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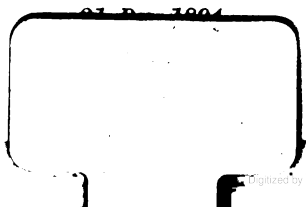
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THE
SPIRIT OF PRAYER;

OR,
THE SOUL RISING OUT OF THE
VANITY OF TIME

INTO THE
RICHES OF ETERNITY.

BY WILLIAM LAW, M. A.
AUTHOR OF LAW'S SERIOUS CALL, ETC.

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THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

CHAPTER I.

TREATING OF SOME MATTERS PREPARATORY TO THE SPIRIT OF PRAYER.

THE greatest part of mankind, nay of Christians, may be said to be asleep; and that particular way of life, which takes up each man's mind, thoughts, and actions, may very well be called his particular dream. This degree of vanity is equally visible in every form and order of life. The learned and the ignorant, the rich and the poor, are

all in the same state of slumber ; only passing away a short life in a different kind of dream. But why so ? It is because man has an eternity within him, is born into this world, not for the sake of living here, not for anything this world can give him, but only to have time and place, to become either an eternal partaker of a divine life with God, or to have an hellish eternity amongst fallen angels : and therefore every man, who has not his eye, his heart, and his hands, continually governed by this two-fold eternity, may be justly said to be fast asleep, to have no awakened sensibility of himself. And a life devoted to the interests and enjoyments of this world, spent and wasted in the slavery of earthly desires, may be truly called a dream, as having all the shortness, vanity, and delusion of a dream ; only with this great difference, that when a dream is over, nothing is lost but fictions and fancies ; but

when the dream of life is ended only by death, all that eternity is lost, for which we were brought into being. Now there is no misery in this world, nothing that makes either the life or death of man to be full of calamity, but this blindness and insensibility of his state, into which he so willingly, nay obstinately, plunges himself. Everything that has the nature of evil and distress in it takes its rise from hence. Do but suppose a man to know himself; that he comes into this world on no other errand, but to rise out of the vanity of time into the riches of eternity; do but suppose him to govern his inward thoughts and outward actions by this view of himself, and then to him every day has lost all its evil; prosperity and adversity have no difference, because he receives and uses them both in the same spirit; life and death are equally welcome, because equally parts of his way to eternity. For poor and

miserable as this life is, we have all of us free access to all that is great, and good, and happy; and carry within ourselves a key to all the treasures that heaven has to bestow upon us. We starve in the midst of plenty, groan under infirmities, with the remedy in our own hand; live and die, without knowing and feeling anything of the *One, only Good*, whilst we have it in our power to know and enjoy it in as great a reality, as we know and feel the power of this world over us: for heaven is as near to our souls, as this world is to our bodies; and we are created, we are redeemed, to have our conversation in it. God, the only good of all intelligent natures, is not an absent or distant God, but is more present in and to our souls, than our own bodies; and we are strangers to heaven, and without God in the world, for this only reason, because we are void of that spirit of prayer, which alone can, and never

fails to unite us with the *One, only Good*, and to open heaven and the kingdom of God within us. A root set in the finest soil, in the best climate, and blessed with all that sun, and air, and rain can do for it, is not in so sure a way of its growth to perfection, as every man may be, whose spirit aspires after all that which God is ready and infinitely desirous to give him. For the sun meets not the springing bud that stretches toward him with half that certainty as God, the source of all good, communicates himself to the soul that longs to partake of him.

We are all of us, by birth, the offspring of God, more nearly related to him than we are to one another; for in him we live, and move, and have our being. The first man that was brought forth from God had the breath and spirit of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost breathed into him, and so he became a living soul. Thus was our first father born

of God, descended from him, and stood in paradise in the image and likeness of God. He was the image and likeness of God, not with any regard to his outward shape or form, for no shape has any likeness to God ; but he was in the image and likeness of God, because the Holy Trinity had breathed their own nature and spirit into him. And as the Deity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are always in heaven, and make heaven to be everywhere ; so this spirit, breathed by them into man, brought heaven into man along with it ; and so man was in heaven as well as on earth, that is, in paradise, which signifies an heavenly state, or birth of life.

Adam had all that divine nature, both as to an heavenly spirit, and heavenly body, which the angels have : But as he was brought forth to be a lord and ruler of a new world, created out of the chaos or ruins of the kingdom of fallen angels ; so it was necessa-

ry that he should also have the nature of this new created world in himself, both as to its spirit and materiality. Hence it was, that he had a body taken from this new created earth, not such dead earth as we now make bricks of, but the blessed earth of paradise, that had the powers of heaven in it, out of which the tree of life itself could grow. Into the nostrils of this outward body was the breath or spirit of this world breathed; and in this spirit and body of this world did the inward celestial spirit and body of Adam dwell: it was the medium or means through which he was to have commerce with this world, become visible to its creatures, and rule over it and them. Thus stood our first father; an angel both as to body and spirit, (as he will be again after the resurrection,) yet dwelling in a body and spirit taken from this new created world; which however was as inferior to him, as subject to him, as the earth and al

its creatures were. It was no more alive in him, no more brought forth its nature within him, than Satan and the Serpent were alive in him at his first creation. And herein lay the ground of Adam's ignorance of good and evil ; it was because his outward body, and the outward world, (in which alone was good and evil,) could not discover their own nature, or open their own life within him, but were kept unactive by the power and life of the celestial man within it. And this was man's first and great trial ; a trial, not imposed upon him by the mere will of God, or by way of experiment ; but a trial necessarily implied in the nature of his state. He was created an angel, both as to body and spirit ; and this angel stood in an outward body, of the nature of the outward world ; and therefore, by the nature of his state, he had his trial, or power of choosing, whether he would live as an angel, using only his outward body

as a means of opening the wonders of the outward world to the glory of his Creator ; or whether he would turn his desire to the opening of the bestial life of the outward world in himself, for the sake of knowing the good and evil that was in it. The fact is certain, that he lusted after the knowledge of this good and evil, and made use of the means to obtain it. No sooner had he got this knowledge, by the opening the bestial life and sensibility within him, but in that day, nay, in that instant, he died ; that is, his heavenly spirit, with its heavenly body, were both extinguished in him ; but his soul, an immortal fire that could not die, became a poor slave in prison of bestial flesh and blood. See here the nature and necessity of our redemption ; it is to redeem the first angelic nature that departed from Adam ; it is to make that heavenly spirit and body, which Adam lost, to be alive again in all the human

nature; and this is called regeneration: See also the true reason why only the Son, or eternal Word of God, could be our Redeemer; it is because he alone, by whom all things were at first made, could be able to bring to life again that celestial spirit and body which had departed from Adam; See also why our blessed Redeemer said, *Except a man be born again, of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.* He must be born again of the spirit, because Adam's first heavenly spirit was lost: He must be born again of water, because that heavenly body which Adam lost was formed out of the heavenly materiality, which is called water. Thus in the Revelation of St. John, the heavenly materiality, out of which the bodies of the angels, and also of Adam, were formed, is called a glassy sea, as being the nearest and truest representation of it that can be made

to our minds. The necessity of our regaining our first heavenly body, is the necessity of our eating the body and blood of Christ. The necessity of having again our first heavenly spirit is declared, by the necessity of our being baptized by the Holy Ghost. Our fall is nothing else, but the falling of our soul from this celestial body and spirit into a bestial body and spirit of this world. Our rising out of our fallen state, or redemption, is nothing else but the regaining our first angelic spirit and body, which in scripture is called our inward, or new man, created again in Christ Jesus. See here, lastly, the true ground of all the mortifications of flesh and blood, required in the gospel ; it is because this bestial life of this outward world should not have been opened in man ; it is his separation from God, and death to the kingdom of heaven ; and therefore, all its workings, appetites and

desires, are to be restrained and kept under, that the first heavenly life, to which Adam died, may have room to rise up in us.

But to return. That Adam was thus an angel at his first creation, dwelling in an outward body and outward world, incapable of receiving any impressions from them, and able to rule them at his pleasure; that all outward nature was a state of life below him, in subjection to him; that neither sun, nor stars, nor fire, nor water, nor earth, nor stones, could act upon him, or hurt him, is undeniably plain from hence; because his first and great sin, which cost him his angelic life, and took from him his crown of glory, consisted in this, That he lusted to know, and took the means of knowing, what good and evil is in the bestial life of this world; for this plainly demonstrates, that before his sin, whilst he stood in the first state of his creation, that he was an angel in

nature and power, that neither his own outward body, nor any part of outward nature, had any power in him or upon him; for had his own outward body, or any element of outward nature, had any power to act upon him, to make any impressions, or raise any sensations in him, he could not have been ignorant of good and evil in this world. Therefore, seeing that his eating of the forbidden tree was that alone which opened this knowledge in him, it is a demonstration, that in his first state he was in this world as an angel, that was put into the possession of it only to rule as a superior being over it; that he was to have no share of its life and nature, no feeling of good or evil from it; but to act in it as an heavenly artist, that had power and skill to open the wonders of God in every power of outward nature. An angel, we read, used at a certain time to

come down into a pool at Jerusalem; the water stirred by the angel gave forth its virtues, but the angel felt no impressions of weight or cold from the water. This is an image of Adam's first freedom from, and power over, all outward nature. He could wherever he went, do as this angel did, make every element, and elementary thing, discover all the riches of God, that were hidden in it, without feeling any impressions of any kind from it. This was to have been the work both of Adam and his offspring, to make all the creation show forth the glory of God, to spread paradise over all the earth, till the time came, that all the good in this world was to be called back to its first state, and all the evil in every part left to be possessed by the devil and his angels. But since he fell from this first state into an animal of this world, his work

is changed, and he must now labour with sweat to till the cursed earth, both for himself and the beasts upon it.

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

First, It is plain that the sin and fall of Adam did not consist in this *viz.* that he had only committed a single act of disobedience, and so might have been just as he was before, if God had pleased to overlook this single act of disobedience, and not to have brought a curse upon him and his posterity for it.—Nothing of this is the truth of the matter, either on the part of God, or on the part of man.

Secondly, It is plain also, that the command of God, not to lust after and eat of the forbidden tree, was not an arbitrary command of God, given at pleasure, or as a mere trial of man's obedience; but was a most

kind and loving information, given by the God of love to his new-born offspring, concerning the state he was in, with regard to the outward world; warning him to withdraw all desire of entering into a sensibility of its good and evil, because such sensibility could not be had, without his immediate dying to that divine and heavenly life, which he then enjoyed. *Eat not, says the God of love, of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou wilt surely die.*

As if it had been said; "I have brought thee into this paradise, with such a nature as the angels have in heaven. By the order and dignity of thy creation, everything that lives and moves in this world is made subject to thee, as to their ruler. I have made thee in thy outward body of this world, to be for a time a little lower than the angels, till thou hast brought forth a numerous off-

spring, fit for that kingdom which they have lost. The world around thee, and the life which is newly awakened in it, is much lower than thou art; of a nature quite inferior to thine. It is a gross, corruptible state of things, that cannot stand long before me; but must for awhile bear the marks of those creatures, which first made evil to be known in the creation. The angels, that first inhabited this region, where thou art to bring forth a new order of beings, were great and powerful spirits, highly endowed with the riches and powers of their Creator. Whilst they stood (as the order of creation requires) in meekness and resignation, under their creator, nothing was impossible to them; there was no end of their glorious powers throughout their whole kingdom. Perpetual scenes of light, and glory, and beauty, were rising and changing through all the height and depth of their glassy sea,

merely at their will and pleasure. But finding what wonders of light and glory they could perpetually bring forth; how all the powers of eternity, treasured up in their glassy sea, unfolded themselves, and broke forth in ravishing forms of wonder and delight, merely in obedience to their call; they began to admire and even adore themselves, and to fancy that there was some infinity of power hidden in themselves; which they supposed was kept under, and suppressed, by that meekness, and subjection to God, under which they acted. Fired and intoxicated with this proud imagination, they boldly resolved, with all their eternal energy and strength, to take their kingdom, with all its glories, to themselves; by eternally abjuring all meekness and submission to God. No sooner did their eternal, potent desires fly in this direction of a revolt from God, but in the swiftness of a thought heaven

was lost; and they found themselves dark spirits, stripped of all their light and glory. Instead of rising up above God, (as they hoped) by breaking off from him, there was no end of their eternal sinking into new depths of slavery, under their own self-tormenting natures. As a wheel going down a mountain, that has no bottom, must continually keep on its turning, so are they whirled down by the impetuosity of their own wrong turned wills, in a continual descent from the fountain of all glory, into the bottomless depths of their own dark, fiery, working powers. In no hell, but what their own natural strength had awakened; bound in no chains; but their own unbending, hardened spirits; made such by their renouncing, with all their eternal strength, all meekness, and subjection to God. In that moment, the beautiful materiality of their kingdom, their glassy sea

in which they dwelt, was, by the wrathful rebellious workings of these apostate spirits, broke all into pieces; and became a black lake, a horrible chaos of fire and wrath, thickness and darkness, a height and depth of the confused, divided, fighting properties of nature. My creating fiat stopped the workings of these rebellious spirits, by dividing the ruins of their wasted kingdom, into an earth, a sun, stars, and separated elements. Had not this revolt of angels brought forth that disordered chaos, no such materiality as this outward world is made of had ever been known. Gross compacted earth, stones, rocks, wrathful fire here, dead water there, fighting elements, with all their gross vegetables and animals, are things not known in eternity, and will be only seen in time, till the great designs are finished, for which thou art brought forth in paradise. And then, as a fire

awakened by the rebel creature began all the disorders of nature, and turned that glassy sea into a chaos, so a last fire, kindled at my word, shall thoroughly purge the floor of this world. In those purifying flames, the sun, the stars, the air, the earth, and water, shall part with all their dross, deadness and division, and all become again that first, heavenly materiality, a glassy sea of everlasting light and glory, in which thou and thy offspring shall sing hallelujahs to all eternity. Look not therefore, thou child of paradise, thou son of eternity, look not with a longing eye after anything in this outward world. There are the remains of the fallen angels in it; thou hast nothing to do in it, but as a ruler over it. It stands before thee, as a mystery big with wonders; and thou, whilst an angel in paradise, hast power to open and display them all. It stands not in thy sphere of existence; it is,

as it were, but a picture and transitory figure of things; for all that is not external is but as an image in a glass, that seems to have a reality, which it hath not. The life which springs up in this figure of a world, in such an infinite variety of kinds and degrees, is but as a shadow: it is a life of such days and years, as in eternity have no distinction from a moment. It is a life of such animals and insects, as are without any divine sense, capacity, or feeling. Their natures have nothing in them, but what I commanded this new modelled chaos, this order of stars and fighting elements, to bring forth.

“Now Adam, observe, I will open to thee a great mystery. The heavenly materiality of the angels’ kingdom before their revolt was a glassy sea, a mirror of beauteous forms, figures, virtues, powers, colours, and sounds, which were perpetually springing

up, appearing and changing in an infinite variety, to the manifestation of the wonders of the divine nature, and to the joy of all the angelical kingdom. This heavenly materiality had its fruits and vegetables, much more real than any that grow in time, but as different from the grossness of the fruits of this world, as the heavenly body of an angel is different from the grossest beast upon earth. In this angelical kingdom, the one element (which is now in four parts) was then a fruitful mother of wonders, continually bringing forth new forms and figures of life; not animals, beasts or insects, but beautiful figures, and ideal forms of the endless divisibility and degrees of life, which only broke forth as delightful wonders of the depth of the riches of the divine nature, and to tune the voices of angels with songs of praise to the infinite source of life. And hence, O Adam, is that endless infinite variety

both of animal and vegetable life in this perishable world. For no fruits of vegetables could have sprung up in the divided elements, but because they are the divided parts of that one heavenly materiality, or glassy sea, in which angelical fruits had formerly grown forth. No animal life could have rose from stars, air, and water, but because they are all of them the gross remains of that one element, in which the figures and images of life had once risen up in such an infinite variety of degrees and kinds. Hence it was, that when my creating fiat spoke to these new ranged stars, and elements, and bid life awaken in them all according to its kind, they all obeyed my word, and every property of nature strove to bring forth, after the kind and manner as it had done in the region of eternity. This, my son, is the source and original of all that infinite variety, and degrees of life, both

of animals and vegetables, in this world. It is because all outward nature, being fallen from heaven, must yet, as well as it can, do and work, as it had done in heaven.

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

“Therefore, my son, be content with thy angelical nature; be content, as an angel in paradise, to eat angels’ food, and to rule over this mixed, imperfect, and perishing world,

without partaking of its corruptible, impure, and perishing nature. Lust not to know how the animals feel the evil and good which this life affords them; for if thou couldst feel what they feel, thou must be as they are; thou canst not have their sensibility, unless thou hast their nature: Thou canst not at once be an angel and an earthly animal. If the bestial life is raised up in thee, the same instant the heavenly birth of thy nature must die in thee. Therefore turn away thy lust and imagination from a tree that can only help thee to the knowledge of such good and evil as belongs only to the animals of this outward world; for nothing but the bestial nature can receive good or evil from the stars and elements; they have no power, but over that life which proceeds from them. Eat therefore only the food of paradise; be content with angels' bread; for if thou eatest of this tree, it will unavoidably

awaken and open the bestial life within thee; and in that moment, all that is heavenly must die, and cease to have any power in thee. And thou must fall into a slavery for life, under the divided, fighting powers of stars and elements. Stripped of thy angelical garment, that hid thy outward body under its glory, thou wilt become more naked than any beast upon earth; be forced to seek from beasts a covering, to hide thee from the sight of thine own eyes. A shameful, fearful, sickly, wanting, suffering, and distressed heir of the same speedy death in the dust of the earth; as the poor beasts, whom thou wilt thus have made to be thy brethren."

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

Thirdly, That the misery, distress, and woful condition which Adam by his transgression brought upon himself, and all his posterity, was not the effect of any severe

vindictive wrath in God, calling for justice to his offended sovereignty, and inflicting pains and punishments suitable to the greatness of his just indignation, and anger at the disobedient creature.

If Adam, contrary to the will of God, and for the sake of some new-fancied knowledge, had broke both his own legs, and put out both his eyes, could it with any show of truth and reason have been said, that God, in the severity of his wrath at so heinous an offence, had punished Adam with lameness and blindness? And if it be further supposed that God, seeing Adam lying in this lame and blind condition, came and spoke kindly to him, informing him of a secret of love, which he had in heaven, which he promised to send him immediately by his highest messenger of love; assuring him, that by the use of this heavenly secret, or divine power, his legs and eyes should in

some course of time be infallibly restored to him, even in a better state than they were in at the first; must it not be still more unreasonable and absurd, to charge anything of this lameness and blindness upon a wrath in God kindled against Adam? Nay, is it not clear, in the highest degree, that in all this matter, Adam had nothing from God but the overflowings of mere love and goodness; and that he had no lameness and blindness, but from his own voluntary acts upon himself?

This is a simple, but clear, representation of the case, how matters stood betwixt God and our first father, when, by his own act and deed, he extinguished that divine life, in which God had created him. Adam had no more hurt, no more evil done to him, at his fall, than the very nature of his own action brought along with it upon himself. He lusted to have the sensibility of that good

and evil, which the beasts of this world have. He was told, that it could not be had without the loss of his heavenly life; because such loss was as necessarily implied in the nature of the thing itself, as blindness is implied in the extinction of eyes. However, he ventured to make the trial, and chose to eat of that which could and did open this sensibility of earthly good and evil in him. No sooner was this sensibility opened in him, but he found it to be a subjection and slavery to all outward nature, to heat and cold, to pains and sickness, horror of mind, disturbed passions, misery, and fears of death. Which is in other words only saying, that he found it to be an extinction of that divine, angelical nature, which till then had kept him insensible, and incapable of any hurtful impressions, from any or all the powers of this world. Therefore, to charge his miserable state as a punishment inflicted upon him by

the severe wrath of an incensed God, is the same absurdity, as in the former supposed lameness and blindness. Because the whole nature of all that miserable change, both as to body and soul, which then came upon him, was neither more nor less than what was necessarily implied in that which he chose to do to himself. And therefore had nothing of the nature of a punishment inflicted from without; but was only that which his own action had done, in and to himself: just as the man that puts out his own eyes has only that darkness and blindness which his own action has brought forth in himself.

From this short yet plain and true account of this matter, we are at once delivered from a load of difficulties that have been raised about the fall of man, and original sin. It has been a great question, how the goodness of God could punish so small and single an act of disobedience in Adam with so great a

punishment? Here the sovereignty of God hath been appealed to, and hath set the matter right; and from this sovereignty, thus asserted, came forth the systems of absolute election, and absolute reprobation. But for our comfort it appears, that the question here put concerns neither God nor man; that it relates not at all to the matter, and has no existence, but in the brains of those that formed it. For the action in which Adam's sin consisted was such an act as in itself implied all that miserable change that came upon him; and so was not a small or single act of disobedience, nor had the least punishment, of any kind, inflicted by God upon it. All that God did on this transgression was mere love, compassion, and relief administered to it. — All the sovereignty that God here showed, was a sovereignty of love to the fallen creature. So that all the volumes on this question may be laid aside, as quite beside the

point. Another, and the greatest question of all, and which divines of all sorts have been ever solving, and yet never have solved, is this : How it can consist with the goodness of God, to impute the sin of Adam to all his posterity? But here, to our comfort again, it may be said, that this question is equally a vain fiction with the other, and has nothing to do with the procedure of God towards mankind. For there is no imputation of the sin of Adam to his posterity, and so no foundation for a dispute upon it. How absurd would it be to say, that God imputes the nature, or the body and soul of Adam to his posterity? for have they not the nature of Adam by a natural birth from him, and not by imputation from God? Now this is all the sin that Adam's posterity have from him, they have only their flesh and blood, their body and soul from him, by a birth from him, and not imputed to them from God. Instead therefore of the

former question, which is quite beside the matter, it should have been asked thus, How it was consistent with the goodness of God, that Adam could not generate children of a nature and kind quite superior to himself? This is the only question that can be asked with relation to God; and yet it is a question whose absurdity confutes itself. For the only reason why sin is found in all the sons of Adam is this, it is because Adam, of earthly flesh and blood, cannot bring forth a holy angel out of himself, but must beget children of the same nature and condition with himself. And therefore here again it may be truly said, that all the laborious volumes on God's imputing Adam's sin to his posterity ought to be considered as waste paper.

But farther, as it is thus evident from the nature of Adam's transgression, that all his misery came from the nature of his own action, and that nothing was inflicted upon him,

from a wrath or anger in God at him, so is it still much more so, from a consideration of the divine nature. For it is a glorious and joyful truth, (however suppressed in various systems of divinity,) that from eternity to eternity, no spark of wrath ever was, or ever will be, in the holy triune God. If a wrath of God was anywhere, it must be everywhere; if it burned once, it must burn to all eternity. For everything that is in God himself is boundless, incapable of any increase or diminution, without beginning, and without end. It is as good sense, as consistent with the divine nature, to say that God, moved by a wrath in and from himself, began the creation, as that a wrath in God ever punished any part of it. Nature and creature is the only source from whence, and the seat in which, wrath, pain, and vexation can dwell. Nor can they ever break forth either in nature, or creature, but so far as

either this, or that, has lost its state in God. This is as certain, as that storms and tempests, thunder and lightnings, have no existence in heaven. God, considered in himself, is as infinitely separate from all possibility of doing hurt or willing pain to any creature, as he is from a possibility of suffering pain or hurt from the hand of a man. And this for this plain reason, because he is in himself, in his holy trinity, nothing else but the boundless abyss of all that is good, and sweet, and amiable ; and therefore stands in the utmost contrariety to everything that is not a blessing ; in an eternal impossibility of willing and intending a moment's pain or hurt to any creature. For from this unbounded source of goodness and perfection, nothing but infinite streams of blessing are perpetually flowing forth upon all nature and creature, in a more incessant plenty, than rays of light stream from the sun. And as

the sun has but one nature, and can give forth nothing but the blessings of light; so the holy triune God has but one nature and intent towards all the creation, which is, to pour forth the riches and sweetness of his divine perfections, upon everything that is capable of them, and according to its capacity to receive them.

The goodness of God, breaking forth into a desire to communicate good, was the cause and the beginning of the creation. Hence it follows, that to all eternity, God can have no thought, or intent, towards the creature, but to communicate good; because he made the creature for this sole end, to receive good. The first motive towards the creature is unchangeable; it takes its rise from God's desire to communicate good, and it is an eternal impossibility, that anything can ever come from God, as his will and purpose towards the creature, but that same love and

goodness, which first created it; he must always will that to it, which he willed at the creation of it. This is the amiable nature of God; he is the good, the unchangeable, overflowing fountain of good, that sends forth nothing but good to all eternity. He is the love itself, the unmixed, unmeasurable love, doing nothing but from love, giving nothing but gifts of love, to everything that he has made; requiring nothing of all his creatures, but the spirit and fruits of that love, which brought them into being. Oh how sweet is this contemplation of the height and depth of the riches of divine love! with what attraction must it draw every thoughtful man, to return love for love to this overflowing fountain of boundless goodness? what charms has that religion, which discovers to us our existence in relation to, and dependence upon this ocean of divine love! View every part

of our redemption, from Adam's first sin, to the resurrection of the dead, and you will find nothing but successive mysteries of that first love, which created angels and men. All the mysteries of the gospel are only so many marks and proofs of God's desiring to make his love triumph, in the removal of sin and disorder from all nature and creature.

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

The angels that kept their state, and those that fell from it, were at first of one and the

same nature; the angels that fell did not lose all their nature, for then they must have fallen into nothing; they only lost the heavenly and divine part of it, and therefore there is something still remaining in them, that is also in the holy angels, and which is common to both of them. Now this which they did not lose, because it cannot be lost, is a certain root of life, or ground of their existence, which, when once in being, cannot be broken, and in which the unceasing eternity or immortality of their nature consists, a root or first ground of life, equally capable of a heavenly birth, or of a birth and growth into hell. Now that there is this root of life in angels, and that it is something quite distinct from their heavenly nature, is very plain from hence, that the devils have lost their heavenly, and yet have kept their eternal and immortal nature, therefore that, in which their eternity and

immortality consists, must be something entirely distinct from their heavenly nature, and must be also the same with that, in which the eternity and immortality of the holy angels consists. For the fallen angels have no other eternal root in them, but that which they had before their fall, and that which they brought from heaven ; and therefore that, which is and must be eternal and undying in their nature, is the same eternal root of life, which is in the angels that kept their state. And consequently, the only difference betwixt an angel and a devil is this, that in the angel its eternal root of life generates a birth of the light and holy spirit of God in it; and in a devil this eternal root of life has lost this birth, and the power of bringing it forth again. Now here is to be truly seen the real difference betwixt the soul of Adam before, and after his fall.

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

First, Because there was nowhere else for

them to fall into, but into this tormenting sensibility of their own fiery, wrathful, darkened nature.

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

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

First, Because his angelical man dwelt in

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

Secondly, Because Adam, not aspiring to be above or without God, by his own proud strength, but only lusting to enter in a sensibility of the good and evil of the bestial life of this world: He found only that which he sought, and fell into no other state or misery than that bestial life which his own actions and desires had opened in him. And therefore this outward world stood him in great stead; it prevented his immediate falling into the state of fallen angels.

But then, as there was nothing that kept

him out of the hell of fallen angels, but his body of earthly flesh and blood, and as this was now as mortal in him as it was in the beasts, and lay at the mercy of a thousand accidents, that could every moment take it from him, so he was, in his fallen state, standing as it were on the brinks of hell, liable every moment to be pushed into it.

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

If thou hast nothing of this birth when thy body dies, then thou hast only that root of life in thee; which the devils have, thou art

as far from heaven, and as incapable of it, as they are; thy nature is their nature, and therefore their habitation must be thine. For nothing can possibly hinder thy union with fallen angels, when thou diest, but a birth of that in thy soul, which the fallen angels have lost.

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

union, or by copying his ways and manners, may, by a figure of speech, be said to be born again of him.

Now let it here be observed, that no passage of scripture is to be called or esteemed as a figurative expression, but where the literal meaning cannot be allowed, as implying something that is either bad in itself, or impossible, or inconsistent with some plain and undeniable doctrines of scripture. Now that this is not the case here, is very evident. For who will presume to say, that for the soul of fallen man to be born again of the Son, or light, and holy spirit of God, is in the literal sense of the words a thing bad in itself, or impossible, or inconsistent with any plain and undeniable doctrines of scripture? The critics therefore, who, in this matter, leave the literal meaning of the words, and have recourse to a figurative sense, are without excuse, and have nothing they can urge

as a reason for so doing, but their own skill in words. But it may be further added as a just charge against these critics, that their fixing these passages to a figurative meaning is not only without any ground, or reason for so doing, but is also a bad meaning, impossible to be true, and utterly inconsistent with the most plain and fundamental doctrines of scripture. Now that this is the case here, may in part be seen by the following instance.

Let it be supposed, that a human body had lost the light, and air, of this world, and was in a state of death, because both these were quite extinguished in it. Must it not be said, that this human body cannot see, or enter again into the life of this world, unless the light and air of this world get again a new birth in it: is there here any occasion, or any room to form a doubt, how these words are to be understood, or any possibili-

ty to mistake the meaning of them? What a philosopher would he be, who, for fear of being called an enthusiast, should here deny the literal meaning of a new birth of light and air, and think himself sufficiently justified in flying from it, because in his great reading he had seen the words, birth, light, and air, sometimes, and upon some occasions, used only in a figurative sense?

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

Now that the soul, as fallen, is in this real

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

out of heaven, but because his fall had absolutely put an end to the life of heaven in his soul.

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

And therefore if angels after angels had come down from heaven to assure him, that God had no anger at him, he would still have been in the same helpless state; nay, had they told him, that God had pity and

compassion towards him, he had yet been unhelped; because, in the nature of the thing, nothing could make so much as a beginning of his deliverance, but that which made a beginning of a new birth in him, and nothing could fully effect his recovery, but which perfectly finished the new birth of all that heavenly life which he had lost.

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

Here it is plain, that this priest and Levite left the poor man in the same helpless state in which they found him. Let it now be supposed, that, instead of going on the other side of the road, they had come up to him, and poured oil and wine into his wounds, only in a figurative sense of the words, that

is that they had spoke such words to him, words so soft, so oily, and reviving, that in a just figure of speech they might be called, a pouring of wine and oil into his wounds. Now had they done this, must it not still be said, that the poor man's wounds and nakedness were still left in their first helpless state? and all for this plain reason, because the poor man was naked and wounded, not in a figurative sense of the words, but really, and truly, and therefore could have no help, or benefit, but from real oil and wine really poured in his wounds. And for the same plain reason the fallen soul, really dead to the kingdom of heaven, can have no help but by a new birth of the light and spirit of heaven, really brought forth again in it. When Adam lay in his death wounds to the kingdom of God, had the highest order of archangels or seraphim come by that way, they could only have done as the priest and

Levite did, go on the other side ; or if they had come up to him, and done all they could for him, it could only have been such a good or relief to him, as by a figure of speech might be so called.

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

One would wonder how any persons, that believe the great mystery of our redemption, who adore the depths of the divine goodness, in that the Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, became a man himself, in order to make it possible for man, by a birth from him, to enter again into the kingdom of God, should yet seek to, and contend for, not a real but a figurative sense of a new birth in

Jesus Christ. Is there anything more inconsistent than this? or can anything strike more directly at the heart of the whole nature of our redemption? God became man, took upon him a birth from the fallen nature. But why was this done? or wherein lies the adorable depth of this mystery? how does all this manifest the infinity of the divine love towards man? It is because nothing less than this mysterious incarnation (which astonishes angels) could open a way, or begin a possibility, for fallen man to be born again from above, and made again a partaker of the divine nature. It was because man was become so dead to the kingdom of heaven, that there was no help for him through all nature. No powers, no abilities of the highest order of creatures, could kindle the least spark of life in him, or help him to the least glimpse of that heavenly light which he had lost. Now when all na-

ture and creature stood round about Adam, as unable to help him, as he was to help himself, and all of them unable to help him for this reason, because that which he had lost was the life and light of heaven ; how glorious, how adorable is that mystery which enables us to say, that when man lay thus incapable of any relief from all the powers and possibilities of nature, that then the Son, the Word of God, entered by a birth into this fallen nature, that by this mysterious incarnation of the fallen nature might be born again of him according to the spirit, in the same reality as they were born of Adam according to the flesh ? Look at this mystery in this true light, in this plain sense of Scripture, and then you must be forced to fall down before it, in adoration of it. For all that is great and astonishing in the goodness of God, all that is glorious and happy with regard to man, is manifestly contained in it.

But tell me, I pray, what becomes of all this, what is there left in any part of this mystery, if this new birth, for the sake of which God became man, is not really a new birth in the thing itself, is not, as the Scripture affirms, a real birth of the Son and spirit of God in the soul, but something or other, this or that, which the critics say may be called a new birth, by a certain figure of speech? Is not this to give up all our redemption at once, and a turning all the mysteries of our salvation into mere empty, unmeaning terms of speech? He that should deny the reality of the resurrection, upon pretence, that by the rules of criticism it need not signify a real coming out of a state of natural death, might have more to say for himself, both from reason and Scripture, than he that denies the reality of the new birth in Christ Jesus. For this new birth is not a part, but the whole of our salvation. Every-

thing in religion, from the beginning to the end of time, is only for the sake of it. Nothing does us any good, but either as it helps forward our regeneration, or as it is a true fruit or effect of it.

All the glad tidings of the gospel, all the benefits of our Saviour, however variously expressed in Scripture, all centre in this one point, that he has become our light, our life, our resurrection, our holiness and salvation; that we are in him new creatures, created again unto righteousness, born again of Him from above, of the spirit of God. Everything in the gospel is for the sake of this new creature, this new man in Christ Jesus, and nothing is regarded without it. What excuse therefore can be made for that learning, which, robbing us of the true fruits of the tree of life, leaves us nothing to feed upon, but the dry dust of words?

I am the vine, ye are the branches. Here

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

Again our blessed Saviour saith, *Without me ye can do nothing.* The question is,

when, or how, a man may be said to be without Christ? Consider again the vine and its branches; a branch can then only be said to be without its vine, when the vegetable life of the vine is no longer in it. This is the only sense in which we can be said to be without Christ; when He is no longer in us, as a principle of a heavenly life, we are then without Him, and so can do nothing, that is, nothing that is good or holy. A Christ not in us, is the same thing as a Christ not ours. If we are only so far with Christ as to own and receive the history of his birth, person, and character, if this is all we have of him, we are as much without Him, as much left to ourselves, as little helped by him, as those evil spirits which cried out, *We know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God.* For those evil spirits, and all the fallen angels, are totally without Christ, have no benefit from Him, for this one and only reason, be-

cause Christ is not in them; nothing of the Son of God is generated, or born in them. Therefore every son of Adam, that has not something of the Son of God generated, or born within him, is as much without Christ, as destitute of all help from Him, as those evil spirits who could only make an outward confession of Him.

It is the language of Scripture, that Christ in us is our hope of glory; that Christ formed in us, living, growing, and raising his own life and spirit in us, is our only salvation. And indeed all this is plain from the nature of the thing; for since the serpent, sin, death, and hell, are all essentially within us, the very growth of our nature, must not our redemption be equally inward, an inward essential death to this state of our souls, and an inward growth of a contrary life within us? If Adam was only an out-

ward person, if his whole nature was not our nature, born in us, and derived from him into us, it would be nonsense to say, that his fall is our fall. So, in like manner, if Christ, our second Adam, was only an outward person, if he entered not as deeply into our nature as the first Adam does, if we have not as really from him a new, inward, spiritual man, as we have outward flesh and blood from Adam, what ground could there be to say, that our righteousness is from Him, as our sin is from Adam?

Let no one here think to charge me with disregard to the Holy Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, or with setting up an inward Saviour in opposition to that outward Christ, whose history is recorded in the gospel. No: It is with the utmost fulness of faith and assurance, that I ascribe all our redemption to that blessed and mysterious per-

son, that was then born of the Virgin Mary, and will assert no inward redemption, but what wholly proceeds from and is effected by that life-giving Redeemer, who died on the cross for our redemption.

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

of the soul, is only so much said of an inward life, brought forth by the power and efficacy of that blessed Christ, that was born of the Virgin Mary.

CHAPTER II.

DISCOVERING THE TRUE WAY OF TURNING
TO GOD, AND OF FINDING THE KINGDOM
OF HEAVEN, THE RICHES OF ETERNITY,
IN OUR SOULS.

THOU hast seen, dear reader, the nature and necessity of regeneration, be persuaded therefore fully to believe, and firmly to settle in thy mind this most certain truth, that all our salvation consists in the manifestation of the nature, life, and spirit of Jesus Christ in our inward new man. This alone is Christian redemption, this alone delivers from the guilt and power of sin, this alone redeems, renews, and regains the first life of God in the soul of man. Everything besides this is

self, is fiction, is propriety, is own will, and, however coloured, is only thy old man, with all his deeds. Enter therefore with all thy heart into this truth, let thy eye be always upon it, do everything in view of it, try everything by the truth of it, love nothing but for the sake of it. Wherever thou goest, whatever thou doest, at home or abroad, in the field or at church, do all in a desire of union with Christ, in imitation of his tempers and inclinations, and look upon all as nothing, but that which exercises, and increases, the spirit and life of Christ in thy soul. From morning to night keep Jesus in thy heart, long for nothing, desire nothing, hope for nothing, but to have all that is within thee changed into the spirit and temper of the Holy Jesus. Let this be thy Christianity, thy church, and thy religion. For this new birth in Christ thus firmly believed, and continually desired, will do everything that thou

wantest to have done in thee, it will dry up all the springs of vice, stop all the workings of evil in thy nature, it will bring all that is good into thee, it will open all the gospel within thee, and thou wilt know what it is to be taught of God. This longing desire of thy heart to be one with Christ will soon put a stop to all the vanity of thy life, and nothing will be admitted to enter into thy heart, or proceed from it, but what comes from God, and returns to God; thou wilt soon be, as it were, tied and bound in the chains of all holy affections and desires, thy mouth will have a watch set upon it, thy ears would willingly hear nothing that does not tend to God, nor thy eyes be open, but to see and find occasions of doing good. In a word, when this faith has got both thy head and thy heart, it will then be with thee, as it was with the merchant who found a pearl of great price, it will make thee gladly to sell

all that thou hast, and buy it. For all that had seized and possessed the heart of any man, whatever the merchant of this world had got together, whether of riches, power, honour, learning or reputation, loses all its value, is counted but as dung, and willingly parted with, as soon as this glorious pearl, the new birth in Christ Jesus, is discovered and found by him. This therefore may serve as a touchstone, whereby every one may try the truth of his state; if the old man is still a merchant within thee, trading in all sorts of worldly honour, power, or learning, if the wisdom of this world is not foolishness to thee, if earthly interests and sensual pleasures are still the desire of thy heart, and only covered under a form of godliness, a cloak of creeds, observances, and institutions of religion, thou mayest be assured that the pearl of great price is not yet found by thee. For where Christ is born, or

his spirit rises up in the soul, there all self is denied, and obliged to turn out; there all carnal wisdom, arts of advancement, with every pride and glory of this life, are so many heathen idols all willingly renounced, and the man is not only content, but rejoices to say, that his kingdom is not of this world.

But thou wilt perhaps say, How shall this great work, the birth of Christ, be effected in me? It might rather be said, since Christ has an infinite power, and also an infinite desire to save mankind, how can any one miss of this salvation, but through his own unwillingness to be saved by him? Consider, how was it, that the lame and blind, the lunatic and leper, the publican and sinner, found Christ to be their Saviour, and to do all that for them, which they wanted to be done to them? It was because they had a real desire of having that which they

asked for, and therefore in true faith and prayer applied to Christ, that his spirit and power might enter into them, and heal that which they wanted, and desired to be healed in them. Every one of these said in *faith and desire, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me whole.* And the answer was always this, *According to thy faith, so be it done unto thee.* This is Christ's answer now, and thus it is done to every one of us at this day; as our faith is, so is it done unto us. And here lies the whole reason of our falling short of the salvation of Christ, it is because we have no will to it.

But you will say, do not all Christians desire to have Christ to be their 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.

Again, consider how was it, that the carnal Jew, the deep-read Scribe, the learned Rabbi, the religious Pharisee, not only did not receive, but crucified their Saviour? It was because they willed and desired no such Saviour as He was, no such inward salvation as he offered to them. They desired no change of their own nature, no inward destruction of their own natural tempers, no deliverance from the love of themselves, and the enjoyments of their passions; they liked their state, the gratifications of their old man, their long robes, their broad phylacteries, and greetings in the markets. They wanted not to have their pride and self-love dethroned, their covetousness and sensuality to be subdued, by a new nature from heaven derived into them. Their only desire was the suc-

cess. of Judaism, to have an outward Saviour, a temporal prince, that should establish their law and ceremonies over all the earth. And therefore they crucified their dear Redeemer, and would have none of his salvation, because it all consisted in a change of their nature, in a new birth from above, and a kingdom of heaven to be opened within them by the spirit of God.

Oh Christendom, look not only at the old Jews, but see thyself in this glass. For at this day, (oh sad truth to be told!) at this day, a Christ within us, an inward Saviour, raising a birth of his own nature, life, and spirit, within us, is rejected as gross enthusiasm, the learned Rabbies take counsel against it. The propagation of popery, the propagation of protestantism, the success of some particular church, is the salvation which priests and people are chiefly concerned about.

But to return: it is manifest, that no one can fail of the benefit of Christ's salvation, but through an unwillingness to have it, and from the same spirit and tempers which made the Jews unwilling to receive it. But if thou wouldst still farther 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, and wanting nothing but thy own faith and good will, to have as real a birth and form in thee, as He had in the Virgin Mary. For the eternal Word, or Son of God, did not then first begin to be the

Saviour of the world, when He was born in Bethlehem of Judea ; but that Word which became man in the Virgin Mary did, from the beginning of the world, enter as a word of life, a seed of salvation, into the first father of mankind, was inspoken into him, as an ingrafted word, under the name and character of a bruiser of the serpent's head. Hence it is, that Christ said to his disciples, *the kingdom of God is within you* ; that is, the divine nature is within you, given unto your first father, into the light of his life, and from him, rising up in the life of every son of Adam. Hence also the holy Jesus is said to be the light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. Not as He was born at Bethlehem, not as He had a human form upon earth ; in these respects He could not be said to have been the light of every man that cometh into the world. But as He was that eternal Word, by which

all things were created, which was the life and light of all things, and which had as a second creator entered again into fallen man, as a bruiser of the serpent; in this respect it was truly said of our Lord, when on earth, that He was that light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. For He was really and truly all this, as He was the Immanuel, the God with us, given unto Adam, and in him to all his offspring. See here the beginning and glorious extent of the Catholic church of Christ, it takes in all the world. It is God's unlimited, universal mercy to all mankind; and every human creature, as sure as he is born of Adam, has a birth of the bruiser of the serpent within him, and so is infallibly in covenant with God through Jesus Christ. Hence also it is, that the holy Jesus is appointed to be judge of all the world; it is because all mankind, all nations and languages, have in him, and

through him, been put into covenant with God, and made capable of resisting the evil of their fallen nature.

When our blessed Lord conversed with the woman at Jacob's well, he said unto her, *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that talketh with thee, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given the living water.* How happy (may any one 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 thy outward eyes ; thou seekest for him in books, in controversies, in the church, and outward exercises, but there thou wilt not find him, till thou hast first found him in thy heart. Seek for him in thy heart, and thou wilt never seek in vain, for there he dwelleth, there is the seat of his light and holy spirit.

For this turning to the light and spirit of God within thee is thy only true turning unto God; there is no other way of finding him, but in that place where he dwelleth in thee. For though God be everywhere present, yet He is only present to thee in the deepest and most central part of thy soul. Thy natural senses cannot possess God, or unite thee to Him, nay, thy inward faculties of understanding, will, and memory, can only reach after God, but cannot be the place of his habitation in thee. But there is a root, or depth in thee, from whence all these faculties come forth, as lines from a center, or as branches from the body of the tree. This depth is called the center, the fund, or bottom of the soul. This depth is the unity, the eternity, I had almost said the infinity of thy soul, for it is so infinite, that nothing can satisfy it, or give it any rest, but the infinity of God. In this depth of the soul, the Holy

Trinity brought forth its own living image in the first created man, bearing in himself a living representation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and this was his dwelling in God, and God in him. This was the kingdom of God within him, and made paradise without him. But the day that Adam did eat of the forbidden earthly tree, in that day he absolutely died to this kingdom of God within him. This depth or center of his soul having lost its God, was shut up in death and darkness, and became a prisoner in an earthly animal, that only excelled its brethren, the beasts, in an upright form, and serpentine subtlety. Thus ended the fall of man. But from that moment that the God of mercy inspoke into Adam the bruiser of the serpent, from that moment all the riches and treasures of the divine nature came again into man, as a seed of salvation sown into the center of the soul, and only

lieth hidden there in every man, till he desires to rise from his fallen state, and to be born again from above.

Awake then, thou that sleepest, and Christ, who from all eternity had 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, or tramplest it under thy feet, for the sake of being rich or great, either in church or state, if death finds thee in this success, thou canst not then say, that though the pearl is lost, yet something has been gained instead of it. For in that parting moment,

the things, and the sounds of this world, will be exactly alike; to have had an estate, or only to have heard of it, to have lived at Lambeth twenty years, or only to have twenty times passed by the palace, will be the same good, or the same nothing to thee.

But I will now show a little more distinctly, what this pearl of eternity is. First, It is the light and spirit of God within thee, which has hitherto done thee but little good, because all the desire of thy heart has been after the light and spirit of this world. Thy reason and senses, thy heart and passions, have turned all their attention to the poor concerns of this life, and therefore thou art a stranger to this principle of heaven, this riches of eternity within thee. For as God is not, cannot be truly found by any worshippers, but those who worship Him in spirit and in truth, so this light and spirit, though always within us, is not, cannot be

found, felt, or enjoyed, but by those whose whole spirit is turned to it.

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

But the goodness of God would not leave man in this condition ; a redemption from it was immediately granted, and the bruiser of the serpent brought the light and spirit

of heaven once more into the human nature, not as it was in its first state, when man was in paradise, but as a treasure hidden in the center of our souls, which should discover and open itself by degrees, in such proportion as the faith and desires of our hearts were turned to it. This light and spirit of God, thus freely restored again to the soul, and lying in it as a secret source of heaven, is called grace, free grace, or the supernatural gift or power of God in the soul, because it was something that the natural powers of the soul could no more obtain. Hence it is, that in the greatest truth, and highest reality, every stirring of the soul, every tendency of the heart towards God and goodness, is justly and necessarily ascribed to the Holy Spirit, or the grace of God. It is because this first seed of life, which is sown into the soul, as the gift or grace of God to fallen man, is itself the light

and spirit of God, and therefore every stirring or opening of this seed of life, every awakened thought or desire that arises from it, must be called the moving, or the quickening, of the spirit of God; and therefore that new man which arises from it must of all necessity be said to be solely the work and operation of God. Hence also we have an easy and plain declaration of the true meaning, solid sense, and certain truth, of all those scriptures, which speak of the inspiration of God, the operation of the Holy Spirit, the power of the divine light, as the sole and necessary agents in the renewal and sanctification of our souls, and also as being things common to all men. It is because this seed of life or bruise of the serpent is common to all men, and has in all men a degree of life, which is in itself so much of the inspiration, or life of God, the spirit of

God, the light of God, which is in every soul, and is its power of becoming born again of God. Hence also it is, that all men are exhorted not to quench, or resist, or grieve the Spirit, that is, this seed of the spirit and light of God that is in all men, as the only source of good. *Again, the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh.* By the flesh, and its lustings, are meant the mere human nature, or the natural man, as he is by the fall; by the spirit is meant the bruiser of the serpent, that seed of the light and spirit of God, which lieth as a treasure hid in the soul, in order to bring forth the life that was lost in Adam. Now as the flesh hath its life, its lustings, whence all sorts of evil are truly said to be inspired, quickened, and stirred up in us; so the spirit, being a living principle within us, has its inspiration, its

breathing, its moving, its quickening, from which alone the divine life, or the angel that died in Adam; can be born in us.

When this seed of the spirit, common to all men, is not resisted, grieved, and quenched, but its inspirations and motions suffered to grow and increase in us, to unite with God, and get power over all the lusts of the flesh, then we are born again, the nature, spirit, and tempers of Jesus Christ are opened in our souls, the kingdom of God is come, and is found within us. On the other hand, when the flesh, or the natural man, 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.

THE SPIRIT

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 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 son of righteousness,

is always casting forth his enlivening beams on this inward seed, to kindle and call it forth to the birth, doing that to this seed of heaven in man, which the sun in the firmament is always doing to the vegetable seeds in the earth.

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

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

both sides, the vegetable life arises, and all the virtues and powers contained in it.

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

way for the new birth, as the death of the husk and gross part of the grain is necessary to make way for its vegetable life.

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

ties, is at an end, either an angel or a devil will be found to have a birth in us.

Thou needest not therefore run here, or there, saying, where is Christ? Thou needest not say, who shall ascend into heaven, that is, to bring down Christ from above? or who shall descend into the deep, to bring up Christ from the dead? for behold the Word, which is the wisdom of God, is in thy heart, it is there as a bruiser of thy serpent, as a light unto thy feet, and lantern unto thy paths. It is there as a 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, among 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. This life of God in the soul, which for its smallness at first, and capacity for great growth, is by our Lord compared to a grain of mustard seed, may be, and too generally is, suppressed and kept under, either by worldly cares, or pleasures, by vain learning, sensuality, or ambition. And all this while, whatever church or profession any man is of, he is a mere natural man, unregenerate, unenlightened by the spirit of God, because this seed of heaven is choaked, and

not suffered to grow up in him. And therefore his religion is no more from heaven, than his fine breeding; his cares have no more goodness in them than his pleasures; his love is worth no more than his hatred; his zeal for this, or against that, form of religion, has only the nature of any other worldly contention in it. And thus it is, and must be with every mere natural man, whatever appearances he may put on, he may if he pleases, know himself to be the slave and machine of his own corrupt tempers and inclinations; to be enlightened, inspired, quickened and animated by self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, which is the only life and spirit of the mere natural man, whether he be heathen, Jew, or Christian.

On the other hand, wherever this seed of heaven is suffered to take root, to get life and breath in the soul, whether it be in man or woman, young or old, there this new-born,

inward man is justly said to be inspired, enlightened, and moved by the spirit of God, because his whole birth and life is a birth from above, of the light and spirit of God, and therefore all that is in it hath the nature, spirit, and tempers of heaven in it. As this regenerate life grows up in any man, so there grows up a true and real knowledge of the whole mystery of godliness in himself. All that the gospel teaches of sin and grace, of life and death, of heaven and hell, of the new and old man, of the light and spirit of God, are things not got by hearsay, but inwardly known, felt, and experienced, in the growth of his own new-born life. He has then an unction from above which teacheth him all things; a spirit that knoweth what it ought to pray for; a spirit that prays without ceasing, that is risen with Christ from the dead, and has all its conversation in heaven; a spirit that hath groans and sighs that can-

not be uttered, that travaileth and groaneth with the whole creation, to be delivered from vanity, and have its glorious liberty in that God, from whom it came forth.

Again, thirdly, this pearl of eternity, is the church or temple of God within thee, the consecrated place of divine worship, where alone thou canst worship God in spirit and in truth. In spirit, because thy spirit is that alone in thee which can unite and cleave unto God, and receive the workings of his divine spirit upon thee. In truth, because this adoration in spirit is that truth and reality, of which all outward forms and rites, though instituted by God, are only the figure for a time, but this worship is eternal. Accustom thyself to the holy service of this inward temple. In the midst of it is the fountain of living water, of which thou mayest drink, and live forever. There the mysteries of thy redemption are celebrated, or rather

opened in life and power. There the supper of the Lamb is kept; the bread that came down from heaven, that giveth life to the world, is thy true nourishment: all is done, and known in real experience, in a living sensibility of the work of God on the soul. There the birth, the life, the sufferings, the death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, are not merely remembered, but inwardly found, and enjoyed as the real state of thy soul, which has followed Christ in the regeneration. When once thou art well grounded in this inward worship, thou wilt have learnt to live unto God above time and place. For every day will be Sunday to thee, and wherever thou goest, thou wilt have a priest, a church, and an altar, along with thee. For when God has all that He should have of thy heart, when, renouncing the will, judgment, tempers and inclinations of thy old man, thou art wholly given up to

the obedience of the light and spirit of God within thee, to will only in his will, to love only in his love, to be wise only in his wisdom ; then it is, that everything thou doest is as a song of praise, and the common business of thy life is a conforming to God's will on earth, as angels do in heaven.

Fourthly, and lastly, this pearl of eternity is the peace and joy of God within thee, but can only be found by the manifestation of the life and power of Jesus Christ in thy soul. But Christ cannot be thy power and thy life, till in obedience to his call, thou deniest thyself, takest up thy daily cross, and followest him, in the regeneration. This is peremptory, it admits of no reserve of evasion, it is the one way to Christ and eternal life. But be where thou wilt, either here or at Rome, or Geneva, if self is undenied, if thou livest to thine own will, to the pleasures of thy natural lust and appetites, senses and pas-

sions, and in conformity to the vain customs and spirit of this world, thou art dead whilst thou livest; the seed of the woman is crucified within thee; Christ can profit thee nothing; thou art a stranger to all that is holy and heavenly within thee, and utterly incapable of finding the peace and joy of God in thy soul. And thus thou art poor, and blind, and naked, and empty, and livest a miserable life in the vanity of time; whilst all the riches of eternity, the light and spirit, the wisdom and love, the peace and joy of God are within thee. And thus it will always be with thee; there is no remedy, go where thou wilt, do what thou wilt, all is shut up, there is no open door of salvation, no awakening out of the sleep of sin, no deliverance from the power of thy corrupt nature, no overcoming of the world, no revelation of Jesus Christ, no joy of the new birth from above, till dying to thyself and the

world, thou turnest to the light, and spirit, and power of God in thy soul. All is fruitless and insignificant, all the means of thy redemption are at a stand, all outward forms are but a dead formality, till this fountain of living water is found within thee.

But thou wilt perhaps say, How shall I discover this riches of eternity, this light, and spirit, and wisdom, and peace of God, treasured up within me? Thy first thought of repentance, or desire of turning to God, is thy first discovery of this light and spirit of God within thee. It is the voice and language of the Word of God within thee, though thou knowest it not. It is the bruiser of thy serpent's head, thy dear Immanuel, who is beginning to preach within thee, that same which he first preached in public, saying, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* When therefore but the smallest instinct or desire of thy heart

calleth thee towards God, and a newness of life, give it time and leave to speak; and take care thou refuse not Him that speaketh. For it is not an angel from heaven that speaketh to thee, but it is the eternal speaking Word of God in thy heart, that Word, which at first created thee, is thus beginning to create thee a second time unto righteousness, that a new man may be formed again in thee, in the image and likeness of God. But above all things, beware of taking this desire of repentance to be the effect of thy own natural sense and reason, for in so doing thou locest the key of all the heavenly treasure that is in thee, thou shuttest the door against God, turnest away from Him, and thy repentance (if thou hast any) will be only a vain, unprofitable work of thy own hands, that will do thee no more good than a well that is without water. But if thou takest this awakened desire of turning to

God to be, as in truth it is, the coming of Christ in thy soul, the working, redeeming power of the light and spirit of the Holy Jesus within thee, if thou dost reverence and adhere to it, as such, this faith will save thee, will make thee whole; and by thus believing in Christ, though thou wert dead, yet shalt thou live.

Now all dependeth upon thy right submission and obedience to this speaking of God in thy soul. Stop therefore all self-activity, listen not to the suggestions of thy own reason, run not on in thy own will, but be retired, silent, passive, and humbly attentive to this new risen light within thee. Open thy heart, thy eyes and ears to all its impressions. Let it enlighten, teach, frighten, torment, judge, and condemn thee, as it pleaseth, turn not away from it, hear all it saith, seek for no relief out of it, consult not with flesh and blood, but, with a heart full

of faith and resignation to God, pray only this prayer, that God's kingdom may come, and his will be done in thy soul. Stand faithfully in this state of preparation, thus given up to the spirit of God, and then the work of thy repentance will be wrought in God, and thou wilt soon find, that he that is in thee is much greater than all that are against thee.

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

First, That through all the whole nature of things, nothing can do or be a real good to thy soul, but the operation of God upon it. Secondly, That all the dispensations of God to mankind, from the fall of Adam to the

preaching of the gospel, were only for this one end, to fit, prepare, and dispose the soul for the operation of the spirit of God upon it. These two great truths, well and deeply apprehended, put the soul in its right state, in a continual dependance upon God, in a readiness to receive all good from him, and will be a continual source of light in thy mind. They will keep thee safe from all errors and false zeal in things, and forms of religion, from a sectarian spirit, from bigotry, and superstition ; they will teach thee the true difference between the means and end of religion, and the regard thou showest to the shell will be only so far as the kernel is to be found in it.

Man, by his fall, had broke off from his true center, his proper place in God, and therefore the life and operation of God was no more in him. He was fallen from a life in God, into a life of self, into an animal life

of self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking in the poor, perishing enjoyments of this world. This was the natural state of man by the fall. He was an apostate from God, and his natural life was all idolatry, where self was the great idol, that was worshipped instead of God. See here the whole truth in short. All sin, death, damnation, and hell, is nothing else but this kingdom of self, or the various operations of self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking, which separate the soul from God, and end in eternal death and hell.

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

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

All the sacrifices, and institutions, of the ancient patriarchs, the law of Moses, with all its types, and rites, and ceremonies, had this only end; they were the methods of divine wisdom for a time, to keep the hearts of men from the wanderings of idolatry, in a state of holy expectation upon God; they were to keep the first seed of life in a state of growth, and make way for the farther operation of God upon the soul; or, as the apostle speaks, to be as a schoolmaster unto Christ. That

is, till the birth, the death, the resurrection and ascension of Christ, should conquer death and hell, open a new dispensation of God, and baptize mankind afresh with the Holy Ghost, and fire of heaven. Then, that is, on the day of Pentecost, a new dispensation of God came forth; which, on God's part, was the operation of the Holy Spirit in gifts and graces upon the church. And on man's part, it was the adoration of God in spirit and in truth. Thus all that was done by God, from the bruiser of the serpent given to Adam, to Christ's sitting down on the right hand of God, was all for this end, to remove all that stood between God and man, and to make way for the immediate and continual operation of God upon the soul. And that man baptized with the holy spirit, and born again from above, should absolutely renounce self, and wholly give up his soul to the operation of God's spirit, to

know, to love, to will, to pray, to worship, to preach, to exhort, to use all the faculties of his mind, and all the outward things of this world, as enlightened, inspired, moved, and guided by the Holy Ghost. Who, by this last dispensation of God, was given to be a comforter, a teacher, and guide to the church, who should abide with it forever.

This is Christianity, a spiritual society, not because it has no worldly concerns, but because all its members, as such, are born of the spirit, kept alive, animated and governed by the spirit of God. It is constantly called by our Lord the kingdom of God, or heaven, because all its ministry and service, all that is done in it, is done in obedience and subjection to that spirit, by which angels live, and are governed in heaven. Hence our blessed Lord taught his disciples to pray, that this kingdom might come, that so God's will might be done on earth, as it is in heaven ;

which could not be, but by that same spirit by which it is done in heaven. The short is this : The kingdom of self is the fall of man, or the great apostacy from the life of God in the soul, and every one, wherever he be, that liveth unto self, is still under the fall and great apostacy from God. The kingdom of Christ is the spirit and power of God, dwelling and manifesting itself in the birth of a new inward man ; and no one is a member of this kingdom, but so far as a true birth of the spirit is brought forth in him. These two kingdoms take in all mankind ; he that is not of one, is certainly in the other ; dying to one, is living to the other.

Hence we may gather these following truths : First, Here is shown the true ground and reason of what was said above, namely, that when the call of God to repentance first ariseth in thy soul, thou art to be retired, silent, passive, and humbly attentive to this

new risen light within thee, by wholly stopping or disregarding the workings of thy own will, reason, and judgment. It is because all these are false counsellors, the sworn servants, bribed slaves of thy fallen nature, they are all born and bred in the kingdom of self; and therefore, if a new kingdom is to be set up in thee, if the operation of God is to have its effect in thee, all these natural powers of self are to be silenced and suppressed, till they have learned obedience and subjection to the spirit of God. Now this is not requiring thee to become a fool, or to give up thy claim to sense and reason, but is the shortest way to have thy sense and reason delivered from folly, and thy whole rational nature strengthened, enlightened, and guided by that light, which is wisdom itself.

A child that obediently denies his own will and reason, to be guided by the will and reason of a truly wise and under-

standing tutor, cannot be said to make himself a fool, and give up the benefit of his rational nature, but to have taken the shortest way to have his own will and reason made truly a blessing to him.

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

And therefore every motion of it is to be mortified, changed and purified from its natural state, before we can enter into the kingdom of God. Thus, when our Lord saith, *Except a man hateth his father and mother, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple ;* it is

because our best tempers are yet carnal, and full of the imperfections of our fallen nature. The doctrine is just and good : not as if father and mother were to be hated ; but that love, which an unregenerate person or natural man hath towards them, is to be hated ; as being a blind self-love, full of all the weakness and partiality, with which fallen man loves, honours, esteems, and cleaves to himself. This love, born from corrupt flesh and blood, and polluted with self, is to be hated and parted with, that we may love them with a love born of God ; with such a love, and on such a motive, as Christ hath loved us. And then the disciple of Christ far exceeds all others in the love of parents. Again, our own life is to be hated ; and the reason is plain, it is because there is nothing lovely in it. It is a legion of evil, a monstrous birth of the serpent, the world and the flesh ; it is an apostacy from the life and

power of God in the soul; a life that is death to heaven; that is pure unmixed idolatry; that lives wholly to self, and not to God, and therefore all this own life is to be absolutely hated, all this self is to be denied and mortified, if the nature, spirit, tempers and inclinations of Christ are to be brought to life in us. For it is as impossible to live to both these lives at once, as for a body to move two contrary ways at the same time. And therefore all these mortifications and self-denials have an absolute necessity in the nature of the thing itself.

Thus, when our Lord further saith, unless a man forsakes *all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple*. The reason is plain, and the necessity absolute; it is because all that the natural man hath is in the possession of self-love, and therefore this possession is to be absolutely forsaken, and parted with. All that he hath is to be put into other hands,

to be given to divine love, or this natural man cannot be changed into a disciple of Christ. For self-love, in all that it hath, is earthly, sensual, and devilish, and therefore must have all taken away from it ; and then to the natural man all is lost, he hath nothing left, all is laid down at the feet of Jesus. And then all things are common, as soon as self-love has lost the possession of them. And then the disciple of Christ, though having nothing, yet possesseth all things, all that the natural man hath forsaken is restored to the disciple of Christ an hundred-fold. For self-love, the greatest of all thieves, being now cast out, and all that he had stolen and hidden thus taken from him, and put into the hands of divine love, every mite becometh a large treasure, and mammon openeth the door into everlasting habitations. This was the spirit of the first draught of a Christian church at Jerusalem ;

a church made truly after the pattern of heaven, where the love that reigns in heaven reigned in it; where divine love broke down all the selfish fences, the locks and bolts of me, mine, my own, &c., and laid all things common to the members of this new kingdom of God on earth.

Now though many years did not pass after the age of the apostles, before Satan and self got footing in the church, and set up merchandise in the house of God; yet this one heart, and one spirit, which then first appeared in the Jerusalem church, is that one heart and spirit of divine love, to which all are called, that would be true disciples of Christ. And though the practice of it is lost as to the church in general, yet it ought not to have been lost; and therefore every Christian ought to make it his great care, and prayer, to have it restored in himself. And then, though born in the dregs of time or

living in Babylon; he will be as truly a member of the first heavenly church at Jerusalem, as if he had lived in the days of the apostles. This spirit of love, born of that celestial fire, with which Christ baptizes his true disciples, is alone that spirit which can enter into heaven, and therefore is that spirit which is to be born in us, whilst we are on earth. For no one can enter into heaven, till he is made heavenly, till the spirit of heaven is entered into him. And therefore all that our Lord hath said of denying and dying to self, and of his parting with all that he hath, are practices absolutely necessary from the nature of the thing.

Because all turning to self is so far turning from God, and so much as we have of self-love, so much as we have of a hellish, earthly weight, that must be taken off, or there can be no ascension into heaven. But thou wilt perhaps say, if all self-love is to be

renounced, then all love of our neighbour is renounced along with it, because the commandment is, only *to love our neighbour as ourselves*. The answer here is easy, and yet no quarter given to self-love. There is but one only love in heaven, and yet the angels of God love one another in the same manner as they love themselves. The matter is thus: the one supreme unchangeable rule of love, which is a law to all intelligent beings of all worlds, and will be a law to all eternity, is this, *viz.* That God alone is to be loved for Himself, and all other beings only in Him, and for Him. Whatever intelligent creature lives not under this rule of love, is so far fallen from the order of his creation, and is, till he returns to this eternal law of love, an apostate from God, and incapable of the kingdom of heaven.

Now if God alone is to be loved for Himself,

then no creature is to be loved for itself; and so all self-love in every creature is absolutely condemned.

And if all created beings are only to be loved in and for God, then my neighbour is to be loved, as I love myself, and I am only to love myself, as I love my neighbour, or any other created being, that is, only in and for God. And thus the command of loving our neighbour as ourselves stands firm, and yet all self-love is plucked up by the roots. But what is loving any creature, only in, and for God? it is when we love only it as it is God's work, image, and delight, when we love it merely as it is God's and belongs to him; this is loving it in God; and when all that we wish, intend, or do to it, is done from a love of God, for the honour of God, and in conformity to the will of God, this is loving it for God. This is the one love that is and must be the spirit of all creatures,

that live united to God. Now this is no speculative refinement or fine spun fiction of the brain, but the simple truth, a first law of nature, and a necessary band of union between God and the creature. The creature that is not in God, is a stranger to Him; has lost the life of God in itself, whenever its love does not thus begin and end in God.

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

works of the devil are all wrought in self, it is his peculiar workhouse, and therefore Christ is not come as a Saviour from sin, as a destroyer of the works of the devil in any of us, but so far as self is beaten down, and overcome in us. If it is literally true, what our Lord said, *That his kingdom was not of this world*, then it is a truth of the same certainty, that no one is a member of this kingdom, but he that in the literal sense of the words, renounces the spirit of this world. Christians might as well part with half the articles of their creed, or but half believe them, as to really refuse, or but by halves enter into these self-denials.

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

Our redemption is this new birth ; if this is not done, or doing in us, we are still un-

redeemed. And though the Saviour of the world is come, He is not come in us, He is not received by us, is a stranger to us, is not ours, if his life is not within us. His life is not, cannot be within us, but so far as the spirit of the world, self-love, self-esteem, and self-seeking are renounced, and driven out of us.

Thirdly, Hence we may also learn the true nature and worth of all self-denials and mortifications. As to their nature, considered in themselves, they have nothing of goodness or holiness, nor are any real parts of our sanctification; they are not the true food or nourishment of the divine life in our souls; they have no quickening, sanctifying power in them; their only worth consists in this, that they remove the impediments of holiness, break down that which stands between God and us, and make way for the quickening, sanctifying spirit of God to operate on

our souls. Which operation of God is the one only thing that can raise the divine life in the soul, or help it to the smallest degree of real holiness, or spiritual life. As in our creation, we had only that degree of a divine life, which the power of God derived into us; as then all that we had, and were, was the sole operation of God in the creation of us, so in our redemption, or regaining that first perfection, which we have lost, all must be again the operation of God; every degree of the divine life restored in us, be it ever so small, must and can be nothing else but so much of the life and operation of God found again in the soul. All the activity of man in the works of self-denial has no good in itself, but is only to open an entrance for the one only good, the light of God, to operate upon us.

Hence also we may learn the reason, why many people not only lose the benefit, but

are even the worse for all their mortifications. It is because they mistake the whole nature and worth of them. They practise them for their own sakes, as things good in themselves; they think them to be real parts of holiness, and so rest in them, and look no farther, but grow full of self-esteem, and self-admiration for their own progress in them. This makes them self-sufficient, morose, severe judges of all those that fall short of their mortifications.

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

There is no avoiding this fatal error, but by deeply entering into this great truth, that all our own activity and working has no good in it, can do no good to us, but as it

leads and turns us in the best manner to the light and spirit of God, which alone brings life and salvation into the soul. *Stretch forth thy hand*, said our Lord to the man that had a withered hand ; he did so, and it was immediately made whole as the other.

Now, had this man any ground for pride, or a high opinion of himself, for the share he had in the restoring of his hand ? Yet just such is our share in the raising up of the spiritual life within us. All that we can do by our own activity is only like this man's stretching out his hand ; the rest is the work of Christ, the only giver of life to the withered hand, or the dead soul. We can only then do living works, when we are so far born again, as to be able to say with the apostle, *Yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me*. But to return, and further show how the soul that feels the call of God to repentance is to be under it, that this stir-

ring of the divine power in the soul may have its full effect, [and bring forth the birth of the new man in Christ Jesus. We are to consider it (as in truth it is) as the seed of the divine nature within us, that can only grow by its own strength, and union with God. It is a divine life, and therefore can grow from nothing but divine power. When the Virgin Mary conceived the birth of the holy Jesus, all that she did towards it herself was only this single act of faith and resignation to God: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word.* This is all that we can do towards the conception of that new man that is to be born in ourselves. Now this truth is easily consented to, and a man thinks he believes it, because he consents to it, or rather, does not deny it. But this is not enough, it is to be apprehended in a deep, full, and practical assurance, in such a manner as a man knows and believes

that he did not create the stars, or cause life to rise up in himself. And then it is a belief, that puts the soul into a right state, that makes room for the operation of God upon it. His light then enters with full power, into the soul, and his Holy Spirit moves and directs all that is done in it, and so man lives again in God, as a new creature. For this truth thus firmly believed, will have these two most excellent effects: First, it will keep the soul fixed, and continually turned towards God, in faith, prayer, desire, confidence, and resignation to Him, for all that it wants to have done in it, and to it; which will be a continual source of all divine virtues and graces. The soul thus turned to God must be always receiving from Him. It stands at the true door of all divine communications, and the light of God as freely enters into it, as the light of the sun enters into the air. Secondly, it will fix and

ground the soul in a true and lasting self-denial. For by thus knowing and owning our own nothingness and inability, that we have no other capacity for good, but that of receiving it from God alone, self is wholly denied, its kingdom is destroyed; no room is left for spiritual pride and self-esteem; we are saved from a pharisaical holiness, from wrong opinions of our own works and good deeds, and from a multitude of errors, the most dangerous to our souls, all which arise from the something that we take ourselves to be either in nature or grace. But when we once apprehend but in some good degree the all of God, and the nothingness of ourselves, we have got a truth, whose usefulness and benefit no words can express. It brings a kind of infallibility into the soul, in which it dwells; all that is vain, and false, and deceitful, is forced to vanish and fly before it. When our religion is founded on this rock,

it has the firmness of a rock, and its height reaches unto heaven. The world, the flesh, and the devil can do no hurt to it; all enemies are known, and all disarmed, by this great truth, dwelling in our souls. It is the knowledge of the all of God that makes cherubim and seraphim to be flames of divine love. For where this all of God is truly known and felt in any creature, there its whole breath and spirit is a fire of love; nothing but a pure, disinterested love can rise up in it, or come from it, a love that begins and ends in God. And where this love is born in any creature, there a seraphic life is born along with it. For this pure love introduces the creature into the all of God, all that is in God is opened in the creature, it is united with God, and hath the life of God manifested in it.

There is but one salvation for all mankind, and that is the life of God in the soul. God

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

Now there is but one possible way for man to attain this salvation, or life of God in the soul. There is not one for the Jew, another for the 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 ; 'tis 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 emotion 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.

Oh my God, just and good, how great is thy love and mercy to mankind, that heaven is thus everywhere open, and Christ thus the common Saviour to all that turn the desire of their hearts to thee ! Oh sweet power of the bruiser of the serpent, born in every son of man, that stirs and works in every man,

and gives every man a power and desire to find his happiness in God! O Holy Jesus, heavenly light, that lighteth every man that cometh into the world, that redeemeth 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 Judea, but to the birth of Jesus in the dark center of thy own fallen soul.

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

“It is much to be lamented, that we are so blindly led, and the truth withheld from us through imaginary conceptions; for if the divine power in the inward ground of the soul was manifest, and working with its lustre in us, then is the whole triune God present in the life and will of the soul; and the heaven wherein God dwelleth is opened in the soul, and there, in the soul, is the place where the Father begetteth his Son, and where the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son.

“Christ saith, *I am the light of the world, he that followeth me, walketh not in darkness.* He directs us only to Himself. He is

the morning star, and is generated and riseth in us, and shineth in the darkness of our nature. O how great a triumph is there in the soul, when he ariseth in it! then a man knows, as he never knew before, that he is a stranger in a foreign land."

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