

~Other Speakers G-L: William Law:

THE

THIRD DIALOGUE

[Pyr-2.3-1] Rust. I have brought again with me, Gentlemen, my silent Friend, Humanus, and upon the same Condition of being silent still. But though his Silence is the same, yet he is quite altered. For this twenty Years I have known him to be of an even cheerful Temper, full of Good-nature, and even quite calm and dispassionate in his Attacks upon Christianity, never provoked by what was said either against his Infidelity, or in Defence of the Gospel. He used to boast of his being free from those four Passions and Resentments, which, he said, were so easy to be seen, in many or most Defenders of the Gospel-Meekness. But now he is morose, peevish, and full of Chagrin, and seems to be as uneasy with himself, as with every Body else: whatever he says, is rash, satirical, and wrathful. I tell him, but he won't own it, that his Case is this: the Truth has touched him; but it is only so far, as to be his Tormentor. It is only as welcome to him, as a Thief that has taken from him all his Riches, Goods, and Armour, wherein he trusted. The Christianity he used to oppose is vanished; and therefore all the Weapons he had against it, are dropped out of his Hands. It now appears to stand upon another Ground, to have a deeper Bottom, and better Nature, than what he imagined; and therefore he, and his Scheme of Infidelity, are quite disconcerted. But though his Arguments have thus lost all their Strength, yet his Heart is left in the State it was; it stands in the same Opposition to Christianity as it did before, and yet without any Ideas of his Brain to support it. And this is the true Ground of his present, uneasy, peevish State of Mind. He has nothing now to subsist upon, but the resolute Hardness of his Heart, his Pride, and Obstinacy. These he cannot give up by the force of his Reason; his Heart cannot bear the Thoughts of such a Sacrifice; and yet he feels and knows, that he has no Strength left, but in a settled Hardness, Pride and Obstinacy, to continue as he is.—These, I own, are severe and hard Words: But, hard as they are, I am sure Humanus knows, that they proceed from the Softness and Affection of my Heart towards him, from a compassionate Zeal to show him where his Malady lies, and the Necessity of overcoming himself, before he can have the Blessing of Light, and Truth, and Peace. Though it is with some Reluctance, yet I have chosen thus to make my Neighbour known both to himself, and to you, that you may speak of such Matters as may give the best Relief to the State he is in.

[Pyr-2.3-2] Theoph. Indeed, Rusticus, I much approve of the Spirit you have here shown, with regard to your Friend, and hope he will take in good Part all that you have said. As for me, I embrace him with the utmost Tenderness of Affection. I feel and compassionate the trying State of his Heart, and have only this one Wish, that I could pour the heavenly Water of Meekness, and the Oil of Divine Love, into it. Let us force him to know, that we are the Messengers of Divine Love to him; that we seek not ourselves, nor our own Victory, but to make him victorious over his own Evil, and become possessed of a new Life in God. His Trial is the greatest and hardest that belongs to human Nature: And yet it is absolutely necessary to be undergone.

[Pyr-2.3-3] Nature must become a Torment and Burden to itself, before it can willingly give itself up to that Death, through which alone it can pass into Life. There is no true and real Conversion, whether it be from Infidelity, or any other Life of Sin, till a Man comes to know, and feel, that nothing less than his whole Nature is to be parted with, and yet finds in himself no Possibility of doing it. This is the Inability that can bring us at last to say, with the Apostle, When I am weak, then am I strong. This is the Distress that stands near to the Gate of Life; this is the Despair by which we lose all our own Life, to find a new one in God. For here, in this Place it is, that Faith, and Hope, and true Seeking to God and Christ, are born. —But till all is Despair in ourselves, till all is lost that we had any Trust in as our own; till then, Faith and Hope, and turning to God in Prayer, are only things learnt and practiced by Rule and Method; but they are not born in us, are not living Qualities of a new Birth, till we have done feeling any Trust or Confidence in ourselves. Happy therefore is it for your Friend Humanus, that he is come thus far, that everything is taken from him on which he trusted, and found Content in himself. In this State, one Sigh or Look, or the least Turning of his Heart to God for Help, would be the Beginning of his Salvation. Let us therefore try to improve this happy Moment to him, not so much by Arguments of Reason, as by the Arrows of that Divine Love which overflows all Nature and Creature.

[Pyr-2.3-4] For Humanus, though hitherto without Christ, is still within the Reach of Divine Love: He belongs to God; God created him for himself, to be an Habitation of his own Life, Light, and Holy Spirit; and God has brought him and us together, that the lost Sheep may be found, and brought back to its heavenly Shepherd.

[Pyr-2.3-5] Oh Humanus, Love is my Bait; you must be caught by it; it will put its Hook into your Heart, and

force you to know, that of all strong Things, nothing is so strong, so irresistible, as Divine Love.

[Pryr-2.3-6] It brought forth all the Creation; it kindles all the Life of Heaven; it is the Song of all the Angels of God. It has redeemed all the World; it seeks for every Sinner upon Earth; it embraces all the Enemies of God; and from the Beginning to the End of Time, the one Work of Providence, is the one Work of Love.

[Pryr-2.3-7] Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, were all of them Messengers of Divine Love. They came to kindle a Fire on Earth, and that Fire was the Love which burns in Heaven. Ask what God is? His name is Love; he is the Good, the Perfection, the Peace, the Joy, the Glory, and Blessing, of every Life. Ask what Christ is? He is the universal Remedy of all Evil broken forth in Nature and Creature. He is the Destruction of Misery, Sin, Darkness, Death, and Hell. He is the Resurrection and Life of all fallen Nature. He is the unwearied Compassion, the long-suffering Pity, the never-ceasing Mercifulness of God to every Want and Infirmary of human Nature.

[Pryr-2.3-8] He is the Breathing forth of the Heart, Life, and Spirit of God, into all the dead Race of Adam. He is the Seeker, the Finder, the Restorer, of all that was lost and dead to the Life of God. He is the Love, that, from Cain to the End of Time, prays for all its Murderers; the Love that willingly suffers and dies among Thieves, that Thieves may have a Life with him in Paradise; the Love that visits Publicans, Harlots, and Sinners, that wants and seeks to forgive, where most is to be forgiven.

[Pryr-2.3-9] Oh, my Friends, let us surround and encompass Humanus with these Flames of Love, till he cannot make his Escape from them, but must become a willing Victim to their Power. For the universal God is universal Love; all is Love, but that which is hellish and earthly. All Religion is the Spirit of Love; all its Gifts and Graces are the Gifts and Graces of Love; it has no Breath, no Life, but the Life of Love. Nothing exalts, nothing purifies, but the Fire of Love; nothing changes Death into Life, Earth into Heaven, Men into Angels, but Love alone. Love breathes the Spirit of God; its Words and Works are the Inspiration of God. It speaketh not of itself, but the Word, the eternal Word of God speaketh in it; for all that Love speaketh, that God speaketh, because Love is God. Love is Heaven revealed in the Soul; it is Light, and Truth; it is infallible; it has no Errors, for all Errors are the Want of Love. Love has no more of Pride, than Light has of Darkness; it stands and bears all its Fruits from a Depth, and Root of Humility. Love is of no Sect or Party; it neither makes, nor admits of any Bounds; you may as easily enclose the Light, or shut up the Air of the World into one Place, as confine Love to a Sect or Party. It lives in the Liberty, the Universality, the Impartiality of Heaven. It believes in one, holy, catholic God, the God of all Spirits; it unites and joins with the catholic Spirit of the one God, who unites with all that is good, and is meek, patient, well-wishing, and long-suffering over all the Evil that is in Nature and Creature. Love, like the Spirit of God, rideth upon the Wings of the Wind; and is in Union and Communion with all the Saints that are in Heaven and on Earth. Love is quite pure; it has no By-ends; it seeks not its own; it has but one Will, and that is, to give itself into everything, and overcomes all Evil with Good. Lastly, Love is the Christ of God; it cometh down from Heaven; it regenerateth the Soul from above; it blotteth out all Transgressions; it taketh from Death its Sting, from the Devil his Power, and from the Serpent his Poison. It healeth all the Infirmities of our earthly Birth; it gives Eyes to the Blind, Ears to the Deaf, and makes the Dumb to speak; it cleanses the Lepers, and casts out Devils, and puts Man in Paradise before he dies. It liveth wholly to the Will of him, of whom it is born; its Meat and Drink is, to do the Will of God. It is the Resurrection and Life of every Divine Virtue, a fruitful Mother of true Humility, boundless Benevolence, unwearied Patience, and Bowels of Compassion. This, Rusticus, is the Christ, the Salvation, the Religion of Divine Love, the true Church of God, where the Life of God is found, and lived, and to which your Friend Humanus is called by us. We direct him to nothing but the inward Life of Christ, to the Working of the Holy Spirit of God, which alone can deliver him from the Evil that is in his own Nature, and give him a Power to become a Son of God.

[Pryr-2.3-10] Rust. My Neighbour has infinite Reason to thank you, for this lovely Draught you have given of the Spirit of Religion; he cannot avoid being affected with it. But pray let us now hear how we are to enter into this Religion of Divine Love, or rather what God has done to introduce us into it, and make us Partakers again of his Divine Nature.

[Pryr-2.3-11] Theoph. The first Work, or Beginning of this redeeming Love of God, is in that Immanuel, or God with us, given to the first Adam, as the Seed of the Woman, which in him, and all his Posterity, should bruise the Head, and overcome the Life of the Serpent in our fallen Nature. This is Love indeed, because it is universal, and reaches every Branch of the human Tree, from the first to the last Man, that grows from it. Miserably as Mankind are divided, and all at War with one another, everyone appropriating God to themselves, yet they all have but one God, who is the Spirit of all, the Life of all, and the Lover of all. Men may divide themselves, to have God to themselves; they may hate and persecute one another for God's sake; but this is a blessed Truth, that neither the Hater, nor the Hated, can be divided from the one, holy, catholic God, who with an unalterable

Meekness, Sweetness, Patience, and Good-will towards all, waits for all, calls them all, redeems them all, and comprehends all in the outstretched Arms of his catholic Love. Ask not therefore how we shall enter into this Religion of Love and Salvation; for it is itself entered into us, it has taken Possession of us from the Beginning. It is Immanuel in every human Soul; it lies as a Treasure of Heaven, and Eternity in us; it cannot be divided from us by the Power of Man; we cannot lose it ourselves; it will never leave us nor forsake us, till with our last Breath we die in the Refusal of it. This is the open Gate of our Redemption; we have not far to go to find it. It is every Man's own Treasure; it is a Root of Heaven, a Seed of God, sown into our Souls by the Word of God; and, like a small Grain of Mustard-seed, has a Power of growing to be a Tree of Life. Here, my Friend, you should, once for all, mark and observe, where and what the true Nature of Religion is; for here it is plainly shown you, that its Place is within; its Work and Effect is within; its Glory, its Life, its Perfection, is all within; it is merely and solely the raising of a new Life, new Love, and a new Birth, in the inward Spirit of our Hearts. Religion (which is solely to restore Man to his first and right State in God) had its Beginning, and first Power, from the Seed of the Woman, the Treader on the Serpent's Head; and therefore all its Progress, from its Beginning to its last finished Work, is, and can be nothing else, but the growing Power and Victory of the Seed of the Woman, over all the Evil brought by the Serpent into human Nature. For the Seed of the Woman is the Spirit, and Power, and Life of God, given or breathed again into Man, to be the Raiser and Redeemer of that first Life, which he had lost. This was the spiritual Nature of Religion in its first Beginning, and this alone is its whole Nature to the End of Time; it is nothing else, but the Power, and Life, and Spirit of God, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, working, creating, and reviving Life in the fallen Soul, and driving all its Evil out of it. This is the true Rock, on which the Church of Christ is built; this is the one Church out of which there is no Salvation, and against which the Gates of Hell can never prevail.

[Pryr-2.3-12] Here therefore we are come to this firm Conclusion, that let Religion have ever so many Shapes, Forms, or Reformations, it is no true Divine Service, no proper Worship of God, has no Good in it, can do no Good to Man, can remove no Evil out of him, raise no Divine Life in him, but so far as it serves, worships, conforms, and gives itself up to this Operation of the holy, triune God, as living and dwelling in the Soul. Keep close to this Idea of Religion, as an inward, spiritual Life in the Soul; observe all its Works within you, the Death and Life that are found there; seek for no Good, no Comfort, but in the inward Awakening of all that is holy and heavenly in your Heart; and then, so much as you have of this inward Religion, so much you have of a real Salvation. For Salvation is only a Victory over Nature; so far as you resist and renounce your own vain, selfish, and earthly Nature, so far as you overcome all your own natural Tempers of the old Man, so far God enters into you, lives, and operates in you, he is in you the Light, the Life, and the Spirit, of your Soul; and you are in him that new Creature, that worships him in Spirit, and in Truth. For Divine Worship or Service is, and can be only performed by being like-minded with Christ; nothing worships God, but the Spirit of Christ his beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased. This is as true, as that no Man hath known the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son revealeth him. Look now at any thing as Religion, or Divine Service, but a strict, unerring Conformity to the Life and Spirit of Christ, and then, though every Day was full of Burnt-offerings, and Sacrifices, yet you would be only like those Religionists, who drew near to God with their Lips, but their Hearts were far from him.

[Pryr-2.3-13] For the Heart is always far from God, unless the Spirit of Christ be alive in it. But no one has the living Spirit of Christ, but he who in all his Conversation walketh, as he walked. Consider these Words of the Apostle, My little Children, of whom I travail in Birth, till Christ be formed in you. This is the Sum total of all, and, if this is wanting, all is wanting. Again, says he, He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly. — Circumcision is nothing, and Uncircumcision is nothing, but the new Creature is all. Nay, see how much further he carries this Point, in the following Words: Though I speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, though I have the Gift of Prophecy, though I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, &c. and have not Charity (that is, have not the Spirit of Christ) it profiteth me nothing. For by Charity here, the Apostle means neither more nor less, but strictly that same Thing, which, in other Places, he calls the new Creature, Christ formed in us, and our being led by the Spirit of Christ. According to the Apostle, nothing availeth but the new Creature, nothing availeth but the Spirit of Charity here described; therefore this Charity, and the new Creature, are only two different Expressions of one and the same Thing, viz., the Birth, and Formation of Christ in us. Thus saith he, If any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his; nay, though he could say of himself (as our Lord says many will) Have I not prophesied in the Name of Christ, cast out Devils, and done many wonderful Works? yet such a one not being led by the Spirit of Christ, is that very man, whose high State the Apostle makes to be a mere Nothing, because he hath not that Spirit of Charity, which is the Spirit of Christ. Again, There is no Condemnation to those, who are in Christ Jesus; therefore to be in Christ Jesus, is to have that Spirit of Charity, which is the Spirit, and Life, and Goodness of all Virtues. Now here you are to observe, that the Apostle no more rejects all outward Religion, when he says Circumcision is nothing, than he rejects Prophesying, and Faith, and Alms-giving, when he says they profit nothing; he only teaches this solid Truth, that the Kingdom of God is within us, and that it all consists in the State of our Heart; and that therefore all outward Observances, all the most specious Virtues, profit nothing, are of no Value, unless the hidden Man of the Heart, the new Creature, led

by the Spirit of Christ, be the Doer of them.

[Pryr-2.3-14] Thus, says he, They who are led by the Spirit of God, are the Sons of God. And therefore none else, be they who, or where, or what they will, Clergy, or Laity, none are, or can be, Sons of God, but they who give up themselves entirely to the Leading and Guidance of, the Spirit of God, desiring to be moved, inspired, and governed solely by it.

[Pryr-2.3-15] Again, We are of the Circumcision, who worship God in Spirit; and to show, that this is not a vain Pretence, he says in another Place, The Manifestation of the Spirit is given to every Man to profit withal. Therefore no Profit from anything else; all Preaching and Hearing is vain, and all Preachers and Hearers stand chargeable with the Vanity of their religious Performances, who think of Preaching, or Hearing profitably, any other Way, or by any other Power, than in and by the Holy Spirit of God dwelling and working in them. Thus again, If the Spirit of him, who raised Jesus from the Dead, dwell in you, he also shall quicken your mortal Bodies by his Spirit, which dwelleth in you. In vain therefore is Life expected, either for Body or Soul, but by the Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Again, Through him we both have Access by one Spirit to the Father; therefore this one Spirit is the one only Way to God, and Salvation. Thus does all Scripture bring us to this Conclusion, that all Religion is but a dead Work, unless it be the Work of the Spirit of God; and that Sacraments, Prayers, Singing, Preaching, Hearing, are only so many Ways of being fervent in the Spirit, and of giving up ourselves more and more to the inward working, enlightening, quickening, sanctifying Spirit of God within us; and all for this End, that the Curse of the Fall may be taken from us, that Death may be swallowed up in Victory, and a true, real, Christlike Nature formed in us, by the same Spirit, by which it was formed in the Holy Virgin Mary. Now for the true Ground, and absolute Necessity, of this turning wholly and solely to the Spirit of God, you need only know this plain Truth; namely, that the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Satan, or the Spirit of this World, are, and must be, the one or the other of them, the continual Leader, Guide, and Inspirer, of everything that lives in Nature. There is no going out from some one of these; the Moment you cease to be moved, quickened, and inspired by God, you are infallibly moved and directed by the Spirit of Satan, or the World, or by both of them. And the Reason is, because the Soul of Man is a Spirit, and a Life, that in its whole Being is nothing else but a Birth both of God and Nature; and therefore, every Moment of its Life, it must live in some Union and Conjunction, either with the Spirit of God governing Nature, or with the Spirit of Nature fallen from God, and working in itself. As Creatures therefore, we are under an absolute Necessity of being under the Motion, Guidance, and Inspiration of some Spirit, that is more and greater than our own. All that is put in our own Power, is only the Choice of our Leader; but led and moved we must be, and by that Spirit, to which we give up ourselves, whether it be to the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of fallen Nature. To seek therefore to be always under the Inspiration and Guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and to act by an immediate Power from it, is not proud Enthusiasm, but as sober and humble a Thought, as suitable to our State, as to think of renouncing the World, and the Devil: For they never are, or can be, renounced by us, but so far as the Spirit of God is living, breathing, and moving in us: And that for this plain Reason, because nothing is contrary to the Spirit of Satan, and the World, nothing works, or can work, contrary to it, but the Spirit of Heaven.

[Pryr-2.3-16] Hence our Lord said, He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth; plainly declaring, that not to be with him, and led by his Spirit is to be led by the Spirit of Satan, and the World. Ask now, what Hell is? It is Nature destitute of the Light and Spirit of God, and full only of its own Darkness; nothing else can make it to be Hell. Ask what Heaven is? It is Nature quickened, enlightened, blessed, and glorified, by the Light and Spirit of God dwelling in it. What Possibility therefore can there be, of our dividing from Hell, or parting with all that is hellish in us, but by having the Life, Light, and Spirit of God living and working in us? And here again, my friends, you may see in the greatest Clearness, why nothing is available, nothing is Salvation, but the new Birth of a Christ-like Nature; it is because every thing else but this Birth, and Life of the Spirit, is only the Spirit of Satan, or the Spirit of this World. Have you anything to object to these Things?

[Pryr-2.3-17] Acad. Truly, Sir, all Objections are over with me; you have taken from me every Difficulty or Perplexity that I had, either about Religion, or the Providence of God. I can now look back into the first Origin of Things with Satisfaction: I have seen how the World and Man began to be, in a Way highly worthy of the Divine Wisdom, and how they both came into their present Condition, and how they both are to rise out of it, and return back to their first State in a glorious Eternity. It now appears to me with the utmost Clearness, that to look for Salvation in any thing else, but the Light of God within us, the Spirit of God working in us, the Birth of Christ really brought forth in us, is to be as carnally minded, as ignorant of God, and Man, and Salvation, as the Jews were, when their Hearts were wholly set upon the Glory of their Temple-service, and a temporal Saviour to defend it, by a temporal Power. For every thing but the Light and Spirit of God bringing forth a Birth of Christ in the Soul, every thing else, be it what it will, has and can have no more of Salvation in it, than a temporal fighting Saviour. For what is said of the Impossibility of the Blood of Bulls, and of Goats, to take away Sins, must with

the same Truth be said of all other outward creaturely Things; they are all at the same Distance from being the Salvation of the Soul, and in the same Degree of Inability to take away Sins, as the Blood of Bulls and Goats.

[Pyr-2.3-18] And all this for this plain Reason, because the Soul is a Spirit breathed forth from God himself, which therefore cannot be blessed but by having the Life of God in it; and nothing can bring the Life of God into it, but only the Light and Spirit of God. Upon this ground I stand in the utmost Certainty, looking wholly to the Light and Spirit of God for an inward Redemption from all the inward Evil that is in my fallen Nature. All that I now want to know is this, what I am to do, to procure this continual Operation of the Spirit of God within me. For I seem to myself, not to know this enough; and I am also afraid of certain Delusions, which I have heard many have fallen into, under Pretences of being led by the Spirit of God. Pray therefore, Theophilus, give me some Instructions on this Head.

[Pyr-2.3-19] Rust. Pray, Gentlemen, let an unlearned Man speak a Word here. Suppose, Academicus, you had a longing earnest Desire, to be governed by a Spirit of Plainness and Sincerity in your whole Conversation. Would this put you upon asking for Art, and Rules, and Methods, or consulting some learned Man, or Book, to direct you, and keep you from Delusion? Would you not know and feel in yourself, that your own earnest Desire, and Love of Sincerity and Plainness, and your own inward Aversion to everything that was contrary to it, must be the one and only possible Way of attaining it, and that you must have it in that Degree, as you loved and liked to act by it? Now there is no more of Art, or any Secret required to bring and keep you under the Direction of the Spirit of God, than under the Spirit of Plainness and Sincerity. The longing earnest Desire of the Heart, brings you into the safe Possession of the one, as it does of the other. For it has been enough proved, that the Spirit of Prayer forms the Spirit of our Lives, and every Man lives as the Spirit of Prayer leads him. Nay every Prayer for the Holy Spirit, is the Spirit itself praying in you. For nothing can turn to God, desire to be united to him, and governed by him, but the Spirit of God. The Impossibility of praying for the Spirit of God in vain, is thus shown by our blessed Lord: If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those that ask for it? But here I stop.

[Pyr-2.3-20] Acad. I do not know how to understand what Rusticus has said. For do not all good Christians daily pray for the Spirit of God? yet how few are led by it? Pray, Theophilus, do you speak here.

[Pyr-2.3-21] Theoph. People may be daily at the Service of the Church, and read long Prayers at home, in which are many Petitions for the Holy Spirit, and yet live and die, led and governed by the Spirit of the World; because all these Prayers, whether we hear them read by others, or read them ourselves, may be done in Compliance only to Duties, Rules, and Forms of Religion, as Things we are taught not to neglect; but, being only done thus, they are not the true, real Working of the Spirit of the Heart, nor make any real Alteration in it. But you are to observe, that Rusticus spoke of the Spirit of Prayer, which is the Heart's own Prayer, and which has all the Strength of the Heart in it. And this is the Prayer that must be affirmed to be always effectual; it never returns empty; it eats and drinks that, after which it hungereth and thirsteth; and nothing can possibly hinder it from having that, which it prays for. This we are assured of from these Words of Truth itself; Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. But this Blessedness could not belong to Hungring, if the truly Hungry and Thirsty, could ever be sent empty away. Every Spirit necessarily reaps that which it soweth, it cannot possibly be otherwise, it is the unalterable Procedure of Nature. Spirit is the first Power of Nature, every thing proceeds from it, is born of it, yields to it, and is governed by it. If the Spirit soweth to the Flesh, it reapeth that Corruption which belongs to the Flesh; if it soweth to the Spirit, it reapeth the Fruits of the Spirit, which are eternal Life. The Spirit of Prayer therefore is the Opener of all that is good within us, and the Receiver of all that is good without us; it unites with God, is one Power with him; it works with him, and drives all that is not God, out of the Soul. The Soul is no longer a Slave to its natural Impurity and Corruption, no longer imprisoned in its own Death and Darkness, but till the Fire from Heaven, the Spirit of Prayer is kindled in it.

[Pyr-2.3-22] Then begins the Resurrection, and the Life; and all that which died in Adam comes to Life in Christ. Ask not therefore, Academicus, what you are to do to obtain the Spirit of God, to live in it, and be led by it; for your Power of having it, and your Measure of receiving it, are just according to that Faith and Earnestness with which you desire to be led by it. For the hungry Spirit of Prayer is that Faith, to which all Things are possible, to which all Nature, though as high as Mountains, and as stiff as Oaks, must yield and obey. It heals all Diseases, breaks the Bands of Death, and calls the Dead out of their Graves. Look at the small Seeds of Plants, shut up in their own dead Husks, and covered with thick Earth, and see how they grow. What do they do? They hunger and thirst after the Light and Air of this World. Their Hunger eats that which they hunger after, and this is their Vegetation. If the Plant ceases to hunger, it withers and dies, though surrounded with the Air and Light of this World.

[Pyr-2.3-23] This is the true Nature of the spiritual Life; it is as truly a Growth or Vegetation, as that of Plants; and nothing but its own Hunger can help it to the true Food of its Life. If this hunger of the Soul ceases, it withers and dies, though in the midst of Divine Plenty. Our Lord, to show us that the new Birth is really a State of spiritual Vegetation, compares it to a small Grain of Mustard-seed, from whence a great Plant arises. Now every Seed has a Life in itself, or else it could not grow. What is this Life? It is nothing else but an Hunger in the Seed, after the Air and Light of this World; which Hunger, being met and fed by the Light and Air of Nature, changes the Seed into a living Plant. Thus it is with the Seed of Heaven in the Soul. It has a Life in itself, or else no Life could arise from it. What is this Life? It is nothing else but Faith, or an Hunger after God and Heaven; which no sooner stirs, or is suffered to stir, but it is met, embraced, and quickened, by the Light and Spirit of God and Heaven; and so a new Man in Christ, is formed from the Seed of Heaven, as a new Plant from a Seed in the Earth. Let us suppose now, that the Seed of a Plant had Sense and Reason, and that, instead of continually hungering after, and drawing in the Virtue of the Light and Air of our outward Nature, it should amuse, and content its Hunger with reasoning about the Nature of Hunger, and the different Powers and Virtues of Light and Air; must not such a Seed of all Necessity wither away, without ever becoming a living Plant? Now this is no false Similitude of the Seed of Life in Man: Man has a Power of Drawing all the Virtue of Heaven into himself, because the Seed of Heaven is the Gift of God in his Soul, which wants the Light and Spirit of God to bring it to the Birth, just as the Seed of the Plant wants the Light and Air of this World; it cannot possibly grow up in God, but by taking in Light, Life, and Spirit from Heaven, as the Creatures of Time take in the Light, and Life, and Spirit of this World. If therefore the Soul, instead of hungering after Heaven, instead of eating the Flesh and Blood of the Christ of God, contents and amuses this Seed of Life with Ideas, and Notions, and Sounds, must not such a Soul of necessity wither, and die, without ever becoming a living Creature of Heaven? Wonder not therefore, Academicus, that all the Work of our Salvation and Regeneration is, by the Scripture, wholly confined to the Operation of the Light and Spirit of God, living and working in us. It is for the same Reason, and on the same Necessity, that the Life and Growth of the Creatures of this World, must be wholly ascribed to the Powers of this World, living and working in them. Nor does all this, in the least Degree, make a Man a Machine, or without any Power with regard to his Salvation. He must grow in God, as the Plants grow in this World, from a Power that is not his own, as they grow from the Powers of outward Nature. But he differs entirely from the Plants in this, that an uncontrollable Will, which is his own, must be the Leader and Beginner of his Growth either in God, or Nature. It is strictly true, that all Man's Salvation dependeth upon himself; and it is as strictly true, that all the Work of his Salvation, is solely the Work of God in his Soul. All his Salvation depends upon himself, because his Will-Spirit has its Power of Motion in itself. As a Will, it can only receive that which it willeth; every thing else is absolutely shut out of it. For it is the unalterable Nature of the Will, that it cannot possibly receive any thing into it, but that which it willeth; its Willing is its only Power of receiving; and therefore there can be no possible Entrance for God or Heaven into the Soul, till the Will-Spirit of the Soul desireth it; and thus all Man's Salvation dependeth upon himself. On the other hand, nothing can create, effect, or bring forth, a Birth or Growth of the Divine Life in the Soul, but that Light and Spirit of God, which brings forth the Divine Life in Heaven, and all heavenly Beings. And thus the Work of our Salvation is wholly and solely the Work of the Light and Spirit of God, dwelling and operating in us. Thus, Academicus, you see that God is all; that nothing but his Life and working Power in us, can be our Salvation; and yet that nothing but the Spirit of Prayer can make it possible for us to have it, or be capable of it. And therefore neither you, nor any other human Soul, can be without the Operation of the Light and Spirit of God in it, but because its Will-Spirit, or its Spirit of Prayer, is turned towards something else; for we are always in Union with that, with which our Will is united. Again: Look, Academicus, at the Light and Air of this World, you see with what a Freedom of Communication they overflow, enrich, and enliven every Thing; they enter every-where, if not hindered by something that withstands their Entrance. This may represent to you the ever-overflowing free Communication of the Light and Spirit of God, to every human Soul. They are everywhere; we are encompassed with them; our Souls are as near to them, as our Bodies are to the Light and Air of this World; nothing shuts them out of us, but the Will and Desire of our Souls, turned from them, and praying for something else. I say, praying for something else; for you are to notice this, as a certain Truth, that every Man's Life is a continual State of Prayer; he is no Moment free from it, nor can possibly be so. For all our natural Tempers, be they what they will, Ambition, Covetousness, Selfishness, Worldly-mindedness, Pride, Envy, Hatred, Malice, or any other Lust whatever, are all of them in reality, only so many different Kinds, and Forms of a Spirit of Prayer, which is as inseparable from the Heart, as Weight is from the Body. For every natural Temper is nothing else, but a Manifestation of the Desire and Prayer of the Heart, and shows us, how it works and wills. And as the Heart worketh, and willeth, such, and no other, is its Prayer. All else is only Form, and Fiction, and empty beating of the Air. If therefore the working Desire of the Heart is not habitually turned towards God, if this is not our Spirit of Prayer, we are necessarily in a State of Prayer towards something else, that carries us from God, and brings all kind of Evil into us. For this is the Necessity of our Nature; pray we must, as sure as our Heart is alive; and therefore when the State of our Heart is not a Spirit of Prayer to God, we pray without ceasing to some, or other Part of the Creation. The Man whose Heart habitually tends towards the Riches, Honours, Powers, or Pleasures of this Life, is in a continual State of Prayer towards all these Things. His Spirit stands always bent towards

them; they have his Hope, his Love, his Faith, and are the many Gods that he worships: And though when he is upon his Knees, and uses Forms of Prayer, he directs them to the God of Heaven; yet these are in Reality the God of his Heart, and, in a sad Sense of the Words, he really worships them in Spirit, and in Truth. Hence you may see, Academicus, how it comes to pass, that there is so much Praying, and yet so little of true Piety amongst us. The Bells are daily calling us to Church, our Closets abound with Manuals of Devotion, yet how little Fruit! It is all for this Reason, because our Prayers are not our own; they are not the Abundance of our own Heart; are not found and felt within us, as we feel our own Hunger and Thirst; but are only so many borrowed Forms of Speech, which we use at certain Times and Occasions. And therefore it is no Wonder that little Good comes of it. What Benefit could it have been to the Pharisee, if, with an Heart inwardly full of its own Pride and Self-exaltation, he had outwardly hung down his Head, smote upon his Breast, and borrowed the Publican's Words, God be merciful to me a sinner? What greater Good can be expected from our Praying in the Words of David, or Singing his Psalms seven times a Day, if our Heart hath no more the Spirit of David in it, than the Heart of the Pharisee had of the Spirit of the humble Publican?

[Pryr-2.3-24] Acad. O Theophilus, Truth and Reason force me to consent to what you say; and yet I am afraid of following you: For you here seem to condemn Forms of Prayer in public, and Manuals of Devotion in private. What will become of Religion, if these are set aside or disregarded?

[Pryr-2.3-25] Theoph. Dear Academicus, abate your Fright. Can you think, that I am against your praying in the Words of David, or breathing his Spirit in your Prayers, or that I would censure your singing his Psalms seven times a Day? Remember how very lately I put into your Hands the Book called, A Serious Call to a Devout Life &c., and then think how unlikely it is, that I should be against Times and Methods of Devotion. At three several Times, we are told, our Lord prayed, repeating the same Form of Words; and therefore a set Form of Words are not only consistent with, but may be highly suitable to, the most Divine Spirit of Prayer. If your own Heart, for Days and Weeks, was unable to alter, or break off from inwardly thinking and saying, Hallowed be thy Name, thy Kingdom come, thy Will be done; if at other times, for Weeks and Months, it stood always inwardly in another Form of Prayer, unable to vary, or depart from saying, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly, with all thy holy Nature, Spirit, and Tempers, into my Soul, that I may be born again of Thee, a new Creature"; I should be so far from censuring such a Formality of Prayer, that I should say, Blessed and happy are they, whose Hearts are tied to such a Form of Words. It is not therefore, Sir, a set Form of Words that is spoken against, but an heartless Form, a Form that has no Relation to, or Correspondence with, the State of the Heart that uses it. All that I have said is only to teach you the true Nature of Prayer, that it is only the Work of the Heart, and that the Heart only prays in Reality (whatever its Words are) for that which it habitually wills, likes, loves, and longs to have. It is not therefore the using the Words of David, or any other Saint, in your Prayers, that is censured, but the using them without that State of Heart, which first spoke them forth, and the trusting to them, because they are a good Form, though in our Hearts we have nothing that is like them. It would be good to say incessantly with holy David, My Heart is athirst for God. — As the Hart desireth the Waterbrooks, so longeth my Soul after Thee, O God. But there is no Goodness in saying daily these Words, if no such Thirst is felt, or desired in the Heart. And, my Friend, you may easily know, that dead Forms of Religion, and Numbers of repeated Prayers, keep Men content with their State of Devotion, because they make use of such holy Prayers; though their Hearts, from Morning to Night, are in a State quite contrary to them, and join no further in them, than in liking to use them at certain times.

[Pryr-2.3-26] Acad. I acquiesce, Theophilus, in the Truth of what you have said, and plainly see the Necessity of condemning what you have condemned; which is not the Form, but the heartless Form. But still I have a Scruple upon me: I shall be almost afraid of going to Church, where there are so many good Prayers offered up to God, as suspecting they may not be the Prayers or Language of my own Heart, and so become only a Lip-labour, or, what is worse, an Hypocrisy before God.

[Pryr-2.3-27] Theoph. I do not, Academicus, dislike your Scruple at all; for you do well to be afraid of saying any thing of yourself, or to God, in your Prayers, which your Heart does not truly say. It is also good for you to think, that many of the Prayers of the Church may go faster, and higher, than your Heart can in Truth go along with them. For this will put you upon a right Care over yourself, and so to live, that, as a true Son of your Mother the Church, your Heart may be able to speak her Language, conform to her Service, and find the Delight of your Soul in the Spirit of her Prayers. But this will only then come to pass, when the Spirit of Prayer is the Spirit of your Heart; then every good Word, whether in a Form, or out of a Form, whether heard, or read, or thought, will be as suitable to your Heart, as gratifying to it, as Food is to the hungry, and Drink to the thirsty Soul. But till the Spirit of the Heart is thus renewed, till it is emptied of all earthly Desires, and stands in an habitual Hunger and Thirst after God (which is the true Spirit of Prayer) till then, all our Forms of Prayer will be, more or less, but too much like Lessons that are given to Scholars; and we shall mostly say them, only because we dare not neglect them. But be not discouraged, Academicus; take the following Advice, and then you may go to Church without

any Danger of a mere Lip-labour or Hypocrisy, although there should be an Hymn, or a Psalm, or a Prayer, whose Language is higher than that of your own Heart. Do this: Go to the Church, as the Publican went into the Temple; stand inwardly in the Spirit of your Mind, in that Form which he outwardly expressed, when he cast down his Eyes, smote upon his Breast, and could only say, God be merciful to me a sinner! Stand unchangeably (at least in your Desire) in this Form and State of Heart; it will sanctify every Petition that comes out of your Mouth; and when any thing is read, or sung, or prayed, that is more exalted and fervent than your Heart is, if you make this an Occasion of a further sinking down in the Spirit of the Publican, you will then be helped, and highly blessed, by those Prayers and Praises, which seem only to fit, and belong to, a better Heart than yours.

[Pyr-2.3-28] This, my Friend, is a Secret of Secrets; it will help you to reap where you have not sown, and be a continual Source of Grace in your Soul. This will not only help you to receive Good from those Prayers, which seem too good for the State of your Heart, but will help you to find Good from every thing else: for every thing that inwardly stirs in you, or outwardly happens to you, becomes a real Good to you, if it either finds or excites in you this humble Form of Mind: For nothing is in vain, or without Profit, to the humble Soul; like the Bee, it takes its Honey even from bitter Herbs; it stands always in a State of Divine Growth; and every thing that falls upon it, is like a Dew of Heaven to it. Shut up yourself therefore in this Form of Humility, all Good is enclosed in it; it is a Water of Heaven, that turns the Fire of the fallen Soul, into the Meekness of the Divine Life, and creates that Oil, out of which the Love to God and Man gets its Flame. Be inclosed therefore always in it; let it be as a garment wherewith you are always covered, and the Girdle with which you are girt; breathe nothing but in and from its Spirit; see nothing but with its Eyes; hear nothing but with its Ears; And then, whether you are in the Church, or out of the Church; hearing the Praises of God, or receiving Wrongs from Men, and the World, all will be Edification, and every Thing will help forward your Growth in the Life of God.

[Pyr-2.3-29] Acad. Indeed, Theophilus, this Answer to my Scruple is quite Good: I not only like, but I love it much: it gives as well an Unction to my Heart, as a Light to my Mind. All my Desire now is, to live no longer to the World, to myself, my own natural Tempers and Passions, but wholly to the Will of the blessed and adorable God, moved and guided by his Holy Spirit.

[Pyr-2.3-30] Theoph. This Resolution, Academicus, only shows that you are just come to yourself; for everything short of this earnest Desire to live wholly unto God, may be called a most dreadful Infatuation or Madness, an Insensibility that cannot be described. For what else is our Life, but a Trial for the greatest Evil, or Good, that an Eternity can give us? What can be so dreadful, as to die possessed of a wicked immortal Nature, or to go out of this World with Tempers, that must keep us for ever burning in our own Fire, and Brimstone? What has God not done to prevent this? His redeeming Love began with our Fall, and kindles itself as a Spark of Heaven in every fallen Soul. It calls every Man to Salvation, and every Man is forced to hear, though he will not obey his Voice. God has so loved the World, that his only Son hung and expired, bleeding on the Cross, not to atone his own Wrath against us, but to extinguish our own Hell within us, to pour his heavenly Love into us, to show us that Meekness, Suffering, and Dying to our own Fallen Nature, is the one, only possible Way, for fallen Man to be alive again in God. Are we yet Sons of Pride, and led away with Vanity? Do the Powers of Darkness rule over us? Do impure evil Spirits possess and drive on our Lives? Has Sin lost all its Power of frightening us? Is Remorse of Conscience no longer felt? Are Falsehood, Guile, Debauchery, Profaneness, Perjury, Bribery, Corruption, and Adultery, no longer seeking to hide themselves in Corners, but openly entering all our high Places, giving Battle to every Virtue, and laying Claim to the Government of the World? Are we thus near being swallowed up by a Deluge of Vice and Impiety? All this is not come upon us, because God has left us too much without Help from Heaven, or too much exposed us to the Powers of Hell; but it is because we have rejected and despised the whole Mystery of our Salvation, and trampled under Foot the precious Blood of Christ, which alone has that Omnipotence, that can either bring Heaven into us, or drive Hell out of us. O Britain, Britain, think that the Son of God saith unto thee, as he said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy Children, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not! Behold, your House is left unto you desolate." And now let me say, What aileth thee, O British Earth, that thou quakest, and the Foundations of thy Churches that they totter? Just that same aileth thee, as ailed Judah's Earth, when the Divine Saviour of the World, dying on the Cross, was reviled, scorned, and mocked, by the inhabitants of Jerusalem; then the Earth quaked, the Rocks rent, and the Sun refused to give its light. Nature again declares for God; the Earth, and the Elements can no longer bear our Sins: Jerusalem's Doom for Jerusalem's Sin, may well be feared by us. Oh ye miserable Pens dipped in Satan's Ink, that dare to publish the Folly of believing in Jesus Christ, where will you hide your guilty Heads, when Nature dissolved, shall show you the Rainbow, on which the crucified Saviour shall sit in Judgment, and every Work receive its Reward? O tremble! ye apostate Sons that come out of the Schools of Christ, to fight Lucifer's Battles, and do that for him, which neither he, nor his Legions can do for themselves. Their inward Pride, Spite, Wrath, Malice and Rage against God, and Christ, and human Nature, have no Pens but yours, no Apostles but you. They must be forced to work in the Dark, to

steal privately into impure Hearts, could they not beguile you into a fond Belief, that you are Lovers of Truth, Friends of Reason, Detectors of Fraud, great Geniuses, and Moral Philosophers, merely and solely, because ye blaspheme Christ, and the Gospel of God. Poor deluded Souls, rescued from Hell by the Blood of Christ, called by God to possess the Thrones of fallen Angels, permitted to live only by the Mercy of God, that ye may be born again from above! my Heart bleeds for you. Think, I beseech you, in time, what Mercies ye are trampling under your Feet. Say not that Reason, and your intellectual Faculties, stand in your Way; that these are the best Gifts, that God has given you, and that these suffer you not to come to Christ. For all this is as vain a Pretense, and as gross a Mistake, as if ye were to say, that you had nothing but your Feet to carry you to Heaven. For your Heart is the best and greatest Gift of God to you; it is the highest, greatest, strongest, and noblest Power of your Nature; it forms your whole Life, be it what it will; all Evil, and all Good, comes from it; your Heart alone has the Key of Life and Death; it does all that it will; Reason is but its Plaything, and whether in Time or Eternity, can only be a mere Beholder of the Wonders of Happiness, or Forms of misery, which the right, or wrong Working of the Heart is entered into.

[Pryr-2.3-31] I will here give you an infallible Touch-stone, that will try all to the Truth. It is this: Retire from the World, and all Conversations, only for one Month; neither write, nor read, nor debate any thing in private with yourself; stop all the former Workings of your Heart and Mind; and, with all the Strength of your Heart, stand all this Month as continually as you can, in this following Form of Prayer to God. Offer it frequently on your Knees; but, whether sitting, standing, or walking, be always inwardly longing, and earnestly praying this one Prayer to God:

"That, of his great Goodness, he would make known to you and take from your Heart, every Kind, and Form, and Degree of Pride, whether it be from evil Spirits, or your own corrupt Nature; and that he would awaken in you the deepest Depth and Truth of all that Humility, which can make you capable of his Light, and Holy Spirit."

Reject every Thought, but that of wishing, and praying in this Manner from the Bottom of your Heart, with such Truth and Earnestness, as People in Torment, wish and pray to be delivered from it. Now if you dare not, if your Hearts will not, cannot give themselves up in this manner to the Spirit of this Prayer, then the Touch-stone has done its Work, and you may be as fully assured, both what your Infidelity is, and from what it proceeds, as you can be of the plainest Truth in Nature. This will show you, how vainly you appeal to your Reason, and Speculation, as the Cause of your Infidelity; that it is full as false and absurd, as if Thieves and Adulterers should say, that their Theft and Adultery was entirely owing to their bodily Eyes, which showed them external Objects, and not to anything that was wrong or bad in their Hearts. On the other Hand, if you can, and will give yourselves up in Truth and Sincerity to this Spirit of Prayer, I will venture to affirm, that if ye had twice as many evil Spirits in you, as Mary Magdalen had, they will all be cast out of you, and ye will be forced with her, to weep with Tears of Love, at the Feet of the holy Jesus.

[Pryr-2.3-32] But here, my Friends, I stop, that we may return to the Matter we had in hand.

[Pryr-2.3-33] Rust. You have made no Digression, Theophilus, from our main Point, which was to recommend Christianity to poor Humanus. He must, I am sure, have felt the Death-blows, that you have here given to the Infidel Scheme. Their Idol of Reason, which is the vain God, that they worship in vain, is here like Dagon fallen to the Ground, never to rise up again. Humanus is caught by your Bait of Love, and I daresay he wants only to have this Conversation ended, that he may try himself to the Truth, by this divine Touch-stone, which you have put into his Hands.

[Pryr-2.3-34] Acad. Give me leave, Gentlemen, to add one Word to this Matter. Theophilus has here fairly pulled Reason out of its usurped Throne, and shown it to be a powerless, idle Toy, when compared to the royal Strength of the Heart, which is the kingly Power, that has all the Government of Life in its Hands. But if Humanus, or anyone else, would see Reason fully maintained in all its just Rights, and yet entirely disarmed of all its Pretenses to a Religion of its own, and the Truth of the Gospel fully proved to every Man, learned, or unlearned, from the known State of his own Heart; if he would see all this set forth in the strongest, clearest Light, he need only read about an hundred Pages of a Book {A Demonstration of the Gross and Fundamental Errors of a Late Book called A Plain Account of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper} published about twelve Years ago, to which no Answer has, nor, it may be, ever will be given by any Patron of Reason, and Infidelity. And if Part of that Book (as I have often wished) beginning at page 70 to 117, was printed by itself, and known and read in every Part of the Kingdom, all Christians, though no Scholars, would have learning enough both to see the deep, true, and comfortable Foundation of their Gospel Faith, and the miserable Folly, and Ignorance of those, who would set up a Religion of human Reason instead of it. But now, Theophilus, I beg we may return to that very Point concerning Prayer, where we left off. I think my Heart is entirely devoted to God, and that I desire nothing but to live in such a State of Prayer, as may best keep me under the Guidance and Direction of the Holy

Spirit. Assist me therefore, my dear Friend, in this important Matter; give me the fullest Directions that you can; and if you have any Manual of Devotion, that you prefer, or any Method that you would put me in, pray let me know it.

[Pryr-2.3-35] **Rust.** I beg leave to speak a Word to Academicus. I am glad, Sir, to see this Fire of Heaven, thus far kindled in your Soul; but wonder that you should want to know, how you are to keep up its Flame, which is like wanting to know, how you are to love and desire that, which you do love and desire. Does a blind, or sick, or lame Man want to know, how he shall wish and desire Sight, Health, and Limbs? or would he be at a Loss, till some Form of Words taught him how to long for them? Now you can have no Desire or Prayer for any Grace, or Help from God, till you in some Degree as surely feel the Want of them, and desire the Good of them, as the sick Man feels the Want, and desires the Good of Health. But when this is your Case, you want no more to be told how to pray, than the thirsty Man wants to be told what he shall ask for. Have you not fully consented to this Truth, that the Heart only can pray, and that it prays for nothing but that, which it loves, wills, and wishes to have? But can Love or Desire want Art, or Method, to teach it to be, that which it is? If from the Bottom of your Heart you have a sincere, warm Love for your most valuable Friend, would you want to buy a Book, to tell you, what Sentiments you feel in your Heart towards this Friend, what Comfort, what Joy, what Gratitude, what Trust, what Honour, what Confidence, what Faith, are all alive, and stirring in your Heart towards him? Ask not therefore, Academicus, for a Book of Prayers; but ask your Heart what is within it, what it feels, how it stirs, what it wants, what it would have altered, what it desires? and then, instead of calling upon Theophilus for Assistance, stand in the same Form of Petition to God.

[Pryr-2.3-36] For this turning to God according to the inward Feeling, Want, and Motion of your own Heart, in Love, in Trust, in Faith of having from him all that you want, and wish to have, this turning thus unto God, whether it be with, or without Words, is the best Form of Prayer in the World. — Now no Man can be ignorant of the State of his own Heart, or a Stranger to those Tempers, that are alive and stirring in him, and therefore no Man can want a Form of Prayer; for what should be the Form of his Prayer, but that which the Condition and State of his Heart demands? If you know of no Trouble, feel no Burden, want nothing to be altered, or removed, nothing to be increased or strengthened in you, how can you pray for any thing of this Kind? But if your Heart knows its own Plague, feels its inward Evil, knows what it wants to have removed, will you not let your Distress form the Manner of your Prayer? or will you pray in a Form of Words, that have no more Agreement with your State, than if a Man walking above-ground, should beg every Man he met, to pull him out of a deep Pit. For Prayers not formed according to the real State of your Heart, are but like a Prayer to be pulled out of a deep Well, when you are not in it. Hence you may see, how unreasonable it is to make a Mystery of Prayer, or an Art, that needs so much Instruction; since every Man is, and only can be, directed by his own inward State and Condition, when, and how, and what he is to pray for, as every man's outward State shows him what he outwardly wants. And yet it should seem, as if a Prayer-Book was highly necessary, and ought to be the Performance of great Learning and Abilities, since only our learned Men and Scholars make our Prayer-Books.

[Pryr-2.3-37] **Acad.** I did not imagine, Rusticus, that you would have so openly declared against Manuals of Devotion, since you cannot but know, that not only the most learned, but the most pious Doctors of the Church, consider them as necessary Helps to Devotion.

[Pryr-2.3-38] **Rust.** If you, Academicus, were obliged to go a long journey on Foot, and yet through a Weakness in your Legs could not set one Foot before another, you would do well to get the best travelling Crutches that you could.

[Pryr-2.3-39] But if, with sound and good Legs, you would not stir one Step, till you had got Crutches to hop with, surely a Man might show you the Folly of not walking with your own Legs, without being thought a declared Enemy to Crutches, or the Makers of them. Now a Manual is not so good an Help, as Crutches, and yet you see Crutches are only proper, when our Legs cannot do their Office. It is, I say, not so good an Help as Crutches, because that which you do with Crutches, is that very same Thing, that you should have done with your Legs; you really travel; but when the Heart cannot take one Step in Prayer, and you therefore read your Manual, you do not do that very same Thing, which your Heart should have done, that is, really pray. A fine Manual therefore is not to be considered as a Means of praying, or as something that puts you in a State of Prayer, as Crutches help you to travel; but its chief Use, as a Book of Prayers to a dead and hardened Heart that has no Prayer of its own, is to show it, what a State and Spirit of Prayer it wants, and at what a sad Distance it is from feeling all that Variety of humble, penitent, grateful, fervent, resigned, loving Sentiments, which are described in the Manual, that so, being touched with a View of its own miserable State, it may begin its own Prayer to God for Help. But I have done. Theophilus may now answer your earnest Request.

[Pryr-2.3-40] **Theoph.** Your earnest Desire, Academicus, to live in the Spirit of Prayer, and be truly governed by

it, is a most excellent Desire; for to be a Man of Prayer is that which the Apostle means by living in the Spirit, and having our Conversation in Heaven. It is to have done, not only with the confessed Vices, but with the allowed Follies and Vanities of this World. To tell such a Soul of the Innocency of Levity, that it needs not run away from idle Discourse, vain Gaiety, and trifling Mirth, as being, the harmless Relief of our heavy Natures, is like telling the Flame, that it needs not always be ascending upwards. But here you are to observe, that this Spirit of Prayer is not to be taught you by a Book, or brought into you by an Art from without, but must be an inward Birth, that must arise from your own Fire and Light within you, as the Air arises from the Fire and Light of this World. For the Spirit of every Being, be it what or where it will, or be its Spirit of what Kind it will, is only the Breath or Spirit that proceeds from its own Fire and Light. In vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual Creatures, it is all in the same Manner; Spirit is the third Form of its Life, and is the Birth that proceeds from the other two; and is the Manifestation of their Nature and Qualities. For such as the Fire and Light are, such and no other, neither higher nor lower, neither better nor worse, is the Spirit that proceeds from them. Now the Reason why all, and every Life does, and must stand in this Form, is wholly and solely from hence, because the Deity, the one Source and Fountain of all Life, is a triune God, whose third Form is, and is called, the Spirit of God, proceeding from the Father, and the Son.

[Pryr-2.3-41] The painful Sense and Feeling of what you are, kindled into a working State of Sensibility by the Light of God within you, is the Fire and Light from whence your Spirit of Prayer proceeds. In its first kindling nothing is found or felt, but Pain, Wrath, and Darkness, as is to be seen in the first kindling of every Heat or Fire. And therefore its first Prayer is nothing else but a Sense of Penitence, Self-condemnation, Confession, and Humility. It feels nothing but its own Misery, and so is all Humility. This Prayer of Humility is met by the Divine Love, the Mercifulness of God embraces it; and then its Prayer is changed into Hymns, and Songs, and Thanksgivings. When this State of Fervor has done its Work, has melted away all earthly Passions and Affections, and left no Inclination in the Soul, but to Delight in God alone, then its Prayer changes again. It is now come so near to God, has found such Union with him, that it does not so much pray as live in God. Its Prayer is not any particular Action, is not the Work of any particular Faculty, not confined to Times, or Words, or Place, but is the Work of his whole Being, which continually stands in Fullness of Faith, in Purity of Love, in absolute Resignation, to do and be, what and how his Beloved pleaseth. This is the last State of the Spirit of Prayer, and is its highest Union with God in this Life. Each of these foregoing States has its Time, its Variety of Workings, its Trials, Temptations, and Purifications, which can only be known by Experience in the Passage through them. The one only and infallible Way to go safely through all the Difficulties, Trials, Temptations, Dryness, or Opposition, of our own evil Tempers, is this: it is to expect nothing from ourselves, to trust to nothing in ourselves, but in every thing expect, and depend upon God for Relief. Keep fast Hold of this Thread, and then let your Way be what it will, Darkness, Temptation, or the Rebellion of Nature, you will be led through all, to an Union with God: For nothing hurts us in any State, but an Expectation of something in it, and from it, which we should only expect from God. We are looking for our own Virtue, our own Piety, our own Goodness, and so live on and on in our own Poverty and Weakness; To-day pleased and comforted with the seeming Strength and Firmness of our own pious Tempers, and fancying ourselves to be somewhat; To-morrow, fallen into our own Mire, we are dejected, but not humbled; we grieve, but it is only the Grief of Pride, at the seeing our Perfection not to be such as we vainly imagined. And thus it will be, till the whole Turn of our Minds is so changed, that we as fully see and know our Inability to have any Goodness of our own, as to have a Life of our own.

[Pryr-2.3-42] For since nothing is, or can be, good in us, but the Life of God manifested in us, how can this be had but from God alone? When we are happily brought to this Conviction, then we have done with all Thought of being our own Builders; the whole Spirit of our Mind is become a mere Faith, and Hope, and Trust in the sole Operation of God's Spirit, looking no more to any other Power, to be formed in Christ new Creatures, than we look to any other Power for the Resurrection of our Bodies at the last Day. Hence may be seen, that the Trials of every State are its greatest Blessings; they do that for us, which we most of all want to have done, they force us to know our own Nothingness, and the All of God.

[Pryr-2.3-43]