

Mystics Magazine

Christian Mystical Theology

Conversations with Jacob Boehme

Compiled by Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

www.outofbodytravel.org



Jacob Boehme

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For information, write to:

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

www.outofbodytravel.org

MarilynnHughes@outofbodytravel.org

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Having worked primarily in radio broadcasting, Marilynn Hughes spent several years as a news reporter, producer and anchor before deciding to stay at home with her three children. She's experienced, researched, written, and taught about out-of-body travel since 1987.

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Mystics Magazine

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Mystics Magazine

Christian Mystical Theology
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 By Marilynn Hughes

Mystics Magazine ventures to take on the issues of Mystical Theology in Different Faiths and World Religions in a new and unique way. It is the purpose of each issue of the magazine to embrace the personal dialogue and teachings of a great Master of the Mystical Path within that religion and allow them to speak of their personal experience and conclusions based on their years of inquiry into the supersensual world.

We've utilized many texts which involve actual dialogue between the Great Mystics and others wherein they explain important aspects and understanding of the mystical theology (and sometimes moral theology) of their own unique religious path.

The Author does not necessarily agree with all views presented, but wishes to present the similarities and differences between some of the Great Mystics the world over. In doing so, we can see better where we agree and where we disagree. We can also pick up points from other paths that may enhance our own.

Look upon this journey into Mystics Magazine as an opportunity to discern for yourself as to how these things may be able to help you in your own spiritual journey.

This is an opportunity to have a conversation with some of the greatest mystical minds in history. So consider listening in . . .

The Signature of All Things

By Jacob Boehme, 1912

OF HEAVEN AND HELL

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN JUNIUS A SCHOLAR
AND THEOPHORUS HIS MASTER

THE scholar asked his master, saying; Whither goeth the soul when the body dieth?

His master answered him; There is no necessity for it to go any whither.c

What not! said the inquisitive Junius: Must not the soul leave the body at death, and go either to heaven or hell?

It needs no going forth, replied the venerable Theophorus: Only the outward mortal life with the body shall separate themselves from the soul. The soul hath heaven and hell within itself before, according as it is written, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, neither shall they say, Lo here! or Lo there! For behold the kingdom of God is within you." And which soever of the two, that is, either heaven or hell is manifested in it, in that the soul standeth.

Here Junius said to his master; This is hard to understand. Doth it not enter into heaven or hell, as a man entereth into an house; or as one goeth through an hole or casement, into an unknown place; so goeth it not into another world?

The master spake and said; No. There is verily no such kind of entering in; forasmuch as heaven and hell are everywhere, being universally co-extended.

How is that possible? said the scholar. What, can heaven and hell be here present, where we are now sitting? And if one of them might, can you make me believe that ever both should be here together?

Then spoke the master in this manner: I have said that heaven is everywhere present; and it is true. For God is in heaven; and God is everywhere. I have said also, that hell must be in like manner everywhere; and that is also true. For the wicked one, who is the devil, is in hell; and the whole world, as the apostle hath taught us, lieth in the wicked one, or the evil one; which is as much as to say, not only that the devil is in the world, but also that the world is in the devil; and if in the devil, then in hell too, because he is there. So hell therefore is everywhere, as well as heaven; which is the thing that was to be proved.

The scholar, startled hereat, said, Pray make me to understand this.

To whom the master: Understand then what heaven is: it is but the turning in of the will into the love of God. Wheresoever thou findest God manifesting

himself in love, there thou findest heaven, without travelling for it so much as one foot. And by this understand also what hell is, and where it is. I say unto thee, it is but the turning in of the will into the wrath of God. Wheresoever the anger of God doth more or less manifest itself, there certainly is more or less of hell, in whatsoever place it be. So that it is but the turning in of thy will either into his love, or into his anger; and thou art accordingly either in heaven or in hell. Mark it well. And this now cometh to pass in this present life, whereof St. Paul speaking, saith, "Our conversation is in heaven." And the Lord Christ saith also; "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give them the eternal life; and none shall pluck them out of my hand." Observe, he saith not, I *will* give them, after this life is ended; but I *give* them, that is, now in the time of this life. And what else is this gift of Christ to his followers but an eternity of life; which for certain, can be nowhere but in heaven. And also if Christ be certainly in heaven, and they who follow him in the regeneration are in his hand, then are they where he is, and so cannot be out of heaven: Yea, moreover none shall be able to pluck them out of heaven, because it is he who holdeth them there, and they are in his hand which nothing can resist. All therefore doth consist in the turning in, or entering of the will into heaven, by hearing the voice of Christ, and both knowing him, and following him. And so on the contrary it is also: Understandest thou this?

His scholar said to him; I think, in part, I do. But how cometh this entering of the will into heaven to pass?

The master answered him; This then I will endeavour to satisfy thee in; but thou must be very attentive to what I shall say unto thee. Know then, my son, that when the ground of the will yieldeth up itself to God, then it sinketh out of its own self, and out of and beyond all ground and place, that is or can be imagined, into a certain unknown deep, where God only is manifest, and where he only worketh and willeth. And then it becometh nothing to itself, as to its own working and willing; and so God worketh and willeth in it. And God dwells in this resigned will; by which the soul is sanctified, and so fitted to come into divine rest. Now in this case when the body breaketh, the soul is so thoroughly penetrated all over with the divine love, and so thoroughly illuminated with the divine light, even as a glowing hot iron is by the fire, by which being penetrated throughout, it loseth its darkness, and becometh bright and shining. Now this is the hand of Christ, where God's love thoroughly inhabiteth the soul, and is in it a shining light, and a new glorious life. And then the soul is in heaven, and is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and is itself the very heaven of God, wherein he dwelleth. Lo, this is the entering of the will into heaven; and thus it cometh to pass.

Be pleased, sir, to proceed, said the scholar, and let me know how it fareth on the other side.

The master said: The godly soul, you see, is in the hand of Christ, that is in heaven, as he himself hath told us; and in what manner this cometh to be so, you have also heard. But the ungodly soul is not willing in

this life-time to come into the divine resignation of its will, or to enter into the will of God; but goeth on still in its own lust and desire, in vanity and falsehood, and so entereth into the will of the devil. It receiveth thereupon into itself nothing but wickedness; nothing but lying, pride, covetousness, envy, and wrath; and therinto it giveth up its will and whole desire. This is the vanity of the will; and this same vanity or vain shadow must also in like manner be manifested in the soul, which hath yielded up itself to be its servant; and must work therein, even as the love of God worketh in the regenerated will, and penetrate it all over, as fire doth iron.

And it is not possible for this soul to come into the rest of God; because God's anger is manifested in it, and worketh in it. Now when the body is parted from this soul, then beginneth the eternal melancholy and despair; because it now findeth that it is become altogether vanity, even a vanity most vexatious to itself, and a distracting fury, and a self-tormenting abomination. Now it perceiveth itself disappointed of everything which it had before fancied, and blind, and naked, and wounded, and hungry, and thirsty; without the least prospect of being ever relieved, or obtaining so much as one drop of the water of eternal life. And it feeleth itself to be a mere devil to itself, and its own vile executioner and tormentor; and is affrighted at its own ugly dark form, appearing as a most hideous and monstrous worm, and fain would flee from itself, if it could, but it cannot, being fast bound with the chains of the dark nature, whereinto it had sunk itself when in the flesh. And so not having

learned nor accustomed itself to sink down into the divine grace, and being also strongly possessed with the idea of God, as an angry and jealous God, the poor soul is both afraid and ashamed to bring its will into God, by which deliverance might possibly come to it. The soul is afraid to do it, as fearing to be consumed by so doing, under the apprehension of the Deity as a mere devouring fire. The soul is also ashamed to do it, as being confounded at its own nakedness and monstrosity; and therefore would, if it were possible, hide itself from the majesty of God, and cover its abominable form from his most holy eye, though by casting itself still deeper into the darkness, wherefore then it will not enter into God; nay, it cannot enter with its false will; yea, though it should strive to enter, yet can it not enter into the love, because of the will which hath reigned in it. For such a soul is thereby captivated in the wrath; yea, is itself but mere wrath, having by its false desire, which it had awakened in itself, comprehended and shut up itself therewith, and so transformed itself into the nature and property thereof.

And since also the light of God Both not shine in it, nor the love of God incline it, the soul is moreover a great darkness, and is withal an anxious fire-source, carrying about an hell within itself, and not being able to discern the least glimpse of the light of God, or to feel the least spark of his love. Thus it dwelleth in itself as in hell, and needeth no entering into hell at all, or being carried thither; for in what place soever it may be, so long as it is in itself, it is in the hell. And though it should travel far, and cast itself many

hundred thousand leagues from its present place, to be out of hell; yet still would it remain in the hellish source and darkness.

If this be so, how then cometh it, said the scholar to Theoporus, that an heavenly soul doth not in the time of this life perfectly perceive the heavenly light and joy; and the soul which is without God in the world, doth not also here feel hell, as well as hereafter? Why should they not both be perceived and felt as well in this life as in the next, seeing that both of them are in man, and one of them (as you have shewed) worketh in every man?

To whom Theoporus presently returneth this answer: The kingdom of heaven is in the saints operative and manifestative of itself by faith. They who carry God within them, and live by his Spirit, find the kingdom of God in their faith; and they feel the love of God in their faith, by which the will hath given up itself into God, and is made Godlike. In a word, all is transacted within them by faith, which is to them the evidence of the eternal invisibles, and a great manifestation in their spirit of this divine kingdom, which is within them. But their natural life is nevertheless encompassed with flesh and blood; and this standing in a contrariety thereto, and being placed through the Fall in the principle of God's anger, and environed about with the world, which by no means can be reconciled to faith, these faithful souls cannot but be very much exposed to attacks from this world, wherein they are sojourners; neither can they be insensible of their being thus compassed

about with flesh and blood, and with this world's vain lust, which ceaseth not continually to penetrate the outward mortal life, and to tempt them manifold ways, even as it did Christ. Whence the world on one side, and the devil on the other, not without the curse of God's anger in flesh and blood, do thoroughly penetrate and sift the life; whereby it cometh to pass that the soul is often in anxiety when these three are all set upon it together, and when hell thus assaulteth the life, and would manifest itself in the soul. But the soul hereupon sinketh down into the hope of the grace of God, and standeth like a beautiful rose in the midst of thorns, until the kingdom of this world shall fall from it in the death of the body: And then the soul first becometh truly manifest in the love of God, and in his kingdom, which is the kingdom of love; having henceforth nothing more to hinder it. But during this life she must walk with Christ in this world; and then Christ delivereth her out of her own hell, by penetrating her with his love throughout, and standing by her in hell, and even changing her hell into heaven.

But in that thou moreover sayest, why do not the souls which are without God feel hell in this world? I answer: They bear it about with them in their wicked consciences, but they know it not; because the world hath put out their eyes, and its deadly cup hath cast them likewise into a sleep, a most fatal sleep. Notwithstanding which it must be owned that the wicked do frequently feel hell within them during the time of this mortal life, though they may not apprehend that it is hell, because of the earthly vanity

which cleaveth unto them from without, and the sensible pleasures and amusements wherewith they are intoxicated. And moreover it is to be noted, that the outward life in every such one hath yet the light of the outward nature, which ruleth in that life; and so the pain of hell cannot, so long as that hath the rule, be revealed. But when the body dieth or breaketh away, so as the soul cannot any longer enjoy such temporal pleasure and delight, nor the light of this outward world, which is wholly thereupon extinguished as to it; then the soul stands in an eternal hunger and thirst after such vanities as it was here in love withal, but yet can reach nothing but that false will, which it had impressed in itself while in the body; and wherein it had abounded to its great loss. And now whereas it had too much of its will in this life, and yet was not contented therewith, it hath after this separation by death, as little of it; which createth in it an everlasting thirst after that which it can henceforth never obtain more, and causeth it to be in a perpetual anxious lust after vanity, according to its former impression, and in a continual rage of hunger after those sorts of wickedness and lewdness whereinto it was immersed, being in the flesh. Fain would it do more evil still, but that it hath not either wherein or wherewith to effect the same, left it; and therefore it doth perform this only in itself. All is now internally transacted, as if it were outward; and so the ungodly is tormented by those furies which are in his own mind, and begotten upon himself by himself. For he is verily become his own devil and tormentor; and that by which he sinned here, when the shadow of this world is passed away, abideth still with him in

the impression, and is made his prison and his hell. But this hellish hunger and thirst cannot be fully manifested in the soul, till the body which ministered to the soul what it lusted after, and with which the soul was so bewitched, as to doat thereupon, and pursue all its cravings, be stripped off from it.

I perceive then, said Junius to his master, that the soul having played the wanton with the body in all voluptuousness, and served the lusts thereof during this life, retaineth still the very same inclinations and affections which it had before, then when it hath no opportunity nor capacity to satisfy them longer; and that when this cannot be, there is then hell opened in that soul, which had been shut up in it before, by means of the outward life in the body, and of the light of this world. Do I rightly understand?

Theophorus said, It is very rightly understood by you. Go on.

On the other hand (said he) I clearly perceive by what I have heard, that heaven cannot be in a loving soul, which is possessed of God, and bath subdued thereby the body to the obedience of the spirit in all things, and perfectly immersed itself into the will and love of God. And when the body dieth, and this soul is hence redeemed from the earth, it is now evident to me, that the life of God which was hidden in it, will display itself gloriously, and heaven consequently be then manifested. But notwithstanding, if there be not also a local heaven besides, and a local hell, I am still at a loss where to place no small part of the creation,

if not the greatest, For where must all the intellectual inhabitants of it abide?

In their own principle, answered the master, whether it be of light or of darkness. For every created intellectual being remaineth in its deeds and essences, in its wonders and properties, in its life and image; and therein it beholdeth and feeleth God, as who is everywhere, whether it be in the love, or in the wrath.

If it be in the love of God, then beholdeth it God accordingly, and feeleth him as he is love. But if it bath captivated itself in the wrath of God, then it cannot behold God otherwise than in the wrathful nature, nor perceive him otherwise than as an incensed and vindictive spirit. All places are alike to it, if it be in God's love; and if it be not there, every place is hell alike. What place can bound a thought? Or what needeth any understanding spirit to be kept here or there, in order to its happiness or misery? Verily, wheresoever it is, it is in the abyssal world, where there is neither end nor limit. And whither, I pray, should it go? since though it should go a thousand miles off, or a thousand time ten thousand miles, and this ten thousand times over, beyond the bounds of the universe, and into the imaginary spaces above the stars, yet it were then still in the very same point from whence it went out. For God is the place of spirit; if it may be lawful to attribute to him such a name, to the which body hath a relation: And in God there is no limit; both near and afar off is here all one; and be it in his love, or be it in his anger, the abyssal will of the spirit is altogether unconfined. It is swift as

thought, passing through all things; it is magical, and nothing corporeal or from without can let it; it dwelleth in its wonders, and they are its house.

Thus it is with every intellectual, whether of the order of angels, or of human souls; and you need not fear but there will be room enough for them all, be they ever so many; and such also as shall best suit them, even according to their election and determination; and which may thence very well be called his own place.

At which, said the scholar; I remember, indeed, that it is written concerning the great traitor, that he went after death to his own place.

The master here said: The same is true of every soul, when it departeth this mortal life: And it is true in like manner of every angel, or spirit whatsoever; which is necessarily determined by its own choice. As God is everywhere, so also the angels are everywhere; but each one in its own principle, and in its own property, or (if you had rather) in its own place. The same essence of God, which is as a place to spirits, is confessed to be everywhere; but the appropriation, or participation hereof is different to every one, according as each hath attracted magically in the earnestness of the will. The same divine essence which is with the angels of God above, is with us also below: And the same divine nature which is with us, is likewise with them; but after different manners and in different degrees, communicated and participated.

And what I have said here of the divine, is no less to be considered by you in the participation of the diabolical essence and nature, which is the power of darkness, as to the manifold modes, degrees, and appropriations thereof in the false will. In this world there is strife between them: But when this world hath reached in any one the limit, then the principle catcheth that which is its own; and so the soul receiveth companions accordingly, that is, either angels or devils.

To whom the scholar again: Heaven and hell then being in us at strife in the time of this life, and God himself being also thus near unto us, where can angels and devils dwell?

And the master answered him thus: Where thou dost not dwell as to thy self-hood, and to thine own will, there the holy angels dwell with thee, and everywhere all over round about thee. Remember this well. On the contrary, where thou dwellest as to thyself, in self-seeking, and self-will, there to be sure the devils will be with thee, and will take up their abode with thee, and dwell all over thee, and round about thee everywhere. Which God in his mercy prevent.

I understand not this, said the scholar, so perfectly well as I could wish. Be pleased to make it a little more clear to me.

The master then spake: Mark well what I am going to say. Where the will of God in anything willeth, there is God manifested; and in this very manifestation of

God, the angels do dwell. But where God in any creature willesh not with the will of that creature, there God is not manifested to it, neither earl he be; but dwelleth in himself, without the co-operation thereof, and subjection to him in humility. There God is an unmanifested God to the creature: So the angels dwell not with such an one; for wherever they dwell, there is the glory of God; and they make his glory. What then dwelleth in such a creature as this? God dwelleth not therein; the angels dwell not therein; God willesh not therein, the angels also will not therein. The case is evidently this, in that soul or creature its own will is without God's will, and there the devil dwelleth; and with him all whatever is without God, and without Christ. This is the truth; lay it to heart.

The Scholar. It is possible I may ask several impertinent questions; but I beseech you, good sir, to have patience with me, and to pity my ignorance, if I ask what may appear to you perhaps ridiculous, or may not be at all fit for me to expect an answer to. For I have several questions still to propound to you; but I am ashamed of my own thoughts in this matter.

The Master. Be plain with me, and propose whatever is upon your mind; yea, be not ashamed even to appear ridiculous, so that by querying you may but become wiser.

The scholar thanked his master for this liberty, and said: How far then are heaven and hell asunder?

To whom he answered thus: As far as day and night; or as far as something and nothing. They are in one another, and yet they are at the greatest distance one from the other. Nay, the one of them is as nothing to the other; and yet notwithstanding they cause joy and grief to one another. Heaven is throughout the whole world, and it is also without the world over all, even everywhere that is, or that can be but so much as imagined. It filleth all, it is within all, it is without all, it encompasseth all; without division, without place; working by a divine manifestation, and flowing forth universally, but not going in the least out of itself. For only in itself it worketh, and is revealed, being one, and undivided in all. It appeareth only through the manifestation of God; and never but in itself only: And in that being which cometh into it, or in that wherein it is manifested; there also it is that God is manifested. Because heaven is nothing else but a manifestation or revelation of the Eternal One, wherein all the working and willing is in quiet love,

So in like manner hell also is through the whole world, and dwelleth and worketh but in itself, and in that wherein the foundation of hell is manifested, namely, in self-hood, and in the false will. The visible world hath both in it; and there is no place but heaven and hell may he found or revealed in it. Now man as to his temporal life, is only of the visible world; and therefore during the time of this life, he seeth not the spiritual world. For the outward world with its substance, is a cover to the spiritual world, even as the body is to the soul. But when the outward man dieth, then the spiritual world, as to the soul, which

hath now its covering taken away, is manifested either in the eternal light with the holy angels, or in the eternal darkness, with the devils.

The scholar further queried: What is an angel, or a human soul, that they can be thus manifested either in God's love or anger, either in light or darkness?

To whom Theophorus answered: They come from one and the self-same original: They are little branches of the divine wisdom, of the divine will, sprung from the divine word, and made objects of the divine love. They are out of the ground of eternity, whence light and darkness do spring: Darkness, which consisteth in the receiving of self-desire; and light, which consisteth in willing the same thing with God. For in the conformity of the will with God's will, is heaven; and wheresoever there is this willing with God, there the love of God is undoubtedly in the working, and his light will not fail to manifest itself. But in the self-attraction of the soul's desire, or in the reception of self into the willing of any spirit, angelical or human, the will of God worketh difficultly, and is to that soul or spirit nought but darkness; out of which, notwithstanding, the light may be manifested. And this darkness is the hell of that spirit wherein it is. For heaven and hell are nought else but a manifestation of the divine will either in light or darkness, according to the properties of the spiritual world.

WHAT THE BODY OF MAN IS; AND WHY THE SOUL IS CAPABLE OF RECEIVING GOOD AND EVIL

Scholar. What then is the body of man?

Master. It is the visible world; an image and quintessence, or compound of all that the world is; and the visible world is a manifestation of the inward spiritual world, come out of the eternal light, and out of the eternal darkness, out of the spiritual compaction or connection; and it is also an image or figure of eternity, whereby eternity hath made itself visible; where self-will and resigned will, viz. evil and good, work one with the other.

Such a substance is the outward man. For God created man of the outward world, and breathed into him the inward spiritual world for a soul and an intelligent life; and therefore in the things of the outward world man can receive and work evil and good.

OF THE DESTRUCTION OF THE WORLD; OF MAN'S BODY, IN AND AFTER THE RESURRECTION; WHERE HEAVEN AND HELL SHALL BE; OF THE LAST JUDGEMENT; AND WHEREFORE THE STRIFE IN THE CREATURE MUST BE

Scholar. What shall be after this world, when all things perish and come to an end?

Master. The material substance only ceaseth; viz. the four elements, the sun, moon, and stars. And then the inward world will be wholly visible and manifest. But whatsoever hath been wrought by the will or spirit of man in this world's time, whether evil or good. I say, every such work shall there separate itself in a spiritual manner, either into the eternal light, or into the eternal darkness. For that which is born from each will penetrateth and passeth again into that which is like itself. And there the darkness is called hell, and is an eternal forgetting of all good; and the light is called the kingdom of God, and is an eternal joy in and to the saints, who continually glorify and praise God, for having delivered them from the torment of evil.

The last judgement is a kindling of the fire both of God's love and anger, in which the matter of every substance perisheth, and each fire shall attract into itself its own, that is, the substance that is like itself: Thus God's fire of love will draw into it whatsoever is born in the love of God, or love-principle, in which also it shall burn after the manner of love, and yield itself into that substance. But the torment will draw into itself what is wrought in the anger of God in darkness, and consume the false substance; and then there will remain only the painful aching will in its own proper nature, image, and figure.

Scholar. With what matter and form shall the human body rise?

Master. It is sown a natural gross and elementary body, which in this life-time is like the outward

elements; yet in this gross body there is a subtle power and virtue. As in the earth also there is a subtle good virtue, which is like the sun, and is one and the same with the sun; which also in the beginning of time did spring and proceed out of the divine power and virtue, from whence all the good virtue of the body is likewise derived. This good virtue of the mortal body shall come again and live for ever in a kind of transparent chrySTALLINE material property, in spiritual flesh and blood; as shall return also the good virtue of the earth, for the earth likewise shall become chrySTALLINE, and the divine light shine in everything that hath a being, essence, or substance. And as the gross earth shall perish and never return, so also the gross flesh of man shall perish and not live for ever. But all things must appear before the judgement, and in the judgement be separated by the fire; yea, both the earth, and also the ashes of the human body. For when God shall once move the spiritual world, every spirit shall attract its spiritual substance to itself. A good spirit and soul shall draw to itself its good substance, and an evil one its evil substance. But we must here understand by substance, such a material power and virtue, the essence of which is mere virtue, like a material tincture (such a thing as hath all figures, colours, and virtues in it, and is at the same time transparent), the grossness whereof is perished in all things.

Scholar. Shall we not rise again with our visible bodies, and live in them for ever? See *The Forty Questions of the Soul*, quest. xxi. ver. 12.

Master. When the visible world perisheth, then all that hath come out of it, and hath been external, shall perish with it. There shall remain of the world only the heavenly chrystalline nature and form, and of man also only the spiritual earth; for man shall be then wholly like the spiritual world, which as yet is hidden.

Scholar. Shall there be husband and wife, or children or kindred, in the heavenly life, or shall one associate with another, as they do in this life?

Master. Why art thou so fleshly-minded? There will be neither husband nor wife, but all will be like the angels of God, viz. masculine virgins. There will be neither son nor daughter, brother nor sister, but all of one stock and kindred. For all are but one in Christ, as a tree and its branches are one, though distinct as creatures; but God is all in all. Indeed, there will be spiritual knowledge of what every one hath been, and done, but no possessing or enjoying, or desire of possessing earthly things, or enjoying fleshly relations any more.

Scholar. Shall they all have that eternal joy and glorification alike?

Master. The Scripture saith, "Such as the people is, such is their God." And in another place, "With the holy thou art holy, and with the perverse thou art perverse." And St. Paul saith, "In the resurrection one shall differ from another in glory, as do the sun, moon, and stars." Therefore know, that the blessed shall indeed all enjoy the divine working in and upon

them; but their virtue, and illumination or glory, shall be very different, according as they have been endued in this life with different measures and degrees of power and virtue in their painful working. For the painful working of the creature in this life-time is the opening and begetting of divine power, by which that power is made moveable and operative. Now those who have wrought with Christ in this life-time, and not in the lust of the flesh, shall have great power and transcendent glorification in and upon them. But others, who have only expected, and relied upon, an imputed satisfaction, and in the meanwhile have served their belly-god, and yet at last have turned, and obtained grace; those, I say, shall not attain to so high a degree of power and illumination. So that there will be as great a difference of degrees between them, as is between the sun, moon, and stars; or between the flowers of the field in their varieties of beauty, power, and virtue.

Scholar. How shall the world be judged, and by whom?

Master. Jesus Christ, that "word of God which became man," shall by the power of his divine stirring or motion separate from himself all that belongeth not to him, and shall wholly manifest his kingdom in the place or space where this world now is; for the separating motion worketh all over the universe, through all at once.

Scholar. Whither shall the devils and all the damned be thrown, when the place of this world is become the

kingdom of Christ, and such as shall be glorified? Shall they be cast out of the place of this world? Or shall Christ have, and manifest his dominion, out of the sphere or place of this world?

Master. Hell shall remain in the place or sphere of this world everywhere, but hidden to the kingdom of heaven, as the night is hidden in and to the day. "The light shall shine for ever in the darkness, but the darkness can never comprehend, or reach it." And the light is the kingdom of Christ; but the darkness is hell, wherein the devils and the wicked dwell; and thus they shall be suppressed by the kingdom of Christ, and made his footstool, viz. a reproach.

Scholar. How shall all people and nations be brought to judgement?

Master. The eternal word of God, out of which every spiritual creaturely life hath proceeded, will move itself at that hour, according to love and anger, in every life which is come out of the eternity, and will draw every creature before the judgement of Christ, to be sentenced by this motion of the world. The life will then be manifested in all its works, and every soul shall see and feel its judgement and sentence in itself. For the judgement is, indeed, immediately at the departure of the body, manifested in and to every soul: And the last judgement is but a return of the spiritual body, and a separation of the world, when the evil shall be separated from the good, in the substance of the world, and of the human body, and everything enter into its eternal receptacle. And thus

is it a manifestation of the mystery of God in every substance and life.

Scholar. How will the sentence be pronounced?

Master. Here consider the words of Christ. "He will say to those on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me. I was sick, and ye visited me, in prison, and ye came unto me.

"Then shall they answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, or in prison, and ministered thus unto thee?

"Then shall the King answer and say unto them; Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

"And unto the wicked on his left hand he will say, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, sick, and in prison, and ye ministered not unto me.

"And they shall also answer him, and say, When did we see thee thus, and ministered not unto thee?

"And he will answer them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have not done it unto one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

"And these shall depart into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Scholar. Loving master, pray tell me why Christ saith, "What you have done to the least of these, you have done to me; and what you have not done to them, neither have you done it to me." And how doth a man this so, as that he doth it to Christ himself!

Master. Christ dwelleth really and essentially in the faith of those that wholly yield up themselves to him, and giveth them his flesh for food, and his blood for drink; and thus possesseth the ground of their faith, according to the interior or inward man. And a Christian is called a branch of the vine Christ, and a Christian, because Christ dwelleth spiritually in him; therefore whatsoever good any shall do to such a Christian in his bodily necessities, it is done to Christ himself, who dwelleth in him. For such a Christian is not his own, but is wholly resigned to Christ, and become his peculiar possession, and consequently the good deed is done to Christ himself. Therefore also, whosoever shall withhold their help from such a needy Christian, and forbear to serve him in his necessity, they thrust Christ away from themselves, and despise him in his members. When a poor person that belongeth thus to Christ, asketh anything of thee, and thou deniest it him in his necessity, thou deniest it to Christ himself. And whatsoever hurt any shall do to such a Christian, they do it to Christ himself. When any mock, scorn, revile, reject, or thrust away such a one, they do all that to Christ; but he that receiveth him, giveth him meat and drink, or apparel, and

assisteth him in his necessities, doth it likewise to Christ, and to a fellow-member of his own body. Nay, he doth it to himself if he be a Christian; for we are all one in Christ, as a tree and its branches are.

Scholar. How then will those subsist in the day of that fierce judgement, who afflict and vex the poor and distressed, and deprive them of their very sweat; necessitating and constraining them by force to submit to their wills, and trampling upon them as their footstools, only that they themselves may live in pomp and power, and spend the fruits of this poor people's sweat and labour in voluptuousness, pride, and vanity?

Master. Christ suffereth in the persecution of his members. Therefore all the wrong that such hard exactors do to the poor wretches under their control, is done to Christ himself; and falleth under his severe sentence and judgement: And besides that, they help the devil to augment his kingdom; for by such oppression of the poor they draw them off from Christ, and make them seek unlawful ways to fill their bellies. Nay, they work for, and with the devil himself, doing the very same thing which he doth; who, without intermission, opposeth the kingdom of Christ, which consisteth only in love. All these oppressors, if they do not turn with their whole hearts to Christ, and minister to, or serve him, must go into hell-fire, which is fed and kept alive by nothing else but such mere self, as that which they have exercised over the poor here.

Scholar. But how will it fare with those, and how will they be able to stand that severe trial, who in this time do so fiercely contend about the kingdom of Christ, and slander, revile, and persecute one another for their religion, as they do?

Master. All such have not yet known Christ; and they are but as a type or figure of heaven and hell, striving with each other for the victory.

All rising, swelling pride, which contendeth about opinions, is an image of self. And whosoever hath not faith and humility, nor liveth in the spirit of Christ, which is love, is only armed with the anger of God, and helpeth forward the victory of the imaginary self, that is, the kingdom of darkness, and the anger of God. For at the day of judgement all self shall be given to the darkness, as shall also all the unprofitable contentions of men; in which they seek not after love, but merely after their imaginary self, that they may exalt themselves by exalting and establishing their opinions; stirring up princes to wars for the sake of the same, and by that means occasioning the desolation of whole countries of people. All such things belong to the judgement, which will separate the false from the true; and then all images or opinions shall cease, and all the children of God shall dwell for ever in the love of Christ, and that in them.

All whosoever in this time of strife, namely, from the Fall to the Resurrection, are not zealous in the spirit of Christ, and desirous to promote peace and love, but seek and strive for themselves only, are of the devil,

and belong to the pit of darkness, and must consequently be separated from Christ. For in heaven all serve God their Creator in humble love.

Scholar. Wherefore then doth God suffer such strife and contention to be in this time?

Master. The life itself standeth in strife, that it may be made manifest, sensible, and palpable, and that the wisdom may be made separable and known.

The strife also constituteth the eternal joy of the victory. For there will arise great praise and thanksgiving in the saints from the experimental sense and knowledge that Christ in them hath overcome darkness, and all the self of nature, and that they are at length totally delivered from the strife; at which they shall rejoice eternally, when they shall know how the wicked are recompenced. And therefore God suffereth all souls to stand in a free-will, that the eternal dominion both of love and anger, of light and of darkness, may be made manifest and

I known; and that every life might cause and find its own sentence in itself. For that which is now a strife and pain to the saints in their wretched warfare here, shall in the end be turned into great joy to them; and that which hath been a joy and pleasure to ungodly persons in this world, shall afterwards be turned into eternal torment and shame to them. Therefore the joy of the saints must arise to them out of death, as the light ariseth out of a candle by the destruction and consumption of it in its fire; that so the life may be

freed from the painfulness of nature, and possess another world.

And as the light hath quite another property than the fire hath, for it giveth and yieldeth itself forth; whereas the fire draweth in and consumeth itself; so the holy life of meekness springeth forth through the death of self-will, and then God's will of love only ruleth, and doth all in all. For thus the Eternal One hath attained feeling and separability, and brought itself forth again with the feeling, through death in great joyfulness; that there might be an eternal delight in the infinite unity, and an eternal cause of joy; and therefore that which was before painfulness, must now be the ground and cause of this motion or stirring to the manifestation of all things. And herein lieth the mystery of the hidden wisdom of God.

"Every one that asketh receiveth, every one that seeketh findeth; and to every one that knocketh it shall be opened. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us all. Amen."

Heb. xii. 22, 23, 24.

"Thank ye the Lord, for ye are now come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first born, who are written in heaven. "And to God the Judge of all; and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

"And to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel. Amen.

"Praise, glory, and thanksgiving; honour, wisdom and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, to our God, and the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen."

A DISCOURSE

BETWEEN A SOUL HUNGRY AND THIRSTY AFTER THE FOUNTAIN OF LIFE, THE SWEET LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST, AND A SOUL ENLIGHTENED.

Which Way one Soul should seek after and comfort another, and bring it by Means of its Knowledge into the Paths of Christ's Pilgrimage, and faithfully warn it of the thorny Way of the World, which leadeth the fallen Soul that naturally walketh therein, into the Abyss or Pit of Hell.

Composed by a Soul that loveth all who are the Children of Jesus Christ under the Cross.

THE WAY FROM DARKNESS TO TRUE ILLUMINATION

THERE was a poor soul that had wandered out of paradise, and come into the kingdom of this world; where the devil met with it, and said to it, "Whither dost thou go, thou soul that art half blind?"

The Soul said: I would see and speculate into the creatures of the world, which the Creator hath made.

The Devil said: How wilt thou see and speculate into them, when thou canst not know their essence and property? Thou wilt look upon their outside only, as upon a graven image, and canst not know them throughly.

The Soul said: How may I come to know their essence and property?

The Devil said: Thine eyes would be opened to see them throughly, if thou didst but eat of that from whence the creatures themselves are come to be good and evil. Thou wouldst then be as God himself is, and know what the creature is.

The Soul said: I am now a noble and holy creature; but if I should do so, the Creator hath said, that I should die.

The Devil said: No, thou shouldst not die at all; but thy eyes would be opened, and thou wouldst be as God himself, and be master of good and evil. Also, thou shouldst be mighty, powerful, and very great, as I am; all the subtilty that is in the creatures would be made known to thee.

The Soul said: If I had the knowledge of nature and of the creatures, I would then rule the whole world as I listed.

The Devil said: The whole ground of that knowledge lieth in thee. Do but turn thy will and desire from God or goodness into nature and the creatures, and then there will arise in thee a lust to taste; and so thou mayest eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and by that means come to know all things.

The Soul said: Well then, I will eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, that I may rule all

things by my own power; and be of myself a lord on earth, and do what I will, as God himself doth.

The Devil said: T am the prince of this world; and if thou wouldst rule on earth, thou must turn thy lust towards my image, or desire to be like me, that thou mayest get the cunning, wit, reason, and subtilty, that my image hath.

Thus did the devil present to the soul the Vulcan in the Mercury (the power that is in the fiery root of the creature), that is, the fiery wheel of essence or substance, in the form of a serpent. Upon which,

The Soul said: Behold, this is the power which can do all things. — What must I do to get it?

The Devil said: Thou thyself art also such a fiery Mercury. If thou dost break thy will off from God, and bring it into this power and skill, then thy hidden ground will be manifested in thee, and thou mayest work in the same manner. But thou must eat of that fruit, wherein each of the four elements in itself ruleth over the other, and is in strife; the heat striving against the cold, and the cold against the heat; and so all the properties of nature work feelingly. And then thou wilt instantly be as the fiery wheel is, and so bring all things into thine own power, and possess them as thine own.

The Soul did so, and what happened thereupon

Now when the soul broke its will thus off from God, and brought it into the Mercury, or the fiery will

(which is the root of life and power), there presently arose in it a lust to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; and the soul did eat thereof. Which as soon as it had done, Vulcan (or the artificer in the fire) instantly kindled the fiery wheel of its substance, and thereupon all the properties of nature awoke in the soul and exercised each its own lust and desire.

First arose the lust of pride; a desire to be great, mighty, and powerful; to bring all things under subjection to it, and so to be lord itself without control; despising all humility and equality, as esteeming itself the only prudent, witty, and cunning one, and accounting everything folly that is not according to its own humour and liking.

Secondly arose the lust of covetousness; a desire of getting, which would draw all things to itself, into its own possession. For when the lust of pride had turned away the will from God, then the life of the soul would not trust God any further, but would take care for itself; and therefore brought its desire into the creatures, viz. into the earth, metals, trees, and other creatures. Thus the kindled fiery life became hungry and covetous, when it had broken itself off from the unity, love, and meekness of God, and attracted to itself the four elements and their essence, and brought itself into the condition of the beasts; and so the life became dark, empty, and wrathful; and the heavenly virtues and colours went out, like a candle extinguished.

Thirdly, there awoke in this fiery life the stinging thorny lust of envy; a hellish poison, a property which all devils have, and a torment which makes the life a mere enmity to God, and to all creatures. Which envy raged 'furiously in the desire of covetousness, as a venomous sting doth in the body. Envy cannot endure, but hateth and would hurt or destroy that which covetousness cannot draw to itself, by which hellish passion the noble love of the soul is smothered.

Fourthly, there awoke in this fiery life a torment like fire, viz. anger; which would murder and remove out of the way all who would not be subject to pride. Thus the ground and foundation of hell, which is called the anger of God, was wholly manifested in this soul. Whereby it lost the fair paradise of God and the kingdom of heaven, and became such a worm as the fiery serpent was, which the devil presented to it in his own image and likeness. And so the soul began to rule on earth in a bestial manner, and did all things according to the will of the devil; living in mere pride, covetousness, envy, and anger, having no longer any true love towards God. But there arose in the stead thereof an evil bestial love of filthy lechery, wantonness, and vanity, and there was no purity left in the heart; for the soul had forsaken paradise, and taken the earth into its possession. Its mind was wholly bent upon cunning knowledge, subtilty, and getting together a multitude of earthly things. No righteousness nor virtue remained in it at all; but whatsoever evil and wrong it committed, it covered all cunningly and subtilly under the cloak of its

power and authority by law, and called it by the name of right and justice, and accounted it good.

The Devil came to the Soul

Upon this the devil drew near to the soul, and brought it on from one vice to another, for he had taken it captive in his essence, and set joy and pleasure before it therein, saying thus to it: Behold, now thou art powerful, mighty, and noble, endeavour to be greater, richer, and more powerful still. Display thy knowledge, wit, and subtilty, that every one may fear thee, and stand in awe of thee, and that thou mayest be respected, and get a great name in the world.

The Soul did so

The soul did as the devil counselled it, and yet knew not that its counsellor was the devil; but thought it was guided by its own knowledge, wit, and understanding, and that it did very well and right all the while.

Jesus Christ met with the Soul

The soul going on in this course of life, our dear and loving Lord Jesus Christ, who was come into this world with the love and wrath of God, to destroy the works of the devil, and to execute judgement upon all ungodly deeds, on a time met with it, and spake by a strong power, viz. by his passion and death, into it, and destroyed the works of the devil in it, and discovered to it the way to his grace, and shone upon

it with his mercy, calling it to return and repent; and promising that he would then deliver it from that monstrous deformed shape or image which it had gotten, and bring it into paradise again.

How Christ wrought in the Soul

Now when the spark of the love of God, or the divine light, was accordingly manifested in the soul, it presently saw itself with its will and works to be in hell, in the wrath of God, and found that it was a misshapen ugly monster in the divine presence and the kingdom of heaven; at which it was so affrighted, that it fell into the greatest anguish possible, for the judgement of God was manifested in it.

What Christ said

Upon this the Lord Christ spake into it with the voice of his grace, and said, "Repent and forsake vanity, and thou shalt attain my grace."

What the Soul said

Then the soul in its ugly misshapen image, with the defiled coat of vanity, went before God, and entreated for grace and the pardon of its sins, and came to be strongly persuaded in itself, that the satisfaction and atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ did belong to it. But the evil properties of the serpent, formed in the astral spirit, or reason of the outward man, would not suffer the will of the soul to come before God, but brought their lusts and inclinations thereinto. For those evil properties would not die to their own lusts,

nor leave the world, for they were come out of the world, and therefore they feared the reproach of it, in case they should forsake their worldly honour and glory.

But the poor soul turned its countenance towards God, and desired grace from him, even that he would bestow his love upon it.

The Devil came to it again

But when the devil saw that the soul thus prayed to God, and would enter into repentance, he drew near to it, and thrust the inclinations of the earthly properties into its prayers, and disturbed its good thoughts and desires which pressed forward towards God, and drew them back again to earthly things that they might have no access to him.

The Soul sighed

The central will of the soul indeed sighed after God, but the thoughts arising in the mind, that it should penetrate into him, were distracted, scattered, and destroyed, so that they could not reach the power of God. At which the poor soul was still more affrighted, and began to pray more earnestly. But the devil with his desire took hold of the mercurial kindled fiery wheel of life, and awakened the evil properties, so that evil or false inclinations arose in the soul, and went into that thing wherein they had taken most pleasure and delight before.

The poor soul would very fain go forward to God with its will, and therefore used all its endeavours; but its thoughts continually fled away from God into earthly things, and would not go to him.

Upon this the soul sighed and bewailed itself to God; but was as if it were quite forsaken by him, and cast out from his presence. It could not get so much as one look of grace, but was in mere anguish, fear, and terror, and dreaded every moment that the wrath and severe judgement of God would be manifested in it, and that the devil would take hold of it and have it. And thereupon fell into such great heaviness and sorrow, that it became weary of all the temporal things, which before were its chief joy and happiness.

The earthly natural will indeed desired those things still, but the soul would willingly leave them altogether, and desired to die to all temporal lust and joy whatsoever, and longed only after its first native country, from whence it originally came. But found itself to be far from thence, in great distress and want, and knew not what to do, yet resolved to enter into itself, and try to pray more earnestly.

The Devil's Opposition

But the devil opposed it, and withheld it so that it could not bring itself into any greater fervency of repentance.

He awakened the earthly lusts in its heart, that they might still keep their evil nature and false right therein, and set them at variance with the new-born

will and desire of the soul. For they would not die to their own will and light, but would still maintain their temporal pleasures, and so kept the poor soul captive in their evil desires, that it could not stir, though it sighed and longed never so much after the grace of God. For whensoever it prayed, or offered to press forward towards God, then the lusts of the flesh swallowed up the rays and ejaculations that went forth from it, and brought them away from God into earthly thoughts, that it might not partake of divine strength. Which caused the poor soul to think itself forsaken of God, not knowing that he was so near it, and did thus attract it. Also the devil got access to it, and entered into the fiery Mercury, or fiery wheel of its life, and mingled his desires with the earthly lusts of the flesh, and tempted the poor soul; saying to it in the earthly thoughts, "Why dost thou pray? Dost thou think that God knoweth thee or regardeth thee? Consider but what thoughts thou hast in his presence; are they not altogether evil? Thou hast no faith or belief in God at all; how then should he hear thee? He heareth thee not, leave off; why wilt thou needlessly torment and vex thyself? Thou hast time enough to repent at leisure. Wilt thou be mad? Do but look upon the world, I pray thee, a little; doth it not live in jollity and mirth? yet it will be saved well enough for all that. Hath not Christ paid the ransom and satisfied for all men? Thou needest only persuade and comfort thyself that it is done for thee, and then thou shalt be saved. Thou canst not possibly in this world come to any feeling of God; therefore leave off, and take care for thy body, and look after temporal glory. What dost thou suppose will become of thee, if thou turn to

be so stupid and melancholy? Thou wilt be the scorn of everybody, and they will laugh at thy folly; and so thou wilt spend thy days in mere sorrow and heaviness, which is pleasing neither to God nor nature. I pray thee, look upon the beauty of the world; for God hath created and placed thee in it, to be a lord over all creatures, and to rule them. Gather store of temporal goods beforehand, that thou mayest not be beholden to the world, or stand in need hereafter. And when old age cometh, or that thou growest near thy end, then prepare thyself for repentance. God will save thee, and receive thee into the heavenly mansions then. There is no need of such ado in vexing, bewailing, and stirring up thyself, as thou makest."

The Condition of the Soul

In these and the like thoughts the soul was ensnared by the devil, and brought into the lusts of the flesh, and earthly desires; and so bound as it were with fetters and strong chains, that it did not know what to do. It looked back a little into the world and the pleasures thereof, but still felt in itself a hunger after divine grace, and would always rather enter into repentance, and favour with God. For the hand of God had touched and bruised it, and therefore it could rest nowhere; but always sighed in itself after sorrow for the sins it had committed, and would fain be rid of them. Yet could not get true repentance, or even the knowledge of sin, though it had a mighty hunger and longing desire after such penitential sorrow.

The soul being thus heavy and sad, and finding no remedy or rest, began to cast about where it might find a fit place to perform true repentance in, where it might be free from business, cares, and the hinderances of the world; and also by what means it might win the favour of God. And at length purposed to betake itself to some private solitary place, and give over all worldly employments and temporal things; and hoped, that by being bountiful and pitiful to the poor, it should obtain God's mercy. Thus did it devise all kinds of ways to get rest, and gain the love, favour, and grace of God again. But all would not do; for its worldly business still followed it in the lusts of the flesh, and it was ensnared in the net of the devil now, as well as before, and could not attain rest. And though for a little while it was somewhat cheered with earthly things, yet presently it fell to be as sad and heavy again, as it was before. The truth was, it felt the awakened wrath of God in itself, but knew not how that came to pass, nor what it ailed. For many times great trouble and terror fell upon it, which made it comfortless, sick, and faint with very fear; so mightily did the first bruising it with the ray or influence of the stirring of grace work upon it. And yet it knew not that Christ was in the wrath and severe justice of God, and fought therein with Satan that spirit of error, which was incorporated in soul and body; nor understood that the hunger and desire to turn and repent came from Christ himself, by which it was drawn in this manner; neither did it know what hindered that it could not yet attain to divine feeling. It knew not that itself was a monster, and did bear the image of the serpent, in which the

devil had such power and access to it, and had confounded all its good desires, thoughts, and motions, and brought them away from God and goodness; concerning which Christ himself said, "The devil snatcheth the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved."

An enlightened and regenerate Soul met the distressed Soul

By the providence of God, an enlightened and regenerate soul met this poor afflicted and distressed soul, and said, "What ailest thou, thou distressed soul, that thou art so restless and troubled?"

The distressed Soul answered

The Creator hath hid his countenance from me, so that I cannot come to his rest; therefore I am thus troubled, and know not what I shall do to get his loving-kindness again. For great cliffs and rocks lie in my way to his grace, so that I cannot come to him. Though I sigh and long after him never so much, yet I am kept back, that I cannot partake of his power, virtue, and strength.

The enlightened Soul said

Thou bearest the monstrous shape of the devil, and art clothed therewith; in which, being his own property or principle, he hath access or power of entrance into thee, and thereby keepeth thy will from penetrating into God. For if thy will might penetrate into God, it would be anointed with the highest power and strength of God, in the resurrection of our

Lord Jesus Christ; and that unction would break in pieces the monster which thou carriest about thee; and thy first image of paradise would revive in the centre; which would destroy the devil's power therein, and thou wouldst become an angel again. And because the devil envieth thee this happiness, he holdeth thee captive in his desire in the lusts of the flesh; from which if thou art not delivered, thou wilt be separated from God, and canst never enter into our society.

The distressed Soul terrified

At this speech the poor distressed soul was so terrified and amazed, that it could not speak one word more. When it found that it stood in the form and condition of the serpent, which separated it from God; and that the devil was so nigh it in that condition, who injected evil thoughts into the will of the soul, and had so much power over it thereby, that it was near damnation, and sticking fast in the abyss or bottomless pit of hell, in the anger of God; it would have even despaired of divine mercy; but that the power, virtue, and strength of the first stirring of the grace of God, which had before bruised the soul, upheld and preserved it from total despair. But still it wrestled in itself between hope and doubt; whatsoever hope built up, that doubt threw down again. And thus was it agitated with such continual disquiet, that at last the world and all the glory thereof became loathsome to it, neither would it enjoy worldly pleasures any more; and yet for all this, could it not come to rest.

The enlightened Soul came again, and spoke to the troubled Soul

On a time the enlightened soul came again to this soul, and finding it still in so great trouble, anguish, and grief of mind, said to it:

What dost thou? Wilt thou destroy thyself in thy anguish and sorrow? Why dost torment thyself in thy own power and will, who art but a worm, seeing thy torment increaseth thereby more and more? Yea, if thou shouldst sink thyself down to the bottom of the sea, or couldst fly to the uttermost coasts of the morning, or raise thyself above the stars, yet thou wouldst not be released. For the more thou grieveest, tormentest, and troublest thyself, the more painful thy nature will be; and yet thou wilt not be able to come to rest. For thy power is quite lost; and as a dry stick burnt to a coal cannot grow green and spring afresh by its own power, nor get sap to flourish again with other trees and plants; so neither canst thou reach the place of God by thy own power and strength, and transform thyself into that angelical image which thou hadst at first. For in respect to God thou art withered and dry, like a dead plant that hath lost its sap and strength, and so art become a dry tormenting hunger. Thy properties are like heat and cold, which continually strive one against the other, and can never unite.

The distressed Soul said

What then shall I do to bud forth again, and recover the first life, wherein I was at rest before I became an image?

The enlightened Soul said

Thou shalt do nothing at all but forsake thy own will, viz. that which thou callest I, or thyself. By which means all thy evil properties will grow weak, faint, and ready to die; and then thou wilt sink down again into that one thing, from which thou art originally sprung. For now thou liest captive in the creatures; but if thy will forsaketh them, the creatures, with their evil inclinations, will die in thee, which at present stay and hinder thee, that thou canst not come to God. But if thou takest this course, thy God will meet thee with his infinite love, which he hath manifested in Christ Jesus in the humanity, or human nature. And that will impart sap, life, and vigour to thee; whereby thou mayest bud, spring, flourish again, and rejoice in the living God, as a branch growing on his true vine. And so thou wilt at length recover the image of God, and be delivered from the image or condition of the serpent: Then shalt thou come to be my brother, and have fellowship with the angels.

The poor Soul said

How can I forsake my will, so that the creatures which lodge therein may die, seeing I must be in the world, and also have need of it as long as I live?

The enlightened Soul said

Now thou hast worldly power and riches, which thou possessest as thy own, to do what thou wilt with, and regardest not how thou gettest or usest the same; employing them in the service and indulgence of thy carnal and vain desires. Nay, though thou seest the poor and needy wretch, who wanteth thy help, and is thy brother, yet thou helpest him not, but layest heavy burdens upon him, by requiring more of him than his abilities will bear, or his necessities afford; and oppressest him, by forcing him to spend his labour and sweat for thee, and the gratification of thy voluptuous will. Thou art moreover proud, and insultest over him, and behavest roughly and sternly to him, exalting thyself above him, and making small account of him in respect of thyself. Then that poor oppressed brother of thine cometh, and complaineth with sighs towards God, that he cannot reap the benefit of his labour and pains, but is forced by thee to live in misery. By which sighings and groanings of his he raiseth up the wrath of God in thee; which maketh thy flame and unquietness still the greater. These are the creatures which thou art in love with, and hast broken thyself off from God for their sakes, and brought thy love into them, or them into thy love, so that they live therein. Thou nourishest and keepest them by continually receiving them into thy desire, for they live in and by thy receiving them into thy mind; because thou thereby bringest the lust of thy life into them. They are but unclean, filthy, and evil births, and issues of the bestial nature, which yet, by thy receiving them in thy lust or desire, have gotten an image, and formed themselves in thee. And that image is a beast with four heads: First, Pride.

Secondly, Covetousness. Thirdly, Envy. Fourthly, Anger. And in these four properties the foundation of hell consisteth, which thou carriest in thee and about thee. It is imprinted and engraven in thee, and thou art wholly taken captive thereby. For these properties live in thy natural life; and thereby thou art severed from God, neither canst thou ever come to him, unless thou so forsake these evil creatures that they may die in thee.

But since thou desirest me to tell thee how to forsake thy own perverse creaturely will, that the creatures might die, and that yet thou mightest live with them in the world. I must assure thee that there is but one way to do it, which is narrow and straight, and will be very hard and irksome to thee at the beginning, but afterwards thou wilt walk in it cheerfully.

Thou must seriously consider, that in the course of this worldly life thou walkest in the anger of God and in the foundation of hell; and that this is not thy true native country; but that a Christian should, and must live in Christ, and in his walking truly follow him; and that he cannot be a Christian, unless the spirit and power of Christ so live in him, that he becometh wholly subject to it. Now seeing the kingdom of Christ is not of this world, but in heaven, therefore thou must always be in a continual ascension towards heaven, if thou wilt follow Christ; though thy body must dwell among the creatures and use them.

The narrow way to which perpetual ascension into heaven and imitation of Christ is this: Thou must

despair of all thy own power and strength, for in and by thy own power thou canst not reach the gates of God; and firmly purpose and resolve wholly to give thyself up to the mercy of God, and to sink down with thy whole mind and reason into the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ, always desiring to persevere in the same, and to die from all thy creatures therein. Also thou must resolve to watch and guard thy mind, thoughts, and inclinations that they admit no evil into them, neither must thou suffer thyself to be held fast by temporal honour or profit. Thou must resolve likewise to put away from thee all unrighteousness, and whatsoever else may hinder the freedom of thy motion and progress. Thy will must be wholly pure, and fixed in a firm resolution never to return to its old idols any more, but that thou wilt that very instant leave them, and separate thy mind from them, and enter into the sincere way of truth and righteousness, according to the plain and full doctrine of Christ. And as thou dost thus purpose to forsake the enemies of thine own inward nature, so thou must also forgive all thy outward enemies, and resolve to meet them with thy love; that there may be left no creature, person, or thing at all able to take hold of thy will and captivate it; but that it may be sincere, and purged from all creatures. Nay further; if it should be required, thou must be willing and ready to forsake all thy temporal honour and profit for Christ's sake, and regard nothing that is earthly so as to set thy heart and affections upon it; but esteem thyself in whatsoever state, degree, and condition thou art, as to worldly rank or riches, to be but a servant of God and of thy fellow-Christians; or as a steward in the office

wherein thy Lord hath placed thee. All arrogance and self-exaltation must be humbled, brought low, and so annihilated that nothing of thine own or of any other creature may stay in thy will to bring thy thoughts or imagination to be set upon it.

Thou must also firmly impress it on thy mind, that thou shalt certainly partake of the promised grace in the merit of Jesus Christ, viz. of his outflowing love, which indeed is already in thee, and which will deliver thee from thy creatures, and enlighten thy will, and kindle it with the flame of love, whereby thou shalt have victory over the devil. Not as if thou couldst will or do anything in thine own strength, but only enter into the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and take them to thyself, and with them assault and break in pieces the kingdom of the devil in thee, and mortify thy creatures. Thou must resolve to enter into this way this very hour, and never to depart from it, but willingly to submit thyself to God in all thy endeavours and doings, that he may do with thee what he pleaseth.

When thy will is thus prepared and resolved, it hath then broken through its own creatures, and is sincere in the presence of God, and clothed with the merits of Jesus Christ. It may then freely go to the Father with the Prodigal Son, and fall down in his presence and pour forth its prayers; and putting forth all its strength in this divine work, confess its sins and disobedience; and how far it hath departed from God. This must be done not with bare words, but with all its strength, which indeed amounteth only to a strong

purpose and resolution; for the soul of itself hath no strength or power to effect any good work.

Now when thou art thus ready, and that thy Heavenly Father shall see thy coming and returning to him in such repentance and humility, he will inwardly speak to thee, and say in thee, "Behold, this is my son which I had lost, he was dead and is alive again." And he will come to meet thee in thy mind with the grace and love of Jesus Christ, and embrace thee with the beams of his love, and kiss thee with his Spirit and strength; and then thou shalt receive grace to pour out thy confession before him, and to pray powerfully. This indeed is the right place where thou must wrestle in the light of his countenance. And if thou standest resolutely here, and shrinkest not back, thou shalt see or feel great wonders. For thou shalt find Christ in thee assaulting hell, and crushing thy beasts in pieces, and that a great tumult and misery will arise in thee; also thy secret undiscovered sins will then first awake, and labour to separate thee from God, and to keep thee back. Thus shalt thou truly find and feel how death and life fight one against the other, and shalt understand by what passeth within thyself, what heaven and hell are. At all which be not moved, but stand firm and shrink not; for at length all thy creatures will grow faint, weak, and ready to die; and then thy will shall wax stronger, and be able to subdue and keep down the evil inclinations. So shall thy will and mind ascend into heaven every day, and thy creatures gradually die away. Thou wilt get a mind wholly new, and begin to be a new creature, and getting rid of the bestial deformity, recover the

divine image. Thus shalt thou be delivered from thy present anguish, and return to thy original rest.

The poor Soul's Practice

Then the poor soul began to practise this course with such earnestness, that it conceived it should get the victory presently; but it found that the gates of heaven were shut against it in its own strength and power, and it was, as it were, rejected and forsaken by God, and received not so much as one look or glimpse of grace from him. Upon which it said to itself, "Surely thou hast not sincerely submitted thyself to God. Desire nothing at all of him, but only submit thyself to his judgement and condemnation, that he may kill thy evil inclinations. Sink down into him beyond the limits of nature and creature, and submit thyself to him, that he may do with thee what he will, for thou art not worthy to speak to him." Accordingly the soul took a resolution to sink down, and to forsake its own will; and when it had done so, there fell upon it presently the greatest repentance that could be for the sins it had committed; and it bewailed bitterly its ugly shape, and was truly and deeply sorry that the evil creatures did dwell in it. And because of its sorrow it could not speak one word more in the presence of God, but in its repentance did consider the bitter passion and death of Jesus Christ, viz. what great anguish and torment he had suffered for its sake, in order to deliver it out of its anguish, and change it into the image of God. In which consideration it wholly sunk down, and did nothing but complain of its ignorance and negligence,

and that it had not been thankful to its Redeemer, nor once considered the great love he had shewn to it, but had idly spent its time, and not at all regarded how it might come to partake of his purchased and proffered grace; but instead thereof had formed in itself the images and figures of earthly things, with the vain lusts and pleasures of the world. Whereby it had gotten such bestial inclinations, that now it must lie captive in great misery, and for very shame dared not lift up its eyes to God, who hid the light of his countenance from it, and would not so much as look upon it. And as it was thus sighing and crying, it was drawn into the abyss or pit of horror, and laid it as it were at the gates of hell, there to perish. Upon which the poor troubled soul was, as it were, bereft of sense, and wholly forsaken, so that it in a manner forgot all its doings, and would willingly yield itself to death, and cease to be a creature. Accordingly it did yield itself to death, and desired nothing else but to die and perish in the death of its Redeemer Jesus Christ, who had suffered such torments and death for its sake. And in this perishing it began to sigh and pray in itself very inwardly to the divine goodness, and to sink down into the mere mercy of God.

Upon this there suddenly appeared unto it the amiable countenance of the love of God, which penetrated through it as a great light, and made it exceedingly joyful. It then began to pray aright, and to thank the Most High for such grace, and to rejoice abundantly, that it was delivered from the death and anguish of hell. Now it tasted of the sweetness of God, and of his promised truth; and now all the evil

spirits which had harassed it before, and kept it back from the grace, love, and inward presence of God, were forced to depart from it. The "wedding of the Lamb" was now kept and solemnised, that is, the noble Sophia espoused or betrothed herself to the soul; and the seal-ring of Christ's victory was impressed into its essence, and it was received to be a child and heir of God again.

When this was done, the soul became very joyful, and began to work in this new power, and to celebrate with praise the wonders of God, and thought thenceforth to walk continually in the same light, strength, and joy. But it was soon assaulted; from without, by the shame and reproach of the world, and from within, by great temptation, so that it began to doubt whether its ground was truly from God, and whether it had really partaken of his grace. For the accuser Satan went to it, and would fain lead it out of this course, and make it doubtful whether it was the true way; whispering thus to it inwardly, "This happy change in thy spirit is not from God, but only from thine own imagination." Also the divine light retired in the soul, and shone but in the inward ground, as fire raked up in embers, so that reason was perplexed, and thought itself forsaken, and the soul knew not what had happened to itself, nor whether it had really and truly tasted of the heavenly gift or not. Yet it could not leave off struggling; for the burning fire of love was sown in it, which had raised in it a vehement and continual hunger and thirst after the divine sweetness. So at length it began to pray aright, and to humble itself in the presence of God, and to

examine and try its evil inclinations and thoughts, and to put them away. By which means the will of reason was broken, and the evil inclinations inherent in it were killed, and extirpated more and more. This process was very severe and painful to the nature of the body, for it made it faint and weak, as if it had been very sick; and yet it was no natural sickness that it had, but only the melancholy of its earthly nature, feeling and lamenting the destruction of its evil lusts.

Now when the earthly reason found itself thus forsaken, and the poor soul saw that it was despised outwardly, and derided by the world, because it would walk no longer in the way of wickedness and vanity; and also that it was inwardly assaulted by the accuser Satan, who mocked it, and continually set before it the beauty, riches, and glory of the world, and called it a fool for not embracing them; it began to think and say thus within itself: "O eternal God! What shall I now do to come to rest?"

The enlightened Soul met it again, and spoke to it

While it was in this consideration, the enlightened soul met with it again, and said, "What ailest thou, my brother, that thou art so heavy and sad?"

The distressed Soul said

I have followed thy counsel, and thereby attained a ray, or emanation of the divine sweetness, but it is gone from me again, and I am now deserted. Moreover I have outwardly very great trials and afflictions in the world; for all my good friends

forsake and scorn me; and am also inwardly assaulted with anguish, and doubt, and know not what to do.

The enlightened Soul said

Now I like thee very well; for now our beloved Lord Jesus Christ is performing that pilgrimage or process on earth with thee and in thee, which he did himself when he was in this world, who was continually reviled, despised, and evil spoken of, and had nothing of his own in it; and now thou bearest his mark or badge. But do not wonder at it, or think it strange; for it must be so, in order that thou mayest be tried, refined, and purified. In this anguish and distress thou wilt necessarily hunger and cry after deliverance; and by such hunger and prayer thou wilt attract grace to thee both from within and from without. For thou must grow from above and from beneath to be the image of God again. Just as a young plant is agitated by the wind, and must stand its ground in heat and cold, drawing strength and virtue to it from above and from beneath by that agitation, and must endure many a tempest, and undergo much danger before it can come to be a tree, and bring forth fruit. For through that agitation the virtue of the sun moveth in the plant, whereby its wild properties come to be penetrated and tintured with the solar virtue, and grow thereby.

And this is the time wherein thou must play the part of a valiant soldier in the spirit of Christ, and cooperate thyself therewith. For now the Eternal Father by his fiery power begetteth his son in thee, who changeth the fire of the Father, namely, the first

principle, or wrathful property of the soul, into the flame of love, so that out of fire and light (viz. wrath and love) there cometh to be one essence, being, or substance, which is the true temple of God. And now thou shalt bud forth out of the vine Christ, in the vineyard of God, and bring forth fruit in thy life, and by assisting and instructing others, shew forth thy love in abundance, as a good tree. For paradise must thus spring up again in thee, through the wrath of God, and hell he changed into heaven in thee. Therefore be not dismayed at the temptations of the devil, who seeketh and striveth for the kingdom which he once had in thee; but, having now lost it, must be confounded, and depart from thee. And he covereth thee outwardly with the shame and reproach of the world, that his own shame may not be known, and that thou mayest be hidden to the world. For with thy new birth or regenerated nature thou art in the divine harmony in heaven. Be patient, therefore, and wait upon the Lord; and whatsoever shall befall thee, take it all from his hands, as intended by him for thy highest good. And so the enlightened soul departed from it.

The distressed Soul's Course

The distressed soul began its course now under the patient suffering of Christ, and depending solely upon the strength and power of God in it, entered into hope. Thenceforth it grew stronger every day, and its evil inclinations died more and more in it. So that it arrived at length to a high state or degree of grace; and the gates of the divine revelation, and the

kingdom of heaven, were opened to, and manifested in it.

And thus the soul through repentance, faith, and prayer, returned to its original and true rest, and became a right and beloved child of God again; to which may he of his infinite mercy help us all. Amen.

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Christian Mystical Theology
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