

~Other Speakers G-L: William Law:

THE

SECOND ~ DIALOGUE

[Way-2-1] Academicus. I must take the Liberty, Gentlemen, of speaking first this Afternoon; for though I have been much pleased with what passed betwixt Humanus and Theophilus in the Morning, yet I must own to you all, that I was quite disappointed; for I came in full Expectation of hearing every thing, that I wish, and want to know, concerning Jacob Behmen, and his Works. For though I have been reading, for more than two Years, some one or other of his Books, with the utmost Attention, and I everywhere find the greatest Truths of the Gospel most fundamentally asserted, yet presently I am led into such Depths, as I know not where I am, and talked to in such new, intricate, and unintelligible Language, as seems quite impossible to be comprehended. Sometimes I almost suspect, that the Author understood not himself: For I think, if I knew any Truths, though ever so deep or uncommon; yet, if I understand them plainly myself, I could set them before others in the same Plainness, that they appeared to me.

[Way-2-2] All my Acquaintance have the same Complaint that I here make; but some hope, and others say, that if you live to publish any of his Books, you will remove most of his strange and unintelligible Words; and give us Notes and Explications of such as you don't alter. Surely a kind of Commentary upon him, would reconcile many to the reading of him, who, in the State he is in, cannot have Patience to puzzle their Heads about him.

[Way-2-3] Rusticus. Oh this impatient Scholar! How many Troubles do I escape, through the want of his learning? How much better does my old Neighbor John the Shepherd proceed? In Winter Evenings, when he comes out of the Field, his own Eyes being bad, the old Woman his Wife puts on her Spectacles, and reads about an Hour to him, sometimes out of the Scriptures, and sometimes out of Jacob Behmen; for he has had two or three of his Books some Years. I sat by one Evening, when my old Dame, reading Jacob, had much ado to get on: John, said I, do you understand all this? Ah, says he, God bless the Heart of the dear Man, I sometimes understand but little of him; and mayhap Betty does not always read right; but that little which I often do understand, does me so much Good, that I love him where I don't understand him.

[Way-2-4] John, said I, shall I bring a Man to you, that knows the Meaning of all of Jacob's hard Words, and can make all his high Matters as plain to you, as the plainest Things in the World? No, no, replied John, I don't want such a Man, to make a talking about Jacob's words; I had rather have but a little of his own, as it comes from him, than twenty times as much at second-hand. Madam, the Squire's Wife, of our Town, hearing how Betty and I loved the Scriptures, brought us, one Day, a huge expounding Book upon the New Testament; and told us, that we should understand the Scripture a deal better, by reading it in that Book, than the Testament alone. — The next Lord's Day, when two or three Neighbours, according to Custom, came to sit with us in the Evening; Betty, said I, bring out Madam's great Book, and read the fifth Chapter of St. Matthew. When she had done that, I bid her read the fifteenth Chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The next Morning, said I to Betty, carry this expounding Book again to my Mistress, and tell her, that the Words of Christ, and his Apostles, are best by themselves, and just as they left them.

[Way-2-5] And, as I was that Morning going to my Sheep, thought I to myself, This great expounding Book seems to have done just as much Good to this little Book of the Testament, by being added to it, and mixed with it, as a Gallon of Water would do to a little Cup of true Wine, by being added to it, or mixed with it. The wine indeed would be all there; but its fine Taste, and cordial Spirit, which it had, when drank by itself, would be all lost and drowned in the Coldness and Deadness of the Water.

[Way-2-6] When my Betty used to read this, or some such Words of Christ, 'Blessed are the Poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven'; she used to stop a little, that my Heart might have time to be affected with them, to love the blessed Thing there spoken of, and lift up itself to God in Desire of it. But this great Book takes this good Work from my Heart; and only calls upon my Mind, to behold the many Parts which the Text may be split into, and the many Meanings, some better and some worse, some higher and some lower, that every Part has, and may be taken in, by some Doctor of some Church or other. Therefore, Rusticus, I sent the great Book to Madam again; and am, for the same Reason, utterly against hearing your Expounder of Jacob Behmen. If Jacob has more Truths than other Folks, he is the best able to tell me what they are; and if he has some Matters too high for me, I don't desire any lesser Man to make them lower.

[Way-2-7] "When he, like an Elijah, in his Fiery Chariot, is caught up into such Heights, and sees and relates such Things, as I cannot yet comprehend; I love and reverence him for having been where I never was; and seeing such Things as he cannot make me to see: Just as I love and reverence St. Paul for having been caught up into the third Heaven, and hearing and seeing Things not possible to be uttered in human Words.

[Way-2-8] "As I have but one End in hearing the Scriptures read to me, to fill me with the Love of God, and every Kind of Goodness; so every Part of Scripture, whether plain or mysterious, does me the same Good, is alike good to me, and kindles the same heavenly Flame in my Soul. Thus these plain Words, Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of Heart; and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls; give me, without any Expounder of their Meaning, such an Aversion and Dislike of all Vanity and Pride, fill me with such sweet Contentment in every Lowliness of Life, that I long to be the Servant of every human Creature. On the other Hand, these lofty Words of Scripture, Behold, a Throne was set in Heaven; and he that sat thereon, was, to look upon, like a Jasper-stone; and there was a Rainbow round about the Throne; and four-and-twenty Seats; and upon the Seats, four-and-twenty Elders in white Raiment, and Crowns of Gold upon their Heads: and out of the Throne proceeded Lightnings, and Thunders, and Voices: and before the Throne were seven Lamps of Fire, which are the seven Spirits of God: and before the Throne there was a Sea of Glass like unto Crystal: and in the midst of the Throne, and round about it, were four Beasts full of Eyes before and behind: and the first Beast was like a Lion, the second like a Calf, the third had a Face as a Man, and the fourth was like a flying Eagle: and the four Beasts had each of them six Wings, and were full of Eyes; and they rest not Day and Night, saying, Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when these Beasts give Glory, and Honour, and Thanks, to him that sat on the Throne, the four-and-twenty Elders fall down before him that sat on the Throne, and cast their Crowns before the Throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory and Honour, for thou hast created all things' &c.\* {\*Revelations, iv. ver. 2 &c.}

[Way-2-9] "Now these lofty and mysterious Words, instead of puzzling my Head, lay hold of my Heart, which, all inflamed with them, rises up with the Eyes and Wings of the Beasts in their Song of Praise and Honour; and Bows down with the Elders that worship the high and mighty Lord of Heaven and Earth. And thus I want no Hebrew or Greek Scholar to tell me this or that, what are the seven Spirits of God, why four Kinds of Beasts, why neither more nor less than six Wings, who were the Elders, and why twenty-four; but the whole Matter, as if a Glance of the Majesty of Heaven had just passed by me, strikes my Heart with such good Transports of Wonder and Joy, as makes me all Longing and Desire to be one of those, who are always singing the Praises and Wonders of the Majesty of God. And thus, Rusticus, all that the Scriptures give me to drink, whether high or low, is equally a Cup of Blessing to me, and equally helps forward the Growth of Heaven in my Soul.

[Way-2-10] Bring not therefore your cunning Man, that has Skill in Words, to me; for Words are but Words; and though they be spoken even by the Messengers of God, as Angels, or Prophets, or Apostles; when they do their best, they can only do, as John the Baptist did, bear Witness to the Light: But the Light itself, which can only give Light to the Soul, is God himself. And therefore not he that can best speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, but he that most loves God, that is, that most loves the Goodness of the Divine Nature; he has most of God, and the Light of God within him.

[Way-2-11] Thus ended honest old John the Shepherd. And now, Academicus, if your learned Curiosity could be as much affected with what he has said, as my ignorant Simplicity is, you would drop all that you had said, as the Effect of such Impatience as is much fitter to bring Darkness than Light into your Soul. You own, that, in the Works of Behmen, the greatest Points of Christianity are most fundamentally opened. And how can you be more self-condemned, than by desiring more?

[Way-2-12] But the Truth is, you have only heard these fundamental Matters; you have only received them as good Notions; are content with the Hearsay of them; and are therefore impatient to have more of this hearsay Knowledge, that you may become more learned in high Matters, and more able to talk about the Ground and Depth of Christian Doctrines. You know, as well as I can tell you, that this is your Joy in Jacob Behmen; and thence it is, that you have no Patience, when you can't come at his Meaning, so as to add it to your Number of Notions. And thus you forget how often he tells you, and how fundamentally he proves to you, that this notional Knowledge, the Treasure of human Reason, is the very Builder of Babel. Whilst you are under the Guidance of our own Babylonian Reason, you can have no Good either from the Scriptures, or the Writings of Jacob Behmen; but will be hunting after Notes and Commentaries to help you to Notions which only delude your Mind with the empty Shadows of Knowledge. Would you know the Truths of Jacob Behmen, you must see that you stand where he stood; you must begin where he began, and seek only, as he tells you he did, the Heart of God, that he might be saved from the Wrath of Sin and Satan; and then it was, that the Light of God broke in upon him. But you, full of the Power of your own Reason, want to stand upon the Top of his Ladder, without the Trouble of beginning at the Bottom, and going up Step by Step. But I believe you had rather have Theophilus

speaking than me; and therefore I shall now leave you to him.

[Way-2-13] Theophilus. Truly, Academicus, I am much of the same Mind with honest Rusticus, though perhaps I might not have spoken it so bluntly as he has done. You seem to be in the same Error, that most of my learned Friends are in, with regard to Jacob Behmen, who, though they greatly admire him, yet, of all People, receive the least true Benefit from him. They have been trained up in Dispute and Controversy, accustomed to determine every thing by the Light of their own Reason, and know no other Guide to Truth. And therefore, till, sooner or later, they come to know the Falseness of this Guide, they can have no Entrance into the Region of Divine Light; but must be forced to take their Part, not of Truth, but of some such System of Opinions, as their Birth and Education has placed them in. Thus, a learned Papist has one Creed, and the learned Protestant has another; not because Truth and Light has helped him to it; but because Birth and Education have given to the one Popish, to the other Protestant Eyes. For Reason, which is the Eye or Light of both, finds as much to its Purpose, and as many good Tools to work with, in Popish, as in Protestant Opinions. Learning and Criticism are an open Field to both, and he only has the greatest Harvest, who is best skilled in Reaping.

[Way-2-14] Academicus. I perceive then, that I must renounce all my Learning and Reason, if I am to understand Jacob Behmen. I cannot say, that I am resolved to purchase it at so great a Price. I hope the Knowledge to be had from the Scriptures, will be sufficient for me, without his deep Matters. I did not expect to find you so great an Enemy to Learning.

[Way-2-15] Theophilus. Dear Academicus, be not so uneasy; I am no more an Enemy to Learning, than I am to that Art which builds Mills to grind our Corn, and Houses for ourselves to dwell in. I esteem the liberal Arts and Sciences as the noblest of human Things; I desire no Man to dislike or renounce his Skill in ancient or modern Languages; his Knowledge of Metals, Pictures, Paintings, History, Geography, or Chronology; I have no more dislike of these Things in themselves, than of the Art of Throwing Silk, or making Lace. But then all these Things are to stand in their proper Places, and everyone kept within its own Sphere.

[Way-2-16] Now all this Circle of Science and Arts, whether liberal or mechanic, belongs solely to the natural Man; they are the Work of his natural Powers and Faculties; and the most wicked, sensual, unjust Person, who regards neither God, nor Man, may yet be one of the ablest Proficients in any or all of them. But now Christian Redemption is quite of another Nature; it has no Affinity to any of these Arts or Sciences; it belongs not to the outward natural Man, but is purely for the Sake of an inward, heavenly Nature, that was lost, or put to Death, in Paradise, and buried under the Flesh and Blood of the earthly, natural Man. It breathes a Spark of Life into this inward, hidden, or lost Man; by which it feels and finds itself, and rises up in new awakened Desires after its lost Father, and native Country.

[Way-2-17] This is Christian Redemption; on the one side, it is the Heavenly Divine Life offering itself again to the inward man, that had lost it. On the other side, it is the Hope, the Faith, and Desire of this inward Man, hungering, and thirsting, stretching after, and calling upon this Divine and Heavenly Life.

[Way-2-18] Now, whether this awakened, new Man breathes forth his Faith and Hope towards this Divine Life, in Hebrew, Greek, or English Sounds, or in no one of them, can be of no Significancy: a Man that can do it only in one, or in all these Languages, is neither farther from, nor nearer to, this redeeming Life of God. Or can you think, that the heavenly Life must more willingly enter into, and open itself in, a Man that has many Languages, than in him, who knows only one? Or, that a Man, who can make High Dutch, Welsh, or Greek Grammars, must have a stronger Faith, a more lively Hope, and a more continual Thirst after God, than he who can but poorly spell in his Mother Tongue? But now, if this is too absurd to be supposed; then, my Friend, without the least Injury done, or the least Enmity shown, to Learning, Science, Reason, and Criticism, you must place them just where I have done, amongst the Things and Ornaments of this earthly Life, and such Things as, in their own Nature, are as easy to be had, and as highly enjoyed, by Men that despise all Goodness, as by those who fear God, and eschew Evil.

[Way-2-19] And therefore, Sir, no Truths concerning the Divine and Heavenly Life are to be brought for Trial before this learned Bar, where both Jury and Judges are born and bred, live and move and have their Being, in another World, which have no more Power of feeling the Divine Life, than an Eagle's Eyes can look into the Kingdom of God. If you, my Friend, having read many old Greek and Latin Books, should intend to publish Homer, or Caesar's Commentaries, with critical Notes, I should have nothing to object to your Ability; you might be as well qualified by such Means for such a Work, as one Man is to make Baskets, or another Traps to catch Flies. But if, because of this Skill in old Greek and Latin, you should seem to yourself, or others, to be well qualified to write Notes upon the Spirit and Meaning of the Words of Christ, I should tell you, that your Undertaking was quite unnatural, and as impossible to be free from Error, as when a blind Man undertakes to

set forth the Beauty of different Colours.

[Way-2-20] For the Doctrines of Redemption belong no more to the natural Man, than the Beauty of Colours to him, that never saw the Light. And from this unnatural Procedure it is, that the Scriptures are as useful to the Socinian or Arian, the Papist or the Protestant; and they can as easily, by the Light of Reason, charge one another with Absurdities, and confute each other's Opinion, as two blind Men can quarrel and reject each other's Notions of Red and Green.

[Way-2-21] Jesus Christ is the Light of that heavenly Man that died in Paradise; and therefore nothing in Man, but that awakened Seed of Life, that died in Paradise, can have the least Sensibility or Capacity for receiving the redeeming Power of Jesus Christ. But Light and Life have no Dependence upon Words or Phrases; they both can only proceed from a Birth, whether it be the Light and Life of God, or the Light and Life of this World. How absurd would it be, to suppose, that a Man, naturally blind, must be taught Grammar or Logic, to fit him for the Reception of the Light of the Sun, and the Knowledge of Colours? Yet not less absurd, than to think, that Skill in Hebrew and Greek words can open the Light of God and Heaven in the Soul. If you now, Academicus, can set this Matter in a juster Light, I am ready to hear you.

[Way-2-22] Academicus. Standing upon the Ground, that you, Theophilus, stand upon, all that you have said of Reason, Science, historical Knowledge, or critical Skill in Words, is unanswerable. For what can all these Things avail, if Redemption is purely a Birth of the Divine Nature, Light, and Spirit of God, offered to fallen Man; which Birth can only be received by the Faith, Hope, and Desire of that inward Man, which is Divine in us? For nothing else can have any Hunger or Thirst after the Divine Nature, but that which is itself born of it.

[Way-2-23] Now this true Ground of the Christian Redemption gives the greatest Glory to God and Comfort to man. It explains the Fact, why plain and simple Souls, having their inward Man kindled into Love, Hope, and Faith in God, are capable of the highest Divine Illumination; whilst learned Students, full of Art and Science, can live and die without the least true Knowledge of God and Christ, and Slaves to all the Lusts of the Flesh. For thus, this Redemption belongs only to one Sort of People, and yet is common to all. It is equally near, and equally open, to every Son of Man. There is no Difference between Learned and Unlearned, between Jew or Greek, Male or Female, Scythian or Barbarian, Bond or Free; but the same Lord is God over all, and equally nigh to all that call upon him. It is told us, as the Glory of the Divine Goodness, that it giveth Fodder to the Cattle; and feedeth the young Ravens that cry unto it. What Cattle? Surely not only to the Cattle of Jacob; or only to the young Ravens that cry in the Land of Judah. Yet this would be much more consistent with the Goodness of the One universal God, than to hold, that only the Sons of Jacob, or the Children of the Circumcision, were in the Covenant of God's Redemption.

[Way-2-24] But now, though this one Ground of Christian Redemption stands in the highest Degree of Plainness from Scripture, and is absolutely certain from the very Nature of the Thing; yet, till I met with honest Rusticus, I never conversed with any Man, or read any Book, that gave me the least Hint of it. When I had taken my Degrees, I consulted several great Divines, to put me in a Method of studying Divinity. Had I said to them, Sirs what must I do to be saved? they would have prescribed Hellebore to me, or directed me to the Physician as a vapoured Enthusiast. And yet I am now fully satisfied, that this one Question ought to be the sole Inquiry of him, who desires to be a true Divine. And was our Saviour himself on Earth, who surely could do more for me, than all the Libraries in the World; yet I need have asked no more Divinity-Knowledge of him, than is contained in this one Question.

[Way-2-25] It would take up near half a Day, to tell you the Work which my learned Friends have cut out for me. One told me, that Hebrew Words are all; that they must be read without Points; and then the Old Testament is an opened Book. He recommended to me a Cart-load of Lexicons, Critics, and Commentators, upon the Hebrew Bible. Another tells me, the Greek Bible is the best; that it corrects the Hebrew in many Places; and refers me to a large Number of Books learnedly writ in the Defence of it. Another tells me, that Church-History is the main Matter; that I must begin with the first Fathers, and follow them through every Age of the Church, not forgetting to take the Lives of the Roman Emperors along with me, as striking great Light into the State of the Church in their Times. Then I must have recourse to all the Councils held, and the Canons made, in every age which would enable me to see with my own Eyes the great Corruptions of the Council of Trent. Another, who is not very fond of ancient Matters, but wholly bent upon rational Christianity, tells me, I need go no higher than the Reformation; that Calvin and Cranmer were very great Men; that Chillingworth and Locke ought always to lie upon my Table; that I must get an entire Set of those learned Volumes wrote against Popery in King James's Reign; and also be well versed in all the Discourses which Mr. Boyle's and Lady Moyer's Lectures have produced: and then, says he, you will be a match for our greatest Enemies, which are the Popish Priests, and modern Deists. My tutor is very Liturgical; he desires me, of all Things to get all the Collections that I can of the

ancient Liturgies, and all the Authors that treat of such Matters; who, he says, are very learned, and very numerous. He has been many years making Observations upon them, and is now clear, as to the Time, when certain little Particles got Entrance into the Liturgies, and others were by Degrees dropped. He has a Friend abroad, in Search of ancient Manuscript Liturgies; for, by the by, said he, at parting, I have some Suspicion that our Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is essentially defective, for want of having a little Water in the Wine, &c. Another learned Friend tells me, the Clementine Constitutions is the Book of Books; and that all that lies loose and scattered in the New Testament, stands there in its true Order and Form; and though he won't say, that Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiston are in the right; yet it might be useful to me to read all the Arian and Socinian Writers, provided I stood upon my Guard, and did it with Caution. The last Person I consulted, advised me to get all the Histories of the Rise and Progress of Heresies, and of the Lives and Characters of Heretics. These Histories, he said, contract the Matter, bring Truth and Error close in View; and I should find all that collected in a few Pages, which would have cost me some Years to have got together. He also desired me to be well versed in all the casuistical Writers, and chief Schoolmen; for they debate Matters to the Bottom; dissect every Virtue, and every Vice, into its many Degrees and Parts; and show, how near they can come to one another without touching. And this Knowledge, he said, might be useful to me, when I came to be a Parish Priest.

[Way-2-26] Following the Advice of all these Counsellors, as well as I could, I lighted my Candle early in the Morning, and put it out late at Night. In this Labour I had been sweating for some Years, till Rusticus, at my first Acquaintance with him, seeing my Way of Life, said to me, Had you lived about Seventeen hundred Years ago, you had stood just in the same Place as I stand now. I cannot read; and therefore, says he, all these Hundreds of Thousands of disputing Books, and Doctrine-Books, which these Seventeen hundred Years have produced, stand not in my Way, they are the same thing to me, as if they had never been. And had you lived at the Time mentioned, you had just escaped them all, as I do now, because, though you are a very good Reader, there was then none of them to be read.

[Way-2-27] Could you therefore, be content to be one of the primitive Christians, who were as good as any that have been since; you may spare all this Labour. Take only the Gospel into your Hands; deny yourself; renounce the Lusts of the Flesh; set your Affections on Things above; call upon God for his Holy Spirit; walk by Faith, and not by Sight; adore the holy Deity of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose Image and Likeness you were at first created; and in whose Name and Power you have been baptized, to be again the living Likeness, and holy Habitation, of his Life, and Light, and Holy Spirit.

[Way-2-28] Look up to Christ, as your Redeemer, your Regenerator, your second Adam; look at him, as truly he is, the Wisdom and Power of God, sitting at his Right Hand in Heaven, giving forth Gifts unto Men; governing, sanctifying, teaching, and enlightening with his Holy Spirit, all those that are spiritually-minded; who live in Faith, and Hope, and Prayer, to be redeemed from the Nature and Power of this evil World. Follow but this simple, plain Spirit of the Gospel, loving God with all your Heart, and your Neighbour as yourself; and then you are Christ's Disciple, and have his Authority to let the Dead bury their Dead.

[Way-2-29] God is a Spirit, in whom you live and move and have your Being; and he stays not till you are a great Scholar, but till you turn from Evil, and love Goodness, to manifest his holy Presence, Power, and Life, within you. It is the Love of Goodness, that must do all for you; this is the Art of Arts; and when this is the ruling Spirit of your Heart, then Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, will come unto you, and make their Abode with you, and lead you into all Truth, though you knew no more of Books than I do."

[Way-2-30] So ended Rusticus. It is not easy for me, Theophilus, to tell you, how much good I received from this simple Instruction of honest Master Rusticus; for Master I may well call him, since he, in so few words, taught me a better Lesson of Wisdom, than ever I had heard before.

[Way-2-31] What a Project was it, to be grasping after the Knowledge of all the Opinions, Doctrines, Disputes, Heresies, Schisms, Councils, Canons, Alterations, Additions, Inventions, Corruptions, Reformations, Sects, and Churches, which 1700 Years had brought forth through all the Extent of the Christian World! What a Project this, in order to be a Divine, that is, in order to bear true Witness to the Power of Christ, as a Deliverer from the Evil of Flesh, and Blood, and Hell, and Death, and a Raiser of a New Birth and Life from above! For as this is the Divine Work of Christ, so he only is a true and able Divine, that can bear a faithful Testimony to this Divine Work of Christ.

[Way-2-32] How easy was it for me to have seen with Rusticus, that all this Labyrinth of learned Inquiry into such a dark, thorny Wilderness of Notions, Facts, and Opinions, could signify no more to me now, to my own Salvation, to my interest in Christ, and obtaining the Holy Spirit of God, than if I had lived before it had any Beginning! But the blind Appetite of Learning gave me no Leisure to apprehend so plain a Truth. Books of

Divinity indeed I have not done with; but I will esteem none to be such, but those that make known to my Heart the inward Power and Redemption of Jesus Christ. Nor will I seek for anything even from such Books, but that which I ask of God in Prayer; viz., how better to know, more to abhor and resist the Evil that is in my own Nature; and how to attain a supernatural Birth of the Divine Life brought forth in me: All besides this is Pushpin. The shipwrecked Man wants only to get to Shore. Did we see the Truth of our State as he does, we should have but one Want, and that would be, to get Possession of our first created State. There is no Misery but in the Evil that is in our own fallen State; this is our Shipwreck, and great Distress; nor is there any Happiness, but in having the first Life of God, and all Goodness, opened again in the Soul. He that is not intent upon this one Thing needful, is not a wise Christian, much less a Divine, or one qualified to make known to others the Mystery of the Power of Christ in the Work of Redemption.

[Way-2-33] But now I go back to that which I first spoke of; and though I give up all that I said of putting out Jacob Behmen in new Language, with Comments, &c. yet I must still desire, that, some way or other, he may be made more plain and intelligible; call it by what Name you please.

[Way-2-34] Theophilus. Jacob Behmen may be considered, (1.) As a Teacher of the true Ground of the Christian Religion. (2.) As a Discoverer of the false Antichristian Church, from its first Rise in Cain, through every Age of the World, to its present State in all and every Sect of the present divided Christendom. (3.) As a Guide to the Truth of all the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God. In these Three respects, which contain all that anyone can possibly want to know or learn from any Teacher; he is the strongest, the plainest, the most open, intelligible, awakening, convincing Writer, that ever was. As to all these Three Matters, he speaks to everyone, as himself saith, in the Sound of a Trumpet. And here to pretend to be an Explainer of him, or make him fitter for our Apprehension, in these great Matters, is as vain, as if a man should pipe through a Straw, to make the Sound of a Trumpet better heard by us.

[Way-2-35] Further, he may be considered, (4.) As a Relater of Depths opened in himself, of Wonders which his Spirit had seen and felt in his Ternario sancto. Now in this respect he is no Teacher, nor his Reader a Learner; but all that he saith is only for the same End as St. Paul spoke of his having been in the Third Heaven, and hearing Things not possible to be spoken in human Words. And yet in these Matters it is, that most of his Readers, especially if they are Scholars, are chiefly employed; every one in his way trying to become Masters of them. Thus, when he first appeared in English, many Persons of this Nation, of the greatest Wit and Abilities, became his Readers; who, instead of entering into his one only Design, which was their own Regeneration from an earthly to an heavenly Life, turned Chemists, and set up Furnaces to regenerate Metals, in Search of the Philosopher's Stone. And yet, of all Men in the World, no one has so deeply, and from so true a Ground, laid open the exceeding Vanity of such Labour, and utter Impossibility of Success in it from any Art or Skill in the Use of Fire. And this must with Truth be affirmed of him, that there is not any possible Error, that you can fall into in the Use of his Books, but what he gives you Notice of beforehand, and warns you against it in the most solemn Manner; and tells you, that the Blame must be yours, if you fall into it. Neither is there any Question that you can put, nor Advice or Direction that you can ask, but what he has over and over spoke to; telling you, in the plainest Manner, what the Mystery is which his Books contain; how, and by whom, and for what End, they are to be read.

[Way-2-36] There are Two Sorts of People to whom he forbids the Use of his Books, as incapable of any Benefit from them, and who will rather receive Hurt, than any Good from them. The First Sort he shows in these Words: "Loving reader, if thou lovest the Vanity of the Flesh still, and art not in an earnest Purpose on the Way to the New Birth, intending to be a New Man, then leave the above-written Words in these Prayers unnamed, or else they will turn to a Judgment of God in thee."{\*Repentance} Again, "Reader, I admonish you sincerely, if you be not in the Way of the Prodigal, or lost Son, returning to his Father again, that you leave my Book, and read it not; it will do you Harm.Â—But if you will not take Warning, I will be guiltless; blame Nobody but yourself."\*\* {\*\*Three Principles.}

[Way-2-37] In this Advice, so different from that of other Writers, he shows the Truth and Reality of his own regenerated State; and that the very same Spirit speaks in him, as formerly said, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.Â— Unless a man deny himself, and forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my Disciple.Â— No Man can come unto me, except the Father draweth him.Â— Except a Man be born again from above, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.Â— He that is of God, heareth God's Word.Â— Come unto me, all ye that labour, are weary and heavy-laden." For all these Texts of Scripture say that very self-same thing that Jacob Behmen doth, when he absolutely requires his Reader to be in the Way of the returning Prodigal. It is not Rules of Morality observed, or an outward blameless Form of Life, that will do: For Pride, Vanity, Envy, Self-love, and Love of the World, can be, and often are, the Heart of such a Morality of Life. But the State of the lost Son is quite another thing; and must be the State of every Man: As soon as he comes to himself, and has seeing Eyes,

he will then, like him, see himself far from home; that he has lost his first Paradise, his heavenly Father, and the Dignity of his first Birth; that he is a poor, beggarly Slave in a foreign Land, hungry, ragged, and starving, amongst the lowest Kind of Beasts, not so well fed and clothed as they are: when thus finding himself, he saith, "I will arise, and go to my Father," &c. then has he his first Fitness for the Mysteries opened in Jacob Behmen's Writings; for they are addressed to Man only in this supposed State; they have no Fitness to him but in this State; and therefore no one, whether Jew, Christian, or Deist, who does not find and feel himself to be the very lost Son described in the Parable, has any Capacity to receive Benefit from them, but they will be a continual Stumbling-block to him. And it is just thus with the Gospel itself; wherever it is received and professed, without something of this Preparation of Heart, without this Sensibility of the lost Son, there it can only be a Stone of stumbling, and help the earthly Man to form a Religion of Notions and Opinions from the unfelt Meaning of the Letter of the Gospel.

[Way-2-38] Secondly, The other Sort of People, whom he excludes from his Books, and for whom he has writ nothing, are the Men of Reason, who give themselves up to the Light of Reason, as the true Touchstone of Divine Truths. To these he declares over and over, that he has not his Light from Reason; and that he writes nothing to Reason. The rational Man, saith he, understands nothing in reference to God; for it is without and not in God. Again, The true Understanding must flow from the inward Ground, out of the living Word of God. In which inward Ground, all my Knowledge concerning the Divine and natural Ground, hath taken its Rise, Beginning, and Understanding. I am not born of the School of this World, and am a plain simple Man; but by God's Spirit and Will am brought, without my own Purpose and Desire, into Divine Knowledge in high natural Searchings. {Episistles, page 121.} Again, He that will learn to understand the true Way, let him depart from and forsake his own Reason. {page 138.} If my Writings, says he, come into your Hands, I would that you should look upon them as of a Child's, in whom the Highest has driven his Work; for there is that couched therein, which no Reason may understand or comprehend. {page 141.} Again, Reason must be blinded, kept under, and not allowed to stir. {page .68.} Again, Reason must yield up its own Hearing and Life, and give itself up to God, that God may live in the Understanding of Man, else there is no Finding in the Divine Wisdom. All that is taught and spoken concerning God, without the Spirit of God, is but Babel. {Episistle. page 9.} Again, We must wholly reject our own Reason; it is not available to help us to the Light, but is a mere leading astray, and keeping us back. This we intimate to the Reader, that he may know what he readeth. Let none account it for a Work of outward Reason. Again, Speaking of the Mystery, {Three-fold Life. pages 68,88.} he saith, Pray to God the most High, that he would be pleased to open the Door of Knowledge, without which no Man will understand my Writings; for they surpass the astral Reason; they apprehend and comprehend the Divine Birth; and therefore only the like Spirit can understand them aright. No Reasoning or Speculating reacheth them, unless the Mind be illuminated from God, to the finding of which the Way is faithfully shown to the seeking Reader. {Episistles. page 138.}

[Way-2-39] And now, Academicus, you may see how needless it is to ask me, or anyone else, to help you to understand his Works: He himself has given you all the Assistance that can be given: He has laid open before you, in the utmost Plainness, both the Nature of the Mystery, and the one only possible Way that you can partake of it.

[Way-2-40] Academicus. You speak often of the Mystery: Pray, what am I to understand by it?

[Way-2-41] Theophilus. You are to understand by it, the deep and true Ground of all Things. A Mystery, in which the Birth and Beginning of eternal Nature, or the first Workings of the inconceivable God, opening and manifesting his hidden Triune Deity in an outward State of Glory in the Splendour of united Fire, Light, and Spirit, all kindled and distinguished, all united and beatified by the hidden Three. In this eternal Nature, all inward Powers, all the hidden Riches of the incomprehensible Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, are from Eternity to Eternity brought forth into outward Majesty, and visible Glory. In which Triune Opening of heavenly Glory, Power, and Majesty, the Triune God beholdeth himself as in his own Manifestation, is clothed as with his own Garment, dwelleth as in his own Habitation, and worketh all his Wonders of Wisdom and Omnipotence in and by, and according to, the possible Powers of this eternal Nature. For this eternal Nature is the first Possibility of all After-beings and Things; for before, or without, this eternal Nature, all is an eternal, silent, still, unmovable, unperceivable Nothingness; and this eternal Nature is the first Manifestation, the first Opening of the Divine Omnipotence; and in it are included, in its own infinite Bounds, all the Height and Depth, and Extent, of the Divine Wisdom and Powers. All that God is, and can do, or bring forth from himself, is done in and by the working of his Triune Spirit in this eternal Nature.

[Way-2-42] This is the great Scene of his eternal Wisdom and Omnipotence, in which new Wonders are eternally rising up, and declaring the fathomless Depths of the Riches of the invisible Triune Deity. And to say, that God can do no more, than what he can do through and by the possible Powers of this eternal Nature, is only saying,

that he can do no more than what he can do by himself, because this eternal Nature is the eternal Manifestation of the total God, or an Out-birth of that which the Deity is, in its invisible Power and Deity.

[Way-2-43] Out of this transcendent eternal Nature, which is as universal and immense as the Deity itself, do all the highest Beings, Cherubims and Seraphims, all the Hosts of Angels, and all intelligent Spirits, receive their Birth, Existence, Substance, and Form. They are all so many different, finite, bounded Forms of the heavenly Fire, and Light of eternal Nature, into which creaturely Beings the invisible Triune God breatheth his invisible Spirit, by which they become both the true Children and Likeness of the invisible Deity, and also the true Offspring of his eternal Nature; and are fitted to rejoice with God, to live in the Life of God, and live and work, and have their Being, in that eternal Nature, or Kingdom of Heaven, in which the Deity itself liveth and worketh. And they are one, and united in one, God in them, and they in God, according to the Prayer of Christ for his Disciples; 'That they, and he, and his Holy Father, might be united in one.' {John xvi.}

[Way-2-44] This is in Part what you are first to understand concerning the Mystery.

[Way-2-45] But, Secondly, it is a Mystery, in which the Creation and Fall of Angels, with all its Consequences in them, and their Kingdom; in which the System of this visible Universe, why, and from what, and how it came to be as it is; the Birth of the Sun and the Planets, why and how they come to have such Difference in Nature, Place, and Office, as also of all the Stars; the Nature of every creaturely Life, and Ground of its vast Variety; the Cause of every inanimate dead Thing; a Mystery in which the Creation, Dignity, and Perfection, of the first angelic Man in Paradise; the whole Kingdom of Nature, and Kingdom of Grace; their Connection, Difference, and mutually affecting and working upon one another under the Providence of the invisible Spirit of God, from the Beginning to the End of Time, are all unfolded from their first Root and Cause.

[Way-2-46] Thirdly, it is a Mystery, in which the Ground of Christian Redemption, its whole Nature, absolute Necessity, and the working of all its Parts both in the Redeemer and in the Redeemed, are set forth in the utmost Degree of Clearness; where the whole Process of Christ, as incarnate, living, suffering, dying, rising from the Dead, ascending into Heaven, and sitting at the Right Hand of God, and governing his Church on Earth by his Holy Spirit; and all the practical Duties of the Gospel, whether of Faith and Hope, or of Self-denial; dying to this World, and strict Conformity to the Life and Spirit of Christ; are all demonstrated from the deepest Ground of the Nature of Things, to be absolutely necessary to the Recovery and Redemption of the fallen human Nature.

[Way-2-47] This, Sir, is, in some Degree, the Mystery which it has pleased the Spirit of God to open in this plain and unlearned Man.

[Way-2-48] Academicus. Well, Theophilus, I entirely consent to this Account you have given of it, and think it is sufficiently supported by what is to be found in his Books; they seem to mean all these great Matters which you mentioned. But then, Sir, give me Leave to tell you, that I think it is impossible for you to defend what you have said above concerning Reason; or to show the Unreasonableness of my demanding rational Illustrations and Comments. For if this is the Truth, that his Works contain the Ground and Philosophy of Nature, and all Creatures; surely they must not only allow the Use of our Reason, but call for the highest and most acute Exercise of it. For what can enter into the Reasons and Philosophy of Things, but Reason? Or what do all these great Matters appeal to, but to our Reason? I see no Possibility of denying this; and if this be granted, all that has been said about silencing our Reason, must be given up.

[Way-2-49] Theophilus. The Conclusion, my Friend, that you here think to be so just and strong, as not possible to be denied, is so far from being so, that it is a glaring Absurdity; and the quite contrary to that one only true Conclusion, which you should have made, and which so easily and naturally flowed from what was said. For if the Mystery is the deep Ground of all Things, of all Nature, and all Creatures, &c., then the one Conclusion that infallibly flows from it, is this, that no Acuteness or Ability of natural Reason can so much as look into it. For natural Reason is no older than Flesh and Blood; it has no higher a Nature or Birth than natural Doubting; it had no Existence when Nature began its first Workings, and therefore can bear no Witness to them. It was not present, had no Eyes, when Things first came forth; it never stood in the Centre, from whence the Birth of every thing must arise; it never saw the Forming of the first Seeds of every Life: and yet the Mystery, you see, contains all this: and therefore the one plain and necessary Conclusion is this; That natural Reason is, and must be, as incapable of entering into this Mystery, as Flesh and Blood is incapable of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven.

[Way-2-50] Behold, now, what a flagrant Proof you have given of the Vanity, Weakness, and Blindness of natural Reason in Divine Matters. Your Reason saw, with the utmost Certainty, that the Mystery must be an Appeal to

Reason, merely because it contained such an Height and Depth of a Divine Philosophy; and yet the Height and Depth of its Matters is the one full Proof, that Reason can have nothing to do with it. This may show you by what means Babel has built itself all over the Christian World. For, by the Light of this Babylonian Reason, the Defenders and Opposers of Doctrines confute one another with such a Certainty and Strength of Reason, as you saw, that Reason must be the only Judge of the Mystery, from which it is just as much excluded by its own Nature, as the Mole under-ground is, by its Nature, excluded from the Flight and Sight of the towering Eagle.

[Way-2-51] Academicus. Pray then tell me, How a Man is to attain the Knowledge of the Mystery, or have any Share in the Light of it.

[Way-2-52] Theophilus. There is but one possible Way, and that is this: It must be born in you. All true Knowledge, either of God or Nature, must be born in you. You cannot possibly know any thing of God, but so far as God is manifested in you; so far as his Light and Holy Spirit is born in you, as it is born in him, and liveth and worketh in you, as it liveth and worketh in him. A distant, absent, separate God, is an unknown God. For God can only manifest God, as Light can only manifest Light, and Darkness make Darkness to be known.

[Way-2-53] Again, you can have no real Knowledge of Nature, and its inward working Power, but so far as the Workings of Nature, and the Birth of Things, are a Working and Birth in yourself. Natural Reason may trade in the Outside of Things; it may measure, and make Draughts of Magnitude, Height, and Distance of Things on the Earth, and above the Earth; it may make many and fine Experiments of the Powers of every Element: but then this is going no farther into the Ground of Nature, than when the Potter makes curious Vessels with his Clay and Fire.

[Way-2-54] To count the Stars, to observe their Places or Motions, is just the same Height of natural Knowledge, as when the Shepherd counts his Sheep, and observes their Time of Breeding.

[Way-2-55] This World, with all its Stars, Elements, and Creatures, is come out of the invisible World; it has not the smallest Thing, or the smallest Quality of any thing, but what is come forth from thence; and therefore every Quality of every thing is what it is, and worketh that which worketh, by a secret Power and Nature in and from the invisible World. Bitter, sweet, sour, hard, soft, hot, cold, &c. have all of them their first Seed and Birth in the invisible World, called eternal Nature. The irrational Animals of this World feel all these Things: the rational Man goes farther; he can reason and dispute about their outward Causes and Effects: but the Mystery of eternal Nature must first be opened in Man, before he can give the Divine Philosophy of them. For as they all come from thence, have their Nature, Birth, and Growth, from thence; so no Philosophy, but that which comes from thence, can give the true Ground of them.

[Way-2-56] If Man himself was not all these Three Things, viz. (1.) A Birth of the holy Deity; (2.) A Birth of eternal Nature; and, (3.) Also a Microcosm of all this great outward World; that is, of every thing in it, its Stars and Elements; and if the Properties of every creaturely Life were not in an hidden Birth in him; no Omnipotence of God could open the Knowledge of Divine and natural Things in him.

[Way-2-57] For God can only manifest that, which there is to be manifested; and therefore only open that, which before lay unopened, and as in a State of Hiddenness or Death. Nothing can come forth from Man, or any Creature, but that which first had its Seed in him; and to think, that any Knowledge can be put into him, but that which is a Birth of his own Life, is as absurd as to think, that the Tree and its Branches may first grow, and then be brought to the Root.

[Way-2-58] We are led into Mistakes about this Matter from the common Practice of the World, which calls every thing Knowledge, that the Reason, Wit, or Humor of Man prompts him to discourse about; whether it be Fiction, Conjecture, Report, History, Criticism, Rhetoric, or Oratory: All this passes for Sterling Knowledge; whereas it is only the Activity of Reason, playing with its own empty Notions.

[Way-2-59] From this Idea of Knowledge it is, that when this rational Man turns his Thoughts to the Study of Divinity, he is content with the same Knowledge of Divine Matters, as he had in these Exercises of his Reason; and he proceeds in the same Manner, as when he studied History and Rhetoric.

[Way-2-60] He turns his mind to Hearsay, to Conjecture, to Criticism, and great Names; and thinks he is then a Member of the true Church, when he knows it as plainly as he knows the ancient Commonwealth of Rome. His Knowledge of the Being of God stands upon the same Bottom, and is made known to him by the same Means and Methods of Proof, as he comes to be assured, that once upon a Time there was a First Man, and his Name was Adam. His Knowledge of the Kingdom of Heaven is looked upon to be sufficient, as soon as he knows it, as

he knows that there is such a Place as Constantinople. When he turns his Inquiries into the Mysteries of Christian Redemption, he looks as much out of himself as when he is searching into the Antiquities of Greece; and appeals to the same Helps for this Knowledge, as when he wants to know the inward Structure of Solomon's Temple, and all its Services, &c.

[Way-2-61] This is the great Delusion which has long over spread the Christian World; and all Countries, and all Libraries, are the Proof of it. It is this Power and Dominion of Reason in religious Matters, that Jacob Behmen so justly calls the Antichrist in Babel; for it leads Men from the Life and Truth of the Mysteries of Christ, to put a carnal Trust in a confused Multitude of contrary Notions, Inventions, and Opinions. And the thing is unavoidable, it cannot be otherwise with Reason; it cannot do more Good with, or make a better Use of, Gospel Doctrines; it is Antichrist as soon as ever it is admitted to debate and state the Nature of any Divine Truth. And that for these Two great Reasons: First, Because it has absolutely the same Incapacity for it, as the Man that is born blind hath for the Light. Wherein now lieth the Incapacity of the blind Man, to speak or think any thing truly about Light? It is because he is born and bred in another World, where nothing of Light ever did or can enter; it is because there is the Gulf of a whole Birth betwixt him and the Light of this World; and therefore, though he lives ever so long, Reasons ever so much, or hears ever so many Speeches, about the Light, all that he gets by it is only more false Ideas of the unknown Thing.

[Way-2-62] Now this is strictly the Incapacity of Reason, to speak, or think anything truly of the Divine Life. It is because it is born and bred in another World, in the Darkness of Flesh and Blood, into which no Perception or Sensibility of God and Heaven can enter; it is because there is the Gulf of a whole Birth betwixt it, and the Light of God and Heaven; and therefore, let Reason, from Age to Age, hear, read, and dispute ever so much about the Light of God and Heaven, all that it can get by it, is only to be enriched with more and more Fictions and Falsities about the unknown Thing.

[Way-2-63] Secondly, Natural Reason, whenever judging or ruling in Divine Matters, must be Antichrist, because it cannot make any other Use of the Mysteries of Religion, or do anything else with them, but in the same Spirit, and for the same Ends, that it receiveth and useth the Things of this World. It matters not, what are the Names or Natures of the Things, whether you call them spiritual or temporal: Natural Reason can make but one and the same Use of them; it can only turn them to an earthly Use, to worldly Prosperity, to private Interest, Honour, Power, or Distinction. And the Thing is unavoidable, it is impossible to be otherwise; it is not a Fault that Reason might amend, if it would; but is as much its own Nature, as it is natural to Flame to ascend. Now every thing must act according to its Nature; every Kind of Life must be for itself, for its own Good. Now Reason has no higher a Birth and Nature, than the Spirit of this World; it must be as worldly as its Birth is, and cannot possibly have any thing else but worldly Views, and the Interests of its own Flesh and Blood, in every thing that it can make any use of. This is as essential to the natural Reason of Man, as to the natural Subtlety of every Beast; for they have both the same Original from the Light and Life of this World, have both the same earthly Nature, and can act only in an earthly Manner, to serve the same Ends of an earthly Life. The Reason of the one has no more of God and the Divine Nature in it, than the Subtlety of the other. And hence it is, that Man, following only the Cunning of his natural Reason, is often more mischievous than the worst of Beasts. And thus, you see how Reason, ruling in Divine Things, is and must be Antichrist: First, As it turns the living Mysteries of God into lifeless Ideas, and vain Opinions; and, Secondly, as it sets up a worldly Kingdom of Strife, Hatred, Envy, Division, and Persecution, in Defence of them. And therefore it is a fundamental Truth, that Man has no Capacity for Divine Knowledge, till the Particle of Divine Life, lost in the Fall, is awakened; in which alone, the Mystery of God and the Divine Nature can have a Birth.

[Way-2-64] Academicus. You have carried your Point, Theophilus, with a high Hand, and I rejoice in seeing this Matter so well proved.— But still I would ask you something, that I know not how to express; I would fain understand more clearly, how this Mystery of God, and eternal Nature, is to be born in me.

[Way-2-65] Theophilus. Every thing, Academicus, is, and must be, its own Proof; and can only be known from and by itself. There is no Knowledge of any thing, but where the Thing itself is, and is found, and possessed. Life, and every Kind and Degree of Life, is only known by Life; and so far as Life reaches, so far is there Knowledge, and no farther. Whatever Knowledge you can get by the Searching and Working of your own active Reason, is only like that Knowledge, which you may be said to have got, when you have searched for a Needle in a Load of Straw, till you have found it.

[Way-2-66] For nothing that is brought into the Mind from without, or is only an Idea beheld by our reasoning Faculty, is any more our Knowledge, than the seeing our natural Face in a Glass, is seeing our own Selves. And all the Ideas or Images that your Reason can form of any absent, unpossessed Thing, is no more a Part of your own Knowledge, than your drawing a Picture of your own Hand is making a Member of your own Body. It is

therefore a vain and fruitless Inquiry, to be asking beforehand for the Knowledge of any unpossessed Matters; for Knowledge can only be yours, as Sickness and Health is yours, not conveyed into you by a Hearsay Notion, but the Fruit of your own Perception and Sensibility of that which you are, and that which you have in yourself. How often have you been warned against this Procedure, in Words like these? "Therefore let the Reader be warned not to dive farther into these very deep Writings, nor Plunge his Will deeper, than so far as he apprehendeth: He should always rest satisfied with his Apprehension for in his Apprehension, he standeth yet in that which hath its Reality; and therefore he erreth not, how deep soever the Spirit leadeth him: For to one more will be given than to another. And this is the only Mark to be observed, that every one continue steadfast in Humility towards God, and submit himself, that he may make the Will and the Deed as he pleaseth. When you do that, you are in yourself as dead; for you desire nothing but God's Will, and the Will of God is your Life, which goeth inward even to the Opening of the highest Mysteries." {Threefold Life. page 158.}

[Way-2-67] One would have thought, Academicus, that this Advice, if only from the uncommon Nature of it, should have had more Effect upon you. For it is not only new to you, but to every Reader; there being nothing like it, either for the Sense, the Sobriety, or the Depth of its Matter, ever given by the wisest of Philosophers to their Readers.

[Way-2-68] Truth, my Friend, whatever you may think of it, is no less than the Saviour and Redeemer of the World.

[Way-2-69] Hear therefore its own Language: If any Man will be my Disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross, and come after me. He does not say, "Let him get a clear and distinct Idea of me, what, and how I am God and Man in the Unity of my Person"; he only tells him what he is to part with, what he must put off, to be made a Child of the Light. Search and look where you will, this Denial of Self is the one only possible Way to the Truth. For nothing has separated us from Truth, nothing stands betwixt us and Truth, but this Self of an earthly Life, which is not from God, but from our wandering out of our first created State.

[Way-2-70] God created us in and for the Light; and had Adam kept his first State, he had not been an ignorant, blind Pilgrim in the Darkness of this World, but the illustrious Opener of all its Wonders in the Light of God. But as this Light and Knowledge was lost in Adam, so it can only be recovered by him who came to restore all that was lost, and who justly called himself the Light of the World. Would you therefore be a Disciple of Truth, you must not, with Pilate, ask, What is Truth? or consult the Schools, how you shall form an Idea of it: but you must alter your Life, put a Stop to all earthly Lusts, renounce all that you are, and have from Self; give up all the Workings of your own Reason, and your own Will; and then, and then only, are you fitted for that Unction from above which can teach you all Things. But till Christ, who is the one Fountain of Life and Light, be opened in you; it is in vain, that you rise up early, and late take Rest, in Quest of Truth; for he himself hath said, Without me, ye can do nothing. And every Son of earthly Adam, however naturally enriched with the Spirit, and Light, and Arts of this World, is born, and must remain, a Spirit in Prison, till Christ is found to be an inward Preacher, and Light within him. As he is the one Resurrection from the Dead, so is he the one Deliverer from everything that has the nature of Death, Darkness, and Ignorance. And to expect seeing Eyes, hearing Ears, and Sensibility of Heart, from any thing but that eternal Word, by which we were at first made, is robbing God and Christ of more Honour, is a more idolatrous Departure from the true Worship and Dependence upon him, than if we sometimes hoped to have Good from this or that Saint's praying for us. For this is a Truth, that admits of no Restriction, but reaches from one End of the Earth to the other, that as no Man can come unto the Father, but through the Son; so no one can come at any Divine Knowledge either in Grace or Nature, but through him alone.

[Way-2-71] The Schools of this World are of no higher a Nature, than the Markets of this World; and, when rightly used, serve only to the Ends of this earthly Life. But as Markets and Traffic seldom keep within their just Bounds, but become serviceable to Vanity, earthly Lusts, and all the Luxury of Life; so it mostly happens in our learned Labours; we grow old, and blear-eyed, in Studies that nourish Pride and Envy, Division and Contention; and only help our old Man to be content with the Riches of his fallen Nature, and feel no Necessity of being born again.

[Way-2-72] Would you therefore be a Divine Philosopher, you must be a true Christian; for Darkness is everywhere, but in the Kingdom of God and Truth nowhere to be found by Man, but in a New Birth from above. Man was created in and for the Truth; that is, he was created in the Truth of the Divine Light, to see and hear, to taste and feel, to find and enjoy all Things in the Truth of the Divine Life brought forth in him. And therefore it is, that for fallen Man there is but one Remedy; it is only the Truth that can make him free. Truth is the one only Resting-place of the Soul; it is its Atonement and Peace with God; all is, and must be, Disquiet, a Succession of lying Vanities, till the Soul is again in the Truth, in which God at first created it. And therefore said the Truth,

Learn of me; for I am meek, and lowly of Heart; and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls.

[Way-2-73] Academicus. Pray, Theophilus, stop a while: Surely your Zeal carries you too far. All Ages of the World have seemed to agree in this, that the Gospel teaches purely the Simplicity of a godly Life; calls no Man to be a Philosopher, nor gives the smallest Instruction in Matters that relate to Philosophy.

[Way-2-74] Theophilus. All this, Academicus, is very true; but then, this very Simplicity and Plainness of the Gospel, turning Man only from this World, to a Faith, and Hope, and Desire of God, is the one Reason, and full Proof, that it alone is a true Guide into the highest School of Divine Wisdom and Philosophy; not only because Goodness is our greatest Wisdom, but because the Mysteries of God, of Grace, of Nature, of Time and Eternity, can no other possible way be opened in Man, but by this Simplicity of a godly Life taught in the Gospel; because only the godly Life hath Knowledge of God; just as the creaturely Life hath only Knowledge of the Creature, and the painful Life hath Knowledge of Pain. The Scripture saith, that only the Spirit of God knoweth the Things of God. And indeed, how can it possibly be otherwise? For since the Spirit of God is the Spirit and Life that goeth through all Nature and Creature, and only openeth its own hidden Powers therein; since it is that which is the Former of every thing; that which makes every thing to have the Life that it hath, and to work as it worketh; nothing but the Spirit of God can possibly know the Things of God: and therefore, of Necessity, this Spirit of God must be in Man, and work in Man, as it is in Nature, and worketh in Nature, before Man can enter into the Knowledge and Working of God in Nature. And therefore here you have two immutable, and fundamental Truths: (1.) That all our Ignorance of God and Nature is, and must be, purely and solely, the Want of the Spirit and Life of God in us: And, (2.) That therefore the one only Way to Divine Knowledge is the Way of the Gospel, which calls and leads us to a New Birth of the Divine Nature brought forth in us.

[Way-2-75] Academicus. I have nothing that I can, or would, object to what you have said. But still I must say, that I do not enough apprehend how the Spirit and Life of God must thus, of all Necessity, be born in us; nor, indeed, do I entirely comprehend how it is done. Human Reason, or human Instruction, I see plain enough, cannot help me to any Divine Light. But suppose God should send an Angel to instruct me, and that frequently, would not Divine Knowledge be then imparted to me? And yet this would not be a Birth of God in me. Or, will you say, that God cannot sufficiently instruct me, even by the highest of his Angels?

[Way-2-76] Theophilus. An Angel, Sir, may instruct you, as the Scriptures instruct you; but it is only such an Instruction, as may direct you where and how to obtain that Light, which neither the Letter of Scripture, nor the Voice of an Angel, can bring forth in you. The highest Angel neither hath, nor ever can have, any more of a redeeming Power in it, than the dead Paper on which the Scriptures are written. But you are to observe, and mark it well, that you cannot have Divine Light from any other Thing, but that which hath full Power to redeem you: for Light is not only Life, but the Perfection, and highest State of it; and therefore nothing can bring forth Light, but that which can bring forth the Truth and Perfection of Life.

[Way-2-77] Every other Thing, besides the Life and Light of God, stands only in a State of ministerial Service towards you: whether it be Words of a Message from God, written on paper, engraven on tables of Stone, or spoken by the Mouth of an Angel, a Prophet, or Apostle; be it what it will, it is only a creaturely Thing; and its creaturely Service can rise no higher, nor go any farther, than to show the true Way to Him, who only himself can be the Truth, the Life, and the Light i