

# THE THIRD DIALOGUE

*Rusticus observes that Humanus, who was previously cheerful and serene, has become peevish and morose, owing, no doubt, to his refusal to accept Christianity, although his arguments against it have been shown to be wrong. He exhorts him to yield to the divine Love, which, as Theophilus says, is 'the Christ of God', 'the treasure of Eternity', the foundation of the Universal Church.*

*Outward observances are of no value save as they lead us to the Spirit of God who works within us, so far as our heart is turned to Him. Our salvation therefore depends wholly on ourselves, yet the work of salvation is solely the work of God within us. Prayer is essentially desire. It profits only as it is the desire of the heart for God.*

*Prayer must begin with penitence and humility; it passes into thanksgiving for the divine Love; it rises finally into a continuous union with God. The fervour of prayer may be succeeded by coldness, which has its value in delivering us from spiritual pride. Since prayer is the natural language of the heart, no manuals are needed. We must pray by the divine Spirit, which is the Breath of God breathed into us and is the source of all that is good in our life. The universal Love of God manifested in us is the one proof of His presence in our souls. We must not look for illuminations, visions or voices, which are abnormal operations of the Spirit.*

*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 will not 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.

*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.

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 practised 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.

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.

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.<sup>1</sup>

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.

*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.

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,

<sup>1</sup> In the passage that follows on this and succeeding pages both Law's eloquence and his insight reach their highest point. He sees love as the motive-power of creation and the secret of redemption, as the manifestation of God in human life, as the essence of all religion, as the bond of all true fellowship and as the one way of salvation for mankind. He thus completely transcends all ecclesiastical and confessional limitations. We may compare Boehme's passage on love in the First Dialogue of *The Supersensual Life*.

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, and wants and seeks to forgive, where most is to be forgiven.

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 inclose 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 overcome all Evil with Good. Lastly, Love is the *Christ* of God; it comes down from Heaven; it regenerates the Soul from above; it blots out all Transgressions; it takes from Death its Sting, from the Devil his Power, and from the Serpent his Poison. It heals 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 lives 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.

*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.

*Theoph.* The first Work, or Beginning of this redeeming Love of God, is in that *Immanuel*, or God with us, treasured up, or preserved in 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.<sup>2</sup> 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 a new Life, new Love, and a new Birth, in the inward Spirit of our

<sup>2</sup> See Part 1, ch. 2, p. 43.

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.<sup>3</sup>

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 Live 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 anything 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

<sup>3</sup> It is characteristic of Law's insight that he recognises the essential inwardness of religion as a spiritual power, and so as the foundation on which the Universal Church of the Spirit, outside which there is no salvation, is built.

Religionists, who drew near to God with their Lips, but their Hearts 'were far from him.'

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 avails but the *new Creature*, nothing avails 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 has 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 has 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 *Almsgiving*, 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.

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.