now be generating themselves in you, and ready to appear as soon as you have ended a life that has continually resisted them, and would have no new birth from them? Or that God, by a compassionate goodness, will not suffer you to be in that condition into which your own will has brought you? No, my friend, the will that is in you must do that for you which the will that was in angels did for those that stood, and for those that fell.

God's goodness or compassion is always in the same infinite state, always flowing forth in and through all nature in the same infinite manner, and nothing wants it but that which cannot receive it. Whilst the angels stood, they stood encompassed with the infinite source of all goodness and compassion; God was communicated to them in as high a degree as their nature could receive; and they fell, not because He ceased to be an infinite, open fountain of all good to them, but because they had a will which must direct itself.

For the will, at its first arising in the creature, can be subject to no outward power, because it has no outward maker; as it stands in a creaturely form, God is its true

Creator; but as a will it has no outward maker, but is a ray or spark derived from the unbeginning will of the Creator, and is of the same nature in the creature as it was in the Creator, self-existent, self-generating, self-moving, and uncontrollable from without; and there could not possibly be a free will in the creature but by its being directly derived, or propagated from, the same will in the Creator, for nothing can be free now, but that which always was so.

But if the free Will of God, which is above and superior to nature, be communicated to the creature, then the creature's free will must have the same power over its own nature, that the Will of God has over that Eternal Nature which is His own manifestation: and therefore, every free creature must have and find its own nature in this or that state, as a birth from the free working of its own will. And here appears the true reason why no creatures of this world can commit sin; 'tis because they have no will that is superior to nature: their will in every one of them is only the will of nature; and therefore let them do what they will they are always doing that which is natural, and consequently, not sinful. But the will of angels and men being an offspring, or ray, derived from the Will of God which is superior to nature, stands chargeable with the state and condition of their nature; and therefore it is that the nature of the devil, and the nature of fallen man, is imputed to both of them as their sin, which could not be but because their will was uncontrollable, and gave birth and being to that state and condition of nature, which is called, and is, their sin.

Therefore, O Man! look well to thyself, and see what birth thou art bringing forth, what nature is growing up in thee, and be assured that stand thou must in that state in nature which the working of thy own will has brought forth in thee, whether it be happy or miserable.

The free grace and mercy by which we are said in the Scripture to be saved is not an arbitrary good will in God which saves whom He pleases; as a Prince may forgive some, and not forgive others, merely through his own sovereign grace and favour: nothing of this kind hath any

place in God, or in the mystery of our redemption; but the mercy and grace, by which we are saved, is therefore free, because God hath freely, and from His own goodness, put us into a state and possibility of salvation, by freely giving us Jesus Christ (the divine and human nature united in one person) as the only means of regenerating that first divine and human life, which the whole race of mankind had lost.

The truth of the matter is this, God is as infinite and boundless in love and goodness as He is in power, but His omnipotence can only do that which is possible, and nothing is possible but that which hath its possibility in nature; because nature is God's first power, His great, universal manifestation of His Deity, in and through and by which all His infinite attributes break forth and display themselves: so that to expect that God should do anything that is above or contrary to this nature is as absurd as to expect that God should act above or contrary to Himself: as God can only make a creature to be in and through and by nature, so the reason why He cannot make a creature to be and not to be at the same time is only this, because it is contrary to nature. Let no man therefore trust to be saved at the last day by any arbitrary goodness or free grace of God; for salvation is, and can be, nothing else but the having put off all that is damnable and hellish in our nature, which salvation can be found by no creature but by its own full conforming to, and concurring with, those mysterious means which the free grace of God hath afforded for the recovery of our first, perfect, glorious state in nature.

Was there no nature, there could be no creature, because the life of every creature is, and can be, nothing else but the life of that nature out of which it was created, and in which it has its being. Eternal beings must have their qualities, nature, form and manner of existence, out of eternal nature, and temporal beings out of temporary nature: was there no eternity, there could be no time, was there nothing infinite, there could be nothing finite; therefore we have here two great fundamental truths that cannot be shaken; first, that

there is, and must be, an eternal nature, because there is a nature that is temporary; and that it must be that to eternal creatures, which temporal nature is to temporal creatures; secondly, that everywhere, in all worlds, nature must stand between God and the creature, as the foundation of all mutual intercourse; God can transact nothing with the creature, nor the creature have any communion with God, but in, and by, that nature in which it stands.

I hope no one will here ask me for Scripture proofs of this, or call these truths nostrums, because they are not to be found in the same form of expression in some particular text of Scripture. Where do the holy writings tell us that a thing cannot be, and not be, at the same time? or that every consequence must arise from premisses? And yet the Scripture is continually supposing both these truths, and there could be no truth in the Scripture, or anywhere else, if these things were not undeniable.

There is nothing said of man throughout all Scripture but what supposes him to stand, in nature, under a necessity of choosing something that is natural, either life or death, fire or water. There is nothing said of God with relation to creatures but what supposes Him to be the God of nature, manifesting Himself in and through nature, calling, assisting, and directing everything to its highest natural state. Nature is the scene of His providence, and all the variety of His governing attributes display themselves by His various operations in and through nature; therefore it is equally certain that what God does to any creature must be done through the medium of nature, and also that what the creature does toward God must be done in and through the powers of that nature in which it stands. No temporary creature can turn to God, or reach after Him, or have any communion with him, but in, and according to, that relation which temporary nature bears to God; nor can any eternal beings draw near to, or unite with, God, in any other manner than that in which eternal nature is united with Him. Would you know why no omnipotence of God can create temporal animals but out of temporary nature, nor eternal animals but out of eternal nature; it is because no omnipotence of God can produce a visible triangle, but out of, and by, three visible

lines; for, as lines must be, before there can be any lineal figures, so nature must be, before there can be natural creatures.

Everything that is in being is either God, or nature, or creature; and everything that is not God is only a manifestation of God; for as there is nothing, neither nature, nor creature, but what must have its being in, and from, God, so everything is, and must be, according to its nature, more or less a manifestation of God. Everything, therefore, by its form and condition speaks so much of God, and God in everything speaks and manifests so much of Himself. Temporary nature is this beginning, created, system of sun, stars, and elements; it is temporary nature, because it begins and hath an end, and therefore is only a temporary manifestation of God, or God manifested according to transitory things.

Properly and strictly speaking, nothing can begin to be: the beginning of everything is nothing more than its beginning to be in a new state. Thus time itself does not begin to be, but duration, which always was, began to be measured by the earth's turning round, or the rising and setting of the sun, and that is called the beginning of time which is, properly speaking, only the beginning of the measure of duration. Thus it is with all temporal nature, and all the qualities and powers of temporal beings that live in it: not quality or power of nature then began to be, but such qualities and powers as had been from all eternity began then to be in a new state. Ask what time is, it is nothing else but something of eternal duration become finite, measurable, and transitory. Ask what fire, light, darkness, air, water, and earth are; they are, and can be, nothing else but some eternal things become gross, finite, measurable, divisible, and transitory. For if there could be a temporal fire that did not spring out of eternal fire, then there might be time that did not come out of eternity.

'Tis thus with every temporary thing, and the qualities of it; 'tis the beginning of nothing, but only of a new state of something that existed before: therefore all temporary nature is a product, offspring, or out-birth of eternal nature, and is nothing else but so much of eternal nature changed from its eternal to a temporal condition. Fire did not begin to be,

darkness did not begin to be, light did not begin to be, water and earth did not begin to be, when this temporary world first appeared, but all these things came out of their eternal state into a lower, divided, compacted, created and transitory state. Hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling, feeling, did not then begin to be when God first created the creatures of this world, they only came to be qualities and powers of a lower and more imperfect order of beings than they had been before.

Figures, and their relations, did not then begin to be when material circles and squares, etc., were first made, but these figures and relations began then to appear in a lower state than they had done before: and so it must be said of all temporal nature, and everything in it. It is only something of eternal nature separated, changed, or created into a new temporary state and condition.

Temporal nature opened to us by the Spirit of God becomes a volume of holy instruction, and leads us into all the mysteries and secrets of eternity; for as everything in temporal nature is descended out of that which is eternal, and stands as a palpable, visible out-birth of it, so when we know how to separate the grossness, death, and darkness of time from it, we find what it is in its eternal state.

In Eternal Nature, or the Kingdom of Heaven, materiality stands in life and light; it is the light's glorious Body, or that garment wherewith light is clothed, and therefore has all the properties of light in it, and only differs from light as it is its brightness and beauty, as the holder and displayer of all its colours, powers, and virtues. But the same materiality in this world, being created or compacted into a separation from fire united with light, is become the body of death and darkness, and is therefore gross, thick, dark, heavy, divisible, etc., for death is nothing else but the shutting up, or shutting out, the united power of fire and light: this is the only death that ever did, or can, happen to anything, whether earthly or heavenly. Therefore every degree of hardness, darkness, stiffness, etc., is a degree of death; and herein consists the deadness of the materiality of this world. When it shall be

raised to life, that is, when the united power of fire and light shall kindle itself through all temporal nature, then hardness, darkness, divisibility, etc., will be all extinguished together.

All beings that are purely of this world have their existence in, and dependence upon, temporal nature. God is no maker, creator, or governor, of any being or creature of this world immediately, or by Himself; but He creates, upholds, and governs all things of this world, by, and through, and with, temporal nature. As temporary nature is nothing else but eternal nature separated, divided, compacted, made visible and changeable for a time, so heaven is nothing else but the beatific visibility, the majestic preference, of the abyssal, unsearchable, Triune God: 'tis that Light with which the Scripture saith, God is decked as with a garment, and by which He is manifested and made visible to heavenly eyes and beings; for Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as they are the Triune God, deeper than the Kingdom of Heaven or Eternal Nature, are invisible to all created eyes; but that beatific visibility and outward glory which is called the Kingdom of Heaven is the manifestation of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in, and by, and through, the glorious union of eternal Fire, and Light, and Spirit. In the Kingdom of Heaven these are three and one, because their original, the Holy Trinity, is so; and we must call them by the names of Fire, Light, and Spirit, because all that we have of fire, and light, and spirit in this world has its whole nature directly from them, and is indeed nothing else but the Fire, and Light, and Spirit of Eternity, brought into a separated, compacted, temporal state. So that to speak of a heavenly fire has no more grossness and offence in it than when we speak of a heavenly life, a heavenly light, or heavenly spirit; for if there is a heavenly light and spirit, there must of all necessity be a heavenly fire; and if these things were not in heaven in a glorious state of union, they never could have been here in this gross state of a temporal compaction and division: so that as sure as there are fire, and light, and air in this world, in a divided, compacted, imperfect state, in which consists the life of temporary nature and creatures, so sure is it that fire, and light, and

spirit are in the Kingdom of Heaven, united in one perfection of glory in which consists the beatific visibility of God, the Divine Nature as communicable to heavenly beings.

The Kingdom of Heaven stands in this threefold life, where three are one, because it is a manifestation of the Deity, which is Three and One; the Father has His distinct manifestation in the Fire, which is always generating the Light; the Son has His distinct manifestation in the Light, which is always generated from the Fire; the Holy Ghost has His manifestation in the Spirit, that always proceeds from both, and is always united with them.

It is this eternal unbeginning Trinity in Unity of Fire, Light, and Spirit, that constitutes Eternal Nature, the Kingdom of Heaven, the heavenly Jerusalem, the Divine Life, the Beatific Visibility, the majestic Glory and Presence of God. Through this Kingdom of Heaven, or Eternal Nature, is the invisible God, the incomprehensible Trinity, eternally breaking forth and manifesting itself in a boundless height and depth of blissful wonders, opening and displaying itself to all its creatures as in an infinite variation and endless multiplicity of its powers, beauties, joys, and glories. So that all the inhabitants of Heaven are for ever knowing, seeing, hearing, feeling, and variously enjoying all that is great, amiable, infinite and glorious in the Divine Nature.

Nothing ascends, or comes into this Kingdom of Heaven, but that which descended, or came out of it, all its inhabitants must be innate guests, and born out of it.

God, considered in Himself, as distinct from this Eternal Nature, or Kingdom of Heaven, is not the immediate Creator of any angels, spirits, or divine beings; but as He creates and governs all temporal beings in, and by, and out of, temporal nature, so He creates and governs all spiritual and heavenly beings in, and by, and out of, Eternal Nature: this is as absolutely true as that no being can be temporal but by partaking of temporal nature, nor any being eternal but by partaking of the eternal, divine nature; and therefore, whatever God creates is not created immediately by Himself, but in, and by, and out of, that nature in which it is to live and move and have its being; temporal beings out of temporal nature, and eternal beings out of the heavenly kingdom of

eternal nature : and hence it is, that all angels and the souls of men are said to be born of God, Sons of God, and partakers of the Divine Nature, because they are formed out of that Eternal Nature, which is the unbeginning Majesty of God, the Kingdom of Heaven, or visible glory of the Deity. In this Eternal Nature, which is the majestic clothing, or glory of the Triune God, manifested in the glorious unity of Divine Fire, Light, and Spirit, have all the created images of God, whether they be angels or men, their existence, union, and communion with God ; because fire, and light, and spirit have the same union and birth in the creature as in the Creator : and hence it is, that they are so many various mirrors of the Deity, penetrated with the Majesty of God, receiving and returning back communications of the Life of God. Now, in this ground, that is, in this consideration of God as manifesting His Holy Trinity through nature and creature, lieth the solid and true understanding of all that is so variously said of God, both in the Old and New Testament, with relation to mankind, both as to their creation, fall, and redemption. God is to be considered throughout as the God of Nature, only manifesting Himself to all His creatures in a variety of attributes in and by nature ; creating, governing, blessing, punishing, and redeeming them according to the powers, workings, and possibilities of nature.

This God over nature and creature darts no more anger at angels when fallen, than He did in the creation of them : they are not in Hell because Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are angry at them, and so cast them into a punishment which their wrath had contrived for them ; but they are in wrath and darkness because they have done to the light which infinitely flows forth from God, as that man does to the light of the sun who puts out his own eyes : he is in darkness, not because the sun is darkened towards him, has less light for him, or has lost all inclination to enlighten him, but because he has put out that birth of light in himself, which alone made him capable of seeing in the light of the sun.

If you ask what Fire is in its first, true, and unbeginning state, not yet entered into any creature, it is the power and strength, the glory and majesty of eternal nature; it is that which generates, enriches, brightens, strengthens, and displays, the light of Heaven. It is that which makes the eternal light to be majestic, the eternal love to be flaming: for the strength and vivacity of fire must be both the majesty of light, and the ardour of love. It is the glorious out-birth, the true representative of God the Father eternally generating His only Son, Light and Word.

If you ask what Fire is in its own spiritual nature, it is merely a desire, and has no other nature than that of a working desire, which is continually its own kindler. For every desire is nothing else but its own striking up, or its own kindling itself into some kind and degree of fire. And hence it is that nature (though reduced to great ignorance of itself) has yet forced all nations and languages to speak of its desires as cool, warm, or burning, etc., because every desire is, so far as it goes, a kindled fire.

But you will perhaps say, though this be a truth yet it is more speculative than edifying, more fitted to entertain the curiosity than to assist the devotion of Christians. But stay a while, and you shall see it is a truth full of the most edifying instruction, and directly speaking to the heart.

For if every desire is in itself, in its own essence, the kindling of fire, then we are taught this great practical lesson, that our own desire is the kindler of our own fire, the former and raiser of that life which leads us. What our desire kindles, that becomes the fire of our life, and fits us either for the majestic glories of the Kingdom of God, or the dark horrors of Hell: so that our desire is all, it does all, and governs all, and all that we have and are must arise from it; and therefore it is that the Scripture saith, "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life."

We are apt to think that our imaginations and desires may be played with, that they rise and fall as nothing, because they do not always bring forth outward and visible effects.

But indeed they are the greatest reality we have, and are the true formers and raisers of all that is real and solid in us. All outward power that we exercise in the things about us is but as a shadow in comparison of that inward power that resides in our will, imagination, and desires; these communicate with eternity, and kindle the life which always reaches either heaven or hell. This strength of the inward man makes all that is the angel, and all that is the devil; and we are neither good nor bad, but according to the working of that which is spiritual and invisible in us. Now our desire is not only thus powerful and productive of real effects, but it is always alive, always working and creating in us; I say creating, for it has no less power, it perpetually generates either life or death in us: and here lies the ground of the great efficacy of prayer, which when it is the prayer of the heart, the prayer of faith, has a kindling and creating power, and forms and transforms the soul into every thing that its desires reach after: it has the key to the Kingdom of Heaven, and unlocks all its treasures; it opens, extends, and moves that in us which has its being and motion in and with the Divine Nature, and so brings us into a real union and communion with God.

The same fire that is mere wrath in a devil, is the sweetness of flaming love in an angel; and the same fire which is the majestic glory of heaven, makes the horror of hell.

V.

SOME ANIMADVERSIONS.

IN will, imagination, and desire, consists the life or fiery driving of every intelligent creature. And as every intelligent creature is its own self-mover, so every intelligent creature has the power of kindling and inflaming its will, imagination, and desire as it pleases, with shadows, fictions, or realities, with things carnal or spiritual, temporal or eternal. And this kindling of the will, imagination, and desire, when raised into a ruling degree of life, is properly that which is to be understood by enthusiasm; and therefore enthusiasm is, and must be, of as many kinds as those objects are which can kindle and inflame the wills, imaginations and desires of men. And to appropriate enthusiasm to religion is the same ignorance of nature as to appropriate love to religion; for enthusiasm, a kindled, inflamed spirit of life, is as common, as universal, as essential to human nature, as love is; it goes into every kind of life as love does, and has only such a variety of degrees in mankind as love hath. And here we may see the reason why no people are so angry at religious enthusiasts as those that are the deepest in some enthusiasm of another kind.

He whose fire is kindled from the divinity of Tully's rhetoric, who travels over high mountains to salute the dear ground that Marcus Tullius Cicero walked upon; whose noble soul would be ready to break out of his body if he could see a desk, a rostrum, from whence Cicero had poured forth his thunder of words, may well be unable to bear the dulness of those who go on pilgrimages only to visit the Sepulchre whence the Redeemer of the world rose from the dead, or who grow devout at the sight of a Crucifix because the Son of God hung as a sacrifice thereon.

He whose heated brain is all over painted with the ancient hieroglyphics; who knows how and why they were this and

that, better than he can find out the customs and usages of his own parish; who can clear up everything that is doubtful in antiquity, and yet be forced to live in doubt about that which passes in his own neighbourhood; who has found out the sentiments of the first philosophers with such certainty as he cannot find out the real opinion of any of his contemporaries; he that has gone thus high into the clouds, and dug thus deep into the dark for these glorious discoveries, may well despise those Christians, as brain-sick visionaries, who are sometimes finding a moral and spiritual sense in the bare letter and history of Scripture-facts.

It matters not what our wills and imaginations are employed about; wherever they fall and love to dwell, there they kindle a fire; and that becomes the flame of life, to which everything else appears as dead, and insipid, and unworthy of regard. Hence it is that even the poor species of fops and beaux have a right to be placed among enthusiasts, though capable of no other claim than that which is kindled by tailors and peruke-makers. All refined speculatists, as such, are great enthusiasts; for being devoted to the exercise of their imaginations, they are so heated into a love of their own ideas that they seek no other *summum bonum*. The grammarian, the critic, the poet, the connoisseur, the antiquary, the philosopher, the politician, are all violent enthusiasts, though their heat is only a flame from straw, and therefore they all agree in appropriating enthusiasm to religion. All ambitious, proud, self-conceited persons, especially if they are scholars, are violent enthusiasts, and their enthusiasm is an inflamed self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking. This fire is so kindled in them, that everything is nauseous and disgusting to them that does not offer incense to that idol which their imagination has set up in themselves. All atheists are dark enthusiasts; their fire is kindled by a will and imagination turned from God into a gloomy depth of nothingness, and therefore their enthusiasm is a dull burning fire that goes in and out, through hopes and fears of they know not what that is to come. All professed infidels are remarkable enthusiasts; they have kindled a bold fire from a few faint ideas, and therefore they are all zeal, and courage, and industry, to be constantly blowing it up. A Tyndal and a Collins are as

inflamed with the notions of infidelity, as a St. Bennet and St. Francis with the doctrines of the Gospel.

Enthusiasts therefore we all are, as certainly as we are men; and consequently, enthusiasm is not a thing blamable in itself, but is the common condition of human life in all its states; and every man that lives either well or ill is that which he is, from that prevailing fire of life, or driving of our wills and desires, which is properly called enthusiasm. You need not then go to a cloister, the cell of a monk, or to a field preacher, to see enthusiasts; they are everywhere, at balls and masquerades, at Court and the Exchange; they sit in all Coffee houses, and cant in all Assemblies. The beau and the coquette have no magic but where they meet enthusiasts. The mercer, the tailor, the bookseller have all their wealth from them; the works of a Bayle, a Shaftesbury, and Cicero, would lose four-fifths of their astonishing beauties, had they not keen enthusiasts for their readers.

That which concerns us, therefore, is only to see with what materials our prevailing fire of life is kindled, and in what species of enthusiasts it truly places us. For either the flesh or the spirit, either the wisdom from above or the wisdom of this world, will have its fire in us; and we must have a life that governs us either according to the sensuality of the beast, the subtlety of the serpent, or the holiness of the angel. Enthusiasm is not blamable in religion, when it is true religion that kindles it. We are created with wills and desires for no other end but to love, adore, desire, serve, and cooperate with God; and therefore the more we are inflamed in this motion of our wills and desires, the more we have of a God-like divine nature and perfection in us. Religious enthusiasm is not blamable when it is a strong persuasion, a firm belief of a continual operation, impression, and influence from above; when it is a total resignation to, and dependence upon, the immediate inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the whole course of our lives; this is as sober and rational a belief as to believe that we always live, and move, and have our being in God. Both nature and Scripture demonstrate this to be the true spirit of a religious man. Nature tells everyone that we can only be heavenly by a spirit derived from heaven, as plainly as it tells us that we

can only be earthly by having the spirit of this world breathing in us. The Gospel teaches no truth so constantly, so universally, as this, that every good thought and good desire is the work of the Holy Spirit. And therefore both nature and Scripture demonstrate that the one only way to piety, virtue, and holiness is to prepare, expect, and resign ourselves up wholly to the influence and guidance of the Holy Spirit in everything that we think, or say, or do. The moment anyone departs from this faith, or loses this direction of his will and desire, so far, and so long, he goes out of the one only element of all holiness of life. There is nothing that so sanctifies the heart of man, that keeps us in such habitual love, prayer, and delight in God; nothing that so kills all the roots of evil in our nature, that so renews and perfects all our virtues, that fills us with so much love, goodness, and good wishes to every creature, as this faith that God is always present in us with His Light and Holy Spirit. When the heart has once learnt thus to find God, and knows how to live everywhere, and in all things, in this immediate intercourse with Him, seeing Him, loving Him, and adoring Him in everything, trusting in Him, depending upon Him for His continual Light and Holy Spirit; when it knows that this faith is infallible, that by thus believing it thus possesses all that it believes of God; then it begins to have the nature of God in it, and can do nothing but flow forth in love, benevolence, and goodwill towards every creature; it can have no wish towards any man but that he might thus know, and love, and find God in himself as the true beginning of heaven, and the heavenly life in the soul.

On the other hand, no error so hurtful to the soul, so destructive of all the ends of the Gospel, as to be led from this faith and entire dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God, or to place our recovery in anything else but in the operation of the Light and Holy Spirit of God upon the soul. It is withdrawing men not only from the earliest, the most natural, the most fruitful, but the only possible source of all light and life. For every man, as such, has an open gate to God in his soul, he is always in that temple where he can worship God in spirit and truth; every Christian, as such, has the first fruits of the Spirit, a seed of Life, which is his call and qualifi-

cation to be always in a state of inward prayer, faith, and holy intercourse with God. All the ordinances of the Gospel, the daily sacramental service of the Church, is to keep up, and exercise, and strengthen this faith, to raise us to such an habitual faith and dependence upon the Light and Holy Spirit of God, that by thus seeking and finding God in the institutions of the Church we may be habituated to seek Him and find Him, to live in His Light and walk by His Spirit, in all the actions of our ordinary life. This is the enthusiasm in which every good Christian ought to endeavour to live and die.

The whole system of Christianity has generally been looked upon as a mystery of salvation solely founded in the divine pleasure; and to be such a scheme of redemption as is wholly to be resolved into the contrivance of the Will and Wisdom of God; and therefore men can think as differently of it, can fall into as many opinions about it, as they can of the Will and Wisdom of God. Hence has arisen all the speculative opposition to the Gospel; it is because reason, human speculation, and conjecture, is always imagining it can form a religion more worthy of the wisdom and designs of the Supreme Being than the Christian is; and would be thought to oppose the Gospel only for the honour of God and the divine attributes. This is the great, prevailing idolatry of the present heathen world, or that part of mankind who are Infidels, or Deists. Hence also is risen another species of idolatry, even amongst Christians of all denominations; who, though receiving and professing the religion of the Gospel, yet worship God not in spirit and in truth, but either in the deadness of an outward form, or in a pharisaical, carnal trust and confidence in their own opinions and doctrines. This body of people, whether they be clergy or laity, are but nominal Christians, because they have little more than the name of every mystery of the Gospel; historical Christians, because satisfied with the history of Gospel-salvation; literal Christians, because looking only to, and contending only for, the letter of the institutions and mysteries of Jesus Christ. For the letter, for the federal rite, and the figurative expression of regeneration, they are all zeal and industry; but the

reality of it, the true life of the new birth, they oppose and reject as heartily as the Deist does the outward form and letter.

To those who confine idolatry to the worship of such idols as the old Heathens and Jews worshipped, it may seem a paradox to talk of the idolatry of the present world, either amongst Deists or Christians. But if we consider things more than words, we shall find that idolatry is nowhere but where the heart has set up something in the place of God; and therefore is everywhere, and in everything, where the heart places that repose, trust, and delight, which should be placed in God alone. For God is only owned, and confessed to be our God, by these acknowledgments and dispositions of our hearts towards Him. It is an infallible truth that all sin has its beginning and continuance in and from idolatry: this alone debauched the former and the later ages of the world, and is the one source of all the corruption of manners, from the beginning to the end of time. You do not make a Golden Calf, as the Jews did, to worship it; but if Mammon is your God, if your life is devoted to pride, ambition, and sensuality, your idolatry is not so sensible, but it is as real, as theirs who danced about a Golden Calf. You fancy that Venus is not your goddess, because you are not worshipping a figured image of her in a temple called by her name; but if you look at the odes, the hymns, the songs, which you love, which lust has inspired, then you may know that Venus is the goddess of your heart. It is thus with every object, and in every course of life; that which possesses and governs our hearts has usurped the right and place of God in it, and has that worship, trust, the devotion of the heart, which is due to God alone; and therefore the idolatry of the present world is only of a different kind from that of the ancient; it is less seen, and less confessed, but not less real, than when carved images and figured idols were adored. Deism, or the religion of human reason, set up in opposition to the Gospel, is direct idolatry, and has every grossness and vanity of image worship. For to put our trust in our own reason, to be content with its light, to resign ourselves up to it, and depend upon it as our guide, is a mistake that has every grossness

and vanity of the adoration of an idol. Now this kind of idolatry has overrun all the last ages of the world; it is the last effort of human vanity; it is the utmost that idolatry can do, both to hide and propagate itself, and is the devil under the appearance of an angel of light. The Gospel has no enemy but this idolatry, and it is as visible in the Church as out of it.

VI.

AN EARNEST AND SERIOUS ANSWER.

VAIN man, taken with the sound of heavenly things and prospects of future glory, yet at the same time a fast friend to all the interests and passions of flesh and blood, would fain compound matters between God and Mammon. He is willing to acknowledge a Saviour that died on the Cross to save him; he is ready to receive outward ordinances and forms of divine worship, and to contend with zeal for the observance of them. He likes heaven and future glory, on these conditions. He is also ready to put on an outward morality of behaviour, to let religion polish his manners, that he may have the credit and ornament of a prudential piety, well-ordered passions, and a decency of outward life; this gives no hurt, or at least no death's-blow, to the old man. But to lay the axe to the whole root of our disease, to cut all those silken cords asunder which tie us to the world and the world to us, to deny every temper and passion that cannot be made holy, wise, and heavenly; to die to every gratification which keeps up and strengthens the folly, vanity, pride and blindness of our fallen nature; to leave no little morsels of sensuality, avarice, and ambition for the old man to feed upon, however well covered under his mantle; this, though it be the very essence of religion on our part, is what he flies from with as much aversion as from heresy and schism. Here he makes learned appeals to reason and common sense to judge betwixt him and the Gospel; which is just as wise as to ask the learned Greek and the worldly Jew whether the Cross of Christ be not foolishness and a just rock of offence; or to appeal to flesh and blood about the narrow way to that Kingdom of Heaven into which itself cannot possibly have any entrance.

To seek for anything in religion but a new nature fitted for a new world is knowing neither it nor ourselves. To be born

again is to be fit for Paradise, in whatever part of the universe we live. Not to be born again is continuing where the sin and death of Adam left us, whatever Church, or sect of religion, we have fellowship with. All ways and opinions, all forms and modes of divine worship, stand on the outside of religion. They may be, and certainly are, great and desirable helps to the Kingdom of God, when we consider them only as the gate, or guide, to that inward life which wants to be raised and brought forth in us. But this is unquestionably true, that our salvation consists wholly and solely in the birth of the Son of God and the renewal of the Holy Ghost in our souls. When this begins our salvation begins; as this goes on our salvation goes on; when this is finished our salvation is finished.

To renounce the poor interests of a worldly life, to be content with a pilgrim's fare in it, to live looking and longing after that which you have lost; to have no more of covetousness, of pride, of vanity, and ambition, than John the Baptist had; to live unto God in your shops, your employments and estates, with such thoughts and desires of going to your heavenly Father as the lost son had when he saw his poor condition, eating husks among swine, is only a proof that you are, like him, come to yourselves, that you begin to see what, and how, and where you are.

There is not the smallest degree of distraction, pain, or punishment, either within us, or without us, but what is owing to this, viz., that man stands out of his place, is not in and under and united to God as he should be, as the nature of things requires. God created everything to partake of His own nature, to have some degree and share of His own life and happiness. Nothing can be good or evil, happy or unhappy, but as it does or does not stand in the same degree of divine life in which it was created, receiving in God, and from God, all that good which it is capable of, and co-operating with and under Him, according to the nature of its powers and perfection. As soon as it turns to itself, and would, as it were, have a sound of its own, it breaks off from

the divine harmony, and falls into the misery of its own discord; and all its workings then are only so many sorts of torment, or ways of feeling its own poverty.

What now can be so desirable to a sober, sensible man as to have the vain, disorderly passions of his own corrupted heart removed from him, to be filled with such unity, love, and concord as flows from God, to stand united to, and co-operating with the divine goodness, willing nothing but what God wills, loving nothing but what God loves, and doing all the good that he can to every creature, from a principle of love and conformity to God. Then the Kingdom of God is come, and His Will is done in that soul as it is done in heaven. Then heaven itself is in the soul, and the life and conversation of the soul is in heaven. From such a man the curse of this world is removed; he walks on consecrated ground, and everything he meets, everything that happens to him, helps forward his union and communion with God. For it is the state of our *will* that makes the state of our life; when we receive everything from God, and do everything for God, everything does us the same good, and helps us to the same degree of happiness. Sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, bless and purify such a soul in the same degree; as it turns everything towards God, so everything becomes divine to it. For he that seeks God in everything is sure to find God in everything. When we thus live wholly unto God, God is wholly ours, and we are then happy in all the happiness of God; for by uniting with Him in heart, and will, and spirit, we are united to all that He is and has in Himself. This is the purity and perfection of life that we pray for in the Lord's Prayer, that God's Kingdom may come and His Will be done in us as it is in heaven. And this, we may be sure, is not only necessary but attainable by us, or our Saviour would not have made it a part of our daily prayer. It may now then justly be asked, have we yet obtained that which we have been so long and so universally praying for? Can we look upon the Church of this nation as drawing near, or even tending to this state of perfection? Can we be carried to any one parish, either in town or country, where it

can with truth be said of any one Pastor and his flock that there the Kingdom of God is coming, and His Will begins to be done on earth as it is done in heaven?

The Christian religion has not had its proper effect, nor obtained its intended end, till it has so set up the Kingdom of Heaven amongst us that His Will is done on earth as it is done in Heaven.

VII.

A DEMONSTRATION OF THE ERRORS OF A LATE BOOK.

THERE never could have been any dispute about the possibility of saving ourselves, nor any pretence to save ourselves by our own natural faculties, had not men lost all true knowledge both of God and themselves. For this dispute cannot happen till men suppose that God is some outward being, that our relation to Him is an outward relation, that religion is an outward thing that passes between God and us, like terms of behaviour between man and man; that sin hurts and separates us from God only as a misdemeanour hurts and separates us from our Prince; that an offended or angry God either gives or refuses pardon to us as an angry Prince does to his subjects; and that what He gives us, or forgives us, is something as distinct and different from Himself as when a Prince, sitting upon his throne, gives or forgives something to an offender that is an hundred miles from him.

Now all this is the same total ignorance of God, of what He is, of the relation we have to Him, and the manner of His being our Good, as when the old idolaters took men to be gods. And yet nothing is more plain than that your religion of reason is wholly founded upon these gross and false notions of God. You have not an argument in its defence but what supposes all these errors just mentioned; that our relation to God is an outward relation like that of subjects to their Prince, and that what we do to, and for God, as our service to Him, is and must be done by our own power, as that which we do to, and for our Prince, must be done by our own power. And here lies the foundation of all your religion of reason and natural power; that if it was not sufficient to obtain for us all that we want of God, He must be less good than a good earthly Prince who requires no more of us than

that which we have a natural strength to do, or can do by our own power.

And yet this error appears to have all the grossness of idolatry, as soon as you suppose that God is no outward separate Being, but that we are what we are, have what we have, can do that which we can do, because He has brought us to this state of life, power and existence in Himself; because He has made us, so far as we are made partakers or possessors of His own nature, and has communicated to us so much of Himself; or, in the words of Scripture, because in Him we live, and move, and have our being, and consequently have no life, motion or being out of Him. For from this state of our existence in God it necessarily follows, first, that by the nature of our creation we are only put into a capacity of receiving good. A creature, as such, can be in no other state; it is as impossible for him to enrich himself, or communicate more good to himself, as it was to create himself. Secondly, that nothing but God Himself can do us any good. Thirdly, that God cannot do us good but by the communication of Himself in some manner to us.

For hence it evidently follows that your religion of reason, which supposes that we have natural powers that can put us in possession of that which we want to be possessed of in God, or that we need no more divine assistance to recover what we have lost of God than to obtain a pardon from a Prince, or that God need communicate no more of Himself to us in our salvation than a Prince communicates of himself to his pardoned subject, has all the mistakes, error and ignorance of God that is in idolatry when it takes God to be something that He is not; and has all the false devotion that is in idolatry when it puts the same trust in, and expects the same help from, its own powers and faculties, which idolaters did in and from their idols.

Therefore your religion of reason, which you esteem as the modern refinement of an human mind, and more excellent and rational than the faith and humility of the Gospel, has all the dregs of the heathen idolatry in it, and has changed nothing in idolatry but the idol; but has the same mistakes of the nature of God, and of the manner in which he is our God and our Good, as those idolaters had; and only differs from them

in such a degree of philosophy as the religion of worshipping the sun differs from the religion of worshipping an onion.

And if you expect that divine assistance from your reason, which one did from the sun and another from an onion, ye are all equally idolaters, though ye may not be equally philosophers.

For as soon as it is known and confessed that God is all in all, that in Him we live, and move, and have our being; that we can have nothing separately or out of Him, but everything in Him; that we can have no being, nor any degree of being, nor any degree of good but in Him; and that He can give us nothing but Himself, nor any degree of salvation but in such degree as He communicates something more of Himself; as soon as this is known, then it is known with the utmost evidence that to put our trust in the sun, an onion, or our own reason, if not equally absurd, is yet equally idolatrous, and equally prejudicial to our salvation.

Further, that principle of life, or light of the mind, which I have said that every man receives from Jesus Christ as the beginning of his salvation, is entirely different from your magnified light of reason, as that signifies a faculty of viewing the relations of the ideas of things, and drawing consequences from them. For that light I speak of is Goodness itself, a seed or degree of so much of the heavenly life in the soul; but this faculty of speculating and reasoning has nothing of the nature of goodness or religion; it has not so much as the shadow of it, and is in its own nature as foreign from religion when it is speculating upon it, as when it is speculating upon anything else. Just as our faculty of seeing has no more of goodness or the nature of an angel in it when it sees the picture of an angel, than when it sees the picture of a beast.

And as a blind man has no more light in him when he reasons about light and colours, than when he discourses about weights and measures; so this ratiocination, or reasoning of the mind, has no more of religion in it when it speculates its ideas of God, goodness, and morality, than when it speculates its idea of trees and houses.

And the reason is plain, because this faculty of speculating and arguing is only the activity of the mind upon its own images and ideas, and is only the same bare activity, whatever the images be that exercise it; it has nothing of the nature of the images that it views, nor gets the nature of them, because it views them; as it does not become dark when it considers the nature, causes, and effects of darkness, nor becomes light when it reasons about it; so neither is it religion, nor gets anything of the nature of religion, when it is wholly taken up in making descriptions and definitions of it.

If the needle touched with the loadstone was an intelligent being, it could reason and make definitions of itself, of attraction, and of the loadstone; but it would be easy to see that the attraction in the needle, or the virtue of the loadstone that was left in it, was something in its whole nature really different from this reasoning about it; and that this reasoning and defining had no relation to this attraction, nor would ever be the more like it for its reasoning upon it, though it continued ever so long or improved ever so much in its descriptions of it; but would always be at the same distance from it, and could have nothing of its nature in it. But now if this reasoning faculty in the needle should pretend that the needle need not be drawn by an inward attraction, that it need not be unfixed, or delivered from any outward impediments of its turning to the loadstone, because this reasoning faculty was its true and proper attraction, being full of ideas and definitions of it; you would then have a plain example of your practice in taking natural reason to be true religion, and to have the nature and power of something that carries the soul to God.

For this instance is a clear explication of the whole matter; for that which I have called the first redemption of Christ in the soul, a seed of life, an instinct of good, a stirring of conscience, and attraction to God, is that to the soul, which attraction is to the needle that is touched; and is as different from your religion of reason as a reasoning faculty in the needle would be different from its attraction, and never could be attraction, or have the nature of it.

If the needle loses its attraction, its communication with the loadstone is at an end; and though it reasons never so

long about it, it is still at the same distance from it. So if the soul loses its instinct of goodness, its seed of a divine life, its attraction to God, all its reasonings and definitions about God and goodness are of no use to carry it to God, but it must lie in an absolute state of separation from Him, if its attraction, its inward tendency to God, is lost.

And let me tell you, my dear friend, for so I must call you, and think of you, that there is much more in this instance than you imagine. For all is magnetism, all is sentiment, instinct and attraction, and the freedom of the will has the government of it. There is nothing in the universe but magnetism and the impediments of it. For as all things come from God, and all things have something of God and goodness in them, so all things have magnetical effects and instincts both towards God and one another. This is the life, the force, the power, the nature of everything, and hence everything has all that is really good or evil in it; reason stands only as a busybody, as an idle spectator of all this, and has only an imaginary power over it.

We discover this magnetism in some things, where it breaks out sensibly; but it is everywhere for the same reason that it is anywhere, though we are too busy with the fictions of our own minds to see it, or too much employed in such things as resist and suppress its force.

But because this magnetism is a secret life that wants to increase its strength before it can sensibly show its power; and because we have an activity of reason within us that is soon in action, and concerns itself with everything, and takes all upon it as if it did all; because it can look at all and dispute about all; therefore it is that this magnetism, or instinct towards God and goodness, has much difficulty to show itself sufficiently, and only stirs now and then within us, or when sickness, distress, or some great outward shock has so dashed in pieces all images of reason, and stopped the activity of our minds, that the secret power of the soul has liberty to awake in it.

This is that trumpet of God which will raise and separate the dead; and then, all impediments being removed, everything will take its place, not according to the images and ideas it has here played with, but according to the inward

tendency and attraction of its nature; and Heaven and Hell will each take its own.

And even whilst we are in this life, this magnetism is the mark within us to what part we belong; and that which has its attraction in us has the right to us and power over us, though for a while flesh and blood, and the nature of our temporal state, hinders this from being visibly and sensibly known.

Nothing however is more plain than that our goodness bears no proportion to our intellectual abilities of reason; everyone sees this, and yet no more than this need be seen to give us the fullest demonstration that natural reason has no connection with virtue and goodness, and therefore surely can have no connection with our salvation, or be the proper cause of it.

And therefore, when you place the power of your salvation in your intellectual light, or the strength of your own reason, you place it in your weakest part, in the poorest, most trifling and insignificant thing that belongs to you, and upon that which has the least effect in human life.

The only good that reason can do to you is to remove the impediments of virtue, and to give room to that inward instinct or attraction to God and goodness to display itself; that the inmost spirit of your mind may receive its strength and assistance from the Spirit of God, from which, as the needle from the loadstone, it has all its instinct of goodness and tendency towards God.

For this inward instinct of goodness, or life of God in the soul, is all the real and living goodness that is in you, and is as different and distinct from natural reason as the light, and heat, and power, and virtue of the sun is different from a picture of it upon a piece of canvas; and has as different effects upon the mind.

For this light of bare reason, or the reasoning faculty of the mind, has no contrariety to the vices of the heart; it neither kills them, nor is killed by them. As pride, vanity, hypocrisy, envy, or malice, do not take away from the mind its geometrical skill; so a man may be most mathematical

in his demonstrations of the religion of reason when he has extinguished every good sentiment of his heart, and be the most zealous for its excellency and sufficiency when he has his passions in the most disordered state.

But in that light of the heart, or attraction to God, which I have said is common to all mankind in and through Jesus Christ, all is contrary. As it is a gift and grace of God, so it is a real life, a living thing, a sentiment of the heart; and so far as it grows and increases in us, so far it destroys all that is bad and corrupt within us. It has the same contrariety to all vices of the heart that light has to darkness, and must either suppress or be suppressed by them.

Now when I speak of this light, or instinct of the heart, or attraction to God, I have not only the authority of Scripture, but every man's own experience on my side; that distinction between the head and the heart, which every one knows how to make, plainly declares for all that I have said. It shows that the state, and manner, and tendency of our heart is all that is good within us; and that the reasonings and speculations of the head are only an empty show and noise that is made in the outside of us.

For that which we mean by the heart plainly speaks thus much; it is a kind of life and motion within us which every one knows contains all that is good or bad in us; that we are that which our hearts are, let us talk, and reason, and dispute what we will about goodness and virtue; and that this state of our heart is as distinct from, and independent of, all speculations of our reasoning faculties, as it is distinct from, and independent of, all the languages in which a scholar can reason and speculate upon it. And if a man should say that the excellency and sufficiency of natural religion consisted in knowing all the languages in which virtue, goodness, and religion are expressed by different sounds and characters, he would have said as much truth, and as well grounded, as he who places the excellency and sufficiency of natural religion in the many arguments and demonstrations which reason can raise about it. For all reasoning and speculation stand on the outside of the heart, in the same superficial manner as all languages do.

For our heart is our manner of existence, or the state in

which we feel ourselves to be; it is an inward life, a vital sensibility, which contains our manner of feeling what and how we are; it is the state of our desires and tendencies, of inwardly seeing, hearing, tasting, relishing and feeling that which passes within us: it is that to us inwardly with regard to ourselves, which our senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, etc., are with regard to things that are without, or external to us.

Now as reason is a poor, superficial, and insignificant thing with respect to our outward senses, unable to add anything to our hearing and seeing, etc., or to be the true power and life of them, by all its speculations and reasonings upon them; so it is much more a poor, and superficial, and insignificant thing with respect to the inward sensibility of the heart, or its seeing, feeling, etc., and much more unable to add to, or amend the state of the heart, or become the life and power of its motions, by its arguings about them.

And therefore, to seek for the religion or perfection of the heart in the power of our reason is more groundless and absurd, and against the nature of things, than to seek for the perfection and strength of our senses in the power of our reason.

Now I appeal to every man in the world for the truth of all this; for every man has the fullest inward conviction that his heart is not his reason, nor his reason his heart, but that the one is as different from the other in its whole nature, as pain, and joy, and desire, are different from definitions of them; and that as a thousand definitions of joy and desire will not become that desire and joy itself, so a thousand definitions of religion will not become religion itself, but be always in the same state of distance from it; and that all reasoning and speculations upon religion are at the same state of distance from the nature and power of religion, as speculations upon our passions are from the nature and power of them.

You know, not by hearsay, reasoning, or books, but by an inward sentiment, that your reason can be very nicely religious, very strict in its descriptions of goodness, at the same time that the heart is a mere libertine, sunk into the very dregs of corruption: on the other hand, you know that

when your reason is debauched with arguments, is contending for profaneness, and seems full of proof that piety is superstition, your heart at the same time has a virtue in it that secretly dissents from all that you say.

Now all this proof that the state of reason is not the state of your heart is the same proof that reason is not the power or strength of our religion; because what our heart is, that is our religion, what belongs to our heart, that belongs to our religion; which never had nor can have any other nature, power, or perfection, than that which is the nature, power, and perfection of our heart.

You are forced to know and feel, whether you will or no, that God has a certain secret power within you, which is watching every opportunity of saying something to you, either of yourself, the vanity of the world, or the guilt and consequences of sin.

This is that instinct of goodness, attraction of God, or witness of Himself in the soul of every man, which without arguments and reasonings rises up in the soul, and would be doing some good to it, if not quenched and resisted by the noise and hurry either of pleasures or business.

And this is everyone's natural religion, or call to God and goodness, which is faithful to every man, and is the only foundation of all the virtue and goodness that shall be brought forth in him. And the least stirring of this inward principle, or power of life, is of more value than all the activity of our reason; which is only, as it were, a painter of dead images, which leave the heart in the same state of death and emptiness of all goodness, in which they find it.

Therefore, my dear friend, know the place of your religion, turn inwards, listen to the voice of grace, the instinct of God that speaks and moves within you; and instead of forming dead and lifeless images, let your heart pray to God that all that is good and holy in Him may touch, and stir, and revive all that is capable of goodness and holiness in you. Your heart wants nothing but God, and nothing but your heart can receive Him. This is the only place and seat of religion, and of all communication between God and you.

We are apt to consider conscience only as some working of our heart that checks us, and so we are rather afraid than

fond of it. But if we looked upon it as it really is, so much of God within us revealing Himself within us, so much of a heavenly life that is striving to raise us from the dead, we should love and adhere to it, as our happy guide to heaven.

For this reason I have called this spark of life, or instinct of goodness, our inward Redeemer; not only because it is the only thing within that helps forward our salvation, but also because it is the first beginning of Christ's redemption in the souls of all men, by His becoming the atonement for all.

And as it is the first step of Christ's redemption in the soul, and that which became their capacity of salvation, so the progress of their redemption consists in the increase and growth of the first seed of life, till the new man be wholly raised up by it.

Lastly, another real difference between this instinct of goodness, or piety of the heart, and your religion of reason, is this, that natural reason in itself is incapable of Jesus Christ; it cannot comprehend Him, it is at enmity with Him, and sets itself up against Him. For it feels no want of a Saviour, and therefore is unwilling to receive one. Or if it were to admit of a Saviour, it must be only such a one as came to increase the number of its images and ideas, or to help it to be more active and artful in arranging, dividing, and distinguishing them. And for this reason it is that a book of ideas and distinctions is more valued by some people, than all the salvation that is offered in the Gospel.

But this natural religion or instinct of goodness, of which I have spoken as God's free gift to all men in Jesus Christ, has that natural fitness for the receiving of Christ as the eye has for receiving the light; it wants Him, it desires Him, it is for Him, it knows Him, it rejoices in Him, as the eye wants, desires, knows, and rejoices in the light. And of this natural religion, or religion of the heart, does our Saviour plainly speak, when He saith, He that is of God heareth God's Word,—and again, My sheep hear My Voice. Therefore this instinct of goodness, or piety of the heart, though it is God's gift to man before his hearing the outward word, is yet a certain preparation for it; and if it be brought forth in us is a never-failing fitness to receive it. Therefore he that has this natural religion of the heart, of which I have

spoken, has the greatest fitness to receive the Gospel; he is so of God that he heareth God's word, such a sheep of Christ as knoweth His voice. And therefore the receiving, or not receiving the Gospel, is the greatest of all demonstrations whether the man hath, or hath not, that right religion that is antecedent to it.

Natural religion, when rightly understood, is a real thing, and of the same truth as revealed religion. But the mistake lies here, in our taking natural religion to be the work or effect of natural reason; whereas reason, or our faculty of reasoning upon our ideas, is not a *part* of natural or revealed religion, but only a bare spectator of its own *images* of natural and revealed religion; just as it is not a part of our hearing and seeing, nor can come any nearer to them, than as it is a bare spectator of its own images of them.

Let your reason pretend what it will, and fancy it has ever so many objections of speculation and argument against the Gospel, they are all objections of the heart. For the Gospel speaks only to the heart, and nothing but the heart can either receive or reject it. For this is an eternal truth, which you cannot too much reflect upon, that reason always follows the state of the heart, and what your heart is, that is your reason. If your heart is full of sentiments of penitence, and of faith in the divine mercy, your reason will take part with your heart, and will entertain itself with all arguments, ideas, and discourses, that can exercise this religion of the heart.

But if your heart is shut up in death and dryness your reason will be according to it, a poor quibbler in words and dead images; and will delight in nothing but such dry objections and speculations as answer to the deadness and insensibility of your heart.

So that what you imagine of your having a religion of pure reason is the merest fiction of deceit that can be imposed upon you; for reason has nothing of its own, it acts nothing of itself, it barely reflects that which comes from the heart, as the moon barely reflects that which comes from the sun; it is the servant of the heart, and must act or not act in obedience to it; what the heart loves, that reason contends

for; and what the heart has no inclination to, that reason objects against. Therefore there neither is, nor was, nor ever can be any other religion but the religion of the heart; and reason is only its servant, in the same manner and in the same degree, whatever the religion of the heart be, whether true or false.

And to imagine that natural religion is the effect of pure reason and speculation is as great an error against the nature of things, and more hurtful to you, than to imagine that natural hearing and seeing is the effect of reason and speculation.

Natural religion, if you understand it rightly, is a most excellent thing; it is a right sentiment of heart, it is so much goodness in the heart, it is its sensibility both of its separation from and its relation to God; and therefore it shows itself in nothing but in a penitential sentiment of the weight of its sins, and in an humble recourse by faith to the mercy of God. Call but this the religion of nature, and then the more you esteem it the better; for you cannot wish well to it without bringing it to the Gospel state of perfection.

For the religion of the Gospel is this religion of penitence, and faith in the mercy of God, brought forth into its full perfection. For the Gospel calls you to nothing but to know, and understand, and practise a full and real penitence, and to know by faith such heights and depths of the divine mercy towards you, as the religion of nature had only some little uncertain glimmerings of. Therefore there is the same agreement, and the same difference, between the true religion of nature and the religion of the Gospel, that there is between the breaking of the day and the rising of the sun to its meridian height; the one is the beginning, and the other is the perfection, of the same thing. And as the light of the daybreak and the light of the noon-day are both the same light, and from the same producer of light; so the light of the religion of nature and the light of the Gospel are the same light, and from the same producer of light in the mind.

If you only stood for some time in the first break of day, sensible of the misery of darkness and only feeling some hope and expectation of the light, yet knowing nothing of that globe of fire that afterwards was to appear, and bless you

with so many unknown and unhopèd for joys and comforts of the noon-day light, you would then resemble one standing for some time in the daybreak of natural religion, sensible of the weight of his sins, and only hoping in God for some kind of mercy towards him; yet knowing nothing of that globe of fire, that mystery of divine love, that was by degrees to discover itself, and bless him with so many unknown, unhopèd-for joys and comforts of the divine mercy towards him.

The original instinct of goodness in the soul, which I have shown to be the only religion of nature, is the light of day-break in the soul, and is that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. The light of the Gospel is that noon-day light, which discovers such joys and comforts as no one could have thought of, that had only stood in the break of day.

And as no one, when the day arises, can reject or dispute the coming or goodness of the rising sun, but because he has lost that sense which was to distinguish light from darkness; so no one can reject or dislike, or dispute against, the light of the Gospel, but he that has extinguished that instinct of goodness in his soul, which alone can distinguish good from evil, and make him love the one and reject the other.

Do not, therefore, my dear friend, deceive yourself, nor let anyone else deceive you. The matter is of infinite consequence that you have before you. You come into the world but once, and have but one trial, but the effects of it are to last for ever. The time of disputing and speculating upon ideas is short; it can last no longer than whilst the sun of this world can refresh your flesh and blood, and so keep your soul from knowing its own depth, or what has been growing in it. But when this is over, then you must know and feel what it is to have a nature as deep, and strong, and large, as eternity.

If you have lived upon the amusements of reason and speculation, your life has been worse than a dream; and your soul will, at the end of such a life, be left to itself in its own darkness, hunger, thirst, and anxiety, to be for ever devoured by its own fire. But if you have watched over that instinct of goodness which God planted in your soul, and have exercised yourself in that penitence for your sins, and humble

faith in the mercy of God, that the Gospel proposes to you ; then when your body falls off from you, you will feel and know what a Kingdom of God lay hid in your soul ; you will see that you have a life and strength like that of eternity, and the fulness of God Himself will be your everlasting enjoyment.

For Heaven and Hell stand ready to awake and be revealed in you, and can no longer be hid from you, than whilst you are under the cover of flesh and blood. And then will be fully verified in you that saying of Scripture, he that seeketh findeth : for you will find that which you have sought, and according to your faith, so will it eternally be done unto you. Your soul will have nothing taken from it, but it will have all that good which you sought after and provided for it. You chose to be saved only by the powers of your own reason, and refused the mercy of God that was to have saved you, and therefore you will have that very salvation you have chosen, you will be entirely without the mercy of God, and left wholly to your own nature : and that salvation is the misery of hell.

You are now your own carver, and must be that which you shall have made of yourself. If the depth of your heart has not in this lifetime its proper cure ; if it has not something done to it, which your reason can no more do than it can create the light, your heart will become your Hell. And if you let the light of the Gospel shine into it, and revive the good seed of life in it, then it will become the seat and habitation of your Heaven.

Can any echo answer better to the voice that raises it, than the voice of your nature answers to the sound of the Gospel ? And do you not hereby plainly see that you stand nearer to the truth of the Christian religion, than you do to anything else ? It is only the description of that which passes within you. It is the book of yourself, it talks of nothing out of you, it speaks but that which is written within you, and therefore you have sufficient help to understand it. To look for outward testimonials is like looking for yourself abroad ; turn but your eyes inward, and you have no need of miracles

to show you that Jesus Christ came from that God that made you, and that He teaches you the only way to find that perfection and happiness for which He made you.

What can the Gospel say to you of the fall of man that your heart does not feel to be true? What can it say to you of your redemption that is not at the same time said to you by the state of your own soul?

Complain therefore no more of want of evidence; neither books, nor study, nor learning is wanted; the Gospel is within you, and you are its evidence; it is preached unto you in your own bosom, and everything within you is a proof of the truth of it.

Ask how you shall know there is such a thing as day and night; for the fall and redemption are as manifest within you as day and night are manifest without you.

Here, sir, in this intimate and true knowledge of yourself lies the most precious evidence of the Gospel, and is as near to you as you are to yourself; because all that is said, and declared, and recorded in the Gospel is only a plain record of that which is said, and done, and doing in yourself.

And when you once feel it thus proved to you, by its agreement with the state of your own nature, then it becomes a pearl that is dearer to you than your life; and what is best, it is then a pearl which no one can rob you of. You are then in such assurance and possession of the power and goodness of Christ as those blind men were whose eyes He had opened to see the light.

Then, all the wrangle and dispute of learned men against the truth of the Gospel will signify no more to you, nor raise any more doubt in you, than if by history and criticism they would prove that you never had any benefit from the light of the sun.

If you go on only outwardly to work, and seek only for an outward proof of the truth of the Gospel, you can only know it by such labours and in such uncertainty as you know other matters of history, and must be always balancing what is said for and against it. And if you come to believe it this way, your faith will be held by an uncertain tenure, you will be

alarmed at every new attack, and frightened at every new enemy that pretends to lessen the evidence of the Gospel.

But these, sir, are difficulties that we make to ourselves by neglecting the proper evidence of the Gospel, and choosing only to know it as we know other histories that have no relation to us, or connection with our own state.

The Gospel is not a history of something that was done and past seventeen hundred years ago, or of a redemption that was then present, and only to be transmitted to posterity as a matter of history; but it is the declaration of a Redeemer, and a redeeming Power that is always in its redeeming state, and equally present to every man.

We all stand as near to the reasons and motives for receiving the Gospel as they did to whom it was first preached. No one then did, or could, receive Jesus Christ when He was on earth, but for the same reasons that the sick, the lame, and the blind sought Him to be cured, namely, because they felt their infirmities, and wanted to be relieved from them. But if this state of heart, or their sensibility of their condition of what they were, and what they wanted, was then the only possible reason they could have for receiving Christ; then it follows that every man of every age has all the reasons for receiving or not receiving the Gospel within himself, and stands just as near to and just as far from the evidence of it, as those did who first heard it.

If you know of no burden or weight of sin, nor want any assistance to overcome it, the Gospel has no evidence for you; and though you had stood by our Saviour you had been never the nearer to it. But if you know your state, as the sick, the lame, and the blind knew their state; if you groan under the power of sin, and are looking towards God for some assistance to overcome it, then you have all the reasons for receiving the Gospel written in your heart, and you stand as near all its proper evidence, whether you were born the last age, or seventeen hundred years ago.

VIII.

A COLLECTION OF LETTERS.

LETTER II.

“ If Christ be not in us, we are none of His.” But how can Christ be in us but because all that which Christ was, in the spirit and nature of His whole process, is in us as it was in Him? If the same mind be not in us which was in Christ Jesus; if that which loved, that which willed, that which suffered in Him be not the same Spirit in us, we shall never reign with Him. He may be truly called a Redeemer, but we are not His redeemed, for such as the Redeemer is, such are they that are redeemed.

“ To him that overcometh,” saith Christ, “ will I grant to sit with me on my Throne, (N.B.) even as I overcame and am set down with My Father on His Throne.” What becomes now of the vain fiction of an outward imputation? Is Christ’s victory here imputed to us? Is not the contrary as strongly taught us as words can do it? “ To him that overcometh, even as I also overcame.”

Can we have fuller proof that Christ’s righteous nature must be inwardly born, living and manifesting itself in us, as it did in Him; how else can we overcome even as He overcame? That spirit which overcame in Christ was manifest in the flesh for no other end but that the same conquering spirit might be born in us.

LETTER III.

That which is Spirit in man must be godlike, before it can unite with that Spirit which is God. And was there not a Divine Spirit in man truly born of, and proceeding from, the Spirit of God as His real offspring, no union of will, love, or desire could be between God and man. For this is a truth that extends itself through all that is natural, or supernatural,

that like can only unite with like. There is no separation between things but that which is effected by contrariety. If therefore nothing in man was a partaker of the Divine Nature man must in his whole nature be for ever separated from God, and stand in the same impossibility of being united with Him that two of the most contrary things do to one another. So sure, therefore, as the mediation of Christ is by Himself declared to be for this end, namely, "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one"; so sure is it that an outwardly imputed Christ is as absurd in itself, and as contrary to Scripture, as an outwardly imputed God.

LETTER IV.

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

All this is in the grossest ignorance of God, of the reason and ground, and effects of Christ's death, and in full contradiction to the express letter of Scripture. For there we are told that God is Love, and that the infinity of His love was that alone which showed itself towards fallen man, and wanted to have satisfaction done to it; which love-desire could not be fulfilled, could not be satisfied, with anything less than man's full deliverance from all the evil of his fallen state. That love, which has the infinity of God, nay, which is God Himself, was so immutably great towards man, though fallen from Him, "that He spared not His only begotten Son." And why did He not spare Him? It was because nothing but the incarnate life of His eternal Son, passing through all the miserable states of lost man, could regenerate his first divine life in him. Can you possibly be told this in stronger words than these, "God so loved the world, that He gave

His only begotten Son"? How did He give Him? Why, in His whole Process. And to what end did He give Him? Why, "that all who believe in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Away then with the superstitious dream of an infinite wrath in God towards poor fallen man, which could never cease till an infinite satisfaction was made to it. All Scripture denies it, and the light of nature abhors it. The birth, the life, the death of Christ, though so different things, have but one and the same operation; and that operation is solely in man, to drive all evil out of his fallen nature, and delight the heart of God that desires his salvation. God is Love, and has no other will towards man but the will of Love.

Do not, my friend, be here so furious as to say that if it were strictly true that there was no wrath in God you would burn your Bible: for if it was not strictly true, you would never have had a Bible to burn; nor any more messages from Heaven about man's salvation, than from Hell.

What a paltry logic to say, God is Righteousness and Justice, as well as Love, and therefore His Love cannot help or forgive the sinner till His justice, or righteous wrath, has satisfaction! Every word here is in full ignorance of the things spoken of. For what is Love in God, but His Will to all goodness? What is Righteousness in God, but His unchangeable love of His own goodness, His impossibility of loving anything else but it, His impossibility of suffering anything that is unrighteous to have any communion with Him? What is God's forgiving sinful man? It is nothing else in its whole nature but God's making him righteous again. There is no other forgiveness of sin but being made free from it. Therefore the compassionate love of God that forgives sin is no other than God's love of His own righteousness, for the sake of which, and through the love of which, He makes man righteous again. This is the one righteousness of God that is rigorous, that makes no abatements, that must be satisfied, must be fulfilled, in every creature that is to have communion with Him. And this righteousness that

is thus rigorous is nothing else but the unalterable purity and perfection of the Divine Love, which from eternity to eternity can love nothing but its own righteousness, can will nothing but its own goodness; and therefore can will nothing towards fallen man but the return of his lost goodness, by a new birth of the Divine Life in him which is the true forgiveness of sins. For what is the sinful state of man? It is nothing else but the loss of that Divine Nature which cannot commit sin; therefore the forgiving man's sin is in the truth and reality of it nothing else but the revival of that nature in man which, being born of God, sinneth not. Lastly, let me ask these dividers of the Divine Nature, what different shares, or different work, had the righteousness and the love of God in the creation of man? Was there then something done by the love of God which ought not to be ascribed to the righteousness of God? Who can be so weak as to say this? But if the love and righteousness of God is one, as God is one, and had but one work in the creation of man, it must be the highest absurdity to say that in the redemption of man the love and righteousness of God must have, not only different, but contrary works, that the love of God cannot act till the righteousness of God, as something different from it, is first satisfied.

All that which we call the attributes of God are only so many human ways of our conceiving that abyssal All, which can neither be spoken nor conceived by us. And this way of thinking and speaking of God is suitable to our capacities, has its good use, and helps to express our adoration of Him and His perfections. But to conclude, and contend, that there must therefore be different qualities in God, answerable, or according, to our different ways of thinking and speaking of His perfections, is rather blaspheming, than truly glorifying, His name and nature. For omnipotent love, inconceivable goodness, is that unity of God which we can neither conceive as it is in itself, nor divide into this or that.

LETTER V.

Live as you now do, in such activity of spirit and multiplied ways of being good, and though you were to live half

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

But, sir, you quite mistake the matter; you have not changed your life, for that which is and only can truly be called your life is in the same state it was when I first knew you. Nothing is in your life, whether it be good or bad, but that which wills and hungers in you; and your own life neither is, nor can be, anything else but this. Therefore nothing reaches your life, or can make a real change in it from bad to good, from falseness to truth, but the right *will* and the right *hunger*. Practise as many rules as you will, take up this or that new opinion, be daily reading better and better books, follow this or that able man; the Bread of Life is not there. Nothing will be fed in you but the vanity and self-conceited righteousness of your own old man. And thus it must be with you, till all that is within you is become one will and one hunger after that which angels eat in Heaven.

But now, if will and hunger are the whole of every natural life, then you may know this great truth with the utmost certainty, namely, that eating is the one preservation of every life, from the highest angel in Heaven to the lowest living creature on earth. That which the life eats not, that the life has not.

And here you may find a glorious meaning of those words of our Lord, saying, "My Kingdom is not of this world"; because it is a kingdom of those heavenly powers of the Triune God, which give food and nourishment, purity and perfection, to the fire, light, and spirit of those Divine Creatures which are to be holy as He is holy, perfect as He is perfect, in His own Heavenly Kingdom.

Here therefore, in this spiritual eating of that same invisible food, that gives life and perfection of life to all the angels of God, and not in any human contrivances, or activity of your own, are you to place your all as to the

change of your life; it all consists in the right hunger, and the right food, and in nothing else.

Live in the love, the patience, the meekness, and humility of Christ, and then the celestial, transparent, spiritual body of Christ's Flesh and Blood is continually forming itself, and growing in and from and about your soul, till it comes to the fulness of the stature in Christ Jesus; and this is your true, substantial, vital eating the Flesh and drinking the Blood of Christ, which will afterwards become your body of glory to all eternity. And though your astral reason and outward senses, whilst you are in Adam's bodily flesh, know nothing of this inward body of Christ, yet there it is, as surely as you have the love, the patience, the meekness, and humility of Christ; for where the true spirit of Christ is, there is His true spiritual body.

On the other hand, live to selfishness, to diabolical pride, wrath, envy, and covetousness, and then nothing can hinder these tempers from forming within you such a spiritual body to your soul as that which devils have, and dwell, and work in.

Be as unwilling as you will, through learned wisdom or fear of enthusiasm, to believe this, your unbelief can last no longer than till Adam's flesh and blood leave you; and then, as sure as your soul lives, you will and must have it living either in the spiritual body of fallen angels, or in the spiritual body of the redeeming Jesus.

Now spiritual eating is by the mouth of desire, and desire is nothing else but will and hunger; therefore, that which you will and hunger after, that you are continually eating, whether it be good or bad; and that, be it which it will, forms the strength of your life, or, which is the same thing, forms the body of your soul. If you have many wills, and many hungers, all that you eat is only the food of so many spiritual diseases, and burdens your soul with their complication of inward distempers. And under this working of so many wills it is, that religious people have no more good or health and strength from the true religion, than a man who has a complication of bodily distempers has from the most

healthful food. For no will or hunger, be it turned which way it will, or seem ever so small or trifling, is without its effect. For as we can have nothing but as our will works, so we must have always some effect from it. It cannot be insignificant, because nothing is significant but that which it does.

Do not now say that you have this one will and one hunger, and yet find not the Food of Life by it. For as sure as you are forced to complain, so sure is it that you have it not. "Not my will, but Thine be done"; when this is the one will of the soul all complaints are over; then it is that patience drinks water of life out of every cup; and to every craving of the old man, this one hunger continually says, "I have meat to eat that ye know nothing of."

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

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

From what Word, and from what Mouth of God? Why, only from that hidden, supernatural power of the Triune Deity which speaks and breathes continual nourishment to that heavenly fire, light, and spirit, in and from which all that are about the Throne of God have their inward joy above all thought; and their outward glory, that can only be figured or hinted to us by pearls, sapphires, and rainbow beauties.

It is from this power of the Triune God, working in the fire, light, spirit, and spiritual water, or body, of your new-born creature, that all the good, and comfort, and joy of religion, which you want, is to be found, and found by nothing but the resurrection of that divine and heavenly nature which came forth in the first man.

Do not take these to be too high flown words, for they are no higher than the truth; for if that which is in you is not as high as Heaven, you will never come there.

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

Do you ask, how you are to come at this one will and one hunger, I refer you to no power of your own, and yet refer you to that which is within yourself.

Hence it is that nothing can put an end to this multiplicity of wills in fallen man which is his death to God, nothing can be the resurrection of the Divine Nature within him which is

his only salvation, but the Cross of Christ; not that wooden Cross on which He was crucified, but that Cross on which He was crucified through the whole course of His life in the flesh. It is our fellowship with Him on this Cross, through the whole course of our lives, that is our union with Him; it alone gives power to the Divine Nature within us to arise out of its death and breathe again in us, in one will and one hunger after nothing but God.

To be like-minded with Christ is to live in every contrariety to self, the world, the flesh and devil, as He did; this is our belonging to Him, our being one with Him, having life from Him, and washing our robes in the Blood of the Lamb. For then, and then only, are we washed and cleansed by His Blood, when we drink His Blood; and we drink His Blood when we willingly drink of the Cup that He drank of.

But to have done, cast not about in your mind how you are to have the one will and one hunger which is always eating at God's Table, and continually fed with the Bread of Life; the thing is already done to your hands. "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life," saith Christ, the same as if He said, the Way is nowhere, the Truth is nowhere, the Life is nowhere, but in me. What room therefore for any learned contrivances, or further inquiry about the matter? Follow Christ in the denial of all the wills of self, and then all is put away that separates you from God: the heaven-born new creature will come to life in you, which alone knows and enjoys the things of God, and has His daily food of gladness in that manifold BLESSED, and BLESSED, which Christ preached on the Mount.

Tell me then no more of your new skill in Hebrew words, of your Paris editions of all the ancient Fathers, your complete collection of the Councils, Commentators, and Church Historians, etc. Did Christ mean anything like this when He said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life?" Did the Apostle mean anything like this when he said, "No man can call Jesus Lord, but by the Holy Ghost?" Great, good, and divine teachers, you say, were many of the Fathers: I say nothing to it, but that much more great, good, and divine

is He who is always teaching within you, ever standing and knocking at the door of your heart, with the words of eternal life.

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

But I will have done as soon as I have given you a little piece of history which your friend Academicus has given of himself: "When I had," says he, "taken my degrees in the University, I consulted several great divines to put me in a method of studying Divinity. It would take up near half a day to tell you the work which my learned friends cut out for me. One told me that Hebrew words are all; that they must be read without points, and then the Old Testament is an opened book. He recommended to me a cartload of Lexicons, Critics, and Commentators upon the Hebrew Bible. Another tells me the Greek Bible is the best, that it corrects the Hebrew in many places, and refers me to a large number of books learnedly writ in defence of it. Another tells me that Church history is the main matter, that I must begin with the first Fathers, and follow them through every age, not forgetting to take the lives of the Roman Emperors along with me, as striking great light into the state of the Church in their times. Then I must have recourse to all the Councils held, and the Canons made in every age: which would enable me to see with my own eyes the great corruptions of the Council of Trent. Another who is not very fond of ancient matters, but wholly bent upon rational Christianity, tells me I need go no higher than the Reformation; that Calvin and

Cranmer were very great men ; that Chillingworth and Locke ought always to lie upon my table ; that I must get an entire set of those learned volumes wrote against Popery in King James's reign ; and also be well versed in all the discourses which Mr. Boyle's and Lady Moyer's Lectures have produced ; and then, says he, you will be a match for our greatest enemies, which are Popish priests and modern Deists. My tutor is very liturgical ; he desired me, of all things, to get all the collections that I can of the ancient liturgies, and all the authors that treat of such matters, who, says he, are very learned and very numerous. He has been many years making observations upon them, and is now clear as to the time when certain little particles got entrance into the liturgies, and others were by degrees stopped. He has a friend abroad in search of ancient MSS. liturgies ; for, by-the-bye, said he at parting, I have some suspicion that our Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is essentially defective for want of having a little water mixed with the wine. Another learned friend told me that the Clementine Constitutions is the book of books ; and that all that lies loose and scattered in the New Testament stands there in its true order and form. And though he will not say that Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiston are in the right, yet it might be useful to me to read all the Arian and Socinian writers, provided I stood upon my guard and did it with caution. The last person I consulted advised me to get all the histories of the rise and progress of heresies, and of the lives and characters of heretics. These histories, he said, contract the matter, bring truth and error close in view ; and I should find all that collected in a few pages which would have cost me some years to get together. He also desired me to be well versed in all the casuistical writers, and chief schoolmen ; for they debate matters to the bottom, dissect every virtue and every vice, and show how near they may come together without touching. And this knowledge, he said, might be very useful when I came to be a parish priest.

“ Following the advice of all these counsellors as well as I could, I lighted my candle early in the morning, and put it out late at night. In this labour I had been sweating for some years, till Rusticus, at my first acquaintance with him,

seeing my way of life, said to me, had you lived about seventeen hundred years ago you had stood just in the same place as I stand now. I cannot read, and therefore, says he, all these hundreds of thousands of doctrine and disputing books, which these seventeen hundred years have produced, stand not in my way; they are the same thing to me as if they had never been. And had you lived at the time mentioned you had just escaped them all as I do now, because, though you are a very good reader, there were then none of them to be read. Could you therefore be content to be one of the primitive Christians, who were as good as any that have been since, you may spare all this labour. It is not easy for me, says Academicus, to tell you how much good I received from this simple instruction of honest Master Rusticus. What project was it to be grasping after the knowledge of all the opinions, doctrines, disputes, heresies, schisms, etc., which seventeen hundred years had brought forth, through all the extent of a Christian world! What project this, in order to be a Divine, that is, in order to bear true witness to the power of Christ as a deliverer from the evil of earthly flesh and blood, and death and hell, and a raiser of a new birth and life from above! For as this is the divine work of Christ, so he only is a true and able Divine that can bear a faithful testimony to this divine work of Christ. How easy was it for me to have seen that all this labyrinth of learned inquiry into such a dark, thorny wilderness of notions, facts, and opinions, could signify no more to me now, to my own salvation, to my interest in Christ, and obtaining the Holy Spirit of God, than if I had lived before it had any beginning. But the blind appetite of learning gave me no leisure to apprehend so plain a truth. Books of Divinity indeed, I have not done with, but will esteem none to be such but those that make known to my heart the inward power and redemption of Jesus Christ. Nor will I seek for anything even from such books but that which I ask of God in prayer, namely, how better to know, more to abhor, and resist, the evil that is in my own nature, and how to obtain a supernatural birth of the Divine Life brought forth within me. All besides this is push-pin."

LETTER VI.

Every man comes into this world in a twofold state; Adam and Christ are both born in him. And if this was not the state of man, nothing within you would, or could, ask as you have done, or have any anxiety after the truth. And your being either led from this true knowledge of your state, or having never been sensible of it, is the reason of your having made so many religious inquiries in vain, both from yourself and other people. For nothing can tell you the truth, or establish you in a just and solid discernment of right from wrong, in doctrines, opinions, and practices of religion, but this home knowledge of yourself, namely, that Christ and Adam are not only both of them essentially within you, but the whole of you; that nothing is life or salvation but that which is the life and growth of Christ in you, and that all that is done from the life, the power and natural capacity, of the Adamical nature, is heathenish, is mere vanity and death, however gloriously set forth by the natural gifts of wit and learning.

Religion has no good in it but as it is the revival and quickening of that Divine Nature which your first Father had from God, and nothing can revive it but that which first created it. God is no otherwise your God but as He is the God of your life, manifested in it; and He can be no otherwise the God of your life but as His Spirit is living within you. Satan is no other way knowable by you, or can have any other fellowship with you, but as his evil spirit works and manifests itself along with the workings of your own spirit. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you"; but he is nowhere to be resisted but as a working spirit within you; therefore to resist the devil is to turn from the evil thoughts and motions that arise within you. "Turn to God, and He will turn to you"; but God is an universal spirit which you cannot logically turn to, or from; therefore to turn to God is to cleave to those good thoughts and motions which proceed from His Holy Spirit dwelling and working in you. This is the God of your life, to whom you are to adhere, listen, and attend, and this is your worshipping Him in spirit and truth. And that is the Devil that goeth about

as a roaring lion, who has no voice but that which he speaks within you. Therefore, my friend, be at home and keep close to that which passes within you, for be it what it will, whether it be a good in which you delight, or an evil at which you grieve, you could have neither the one nor the other, but because a Holy God of light and love is essentially dwelling in you. Seek therefore for no other road, nor call any thing the way to God, but solely that which His eternal, all-creating Word and Spirit worketh within you. For could any thing else have been man's way to God the Word had not been made Flesh.

To be in the truth as it is in Jesus is to be come from under the veil, to have passed through all those dispensations which would never have begun, but that they might end in a Christ spiritually revealed and essentially formed in the soul. So that now, in this last dispensation of God, which is the first truth itself restored, nothing is to be thought of, trusted to, or sought after, but God's immediate, continual working in the soul by His Holy Spirit. This, sir, is the Where you are to go, and the What you are to do, to be in the truth. For the truth as it is in Jesus is nothing else but Christ come in the Spirit; and His coming in the Spirit is nothing else but the first lost life of God, quickened and revealed again in the soul. Everything short of this has only the nature of outward type and figure, which in its best state is only for a time. If therefore you look to any thing but the Spirit, seek to any power but that of the Spirit, expect Christ to be your Saviour in any other way than as He is spiritually born in you, you go back from the grace and truth which came by Jesus, and can at best be only a legal Jew, or a self-righteous Pharisee; there is no getting further than these states but by being born of the Spirit, living by the Spirit, as His child, His instrument, and holy temple in which He dwells and works all His good pleasure. Drop this full adherence to, and dependence upon, the Spirit, act as in your own sphere, be something of yourself and through your own wisdom, etc., and then, though all that you say, or do, is with the outward words of the spiritual Gospel, and in the outward practices of the spiritual Apostles, yet for all this you are but

there where those were who worshipped God with the blood of bulls and goats; for (N.B.) nothing but the Spirit of God can worship God in spirit and in truth.

But you will perhaps say that you are still but where you were, because you know not how to find the continual guidance of the Holy Spirit. If you know how to find your own thoughts you need not be at a loss to find the Spirit of God. For you have not a thought within you but is either from the good of the Spirit, or from the evil of the Flesh. Now the good and the evil that are within you, and always more or less sensible by turns, do each of them teach you the same work and presence of the Spirit of God. For the good could not appear as good, nor the evil be felt as evil, but because the immediate working of the Spirit of God creates or manifests this difference between them; and therefore be in what state you will, the power of God's Spirit within you equally manifests itself to you; and to find the immediate, continual, essential working of the Spirit of God within you, you need only know what good and evil are felt within you. For all the good that is in any thought or desire is so much of God within you, and whilst you adhere to and follow a good thought, you follow, or are led by, the Spirit of God. And on the other hand, all that is selfish and wicked in thought, or affection, is so much of the spirit of Satan within you which would not be known or felt as evil, but because it is contrary to the immediate, continual working of the Spirit of God within you. Turn therefore inwards, and all that is within you will demonstrate to you the Presence and Power of God in your soul, and make you find, and feel it, with the same certainty as you find and feel your own thoughts. And what is best of all, by thus doing you will never be without a living sense of the immediate guidance and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, always equal to your dependence upon it, always leading you from strength to strength in your inward man, till all your knowledge of good and evil is become nothing else but a mere love of the one, and mere aversion to the other. For the one work of the Spirit of God is to distinguish the good and evil that is within you, not as in notion, but by affection; and when you are wholly given up to this new creating work of God, so as to

stay your mind upon it, abide with it, and expect all from it, this, my friend, will be your returning to the rock from whence you were hewn, your drinking at the fountain of living water, your walking with God, your living by faith, your putting on Christ, your continual hearing the word of God, your eating the Bread that came down from Heaven, your supping with Christ, and following the Lamb wherever He goeth.

IX.

AN ADDRESS TO THE CLERGY.

HERE lies the true unchangeable distinction between God, and nature and the natural creature. Nature and creature are only for the outward manifestation of the inward, invisible, unapproachable powers of God; they can rise no higher, nor be anything else in themselves, but as temples, habitations, or instruments, in which the supernatural God can and does manifest Himself in various degrees, bringing forth creatures to be good with His own goodness, to love and adore Him with His own Spirit of Love, for ever singing praises to the divine nature by that which they partake of it. This is the religion of divine inspiration, which, being interpreted, is Immanuel, or God within us. Everything short of this is short of that religion which worships God in spirit and in truth. And every religious trust or confidence in anything but the Divine operation within us is but a sort of image-worship, which though it may deny the form, yet retains the power thereof in the heart. And he that places any religious safety in theological decisions, scholastic points, in particular doctrines and opinions that must be held about the Scripture words of faith, justification, sanctification, election, and reprobation, so far departs from the true worship of the living God within him, and sets up an idol of notions to be worshipped, if not instead of, yet along with Him. And I believe it may be taken for a certain truth, that every society of Christians whose religion stands upon this ground, however ardent, laborious and good their zeal may seem to be in such matters, yet in spite of all, sooner or later, it will be found that nature is at the bottom, and that a selfish, earthly, overbearing pride in their own definitions and doctrines of words will by degrees creep up to the same height, and become that same fleshly wisdom, doing those very same things which they exclaim against in Popes, Cardinals, and

Jesuits. Nor can it possibly be otherwise. For a letter-learned zeal has but one nature wherever it is, it can only do that for Christians which it did for Jews. As it anciently brought forth Scribes, Pharisees, Hypocrites, and Crucifiers of Christ, as it afterwards brought forth heresies, schisms, Popes, Papal decrees, images, anathemas, transubstantiation, so in Protestant countries it will be doing the same thing, only with other materials; images of wood and clay will only be given up for images of doctrines; grace and works, imputed sin, and imputed righteousness, election and reprobation, will have their synods of Dort, as truly evangelical as any Council of Trent.

This must be the case of all fallen Christendom, as well Popish as Protestant, till single men and Churches know, confess, and firmly adhere to this one Scripture truth, which the blessed Behmen prefixed as a motto to most of his epistles, namely, "That our salvation is in the life of Jesus Christ in us." And that, because this alone was the divine perfection of man before he fell, and will be his perfection when he is one with Christ in heaven. Every thing besides this, or that is not solely aiming at and essentially leading to it, is but mere Babel, in all sects and divisions of Christians living to themselves and their own old man, under a seeming holiness of Christian strife and contention about Scripture works. But this truth of truths, fully possessed and firmly adhered to, brings God and man together, puts an end to every, *Lo here*, and, *Lo there*; and turns the whole faith of man to a Christ that can nowhere be a Saviour to him, but as essentially born in the inmost spirit of his soul, nor possible to be born there by any other means but the immediate inspiration and working power of the Holy Spirit within him. To this man alone all Scripture gives daily edification; the words of Christ and His apostles fall like a fire into him. And what is it that they kindle there? Not notions, nor itching ears, nor rambling desires after new and new expounders of them, but a holy flame of love to be always with, always attending to, that Christ and His Holy Spirit within him, which alone can make him to be and do all that which the words of Christ and His apostles have taught. For there is no possibility of being like-minded with

Christ in anything that He taught, or having the truth of one Christian virtue, but by the nature and spirit of Christ become essentially living in us. Read all our Saviour's divine Sermon from the Mount, consent to the goodness of every part of it; yet the time of practising it will never come till you have a new nature from Christ, and are as vitally in Him, and He in you, as the vine in the branch, and the branch in the vine. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God," is a divine truth, but will do us no divine good unless we receive it as saying neither more nor less than "Blessed are they that are born again of the Spirit, for they alone can see God." For no blessedness, either of truth or life, can be found either in men or angels, but where the Spirit and Life of God is essentially born within them. And all men or Churches not placing all in the life, light, and guidance of the Holy Spirit of Christ, but pretending to act in the Name, and for the Glory of God, from opinions which their logic and learning have collected from Scripture words, or from what a Calvin, an Arminius, a Socinus, or some smaller name, has told them to be right or wrong, all such are but where the apostles were, when "by the way there was a strife among them who should be the greatest." And how much soever they may say and boast of their great zeal for truth and the only glory of God, yet their own open notorious behaviour towards one another is proof enough that the great strife amongst them is, which shall be the greatest sect, or have the largest number of followers—a strife from the same root, and just as useful to Christianity, as that of the carnal apostles, who should be greatest. For not numbers of men or kingdoms professing Christianity, but numbers redeemed from the death of Adam to the life of Christ, are the glory of the Christian Church. And in whatever national Christianity anything else is meant or sought after, by the profession of the Gospel, but a new heavenly life through the mediatorial Nature and Spirit of the eternal Son of God born in the fallen soul, wherever this spirituality of the Gospel-redemption is denied or overlooked, there the spirit of self, of Satanic and worldly subtlety, will be church and priest, and supreme power, in all that is called religion.

But to return now to the doctrine of continual inspiration. The natural or unregenerate man, educated in pagan learning and scholastic theology, seeing the strength of his genius in the search after knowledge, how easily and learnedly he can talk and write, criticise and determine upon all Scripture words and facts, looks at all this as a full proof of his own religious wisdom, power and goodness; and calls immediate inspiration enthusiasm, not considering that all the woes denounced by Christ against Scribes, Pharisees, and Hypocrites, are so many woes now at this day denounced against every appearance and show of religion, that the natural man can practise.

And what is well to be noted, everyone, however high in human literature, is but this very natural man, and can only have the goodness of a carnal secular religion, till, as empty of all as a new-born child, the Spirit of God gets a full birth in him, and becomes the Inspirer and Doer of all that he wills, does, and aims at, in his whole course of religion.

Our Divine Master compares the religion of the learned Pharisees to "whited sepulchres, outwardly beautiful, but inwardly full of rottenness, stench, and dead men's bones."

Now whence was it that a religion, so serious in its restraints, so beautiful in its outward form and practices, and commanding such reverence from all that beheld it, was yet charged by Truth itself with having inwardly such an abominable nature? It was only for this one reason, because it was a religion of self. Therefore, from the beginning to the end of the world it must be true that where self is kept alive, has power, and keeps up its own interests, whether in speaking, writing, teaching or defending the most specious number of Scripture doctrines and religious forms, there is that very old Pharisee still alive, whom Christ with so much severity of language constantly condemned. And the reason of such heavy condemnation is because self is the only root, or rather the sum total, of all sin; every sin that can be named is centred in it, and the creature can sin no higher than he can live to self. For self is the fulness of atheism and idolatry, it is nothing else but the creature broken off from God and Christ; it is the power of Satan living and

working in us, and the sad continuance of that first turning from God which was the whole fall or death of our first father.

Now that which we are here taught is the whole end of all Scripture; for all that is there said, however learnedly read or studied by Hebrew or Greek skill, fails of its only end till it leads and brings us to an essential God within us, to feel and find all that which the Scriptures speak of God, of man, of life and death, of good and evil, of heaven and hell, as essentially verified in our own souls. For all is within man that can be either good or evil to him: God within him is his divine life, his divine light, and his divine love; Satan within him is his life of self, of earthly wisdom, of diabolical falseness, wrath, pride, and vanity of every kind. There is no middle way between these two. He that is not under the power of the one is under the power of the other. And the reason is, man was created in and under the power of the divine life; so far therefore as he loses, or turns from the Life of God, so far he falls under the power of self, of Satan, and worldly wisdom. When St. Peter, full of an human good love towards Christ, advised Him to avoid His sufferings, Christ rejected him with a "Get thee behind me, Satan," and only gave this reason for it, "for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men."

"Rabbi," says Nicodemus to Christ, "we know that thou art a teacher come from God." Now that which was here truly said of Christ in the flesh is the very truth that must be said of the Scripture teaching in ink and paper; it is a teacher come from God, and therefore fully to be believed, highly revered, and strictly followed. But as Christ's teaching in the flesh was only preparatory to His future vital teaching by the Spirit, so the teaching of Scripture by words written with ink and paper is only preparatory, or introductory, to all that inward essential teaching of God which is by His Spirit and Truth within us. Every other opinion of the holy Scripture, but that of an outward teacher and guide to God's inward teaching and illumination in our souls, is but making

an idol-God of it: I say an idol-God, for to those who rest in it as the constant abode and supreme illumination of God with them it can be nothing else. For if nothing of divine faith, love, hope, or goodness, can have the least birth or place in us but by divine inspiration, they who think these virtues may be sufficiently raised in us by the letter of Scripture do, in truth and reality, make the letter of Scripture their inspiring God. The Apostles preached and wrote to the people by divine inspiration. But what do they say of their inspired doctrine and teachings? What virtue or power was there in them? Do they say that their words and teachings were the very promised Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, the true abode and supreme illumination of God in the souls of men? So far from such a blasphemous thought, that they affirm the direct contrary, and compare all their inspired teachings and instructions to the dead works of bare planting and watering, and which must continue dead, till life comes into them from another and much higher power. "I have planted," says St. Paul, "Apollos has watered, but God gave the increase." And then, further to show that this planting and watering, which was the highest work that an inspired Apostle could do, was yet in itself to be considered as a lifeless, powerless thing, he adds, "So then, neither is he that planteth anything, nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." But now, if this must be said of all that which the inspired Apostles thought in outward words, that it was nothing in itself, was without power, without life, and only such a preparation towards life as is that of planting and watering, must not that same be said of their inspired teachings when left behind them in writing? For what else are the Apostolical Scriptures, but those very instructions and teachings put into writing, which they affirmed to be but bare planting and watering, quite powerless in themselves till the living Spirit of God work with them? Or will anyone say that what Paul, Peter, John, etc., spoke by inspiration from their own mouths was indeed bare planting and watering in order to be capable of receiving life from God; but when these Apostolic teachings and instructions were written on paper, they were raised out of their first inability, got the nature of God Himself,

became spirit and life, and might be called the great quickening Power of God, or the constant abode and supreme illumination of His Spirit with us?

It would be great folly and perverseness to charge me here with slighting, or lessening, the true value, use, and importance of the inspired Apostolical Scriptures; for if the charge was just it must lie against Paul, and not against me, since I say nothing of them but that which he says, and in his own express words, viz., that all their labour of preaching, instructing, and writing by divine inspiration had in themselves no other nature, use, or power, than that of such planting and watering as could not fructify till a higher power than was in them gave life and growth to that which they planted and watered.

And when all Scripture is thus understood, and all that either Christ says of Himself, or His Apostles say of Him, are all heard, or read, only as one and the same call to come to Christ in hunger and thirst, to be filled and blessed with His divine nature made living within us; then, and then only, the letter kills not, but as a sure guide leads directly to life.

The true nature and full distinction between literal and divine knowledge is set forth in the highest degree of clearness in these words of our Saviour, "The Kingdom of God is like a treasure in a field." Thus far is the true use and benefit, and utmost power of the letter; it can tell us of a treasure that we want, a treasure that belongs to us, and how and where it is to be found; but when it is added that a "man goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field," then begins the divine knowledge, which is nothing else but the treasure possessed and enjoyed. Now what is here said is the same that is said in these other words of Christ, "Except a man denies himself and forsakes all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple," that is, he cannot partake of My mind, My spirit and My nature, and therefore cannot know Me; he is only a hearer of a treasure, without entering into the possession and enjoyment of it. And thus it is with all

Scripture, the letter can only direct to the doing of that which it cannot do, and give notice of something that it cannot give.

Now, clear and evident as this distinction is between a mere literal direction to a thing, and a real participation of it, which alone is a true perception of it, the generality of Christians seem quite insensible of any other religious perception, or knowledge of divine things, but such ideas or notions of them as a man can form from Scripture words. Whereas good and evil, the only objects of religious knowledge, are an inward state and growth of our life; they are in us, are a part of us, just in the same manner as seeing and hearing are in us; and we can have no real knowledge of them any other way than as we have of our own seeing and hearing. And as no man can get or lose his seeing or hearing, or have less or more of them, by any ideas or notions that he forms about them, just so it is with that which is the power of good and the power of evil in us; notions and ideas have no effect upon it. Yet no other knowledge is thought of, or sought after, or esteemed of any value, but that which is notional and the work of the brain.

Thus, as soon as a man of speculation can demonstrate that which he calls the being and attributes of God, he thinks, and others think, that he truly knows God. But what excuse can be made for such an imagination, when plain Scripture has told him that to know God is Eternal Life, that is, to know God is to have the Power, the Life, and the Spirit of God manifested in him; and therefore it is Eternal Life. "No man knoweth the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth Him"; because the revelation of the Son is the birth of the Son in the soul, and this new creature in Christ has alone knowledge of God, what He is, and does, and works, in the creature.

Again, another, forming an opinion of faith from the letter of Scripture, straightway imagines that he knows what faith is, and that he is in the faith. Sad delusion! For to know what faith is, or that we are in the faith, is to know that Christ is in us of a truth; it is to know the power of His life, His sufferings, His death, His resurrection and ascen-

sion, made good in our souls. To be in the faith is to have done with all notions and opinions about it, because it is found and felt by its living power and fruits within us, which are righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. All which are three names or powers peculiar to Jesus Christ; He alone is our righteousness, our peace, our joy in the Holy Ghost. And therefore faith is not in us by reason of this or that opinion, assent, or consent, but it is Christ, or the Divine Nature, in us; or its operations could not be righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. By faith ye are saved has no other meaning than by Christ ye are saved. And if faith in its whole nature, in its root and growth, was anything else but Christ, or a birth of the Divine Nature within us, it could do us no good, no power could be ascribed to it, it could not be our victory, it could not overcome the world, the flesh and the devil. Every faith that is not Christ in us is but a dead faith.

No salvation would have ever been ascribed to faith, but because it is, in the strictest sense, Christ Himself, the power of God, living and working in us. It never would have been said of faith that every power of the world, the flesh, and the devil must yield to it, but because it is that very Christ within us, without whom we can do nothing. But if without Christ we can do nothing, and yet all things are possible to our faith, can there be a fuller demonstration that our faith is nothing else but Christ born and living within us? Whatever therefore there is of power within us that tends to salvation, call it by what name you will, either faith, or hope, or prayer, or hunger after the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, it is all but one power, and that one power is Christ within us.

It may perhaps be here said, Must there then be no learning or scholarship, no recondite erudition, in the Christian Church? Must there be nothing thought of, or got by the Gospel, but mere salvation? Must its ministers know nothing, teach nothing, but such salvation-doctrines as Christ and His Apostles taught; nothing but the full

denial of self, poverty of spirit, meekness, and humility, and unwearied patience; a never ceasing love, an absolute renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the world, a full dependence upon our heavenly Father; no joy or rejoicing but in the Holy Ghost; no wisdom but that which God gives; no walking but as Christ walked; no reward or glory for their labours of love but that of being found in Christ, flesh of His flesh, bone of His bones, spirit of His spirit; and clothed with the wedding garment when the bridegroom comes, "when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first"?

To this the first answer is, happy, thrice happy, are they, who are only the thus learned preachers of the Gospel; who through all their ministry seek nothing for themselves or others but to be taught of God; hunger after nothing but the Bread of Life that came down from heaven; owning no master but Christ, no teacher but His Holy Spirit; as unable to join with the diggers in pagan pits of learning, as with those that "labour for the wind, and give their money for that which is not bread."

Secondly, with regard to the demand of learned knowledge in the Christian Church, it may be answered that all that has been said above is only for the increase and promotion of it, and that all ignorance and darkness may be driven quite out of it. The Church of Christ is the seat or school of all the highest knowledge that human nature is capable of in this life. Ignorance is everywhere but in the Church of Christ. The Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel are the only treasures of all that can be called the knowledge either of God or man; and he in whom the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel are fulfilled is the only well-educated man, and one of the first-rate scholars in the world. But now, who is he that has this wisdom from these rich treasures? Who is he in whom all is known and fulfilled which they teach? The lip of truth has told us that it is he, and he alone, "who loves God with all his heart, with all his soul, with all his mind, and with all his strength, and his neighbour as himself." This is the man that is all wisdom, all light, and let into full possession of all that is meant by all the mysteries contained

in the Law, the Prophets and the Gospel. Where this divine love is wanting, and a diabolical self sits in its place, there may be great wits, shining critics, orators, poets, etc., as easily as there may be a profound Machiavel, a learned Hobbes, or an atheistical virtuoso. But would you divinely know the mysteries of nature, the ground and reason of good and evil in this world, the relation and connection between the visible and invisible world, how the things of time proceed from, are influenced by, and depend upon, the things and powers of eternity, there is but one only key of entrance; nothing can open the vision but seeing with the eyes of that same love which begun, and carries on, all that is and works in visible and invisible nature. Would you divinely know the mysteries of grace and salvation, would you go forth as a faithful witness of Gospel truths, stay till this fire of divine love has had its perfect work within you. For till your heart is an altar on which this heavenly fire never goes out, you are dead in yourself, and can only be a speaker of dead words about things that never had any life within you.

Need it now be asked whether the true Christ of the Gospel be less blasphemed, less crucified, by that Christian theology which rejects an inward Christ, a Saviour living and working in the soul as its inward light and life, generating His own nature and spirit in it as its only redemption; whether that which rejects all this as mystic madness be not that very same old Jewish wisdom sprung up in Christian theology, which said of Christ when teaching these very things, "He is mad, why hear ye Him?" Our blessed Lord, in a parable, sets forth the blind Jews as saying of Himself, "We will not have this man to reign over us." The sober-minded Christian scholar has none of this Jewish blindness; he only says of Christ, we will not have this man to reign in us; and so keeps clear of such mystic absurdity as St. Paul fell into, when he enthusiastically said, "Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me."

Christian Doctors reproach the old learned Rabbis for their vain faith, and carnal desire of a glorious, temporal, outward Christ, who should set up their Temple-worship all over the world. Vanity indeed, and learned blindness enough!

But nevertheless, in these condemners of rabbinic blindness, St. Paul's words are remarkably verified, namely, "Wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself, for thou that judgest dost the same thing." For take away all that from Christ, which Christian Doctors call enthusiasm; suppose Him not to be an inward birth, a new life and spirit within us, but only an outward, separate, distant heavenly prince, no more really in us than our high cathedrals are in the third heavens; but only by an invisible hand from His throne on high, some way or other raising and helping great scholars, or great temporal powers, to make a rock in every nation for His Church to stand upon; suppose all this (which is the very marrow of modern divinity), and then you have that very outward Christ, and that very outward Kingdom, which the carnal Jew dreamed of, and for the sake of which the spiritual Christ was then nailed to the Cross, and is still crucified by the new risen Jew in the Christian Church.

Let no one here imagine that I am writing against all human literature, arts, and sciences, or that I wish the world to be without them. I am no more an enemy to them than to the common useful labours of life. It is literal learning, verbal contention, and critical strife about the things of God, that I charge with folly and mischief to religion. And in this I have all learned Christendom, both Popish and Protestant, on my side. For they both agree in charging each other with a bad and false Gospel-state, because of that which their learning, logic, and criticism do for them. Say not then that it is only the illiterate enthusiast that condemns human learning in the Gospel Kingdom of God. For when he condemns the blindness and mischief of Popish logic and criticism, he has all the learned Protestant world with him; and when he lays the same charge to Protestant learning, he has a much larger kingdom of Popish great scholars, logically and learnedly affirming the same thing. So that the private person, charging human learning with so much mischief to the Church, is so far from being led by enthusiasm, that he is led by all the Church-learning that is in the world.

Now look where you will, through all the whole nature of things, no divine wisdom, knowledge, goodness, and deliverance from sin are anywhere to be found for fallen man, but in these two points : (1) a total entire entrance into the whole process of Christ ; (2) a total resignation to, and sole dependence upon, the continual operation of the Holy Ghost, or Christ come again in the Spirit, to be our never-ceasing Light, Teacher, and Guide into all those ways of virtue in which He Himself walked in the flesh. All besides this, call it by what name you will, is but dead work, a vain labour of the old man to new create himself. And here let it be well observed, that in these two points consists the whole of the mystic divinity to which a Jewish orthodoxy at this day is so great an enemy. For nothing else is meant, or taught by it, but a total dying to self (called the Process or Cross of Christ), that a new creature (called Christ in us, or Christ come in the Spirit) may be begotten in the purity and perfection of the first man's union with God. Now, let the Christian world forget, or depart from, this one mystic way of salvation ; let anything else be thought of, or trusted to, but the Cross of Christ and the Spirit of Christ ; and then, though Churches, and Preachers, and Prayers, and Sacraments are everywhere in plenty, yet nothing better can come of it than a Christian Kingdom of Pagan vices, along with a mouth-belief of an Holy Catholic Church and Communion of Saints. To this melancholy truth all Christendom, both at home and abroad, bears full witness. Who need be told that there is not a corruption or depravity of human nature, no kinds of pride, wrath, envy, malice, and self-love ; no sorts of hypocrisy, falseness, cursing, swearing, perjury, and cheating ; no wantonness of lust in every kind of debauchery, but are as common all over Christendom as towns and villages ? But to pass these by, I shall only instance in two or three particulars, which though little observed, and less condemned, yet fully show that the Beast, the Whore, and the fiery Dragon are in possession of Protestant as well as Popish Churches.

And first, can it be said that Mammon is less served by Christians than by Jews and Infidels ? Or can there be a fuller proof that Christians, Jews, and Infidels are equally

fallen from God and all divine worship, since truth itself has told us that we cannot serve God and Mammon? Is not this as unalterable a truth, and of as great moment, as if it had been said, Ye cannot serve God and Baal? Or can it with any truth or sense be affirmed that the Mammonist has more of Christ in him than the Baalist, or is more or less an idolater for being called a Christian, a Jew, or an Infidel? Look now at all these particulars which Christ charged upon the Jewish Priests, Scribes, and Pharisees, and you will see them all acted over again in the fallen state of Christendom. And if God's prophets were again in the world, they would have just the same complaints against the fallen Christian Church, as they had against the old carnal stiff-necked Jews, namely, "that of their silver and gold they had made themselves idols" (Hos. viii. 4). For though figured idol-gods of gold are not now worshipped either by Jews or Christians, yet silver and gold, with that which belongs to them, is the Mammon god that sits and reigns in their hearts. How else could there be that universal strife through all Christendom, who should stand in the richest and highest place to preach up the humility of Christ, and offer spiritual sacrifices unto God? What God but Mammon could put into the hearts of Christ's ambassadors, to make, or want to make, a gain of that Gospel which, from the beginning to the end, means nothing else but death to self, and separation from every view, temper, and affection, that has any connection with the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life? Our Blessed Lord said a word to the Jews that might well have made their ears to tingle, when He told them that they "had made His Father's House a den of thieves"; because sheep and oxen were sold, and money-changers sitting in the outer court of the Temple. Now if you will say that Mammon has brought forth no profanation like this in our Christian Church, your best proof must be this, because our Church-sale is not oxen and sheep, but holy things, cures of soul, parsonages, vicarages, etc.; and our money-changers, our buyers, and sellers, are chiefly consecrated persons.

Look at things spiritual, and things temporal, and say, if you can, that the same arts, the same passions and worldly wisdom, are not as visibly active in the one as in the other.

For if Christ, at leaving the world, had said to His disciples, Labour to be rich; make full provision for the flesh; be conformed to the world; court the favour and interest of great men; clothe yourselves with all the worldly honours, distinctions, and powers you can get; I appeal to every man, whether Popish and Protestant Churches need do anything else than that which they now do, and have done for ages, to prove their faithfulness to such a Master, and their full obedience to His precepts. And now, what is all this in truth and reality, but the same Whore riding upon the same Beast, not here or there, but through all fallen Christendom, where God has only, in every age, people, and language, His seven thousands who have not bowed the knee to Mammon?

What blindness can well be greater than to think that a Christian kingdom, as such, can have any other goodness, or union with Christ, but that very goodness which makes the private Christian to be one with Him, and a partaker of the Divine Nature? Or that pride, wrath, ambition, envy, covetousness, rapine, resentment, revenge, hatred, mischief, and murder are only the works of the devil whilst they are committed by private or single men; but when carried on by all the strength and authority, all the hearts, hands, and voices of a whole nation, that the Devil is then quite driven out of them, loses all his right and power in them, and they become holy matter of Church thanksgivings, and the sacred oratory of pulpits.

Look at that which the private Christian is to do to his neighbour, or his enemy, and you see that very thing which one Christian kingdom is to do to another. Look at that which proves a man to be not led and governed by the Spirit of Christ, and you see that which proves a kingdom to be under the domination and power of Satan. Wherever pride is, there the Devil is riding in his first fiery chariot; and wherever wrath is, there he has his first murdering sword at work. What is it that fallen man wants to be redeemed from, but pride and wrath, envy and covetousness? He can have no higher separation or apostasy from God, no fuller union with Satan and his angels, than he has of the spirit of these

tempers; they constitute that of which, whether you call it self, or Satan in him, the meaning is the same. Now suppose man not fallen into this self or Satan, and then there could be no more war or fighting in him, than there was in the Word made man in our flesh. Or suppose him redeemed from his fallen nature by a new birth of the Lamb of God born in his soul, and then he can no more be hired to kill men gloriously in the field, than to carry a dark lanthorn by night to a powder-plot.

Love, goodness, and communication of good, is the immutable glory and perfection of the Divine Nature, and nothing can have union with God but that which partakes of this goodness. The love that brought forth the existence of all things changes not through the fall of its creatures, but is continually at work to bring back all fallen nature and creature to their first state of goodness. All that passes for a time between God and His fallen creature is but one and the same thing, working for one and the same end; and though this is called wrath, that called punishment, curse, and death, it is all, from the beginning to the end, nothing but the work of the first creating Love; and means nothing else, does nothing else, but those works of purifying fire, which must, and alone can, burn away all that dark evil which separates the creatures from its first created union with God. God's Providence, from the fall to the restitution of all things, is doing the same thing as when He said to the dark chaos of fallen nature, "Let there be light"; He still says, and will continue saying the same thing, till there is no evil of darkness left in all that is nature and creature. God creating, God illuminating, God sanctifying, God threatening and punishing, God forgiving and redeeming, is but one and the same essential, immutable, never ceasing working of the Divine Nature. That in God, which illuminates and glorifies Saints and Angels in Heaven, is that very same working of the Divine Nature which wounds, pains, punishes, and purifies sinners upon earth. And (N.B.) every number of destroyed sinners, whether thrown by Noah's flood, or Sodom's brimstone, into the terrible furnace of a life insensible of anything but new forms of raging misery till Judgement's Day, must through the all-working, all-

redeeming Love of God, which never ceases, come at last to know that they had lost, and have found again, such a God of Love as this.

And if long and long ages of fiery pain and tormenting darkness fall to the share of many, or most, of God's apostate creatures, they will last no longer than till the great fire of God has melted all arrogance into humility; and all that is self has died in the long agonies and bloody sweat of a lost God, which is that all-saving Cross of Christ which will never give up its redeeming power, till sin and sinners have no more a name among the creatures of God. And if long ages hereafter can only do that for a soul departing this life under a load of sins, which days and nights might have done for a most hardened Pharaoh, or a most wicked Nero, whilst in the body, it is because whilst the soul is in the body it has only the nature and state of fallen Adam, but when flesh and blood are taken from it, the strong apostate nature of fallen angels is found in it, which must have its state and place in that blackness of darkness of a fiery wrath, that burns in them and their kingdom.

X.

THE WAY TO DIVINE KNOWLEDGE.

THEOPHILUS : If you please, Humanus, pray tell me, in what manner you would attempt to make converts to Christianity.

HUMANUS : I would not take the method generally practised by the modern defenders of Christianity. I would not attempt to show from reason and antiquity the necessity and reasonableness of a divine revelation in general, or of the Mosaic and Christian in particular; nor enlarge upon the arguments for the credibility of the Gospel-history, the reasonableness of its creeds, institutions and usages; or the duty of man to receive things above, but not contrary to, his reason. I would avoid all this, because it is wandering from the true point in question, and only helping the Deist to oppose the Gospel with a show or argument which he must necessarily want, was the Gospel left to stand upon its own bottom.

And, on the other hand, should the Deist yield up such a cause as this, and change sides, he could only be said to have changed his opinion about facts, without any more altering or bettering his state in God than if he had only altered his opinion about things in dispute amongst the ancient philosophers.

This, therefore, is the one true essential distinction between the Christian and the Infidel. The Infidel is a man of this world, wholly devoted to it, his hope and faith are set upon it; for where our heart is, there and there only is our hope and faith. He has only such virtue, such goodness, and such a religion, as entirely suits with the interest of flesh and blood, and keeps the soul happy in the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life: this, and this alone, is infidelity, a total separation from God, and a removal of all faith and hope from Him into the life of this world. It

matters not whether this Infidel be a professor of the Gospel, a disciple of Zoroaster, a follower of Plato, a Jew, a Turk, or an opposer of the Gospel-history: this difference of opinions or professions alters not the matter, it is the love of the world instead of God that constitutes the whole nature of the Infidel.

On the other hand, the Christian renounces the world as his horrid prison; he dies to the will of flesh and blood, because it is darkness, corruption, and separation from God; he turns from all that is earthly, animal, and temporal, and stands in a continual tendency of faith, and hope, and prayer to God, to have a better nature, a better life and spirit, born again into him from above.

Where this faith is, there is the Christian, the new creature in Christ, born of the Word and Spirit of God: neither time nor place, nor any outward condition of birth and life, can hinder his entrance into the Kingdom of God.

But where this faith is not, there is the true, complete Infidel, the man of the earth, the unredeemed, the rejector of the Gospel, the Son of Perdition that is dead in trespasses and sins, without Christ, an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

He therefore that opens a field of controversy to the Deist about revelation in general, or the history of facts, creeds, and doctrines of Churches, not only leads him from the merits of the Gospel, but brings him into a field of battle where he may stand his ground as long as he pleases. This I can truly say from my own experience, who have been twenty years in this dust of debate, and have always found that the more books there were written in this way of defending the Gospel, the more I was furnished with new objections to it, and the less apprehensive of any danger from my not receiving it.

For I had frequently a consciousness rising up within me that the debate was equally vain on both sides, doing no more real good to the one than to the other, not being able to imagine that a set of scholastic, logical opinions about history, facts, doctrines, and institutions of the Church, or a

set of logical objections against them, were of any significance towards making the soul of man either an eternal Angel of Heaven or an eternal Devil of Hell. And therefore it was that I was often tempted rather to think there was neither Heaven nor Hell, than to believe that such a variety of Churches and systems of opinion, all condemning, and all condemned by one another, were to find the Heaven of God opened to receive them; but he who was equally led by opinion to reject them all was doomed to Hell. But you, sir (and how can I enough thank you for it?) have put a full end to all this vain strife of opinions floating in the brain; you have dispersed the clouds that surround my bewildered mind; you have brought me home to myself, where I find Heaven and Hell, Life and Death, Salvation and Damnation at strife within me; you have shown me the infinite worth of Christianity, and the dreadful nature of Infidelity, not by helping me to a new opinion for my reason to maintain, but by proving to me this great and decisive truth, that Christianity is neither more nor less than the goodness of Divine Life, Light and Love, living and working in my soul; and that infidelity, in its whole nature, is purely and solely the heart of man living in, governed by, and contented with, the evil workings of the earthly life and spirit and nature.

It is wonderfully astonishing that you men of learning seldom come thus far as to see and feel this glaring truth, that goodness must be a living thing; but, blinded with the empty sounds of words in variety of languages, are as content and happy with a religion of nature delineated, or a book of axioms, maxims, and deductions, mathematically placed one after another, as if you had really found the Tree of Life. Whereas, in truth, all this is no better than the reading a lecture upon the use of the heart, liver, and lungs, to a dead carcase: for the life of goodness can no more be raised, or brought into the soul, by this art of reasoning, than life can be brought into the carcase by a discourse upon the heart, liver, and lungs, made over it.

Oh! ACADEMICUS, forget your scholarship, give up your art and criticism, be a plain man; and then the first rudiments

of sense may teach you that there, and there only, can goodness be, where it comes forth as a birth of Life, and is the free natural work and fruit of that which lives within us. For till goodness thus comes from a Life within us, we have in truth none at all. For reason, with all its doctrine, discipline, and rules, can only help us to be so good, so changed, and amended, as a wild beast may be, that by restraints and methods is taught to put on a sort of tameness, though its wild nature is all the time only restrained, and in a readiness to break forth again as occasion shall offer.

No, the learning of the Christian world must bear the blame of these fruitless disputes: the demonstrators of the truth and reasonableness of Christianity have betrayed their own cause, and left true Christianity unmentioned in their defences of it. What a reasonableness of Christianity have some great names helped us to! Just as useful, and good to our fallen souls, as the reasonableness of consenting to the death of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea. But you, my friend, being rightly converted to a Christianity that began before the Scriptures were written, and is as old as the creation and fall of Man, keep close to its true and real ground; and, instead of showing the reasonableness of believing a long history of things, show the absolute necessity of man's dying to his present life, in order to have a better from God. This is the Christianity that began with the fall, and has been preached ever since to every son of fallen man, in every corner of the world; and by the same preacher that tells every man that he ought to be better than he is.

How many hundred barns must there be to hold all the learned volumes that had never been written, had man looked upon the Scriptures as having no other end in view but to teach him to renounce the tempers of his fallen earthly nature, and live unto God in faith and prayer; to be born again of the Divine Nature! But this one end being overlooked by learned reason, Hebrew and Syriac, Arabic, Greek and Latin, have been called in to torture the Scriptures into a chaos of confused opinions, that has covered the Christian world with

darkness, and lost the only good that was to be had from the written word of God. Whereas, standing upon the ground on which you stand, with only this one great point at heart, the Scriptures are a plain, easy, and certain instruction; and no honest unlearned heart stands in need of any commentator, to help him to all the benefit that can be had from Scripture, or secure him from any hurtful error.

Why was the Son of God made Man? It was because man was to be made again a Divine Creature. Why did man want such a Saviour? It was because he was become earthly, mortal, gross flesh and blood. Now take Christ in this light, and consider man in this state, and then all that is said in the Gospel stands in the fullest light.

For to man insensible of his fallen state the glad tidings of the Gospel are but like news from fairyland; and the Cross of Christ can be only a stumbling-block and foolishness to him, whether he be a Christian, a Jew, or a Greek. Thus does it appear that all the doctrines and sayings of Christ and His Apostles are full of a comfortable, divine, and exalted sense, or mere empty words, just as the fall of man from a divine life is either owned or disowned. But I have done.

THEOPHILUS: Thus far then, HUMANUS, we are agreed that the fall of man into the life and state of this world is the whole ground of his redemption; and that a real birth of Christ in the soul is the whole nature of it. Let me now only ask you how you would endeavour to convince a man of his fallen state.

HUMANUS: I would not begin with the account that Moses gives of it, for several reasons; but chiefly for these two: first, because the fall is not an historical matter, nor would a mere historical knowledge of it be of any use, or do any real good to him. Secondly, because Moses's account is not the proof of the fall, and therefore not to be appealed to as such.

Moses is the first historian of natural death, and has recorded the death of the first man, and of many others who were born to him; but the proof that man is mortal lies not

in Moses's history of the death of the first man, but in the known nature of man, and the world from which he has his life.

Thus it is with the fall; we have no more occasion to go to Moses to prove that man and the world are in a fallen state, than to prove that man is a poor, miserable, weak, vain, distressed, corrupt, depraved, selfish, self-tormenting, perishing creature; and that the world is a sad mixture of false goods and real evils, a mere scene of all sorts of trials, vexations, and miseries, all arising from the frame and nature and condition both of man and the world. This is the full, infallible proof of the fall of man; which is not a thing learnt from any history, but shows itself everywhere, and every day, with such clearness as we see the sun.

THEOPHILUS: All that we want to know, my friend, is the certainty of the fact; and this is of the greatest moment to us. For this is it that takes us from the herd of earthly animals, and lays the foundation of religion and divine virtue. For had not a divine life at first been in us we should be now at the same distance from all true virtue and goodness, and as incapable of forming the least thought or desire of it, as other animals; and should have nothing to do but to look to ourselves, live to our earthly nature, and make the most of this world. For this is the only wisdom of goodness that an earthly nature is capable of, whether it be a man or a fox. The certainty therefore of the fact of our first divine birth is all; nothing more need be inquired after. For on this ground stands all our comfort; hence it is that in faith and hope we can look up to God as our Father, to heaven as our native country, and have the honour to be accounted only as strangers and pilgrims upon earth.

But, however, to remove your difficulty, I shall give you a little sketch of the possibility of man's falling, although created in the perfection above-mentioned.

Now supposing God to have brought a new intelligent Creature into a new world, all the attributes of God oblige us to suppose this Creature to be created in a perfect state both

inwardly and outwardly. As intelligent, it must partake of the divine understanding; as living, it must have a degree of the divine life in it; as good, it must have a birth of the divine goodness in it; as an offspring of divine love, it must have a divine happiness, for the enjoyment of which the love of God created it. Now there is but one possible way for this intelligent Creaturē, thus endowed, to fall from, or lose, the happiness of its first created state. It cannot knowingly choose misery, or the loss of its happiness: therefore it can only fall by such an ignorance, or power of falling, as is consistent with its perfect state. Now this power lay wholly in the *Newness* of its Life. It only *began* to find itself an intelligent being; and yet had a power of looking with the eyes of its understanding either inwards, or outwards, upwards, or downwards. It had a power of acquiescing and rejoicing in that which it found itself to be, and adoring that power and goodness which had brought it into the possession of such a nature: and it had a power of wandering into conjectures and reasons about *that* which it *was not*. Now, as a free, intelligent Creature, it could not be without this power of thus turning its intelligent eye; and yet, as a beginning Creature that had no experience, this power could not be free from a possibility of wandering; and therefore its power of wandering was not a defect, but a necessary part of its first perfect state. Now in this possibility of wandering with its intelligent eye, looking where it ought not, and entering into conjectures about that which it was not, may be clearly seen the possibility of its falling from a state of high perfection.

This is the one only possible way for a good, intelligent, *new* Creature to lose its happiness.

Indeed, I very well know, from former experience, that all discourses about the reasonableness of Christianity, the doctrine of the Cross, the exceeding love of God in giving so great a Saviour, with many more things of the like nature, were mere empty sounds, heard with the greatest indifference, and incapable of raising the least seriousness in me, merely because I had not the least notion or suspicion of the truth

and greatness of my fallen state, and therefore was not the man who had any fitness to be affected with these matters. And thence it was that Christ said, "Come unto me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you"; as plain as if He said, No one else can come to Me, nor anyone else be refreshed by Me.

Here therefore, in my humble opinion, should all begin who would propagate Christianity, or make true converts to it; and here stop, as Christ did. It is only the weary and heavy laden that are fitted to be converts, or refreshed; and therefore we can no way help a man to be a Christian, or fit him to be refreshed by Christ, but by bringing him into a full sensibility of the evil, and burden, and vanity of his natural state. And if he cannot be made sensible of this, we are to leave him to himself in his natural state till some good providence awakens him out of it; and not make proposals to him of the reasonableness of believing the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, and the necessity of His sufferings and death, etc.; for this method is full as absurd as to enter into solemn debate with a confessed Atheist about the reasonableness of worshipping God in spirit and truth; for, as the existence of a God is the only ground of proving that He ought to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, so the certainty and belief of our fallen state is the only ground for showing the reasonableness of the mysteries of redemption.

And as you have also shown that the whole nature of the Gospel redemption means nothing but the one, true, and only possible way of delivering man from his miserable state in this world, Christianity is shown to be the most intelligible and desirable thing that the heart of man can think of. And thus, contrary to all expectation, the tables are quite turned; Deism can no longer be founded on argument, and Christianity is as self-evident as our senses; all learning on both sides, either for or against it, is insignificant; Christianity stands upon a bottom quite superior to it, and may be the sure possession of every plain man who has sense enough to know whether he is happy or unhappy, good or evil. For this natural knowledge, if adhered to, is every man's sure

guide to that one salvation preached by the Gospel. Which Gospel stands in no more need of learning and critical art now, than it did when Christ was preaching it upon earth. How absurd would it have been for art critics in Greek and Hebrew to have followed Christ and His Apostles, as necessary explainers of their hard words, which called for nothing in the hearers but penitent hearts turned to God, and declared that they only who were of God could hear the Word of God! How strange that Christ should choose only illiterate men to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, if only great scholars could rightly understand what they said! Again, supposing learned men to have only the true fitness to understand the word of Scripture, and that the plain man is to receive it from them, how must he know which are the scholars that have the right of knowledge? From whence is he to have this information? For no one need be told that ever since learning has borne rule in the Church, learned doctors have contradicted and condemned one another in every essential point of the Christian doctrine. Thousands of learned men tell the illiterate they are lost in this or that Church; and thousands of learned men tell them they are lost if they leave it.

If, therefore, Christianity is in the hands of scholars, how must the plain man come to it? Must he, though unable to understand Scripture through want of learning, tell which learned man is in the right, and which is not? If so, the unlearned man has much the greatest ability, since he is to do that for scholars which they cannot do for themselves.

But the truth of the matter is this; Christian redemption is God's mercy to all mankind; but it could not be so if every fallen man, as such, had not some fitness and capacity to lay hold of it. It must have no dependence upon times and places, or the ages and several conditions of the world, or any outward circumstance of life; as the first man partook of it, so must the last; the learned linguist, and the blind, the deaf and dumb, have but one and the same common way of finding life in it. And he that writes large commentaries upon the whole Bible must be saved by something full as different from book-knowledge, as they were who lived when there was neither book nor any alphabet in the world.

For this salvation, which is God's mercy to the fallen soul of man merely as fallen, must be something that meets every man; and which every man, as fallen, has something that directs him to turn to it. For as the fall of man is the reason of this mercy, so the fall must be the guide to it; the want must show the thing that is wanted. And therefore the manifestation of this one salvation, or mercy to man, must have a nature suitable, not to this or that great reader of history or able critic in Hebrew roots and Greek phrases, but suitable to the common state and condition of every son of Adam. It must be something as grounded in human nature as the fall itself is, which wants no art to make it known, but to which the common nature of man is the only guide in one man as well as another. Now this something, which is thus obvious to every man, and which opens the way to Christian redemption in every soul, is a sense of the vanity and misery of this world, and a prayer of faith and hope to God to be raised to a better state.

Now in this sensibility, which every man's own nature leads him into, lies the whole of man's salvation; here the mercy of God and the misery of man are met together; here the fall and redemption kiss each other. This is the Christianity which is as old as the fall; which alone saved the first man, and can alone save the last. This is it on which hang all the Law and the Prophets, and which fulfils them both; for they have only this end, to turn man from the lusts of this life to a desire, and faith, and hope of a better. Thus does the whole of Christian redemption, considered on the part of man, stand in this degree of nearness and plainness to all mankind; it is as simple and plain as the feeling our own evil and misery, and as natural as the desire of being saved and delivered from it.

This is the Christianity which every man must first be made sensible of, not from hearsay, but as a growth or degree of life within himself, before he can have any fitness, or the least pretence, to judge or speak a word about the further mysteries of the Gospel.

For the whole of the matter lies solely in this, whether Heaven, or Earth, hath the heart and government of man.

Nothing divides the worshippers of the true God from idolaters but this : where earth possesses and rules the heart, there all are of one and the same religion, and worship one and the same God, however they may be distinguished by sect or party.

And wherever the heart is weary of the evil and vanity of the earthly life, and looking up to God for an heavenly nature, there all are of the one true religion, and worshippers of the true God, however distant they may be from one another as to time or place.

Hence the Apostles were new men, entered into a new kingdom come down from heaven, enlightened with new light, inflamed with new love ; and preached not any absent or distant thing, but Jesus Christ as the Wisdom and Power of God, felt and found within them, and as a power of God ready to be communicated, in the same manner as a new birth from above, to all that would repent and believe in him. It was to this change of nature, of life and spirit, to this certain, immediate deliverance from the power of sin, to be possessed and governed by gifts and graces of an heavenly Life, that men were then called to, as true Christianity. And the preachers of it bore witness, not to a thing that they had heard, but to a power of salvation, a renewal of nature, a birth of heaven, a sanctification of the spirit, which they themselves had received. Gospel Christianity then stood upon its own true ground ; it appeared to be what it was. And what was it ? Why, it was an awakened Divine Life set up amongst men ; itself was its own proof ; it appealed to its proper judge, to the heart and conscience of man, which was alone capable of being touched with these offers of a new life.

Hence it was that sinners of all sorts that felt the burden of their evil nature were in a state of fitness to receive these glad tidings. Whilst the rigid Pharisee, the orthodox Priest, and the rational Heathen, though at enmity with one another and each proud of his own distinction, yet all agreed in rejecting and abhorring a spiritual Saviour, that was to save

them from their carnal selves and the vanity of their own rational selfish virtues. But when, after a while, Christianity had lost its first glory, it appeared no longer as a Divine Life awakened amongst men, and itself was no longer its own proof of the power and spirit of God manifested in it; then heathenish learning, and temporal power, was from age to age forced to be called the glory and prosperity of the Church of Christ.

Dear ACADEMICUS, be not so uneasy; I am no more an enemy to learning than I am to that art which builds mills to grind our corn, and houses for ourselves to dwell in. I esteem the liberal arts and sciences as the noblest of human things; I desire no man to dislike or renounce his skill in ancient or modern languages, his knowledge of medals, pictures, paintings, history, geography, or chronology; I have no more dislike of these things in themselves, than of the art of throwing silk, or making lace. But then, all these things are to stand in their proper places, and everyone keep within its own sphere.

Now, all this circle of science and arts, whether liberal or mechanic, belongs solely to the natural man; they are the work of his natural powers and faculties; and the most wicked, sensual, unjust person, who regards neither God nor man, may yet be one of the ablest proficient in any or all of them. But now, Christian redemption is quite of another nature; it has no affinity to any of these arts or sciences; it belongs not to the outward natural man, but is purely for the sake of an inward, heavenly nature that was lost, or put to death, in Paradise, and buried under the flesh and blood of the earthly, natural man. It breathes a spark of life into this inward, hidden, or lost man; by which it feels and finds itself, and rises up in new awakened desires after its lost Father and native Country.

This is Christian redemption; on the one side, it is the heavenly divine life offering itself again to the inward man that had lost it. On the other side, it is the hope, the faith, and desire of this inward man, hungering, and thirsting, stretching after, and calling upon, this divine and heavenly life.

Now, whether this awakened new man breathes forth his faith and hope towards this divine life in Hebrew, Greek, or English sounds, or in no one of them, can be of no significance: a man that can do it only in one, or in all these languages, is neither further from, nor nearer to, this redeeming life of God. Or can you think that the heavenly life must more willingly enter into, and open itself in, a man that has many languages, than in him who knows only one? Or that a man who can make High Dutch, Welsh, or Greek Grammars must have a stronger faith, a more lively hope, and a more continual thirst after God, than he who can but poorly spell in his mother tongue? But now, if this is too absurd to be supposed; then, my friend, without the least injury done, or the least enmity shown to learning, science, reason, and criticism, you must place them just where I have done, amongst the things and ornaments of this earthly life; and such things as, in their own nature, are as easy to be had, and as highly enjoyed, by men that despise all goodness, as by those who fear God and eschew evil.

And therefore, sir, no truths concerning the divine and heavenly life are to be brought for trial before this learned Bar, where both Jury and Judges are born and bred, live and move and have their being in another world, which have no more power of feeling the divine life than an eagle's eye can look into the Kingdom of God. If you, my friend, having read many old Greek and Latin books, should intend to publish Homer, or Cæsar's Commentaries, with critical notes, I should have nothing to object to your ability; you might be as well qualified by such means for such a work as one man is to make baskets, or another, traps to catch flies. But if, because of this skill in Greek and Latin, you should seem to yourself, or others, to be well qualified to write notes upon the spirit and meaning of the words of Christ, I should tell you that your undertaking was quite unnatural, and as impossible to be free from error as when a blind man undertakes to set forth the beauty of different colours.

For the doctrines of redemption belong no more to the natural man, than the beauty of colours to him that never saw the light. And from this unnatural procedure it is that the

Scriptures are as useful to the Socinian or Arian, the Papist or the Protestant; and they can as easily, by the light of reason, charge one another with absurdities, and confute each other's opinions, as two blind men can quarrel, and reject each other's notions of red and green.

Now this true ground of the Christian redemption gives the greatest glory to God, and comfort to man. It explains the fact why plain and simple souls, having their inward man kindled into love, faith, and hope in God, are capable of the highest divine illumination; whilst learned students, full of art and science, can live and die without the least true knowledge of God and Christ, and slaves to all the lusts of the flesh. For thus, this redemption belongs only to one sort of people, and yet is common to all. It is equally near, and equally open, to every son of man. There is no difference between learned and unlearned, between Jew or Greek, male or female, Scythian or Barbarian, bond or free; but the same Lord is God over all, and equally nigh to all that call upon Him.

The other sort of people, whom Jacob Behmen excludes from his books, and for whom he has writ nothing, are the men of reason, who give themselves up to the light of reason as the true touchstone of divine truths. To these he declares over and over that he has not his light from reason, and that he writes nothing to reason. "The rational man," saith he, "understands nothing in reference to God; for it is without, and not in God." Again, "The true understanding must flow from the inward ground, out of the living Word of God. In which inward ground, all my knowledge concerning the divine and natural ground hath taken its rise, beginning, and understanding. I am not born of the school of this world, and am a plain simple man; but by God's Spirit and Will am brought, without my own purpose and desire, into divine knowledge in high natural searchings."

All true knowledge, either of God or Nature, must be born in you. You cannot possibly know anything of God but so far as God is manifested in you; so far as His Light and Holy

Spirit is born in you as it is born in Him, and liveth and worketh in you as it liveth and worketh in Him. A distant, absent, separate God, is an unknown God. For God can only manifest God, as light can only manifest light, and darkness make darkness to be known.

Nothing can come forth from man, or any creature, but that which first had its seed in him; and to think that any knowledge can be put into him, but that which is a birth of his own life, is as absurd as to think that the tree and its branches may first grow, and then be brought to the root.

We are led into mistakes about this matter from the common practice of the world, which calls everything knowledge that the reason, wit, or humour of man prompts him to discourse about; whether it be fiction, conjecture, report, history, criticism, rhetoric, or oratory: all this passes for sterling knowledge; whereas it is only the activity of reason, playing with its own empty notions.

From this idea of knowledge it is, that when this rational man turns his thoughts to the study of divinity, he is content with the same knowledge of divine matters as he had in these exercises of his reason; and he proceeds in the same manner as when he studied history and rhetoric.

He turns his mind to hearsay, to conjecture, to criticism, and great names; and thinks he is then a member of the true Church when he knows it as plainly as he knows the ancient Commonwealth of Rome. His knowledge of the Being of God stands upon the same bottom, and is made known to him by the same means and methods of proof, as he comes to be assured that once upon a time there was a first man and his name was Adam. His knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven is looked upon to be sufficient, as soon as he knows it as he knows that there is such a place as Constantinople. When he turns his inquiries into the mysteries of Christian redemption, he looks as much out of himself as when he is searching into the antiquities of Greece; and appeals to the same helps for this knowledge, as when he wants to know the inward structure of Solomon's Temple, and all its services, etc.

This is the great delusion which has long overspread the Christian world; and all countries, and all libraries, are the proof of it. It is this power and dominion of reason in religious matters that Jacob Behmen so justly calls the Anti-christ in Babel; for it leads men from the life and truth of the mysteries of Christ, to put a carnal trust in a confused multitude of contrary notions, inventions, and opinions.

For nothing that is brought into the mind from without, or is only an idea beheld by our reasoning faculty, is any more our knowledge than the seeing our natural face in a glass is seeing our own selves. And all the ideas or images that your reason can form of any absent, unpossessed thing, is no more a part of your own knowledge, than your drawing a picture of your own hand is making a member of your own body. It is therefore a vain and fruitless inquiry to be asking beforehand for the knowledge of any unpossessed matters; for knowledge can only be yours as sickness and health is yours, not conveyed into you by a hearsay notion, but by the fruit of your own perception and sensibility of that which you are, and that which you have in yourself. How often have you been warned against this procedure, in words like these: "Therefore let the reader be warned not to dive further into these very deep writings, nor plunge his will deeper than so far as he apprehendeth; he should always rest satisfied with his apprehension, for in his apprehension he standeth yet in that which hath its reality; and therefore he erreth not, how deep soever the Spirit leadeth him; for to one more will be given than to another. And this is the only mark to be observed, that everyone continue steadfast in humility towards God, and submit himself, that He may make the will and the deed as He pleaseth. When you do that, you are in yourself as dead; for you desire nothing but God's will, and the will of God is your life, which goeth inward even to the opening of the highest mysteries."

Every other thing, besides the Life and Light of God, stands only in a state of ministerial service towards you; whether it be words of a message from God written on paper,

engraven on tables of stone, or spoken by the mouth of an angel, a prophet or apostles; be it which it will, it is only a creaturely thing; and its creaturely service can rise no higher, nor go any further, than to show the true way to Him who only Himself can be the truth, the life, and the light in you. For the Light of God cannot, even by God Himself, be communicated to you by any creature; and the reason is because the Light of God is God Himself: it is the light of His own Life, and therefore only Himself can bring it forth wherever it is; and no creature can possibly partake of His Light but by having a birth in and from the divine nature; for the Light of God can never be separate from the divine nature, or be anywhere but where the divine birth is. And thus you fully see that all that can be divinely known, either in heaven, or on earth, can only be known in that one way, and by that one means, by which fallen man can be saved; namely, by a new birth of the Light and Spirit of God within us. And therefore the simple way of the Gospel is the one only way to attain all knowledge of all that which can be known of God and nature; for nothing can manifest God and nature but the Spirit of God working in man, as He worketh in nature, which can only be done by a new birth of the divine nature brought forth in man. But when man is thus born again of God, then the Life and Spirit of God is in him, and worketh in him as it doth in nature. And thus it is, that man can only be a divine philosopher when Christ, who is the Light of God and the Light of nature, is revealed in him. Then he is in that living Word, and that living Word is in him, by which all things were at first made; and which maketh, createth, and worketh in him, as it worketh in all things both in heaven and earth.

For nothing leads or carries you anywhere, nothing generates either life or death in you, but the working of your mind, will, and desire. If your will is angelic, you are an angel, and angelic happiness must be yours. If your will is with God, you work with God; God is then the life of your soul, and you will have your life with God to all eternity. If you follow an earthly will, every step you take is a

departure from God, till you become as incapable of God, and the life of God, as the animals of this world. If your will worketh in pride and self-exaltation, in envy and wrath, in hatred and ill-will, in deceit, hypocrisy, and falseness, you work with the Devil, you are generating his nature within you, and making yourself ready for the Kingdom of Hell. And thus it is, that our works follow us; and that everyone will be rewarded according to his works; and none can reap anything else but that which he hath sown. And the seed of everything that can grow in us is our will. The will maketh the beginning, the middle, and the end of everything; it is the only workman in nature, and everything is its work. It has all power; its works cannot be hindered; it carries all before it; it creates as it goes: and all things are possible to it. It enters wherever it wills, and finds everything that it seeks; for its seeking is its finding. The will over-rules all nature, because nature is its offspring and born of it; for all the properties of nature, whether they be good or evil, in darkness or in light, in love or in hatred, in wrath or in meekness, in pride or humility, in trouble or joy, are all of them the offspring or birth of the will; as that liveth, so they live; and as that changeth, so they change. So that whatever you are, or whatever you feel, is all owing to the working and creating power of your own will. This is your God or your Devil, your Heaven or your Hell; and you have only so much of one, or the other, as your will, which is the first mover, is either given up to the one or to the other.

For where the will of man is not, there he hath nothing; and where his will is, there is all that something which he hath, be it of what kind it will; and it is inseparable from him till his will worketh contrary to it.

The will is not a made thing, which is made out of something, or that came out of some different state into the state of a will. But the free will of man is a true and real birth from the free, eternal, uncreated Will of God, which willed to have a creaturely offspring of itself, or to see itself in a creaturely state. And therefore the will of man hath the nature of divine freedom; hath the nature of eternity, and

the nature of omnipotence in it; because it is what it is, and hath what it hath, as a spark, a ray, a genuine birth of the eternal, free, omnipotent will of God. And therefore, as the will of God is superior to, and ruleth over, all nature; so the will of man, derived from the will of God, is superior to, and ruleth over, all his own nature. And thence it is, that as to itself, and so far as its own nature reacheth, it hath the freedom and omnipotence of that Will from which it is descended; and can have or receive nothing but what itself doth, and worketh, in and to itself.

All things stand in the will, and everything, animate or inanimate, is the effect and produce of that will which worketh in it, and formeth it to be that which it is. And every will, wherever found, is the birth and effect of some antecedent will; for will can only proceed from will, till you come to the first working Will, which is God Himself.

And here, my friend, you have an easy entrance into the true meaning of many important passages in the books of Jacob Behmen, like those that follow: "All," says he, "is magical; the eternity is magical. Magic is the Mother of all things. I speak from a magic ground. Here the reader must have magical eyes. This hath a magical understanding," etc. Vulgar reason is offended at these expressions, because the word magic has for many ages been mostly used in a bad sense. But do not you be frightened at the sound of these words; they are not only innocent, but truly good and wise, and deeply founded on the truth of things. They have the most Christian and divine meaning; are strictly conformable to the spirit of the Gospel, as shall be shown by-and-by; and are used for the best of ends; namely, to open the true ground of eternal and temporal nature, and the birth of Creatures in each of them. They are to show how the hidden, invisible Deity acteth and worketh all its wonders in both these worlds, in one and the same uniform way; as also, how everything in religion, whether it be a mystery of God, a grace of God, or a duty of man, hath its whole ground, and nature, and efficacy, therein.

Now magic power meaneth nothing but the working of

the will, whether it be the divine, or the creaturely will; and everything that is the work of the will, and is produced by it, is called its magic work; which only means that it is generated by and from the will, as a birth brought forth by it. The will is the workman, and the work is that which it bringeth forth out of itself. So that by these words you are always to understand these two things, the working, and the work of the will. And now you may already sufficiently see that their meaning is not only innocent and good, but as necessarily and divinely to be ascribed to God, as the power of bringing things into existence by the working of His Will. For here you have the true ground and original of the creating power of God; how everything that is not God is yet come from Him, and out of Him, as so many births of His invisible power, breaking forth into visibility, and sensible qualities of an outward life.

It is because *will* is the first original of all power, and the omnipotence of God consisteth in nothing else but His working Will; and therefore no power ever was, or ever can be, anywhere else but as it is in God; and if the creature hath any power, it must have it, as God hath it, in the working will. For since all nature, with all its qualities, births, and creatures, are all brought into being by the working Will of God, it evidently follows that every creature, with every quality, power, and property in it, is magically born, and therefore must have a magic nature; that is, a nature that cometh from, and standeth in, a working will.

And now, sir, you are come into a full view of the most important matter of the mystery of all things; a matter which, if rightly apprehended in the inward ground of your soul, puts an entire end to all the jargon of a false philosophy, and to all those fictions of doctrines and disputes which reason has built upon the written word of God.

For nothing is effected by fiction and invention, by any contrived arts or searchings of rational inquiries; all this is nothing, because it toucheth not nature, but leaveth it to itself; which carrieth on its own works by its own power, and can only work in its own way, and must bring forth its own

births, independent of everything but its own working life. But all lieth in the will and working desire of the soul, because will began, and brought forth, all that nature that lives in the soul, and is the only life in it; and this life can work and grow from nothing else but that which first brought it forth. Hence you see the full meaning of these words of our author, "All is magical"; and "that magic is the mother of all things," and, consequently, the only Opener of all divine knowledge. All which expressions only imply thus much, that the *will*, whether in God or the Creature, is the ground and seed of everything; is the generating working power, which maketh and worketh all things to be in that state and condition which they are; and that everything begins, goes on, and ends in the working of the will, and that nothing can be otherwise than as its will worketh; and therefore Eternity and Time are magical, and magic is, and must be, the Mother of all things.

Now here you see, in the utmost degree of clearness, how all true and false religions divide from one another. For if nothing worketh but the will, if nothing else carries on the work of nature, then all is false and vain in religion but the working of the will; and nothing is saving, or redeeming the life of the soul, but that which helps the will to work towards God.

All things in heaven and in earth stand in this magic birth; and nothing can change its state, either for better or worse, but as the working of its will changes. Justly, therefore, is it said, that where this truth is found there is a full and true deliverance from *Babel*, that is, from all strife, and zeal, and division about opinions, sects, and churches; since the one thing that works either to life or to death, the one thing that alone opens Heaven or Hell for us, is with every individual man, in every place, and in every age, of the world; and that one thing is the working of the will. And when, in any such man, his will is turned from his earthly self and this earthly life, and worketh with its desire to God, then all these sayings of the Scripture are true of him, *viz.*, "That he is redeemed from this evil world—that he has his conversation in heaven—that he is of God, and heareth God's word—that he is

saved by faith—that Christ is revealed to him—that he is Christ's, and Christ is his—that Christ is in him of a truth—and that he is led by the Spirit of Christ." All these texts would be true of him though he had never seen, nor heard, a syllable of the written Word of God.

For the Word of God which saveth and redeemeth, which giveth life and light to the soul, is not the word printed on paper, but is that eternal, ever-speaking Word which is the Son of God, who in the beginning was with God, and is the God by whom all things were made. This is the universal teacher and enlightener of all that are in heaven and on earth; who, from the beginning to the end of time, without respect of persons, stands at the door of every heart of man, speaking into it not human words but divine goodness; calling and knocking, not with outward sounds but by the inward stirring of an awakened divine life. And therefore, as sure as that is true which St. John saith, that this eternal Word "is the life of men, and the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world," so sure is it that our Saviour and Salvation, our Teacher and Enlightener, from whom we have every good thought, is Christ within us; not within this or that man, but in every man, wherever born, in whom the light of life ariseth. And indeed how can it be otherwise? For if God is the God of all men; and the Word of God the life and light of all men; and all men are capable of goodness; and all goodness can only be from God; and no goodness can belong to man but that which is within him; then every man must have the Word, or Christ of God, within him, and can have it nowhere else.

Again, see here, in a still higher degree of proof, the absolute necessity and unspeakable benefit of the spirit of prayer; how it does, and must, in spite of all opposition, raise the fallen soul out of the poverty of flesh and blood into the riches of an heavenly nature brought forth in it. For since all things in heaven and earth stand in a magic birth or working of the will, the will is that which hath all power; it unites all that is united in heaven or on earth; it divides

and separates all that is divided in nature; it makes heaven and it makes hell; for there is no hell but where the will of the Creature is turned from God; nor any heaven but where the will of the Creature worketh with God. Therefore, as we pray, so we are; and as our will-spirit secretly worketh, so are we either swallowed up in the vanity of time, or called forth into the riches of eternity. And therefore the spirit of prayer is most justly conceived, and most simply expressed, when it is said to be the rising of the soul out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity: for all the vanity which the soul hath is from its living in, and loving, the things of time; and therefore it can only come out of the vanity of its state by loving and living in the truths which are the riches of eternity: for the spirit of prayer is the hunger of the soul; and as every hunger is, so it eats; it always eateth that which it hungereth after, and hath a life suitable to the nature, state, and condition, both of its hunger, and its food. If it hungereth after the things of flesh and blood it eateth nothing else, and only groweth in the bestial life, and the flesh must reap the corruption that belongs to flesh; and if it hungereth after God, it eateth the food which giveth life to the angels, it eateth the Bread that is come down from heaven, namely, the real heavenly Body and Blood of Christ, which surely may be called the riches of eternity.

The delusion of the Deist lies here: he refuses an assent to the history of facts and doctrines of the Gospel; and this is his proof to himself that he lives by reason, and that it is the real principle of his life. On the other hand, he that assents to the history of facts and doctrines of the Gospel is by the Deist reckoned to be a man of Gospel faith, and that lives by it. But this is all mistake on both sides. For this assent on one side, and dissent on the other, touches not the matter either of reason or faith. For both these persons, notwithstanding this difference of assenting, may not only be equally governed by faith, but have strictly one and the same faith. For if the things of this world have the heart of both of them, which very easily may be, then they have but

one and the same faith, and are equally governed by it; for they both equally live by a faith in this world.

The Deist therefore hath no other possible way of showing that he is not as much a man of faith as any Christian can be, but by showing that he has no will, no desire, no inclination of heart left in him; that his life drives no way, is given up to no one thing, as its end and good; but that reason, without affection, carries him only from syllogism to syllogism, in quest of nothing. Then it is that he may deem himself to be a man of reason, but not till then; for if he has any heart that hath any inclination to be united with, or belong to, anything, then he becomes a man of faith; and he lives by faith in that to which he is given up, as much as any Christian does who is given up to the mysteries of Christian redemption.

The men of speculative reason, whom you seem most to apprehend, are powerless enemies, that cannot strike at your religion with the strength of a straw. Did you but rightly see what their power is, you would see it as ridiculous as that of a few water-engines trying to quench the fiery globe of the sun: for reason stands in the same inability to touch the truth of religion as the water-engines to affect the sun. Nay, its inability is much greater; for could the water thrown from the engine be made to reach the sun, it would have some, though an insignificant, effect upon it; but reason can no more affect the truth of religion than nothing can affect something. If reason seems to have any power against religion, it is only where religion is become a dead form, has lost its true state and is dwindled into opinion; and when this is the case that religion stands only as a well-grounded opinion, then indeed it is always liable to be shaken; either by having its own credibility lessened, or that of a contrary opinion increased. But when religion is that which it should be, not a notion or opinion, but a real life growing up in God, then reason has just as much power to stop its course as the barking dog to stop the course of the moon. For true and genuine religion is nature, is life, and the working of life; and therefore, wherever it is, reason has no more power over it than over the roots that grow secretly in the earth, or the life that is working in the highest heavens. If therefore

you are afraid of reason hurting your religion, it is a sign that your religion is not yet as it should be, is not a self-evident growth of nature and life within you, but has much of mere opinion in it.

Observe the word self-evident; for there lies the truth of the matter; for you have no more of the truth of religion than what is self-evident in you. A blind man may be rich in notions and opinions about the nature, power, and good of light; and in this case one blind man may perplex another and unsettle his notions; but when the light manifests itself and is become self-evident, then he is at once delivered from an uncertainty about it. Now religion is light and life; but light and life can only manifest themselves, and can nowhere be known, but where they are self-evident.

You can know nothing of God, of nature, of heaven, or hell, or yourself, but so far as all these things are self-evident in you. Neither would any of these things be of any concern to you, but because they can all of them be self-evident in you. For the bare history, or hearsay, of any one thing, signifies no more to you than the hearsay of any other thing. And if God and heaven and hell, and the devil, the world and the flesh, were not all of them self-evident in you, you could have no more good or hurt from any hearsay about them, than from the hearsay of pleasant gardens, and dismal prisons, in the world of the moon.

Let it be supposed that your ingenious reason should suggest to you that there are no devils or hell, and therefore no occasion to believe that revelation that gives an account of them: in this case, do but turn to that which is sensible and self-evident in you, and then you must know, in the same certainty as you know yourself to be alive, that there is wrath, self-torment, envy, malice, evil-will, pride, cruelty, revenge, etc. Now say, if you please, there are no other devils but these, that men have no other devils to resist; and then you will have said truth enough, have owned devils enough, and enough confessed that you are in the midst of them, that you are everywhere tempted by them; and that flesh and blood is too weak to resist them, and therefore wants some kind of Saviour of so contrary a nature as has power to destroy these works of the devil in you.

Now this is the only knowledge that you can possibly have of an outward hell, and outward devils; and this knowledge is as self-evident in you as your own thoughts, and is as near to you as your own life. But to see and know an outward hell, or outward devils that are outward living creatures, can never be your own case till all that is divine and human in you is extinguished; and then you will have knowledge enough how hell is a place, and how the devils of rage, wrath, envy, and pride, etc., are living creatures.

Again, let it be supposed that your sceptic reason has brought you into doubt about the Being and Providence of God in you; you have no occasion to consult the demonstrations which heathen philosophers, School divines, Deists, or Atheists, have produced about it, from the existence of things; all concluding, as well Christians, as Deists and Atheists, that there must be some eternal First Cause from which all has proceeded.

For what a God is this that is only proved to be, because something now is and therefore something must always have been, an infinite, eternal Something, with infinite power to bring forth all that is come into being! What a God, I say, is this, which the Arian, the Deist, the Atheist, is as willing to own as the Christian; and which is as serviceable to the cause of Arianism, Deism, Idolatry, and Atheism, as it is to Christianity! For the Atheist has his omnipotent, eternal, First Cause, as well as all the disputers of a God.

But now, if you turn from all these idle debates and demonstrations of reason, to that which is sensible and self-evident in you, then you have a sensible, self-evident proof of the true God of life, and light, and love, and goodness, as manifest to you as your own life. For with the same self-evident certainty as you know that you think, and are alive, you know that there is goodness, love, benevolence, meekness, compassion, wisdom, peace, joy, etc. Now this is the self-evident God, that forces Himself to be known, and found, and felt, in every man, in the same certainty of self-evidence as every man feels and finds his own thoughts and life.

And this is the God whose Being and Providence, thus self-evident in us, call for our worship, and love, and adoration and obedience to Him; and this worship, and love, and

adoration and conformity to the divine goodness, is our true belief in, and sure knowledge of, the self-evident God. And Atheism is not the denial of a first omnipotent Cause, but is purely and solely nothing else but the disowning, forsaking, and renouncing the goodness, virtue, benevolence, meekness, etc., of the divine nature, that has made itself thus self-evident in us, as the true object of our worship, conformity, love, and adoration. This is the one true God, or the Deity of goodness, virtue, and love, etc., the certainty of whose Being and Providence opens itself to you in the self-evident sensibility of your own nature; and inspires His likeness and love of His goodness into you. And as this is the only true knowledge that you can possibly have of God and the divine nature, so it is a knowledge not to be debated, or lessened by any objections of reason, but is as self-evident as your own life. But to find or know God in reality, by any outward proofs, or by anything but by God Himself made manifest and self-evident in you, will never be your case either here or hereafter. For neither God, nor Heaven nor Hell, nor the Devil, nor the World and the Flesh, can be any otherwise knowable in you, or by you, but by their own existence and manifestation in you. And all pretended knowledge of any of these things, beyond or without this self-evident sensibility of their birth within you, is only such knowledge of them as the blind man hath of that light that never entered into him.

But seeing a worldly spirituality, called in Scripture the Whore riding upon the Beast, has had its thousand years in the Church; since not only every kingdom, but almost every corner of Christendom, has a Babel of its own built upon some rational interpretation of the letter of Scripture; since learned reason within the Church knows no other use of Scriptures but to reproach and condemn all other Babels, and to find materials to strengthen its own; since reason without the Church finds it as easy to reproach and condemn all revelation as it is to reproach all these Babels built upon it; since this is the finished confusion brought forth by the reason and fleshly wisdom both of those that defend, and

those that oppose the Gospel; how adorable is the goodness of God, in vouchsafing to these last ages of the world such a remedy (namely, the opening the ground and mystery of all things) as is suitable to the distressed and confused state of religion in the world! And how easy is it also to see the greatest reasons why this remedy was not afforded sooner! For as true faith did not want it, and learned reason, whilst pleased with itself, could not be in a condition to receive it; so it was highly suitable to the goodness and wisdom of God not to give forth this mystery till reason, or fleshly wisdom, had made shipwreck of faith; and had so filled up the measure of its folly as to stand in its last and highest state of distress, perplexity, and confusion. For any remedy is only then likely to be rightly received, when distress and perplexity make the want of it to be sensibly felt.

Let not therefore the genuine, plain, simple Christian, who is happy and blessed in the simplicity of Gospel-faith, take offence at this mystery because he has no need of it. For it is God's goodness to the distressed state of the Church, fallen from life and power of Gospel-faith, and groaning under the slavery, darkness, and perplexity, of bewildered reason and opinions.

Neither let the orthodox Divine, who sticks close to the phrases and sentiments of antiquity, reject this mystery as heretical, because it opens a ground of man and the divine mysteries not known or found in the primitive writers. For this is the very reason why he should thankfully receive it with open arms, as having, and being, that very thing which the distressed, divided state of the Church now so greatly wants; and yet did not want till it was fallen from its first simplicity of faith. For whilst faith and life defended the mysteries of religion, the ground and philosophy of it was not wanted. But when orthodoxy had given itself up to reason, and had nothing else for its support but reason and argument from the letter of Scripture, without the least knowledge of the first ground of doctrines; then it could only be defended as it is defended in every sect and division of the Christian world. For if reason will defend the mysteries of redemption without knowing the true ground on which they stand, or why they must be as they are from the nature of

the thing ; the more zealous and learned any man is, the more error must he fall into in the defence of them. For the greater the strength is that works without light, the more extravagancies it must produce.

XI.

THE GROUNDS AND REASONS OF CHRISTIAN REGENERATION.

THE Bruiser of the Serpent, given to Adam as his Saviour, was not a verbal promise of something only that should come to pass in future ages to redeem him, and which left his soul in the same state of inward darkness, disorder, and weakness in which it found him; but it was a Redeeming Power which, by the mercy of God, was treasured up in his fallen nature, which was to resist and overcome the wrath, and death, and awakened nature of Hell, that was in his soul; and from that time of God's accepting him to a salvation through the Seed of the woman, he was saved by the power of Christ *within him*, as really as those that lived and believed in Christ after He had become incarnate. As nothing can save the *last* man, or become his righteousness or redemption, but the divine nature of Jesus Christ derived into his soul, so nothing else could be righteousness, redemption, or salvation to the *first* man.

All men therefore that ever were or shall be descended from Adam have Jesus Christ for their Saviour as Adam had; they receive the promise made to him, and receive by that promise that which he received by it; they have a Seed of the woman, an incorruptible Seed of Life, springing up in the first essence of their life.

This mystery of an inward power of a salvation hidden in all men has had just such degrees of security and manifestation as the nature, and birth, and person of the Messiah have had; that is, as the nature and person of Jesus Christ as an Atonement, Saviour and Redeemer of mankind were

for several ages of the world only obscurely pointed at and typified by the religion of the Jews; so this Seed of a new birth, or saving power of Christ, hidden in the souls of all men, was through the same ages under the same veil and obscurity.

But when the eternal Son of God became incarnate, and manifested to the world the mysteries of His nature, person, and office; when it was publicly declared that He was the Life and Light of the World, the only source of goodness in every creature, the "Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world"; that we must all be born again of Him, be born again from above, be born of the Spirit; and that everyone was to profess the owning, seeking, and desiring this divine birth by a baptism into the name, or *nature*, of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; then it became plainly manifest what Christianity was from the beginning, and in what manner Jesus Christ was the Saviour of Adam, and what it was that he received by receiving a Bruiser of the Serpent into the first essences of his life.

Therefore when Jesus Christ came into the world, declaring the necessity of a new birth to be owned, and sought, by a baptism into the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, this was not a new kind or power of salvation that had been till then only typified and veiled under certain figures and shadows, as He Himself had been. And men were called, not to a new faith in Him as then first become their inward Life and Light, but to a more open and plain acknowledgement of Him who from the beginning had been the one Life and Light and only Salvation of the first man and all that were to descend from him.

And here it is that we see again how "God is Love," universal Love towards all mankind, having put all into a state of redemption. For if all men, as sons of Adam, are by the free grace of God made sons of the second Adam, and as such have a Seed of Life in them from Him, in order to be raised up to a perfection of the new Man in Christ Jesus; and if this Seed of a new birth, or Light of Life, is the general and preventing grace of all men, that enables

them to act as to obtain God's assisting grace in the renewal of their hearts and minds; then it is a glorious and undeniable truth that there is no partiality in God.

This Seed of the new birth, that is God's free and fore-ordained gift to man as the power that is to redeem him, is the reason and foundation of that language in Scripture of a *new, inward, and spiritual* man, and of the enmity between the one and the other; in which enmity the whole warfare and trial of the Christian life consists.

This inward man is alone the subject of religion and divine grace; he only is of God and heareth God's Word; he only hath eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to conceive the things of God.

This is he alone that is born of God and cannot sin, because he has no sin in his nature. This is he alone that overcometh the world, because he is of a divine nature and is both contrary to the world and above it. This is he alone that can love his brother as himself, because the Love of God is alone alive and abideth in him.

The old natural man, or the rational man of this world, is the dark, fallen nature enlightened only and solely with the light of this outward world; it is the diabolical nature, only softened with flesh and blood, quieted and comforted with the light of the sun. By this light he can only see the outward images of things, whether divine or human, and can only reason, dispute, and wrangle about his own shadowy images; but can know no more of God and the things of God, than such dead images can represent unto him.

The old or natural man may be an historian, a poet, an orator, a critic, a politician, or worldly wise man, etc.; all this skill and art lies within his reach; the fire of his soul, kindled only by the light of the sun, may do all this. But notwithstanding all these trappings and endowments he is wholly shut up in his own dark prison of selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath; his virtues, piety, and goodness can only be such as give no disturbance to these four elements of the fallen nature.

He is an animal, full of earthly, sensual passions and tempers, and can only favour such things as can gratify their nature.

Here, and here only, lies the true, solid, and immutable distinction between the old and the new man, and the plain reason why the life of the one is the death of the other.

Now, in this essential difference between the old and the new man we may at one view see a clear and solid ground of distinction between what is called a bare historical and superficial faith, which cannot save the soul but leaves it a slave to sin; and that living and real faith, which effecteth our salvation and sets us in the glorious liberty of the Sons of God.

Human reason, or the natural man of this life, can believe and assent to this truth that Christ is our Saviour, and that we are to be saved by a righteousness from Him, as easily as it can assent to any other relation or matter of fact. But whilst it is human reason *only* that assents to this truth, little or nothing is done to the soul by it; the soul is under much the same power of sin as before, because only the notion, or image, or history of the truth is taken in by it; and reason of itself can take in no more.

But when the Seed of the new birth, called the inward man, has faith awakened in it, its faith is not a *notion*, but a real, strong, essential *hunger*, an attracting, or magnetic *desire* of Christ, which, as it proceeds from a seed of the divine nature in us, so it attracts and unites with its like, it lays hold on Christ, puts on the divine nature, and in a living and real manner grows powerful over all sins, and effectually works out our salvation.

And therefore it is justly called a divine faith, not only because of its divine effects, but chiefly because it arises from that which is divine within us, and by its attracting hunger and thirst after that Fountain of Life from whence it came, becomes essentially united with it, breathes by that Spirit, and lives by that Word, which eternally proceeds out of the mouth of God. Of this faith alone it is that our Lord speaks, when He says, "Whoso eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal Life."

When religion is in the hands of the mere natural man he is always the worse for it; it adds a bad heat to his own dark fire, and helps to inflame his four elements of selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath. And hence it is that worse passions, or a worse degree of them, are to be found in persons of great religious zeal than in others that make no pretences to it. History also furnishes us with instances of persons of great piety and devotion, who have fallen into great delusions and deceived both themselves and others. The occasion of their fall was this; *it was because they made a saint of the natural man.* My meaning is, they considered their whole nature as the subject of religion and divine graces; and therefore their religion was according to the workings of their whole nature, and the old man was as busy, and as much delighted in it, as the new. And hence it was that persons of this stamp, all inflamed, as they seemed to be, with piety, yet overlooked in their own lives such errors of moral behaviour as the first beginners in religion dare not allow themselves in.

Others, again, perhaps truly awakened by the Spirit of God to devote themselves wholly to piety and the service of God, yet making too much haste to have the glory of Saints, the elements of fallen nature, selfishness, envy, pride, and wrath, could secretly go along with them. For to seek for eminence and significancy in grace is but like seeking for eminence and significancy in nature. And the old man can relish glory and distinction in religion as well as in common life, and will be content to undergo as many labours, pains, and self-denials, for the sake of religion as for the sake of secular glory. There is nothing safe in religion but such a course of behaviour as leaves nothing for corrupt nature to feed or live upon; which can only then be done, when every degree of perfection we aim at is a degree of death to the passions of the natural man.

The only useful question in this matter is this: How a man may know that he is in the way of regeneration, that he is spiritually *alive*, and *growing* in the inward and new man?

It may be answered, Just as the state, nature, and life of the natural man makes itself to be known and felt. The soul of man, or that which is the subject both of the old and new nature, is not two, but one soul. The fire of the soul, or that spiritual fire which is the soul itself, is kindled or enlightened by the light of the sun; this makes the natural man, and from whence the imagination, will, desires, thoughts, and inclinations of the natural life arise.

The same individual fire-soul, enlightened by the son of God, makes the true *new man*, from which soul, thus enlightened, the imagination, will, desires, thoughts, and inclinations of the new man arise. So that the same proofs are to be expected in both cases; the spiritual man is to know that he is alive in the same manner as the natural man knows and feels his life. In these things, in the imagination, will, desires, thoughts, and inclinations, consists the life of each nature; and what are more than these are to be considered as the outward fruits and effects of each nature.

Now though the natural life in all men is one and the same, yet there are under it variety of complexions, which makes men of the same nature almost infinitely different from one another. Now the matter is just thus with the spiritual man, or in the inward world. As many different complexions arise in the soul enlightened by the Son of God as in the soul enlightened by the outward light of this world.

For the outward world is but a glass, or representation, of the inward; and every thing and variety of things in temporal nature must have its root or hidden cause in something that is more inward.

It is therefore a well-grounded and undeniable truth that the new spiritual man hath his particular complexion, as sure as the outward and natural man hath. Hence it is that there has been so great a difference in the form and character of the most eminent and faithful servants of God; one could think of nothing but penitence and penitential austerities; another, all inflamed with the love of God, could think or speak of nothing else; some have been driven into a holy solitude, living as John the Baptist; others have been wholly taken up in works of charity, loving their neighbour even more than themselves. A great variety of this kind

has been always found among those who were most truly devoted to God, whose variety is not only not hurtful in itself, nor displeasing to God, but is as much according to His will, and the designs of His wisdom, as the difference between Cherubim and Seraphim, or the variety of the stars in the firmament.

Every complexion of the inward man when sanctified by humility, and suffering itself to be tuned, and struck, and moved, by the Holy Spirit of God, according to its particular frame and turn, helps mightily to increase that harmony of divine praise, thanksgiving, and adoration, which must arise from different instruments, sounds, and voices. To condemn this variety in the servants of God, or to be angry at those who have not served Him in the way that we have chosen for ourselves, is but too plain a sign that we have not enough renounced the elements of selfishness, pride, and anger.

How strangely must they have read the Gospel who can take a naked implicit faith, and an humble total resignation of our spirit, state, and life into the mercy and goodness of God, to be not only a poor and imperfect but a reprobate state; or say that a man has no true and saving faith till it is an infallible *own-feeling* and *self-assurance*! What must such people think of our Saviour dying upon the Cross with these words in His mouth: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me"? Will they say that this is a dangerous state? Is the spirit of Christ here to be *renounced*? Will they say that no new-born Christian can die in this manner? Or that if he does he is not in a state of salvation?

To know no more, and to seek to know no more of our salvation than we can know by an implicit faith, and absolute resignation of ourselves to God in Christ Jesus, is the true saving knowledge of Christ, and such as keeps us in the highest degree of fitness to receive our perfect salvation.

I hope it will here be observed that I in no way depreciate, undervalue, or reject, any particular impressions, strong influences, delightful sensations, or heavenly foretastes in the inward man, which the Holy Spirit of God may at times bestow upon good souls; I leave them at their just worth

I acknowledge them to be the good gifts of God, as special calls and awakenings to forsake our sins, as great incitements to clear ourselves and take up our Cross and follow Christ, with greater courage and resolution.

They may be as beneficial and useful to us in our spiritual life as other blessings of God, such as prosperity, health, happy complexion, and the like. But then, as outward blessings, remarkable providences, religious complexions, and the like, may be very serviceable to awaken us and excite our conversion to God, and much assist the spiritual life; so they may very easily have a contrary effect, serve to fill us with pride and self-satisfaction, and make us esteem ourselves as greater favourites of God than those that want them; who may yet be led to a higher degree of goodness, be in a more purified state, and stand nearer to God in their poor, naked, and destitute condition, than we in the midst of great blessings.

It is just thus with regard to those inward blessings of the spiritual life. They are so many spurs, motives, and incitements to live wholly unto God; yet they may instead of that fill us with self-satisfaction and self-esteem, and prompt us to despise others that want them, as in a poor, mean, and reprobate state; who yet may be higher advanced, and stand in a nearer degree of union with God, by humility, faith, resignation, and pure love, in their inward poverty and emptiness, than we who live high upon spiritual satisfactions, and can talk of nothing but our feasts of fat things.

All that I would here say of these inward delights and enjoyments is only this, They are not holiness, they are not piety, they are not perfection; but they are God's gracious allurements and calls to seek after holiness and spiritual perfection. They are not to be sought for, for their own sakes; they are not to be prayed for, but with such a perfect indifference and resignation as we must pray for any earthly blessings; they are not to be rested in as the perfection of our souls, but to be received as cordials that suppose us to be sick, faint, and languishing; and ought rather to convince us that we are as yet but *babes*, than that we are really *men* of God.

There are indeed impressions and communications from God, which are more necessary and essential to the pious life of the soul than the impressions of the sun are to the comfortable life of our outward man. And he who prays for nothing else but these divine communications and impressions, who thinks of nothing else, trusts in nothing else, as able to comfort, strengthen, and enrich his soul; he that is thus all prayer, all love, all desire, and all faith, in these communications and impressions from above, is just in the same state of sobriety that only prays that God *would not leave him to himself*. For he that is without anything of these communications and impressions of God upon him is in the same state of death and separation from God as the devils are.

These impressions or operations of God upon our souls are of the essence of religion, which has no goodness in it but so far as it introduces the life, power, and presence of God into the soul. The praying, therefore, for impressions of this kind from God is only praying that we may not be left to ourselves. To pray always for these with faith, and hunger, and thirst after them, is only praying earnestly that the Kingdom of God may come and His Will be done in us.

For the soul is only so far cleansed from its corruptions, so far delivered from the power of sin, and so far purified, as it has renounced all own will and own desire, to have nothing, receive nothing, and be nothing, but what the one Will of God chooses for it, and does to it.

This, and this alone, is the true Kingdom of God opened in the soul when, stripped of all selfishness, it has only one love and one will in it, when it has no motion or desire but what branches from the Love of God, and resigns itself wholly to the Will of God.

There is nothing *evil*, or the cause of evil, to either man or devil, but his own will; there is nothing *good* in itself but the Will of God: he therefore who wholly renounces his own will turns away from all evil; and he who gives himself up wholly to the Will of God puts himself in possession of all that is good.

To sum up all in a word: Nothing hath separated us from God but our own will, or rather our own will is our separation

from God. All the disorder and corruption and malady of our nature lies in a certain fixedness of our own will, imagination, and desire, wherein we live to ourselves, are our own centre and circumference, act wholly from ourselves, according to our own will, imagination, and desires. There is not the smallest degree of evil in us but what arises from this selfishness, because we are thus all in all to ourselves.

It is this Self that our Saviour calls upon us to deny; it is this Life of Self that we are to hate and lose, that the Kingdom of God may arise in us; that is, that God's Will may be done in us. All other sacrifices that we make, whether of worldly goods, honours, or pleasures, are but small matters compared to that sacrifice and destruction of all selfishness, as well spiritual as natural, that must be made before our regeneration hath its perfect work.

There is a denial of our own will, and certain degrees even of self-denying virtues, which yet give no disturbance to this selfishness. To be humble, mortified, devout, patient, in a certain degree, and to be persecuted for our virtues, is no hurt to this selfishness; nay, *spiritual-self* must have all these virtues to subsist upon, and his life consists in seeing, knowing, and feeling, the bulk, strength, and reality of them. But still, in all this show and glitter of virtue, there is an unpurified bottom on which they stand, there is a selfishness, which can no more enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, than the grossness of flesh and blood can enter into it.

What we are to feel and undergo in these last purifications, when the deepest root of all selfishness, as well spiritual as natural, is to be plucked up and torn from us, or how we shall be able to stand in that trial, are both of them equally impossible to be known by us beforehand.

It is enough for us to know that we hunger and thirst after the righteousness that is in Christ Jesus, that by faith we desire and hope to be in Him new creatures, to know that the greatest humility, the most absolute resignation of our whole selves unto God, is our greatest and highest fitness to receive our greatest and highest purification from the Hands of God.

XII.

A SHORT CONFUTATION.

THE promise and the fulfilling are but one thing, one operation, one gift of God, the one only redemption, reconciliation, satisfaction, and atonement, that ever did, or ever can, help fallen man to peace, blessing, and union again with God.

It is therefore a great truth that all that is said in the Gospel of the power of Christ and the availing efficacy of His whole process, from His divine birth to His ascension into heaven, is in truth and reality so much said of the Why, and the How, the Seed of the woman has worked from the beginning, and been the one power of salvation through every age of the world.

For though the visibility and outward manifestation of Christ's Process was and only could be first and fully known at His ascension into heaven, yet its inward spiritual power in all its parts began with the first covenant of life made with Adam and Eve. And though all was then as a hidden life, under the name of a Seed of the woman, yet it had its divine power and working within, and brought men to God by that Spirit of Christ, which manifested itself through all His Process.

Not the smallest spark of goodness ever sprung up in fallen man, no kind of faith, hope, or trust in God, no patience in adversity, no self-denial, no love of God, or desire of doing His will; no truth of humility, meekness, and compassion ever did, or could, work in the heart or spirit of any Son of Adam, but solely for this reason, because all these tempers were the Spirit of Christ's Process, which Spirit was inspoken, or ingrafted, into fallen man, as soon

as God looked with pity, compassion, love, and relief towards Adam and Eve.

For this looking of God with compassion, love and relief at man was in truth the very beginning of the Incarnation of the Son of God; for it was not something without or separate from man (because God is not without or separate), but it was divine compassion, love, and relief inwardly working in the inmost ground of the life of man; which blessed power of the redeeming love of God in the soul was first called the Seed of woman.

Now that which Christ did, suffered, and obtained in and through His Process in our flesh, calling all to turn to God, to deny themselves, to be of His Spirit, to enter into the strictest union with Him, giving heavenly birth and life and all divine graces to men, and yet only and solely according to their faith in Him; that very same the Seed of one woman did, and from the beginning was always doing, in the same way of life and blessing and heavenly graces, yet only and solely according to their faith in it.

Faith in God is nothing else but a full adhering to God; and therefore it is one with God and God with it; and all that is holy, divine, and good may well be found in it.

It matters not in what age or under what dispensation of God we live, the necessity, the nature, and power of faith is always the same; that simple, illiterate, unreasoning faith that helped Abraham to righteousness, life, and union with God is the one faith that alone can be justification, life, and salvation to Christians; or, which is the same thing, can alone be Christ in us, the hope of glory. For faith is nothing else but so much of the Nature and Spirit of Christ, born and living in us.

For the Spirit of Christ, or which is the same thing, the spirit and power of His Process, did not begin to be

but only came into outward manifestation in the Gospel age ; it was, and had been invisibly, the one only possible source of goodness in man, as well before, as after, His Incarnation.

Nor was there ever any man in the world, either before or after Christ's manifestation in the flesh, that ever had the least faith, hope, or desire of God, or any possible access or communion with Him, but so far as the Spirit of Christ's Process was begotten, living, and working in him.

And thus it is that the availing efficacy of Christ's mediation, reconciliation, etc., reached backward to the first man in the world, not by an arbitrary imputation of it, or because God would account it as there, though it were not there ; but the true reason is because the Spirit of Christ's Process, which alone reconciles God to Man, began to work from the beginning, and was as really and vitally operative in the first man and his descendants, as it was in that human soul and body which Christ took from the Virgin Mary.

Goodness cannot come into man, or belong to him, two different ways, or from two different causes.

So plain is it that nothing but the one Spirit of Christ living and working in man, from the beginning to the end of the world, can possibly be the source or cause of any goodness, holiness, or redemption of man.

To come at the knowledge of outward things a man must look outwards, because nothing can be seen or found but where it is ; and therefore for the same reason all that concerns man's life, or has relation to or connection with his life, can only be found and known by his finding out *That*, which *lives* in him.

So far as God is living and operating in the creature, and manifesting Himself in it, either by light and love, or reproof, so far it truly knows and is taught of God. Any other

knowledge of God, however learned, high, or deep it may pretend to be, is as vain and spurious as that goodness which proceeds from something else than God's good Spirit living in us.

Now that this form of a divine life is in every man, and that no man is without this witness of God in himself, is a truth as evident as anything that can be affirmed of human nature. For was not God in man as a principle of life, and man in God as a birth of Him and in Him; or, in Scripture words, did he not live and move and have his being in God, he could no more begin to form a thought of inquiry after God, or have the least desire of knowing anything about Him, than the worms in the earth can begin to hunger after the power of syllogisms, and crawl about in quest of them.

But as all instincts, appetites, and inclinations are, and can be nothing else but, the various workings of that kind of life which is in the animal, so the cares, fears, hopes, etc., relating to God, and inseparable from man, are and can be nothing else but the various workings of a life and power of God essentially existing as a Birth in the soul of man.

And as it is a certain truth that no fruits, flowers, or virtues can be or come forth in any vegetable but what were first in its seed or root, so no divine glory, perfection, or power can ever come forth in any creature in heaven, but what arises from the Seed of the Deity sown into it at its creation. Therefore, as sure as the heavenly soul will to all eternity increase in new openings and enlargements of divine union, enjoyment, and perfection in God, so sure is it that in the centre, or inmost birth of the soul's life, lie the riches of the divine nature as a Seed, or Root of Glory, given to it by its first created image or likeness to God.

Everything that is endless and numberless in the depth of eternity is endless and numberless in the essence of the Soul: what seeing is, what hearing, feeling, etc., are in their boundless variety and ever-increasing newness of delights in eternity, these, with all their wonders, are the innate birthright and sure inheritance of every immortal godly

Soul; the things "which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath the heart of man conceived," nor will conceive till all that belongs to time is separated from it.

For every creature of this world, animate or inanimate, is in its degree a microcosm of all the powers that are in the great world of which it is a part. And every thing or creature is that which it is because the powers of this world, or properties of nature, are, in such or such a combination, included or treasured up in its essence, and give it its difference from other things.

In eternity, or before the creation, the Spirit of Life is unfathomable, incomprehensible; but the Spirit of Life coming by the divine *Fiat* to be creaturely is life generating a body; for body, form, and creature, are synonymous terms; for nothing can be creaturely but because it is bodily, and under some form.

The Spirit of Life cannot come into any creature from without; nothing can be its life but that which arises as a birth within itself. And as life, so every quality, state, or condition of every creature, whether good or bad, is from a birth or magical power working in it, for birth and magical power is the same thing. Every vegetable and animal of this world demonstrates the truth and certainty of this magical power; they are all, both as to their existence, qualities, and conditions, whether good or bad, so many full proofs of it; they are what they are, and have what they have, as so many births and growths of a magical power.

The Will-Spirit in God is the beginner or first cause of all that is in nature and creature; it is that mysterious and abyssal power of the Deity which generateth and bringeth forth nature with all its properties, is always in them and with them as the cause of all that they are and work.

The Will-Spirit in the creature, called in things inanimate, *attraction*, and in animals, *instinct*, coming from the Will-

Spirit of the Creator as a ray from it, is that which keeps up the whole system of stars and elements, with all its creatures, vegetable and animal, in their full conformity to the first working Will of God in their creation, which is never separate from them.

The Will-Spirit in the intelligent Free Creature is of a much higher nature; it has the *never-beginning* eternity in it, and is a genuine offspring of the Will-Spirit of God, and therefore, in its degree, partakes of the power of God *over* nature. And were it not so, that is, had it not something in it higher than nature, it would be as right and fitting in every man to follow his natural lusts and appetites as it is in beasts; neither could it be any part of man's glory and perfection to imitate the divine goodness, or strive to be perfect as his Father in Heaven is perfect.

The Will-Spirit, therefore, is justly called the great magical power of the Soul, because, though working secretly, and without any materials, yet it never is, nor can be, without its real and vital effects. It always generates, and a birth must be brought forth, either from above or below. For our nature standeth in the growth for a life out of time into eternity.

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