Chapter VI

S. 1. That all creatures are mutable in respect to their natures. S. 2. To what point this mutability extends, whether to the essential nature of things or only to their attributes and modes of being? S. 3. That only the modes of being are mutable but not the essences. S. 4. That there are only three kinds of being essentially distinct from each other, namely, God, who is supreme, Christ, the mediator, and creatures, who are lowest. S. 5. That these distinctions are very necessary and protect us from falling into either of the extreme positions which are available to us – one of which is Ranterism, the other crass ignorance, both of which obscure the glory of the divine attributes. S. 6. An example of this is given. S. 7. That the justice of God gloriously appears in the transmutation of things from one species to another. S. 8. That when the human spirit changes itself through impiety into the qualities and conditions of animals, it is according to God’s justice that the animal-like spirit enters the body of the animal and is punished there for some length of time. S. 9. How many erroneous ideas there are about God and how men conceive of God erroneously. S. 10. Why the world was first destroyed by water and must finally be destroyed by fire; and that all these punishments are medicinal. S. 11. That every creature is made of body and spirit, and in what way every creature, just as it has many bodies within itself, also has many spirits under one predominant general spirit, which rules all the others.

S. 1. Since all creatures are mutable in respect to their natures, the difference between God and creatures, rightly considered, is clearly demonstrated by daily experience. Now, if any creature is mutable in respect to its nature, it is mutable inasmuch as it is a creature. Consequently, all creatures are mutable according to the same law, namely, that whenever one thing is like another insofar as it belongs to one or another species, it is like everything contained in that species.

5 The Ranters were seventeenth-century English political and religious radicals. They were pantheists and antinomians, meaning they rejected conventional standards of morality and believed those who were spiritually enlightened were above the law. They advocated total freedom of thought.
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In fact, since mutability is appropriate for a creature insofar as it is a creature (this is the most general name of the species which includes all creatures), it appears that there is no other distinction between God and creatures. For if any creature were by its nature immutable, it would be God since immutability is one of his incommunicable attributes.

S. 2. Now let us consider the extent of this mutability. First, can one individual be changed into another, either of the same or of a different species? I say that this is impossible, for then the essential nature of things would change, which would cause great confusion not only for creatures but also for the wisdom of God, which made everything. For example, if one man could change into another, namely Paul into Judas or Judas into Paul, then he who sinned would not be punished for that sin but another in his stead who was innocent and virtuous. Thus a righteous man would not receive the reward of his virtue but another steeped in vice. But if we suppose that one righteous man is changed into another, as Paul into Peter and Peter into Paul, then Paul would surely not receive his proper reward but that of Peter, nor would Peter receive his but that of Paul. This confusion would not suit the wisdom of God. Besides, if the essential nature of individuals could change one into another, it would follow that creatures would not have a true being inasmuch as we could not be certain of anything nor could we have true knowledge or understanding of anything. Therefore all the innate ideas and precepts of truth, which all men find in themselves, would be false and, consequently, so would the conclusions drawn from them. For all true science or certainty of knowledge depends on the truth of objects, which we commonly call objective truths. If these objective truths were interchangeable, then the truth of any statement made about the object would also change. Therefore no statement could be invariably true, not even the clearest and most obvious, for example, the following: that the whole is greater than its parts and that two halves make a whole.

S. 3. Furthermore, we must consider whether one species can change into another. But first we must distinguish as carefully as possible how one species differs from another. For there are many species which are commonly said to differ, but nevertheless are not distinct from each other in substance or essence, but only in certain modes or attributes. And when these modes or attributes change, the thing itself is said to have changed its species. But indeed, it is not the essence or entity itself but only its mode of being which thus changes. For example, water does not change but stays the same, although when cold it freezes, where it was fluid before. When water turns to stone, there is no reason to suppose that a greater change of substance has occurred than in the earlier example when it changed from water to ice. And when a stone changes back into softer and more pliant earth, this too is no change of substance. Thus, in all other changes which can be observed the substance or essence always remains the same. There is merely a change of form inasmuch as the substance
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relinquishes one form and takes on another. These arguments prove that in terms of its substance or essence one species cannot change from one into another and equally that one individual cannot change into another. For species are nothing but individual entities subsumed under one general and common idea of the mind or one common term, as, for instance, man is a species including all individual men and horse is a species including all individual horses. If one man cannot change into another, much less can that man change into an individual of another species. Thus, if Alexander cannot change into Darius, he also cannot change into his own horse, Bucephalus.

S. 4. Since we know to what extent things are able to change, we must now determine how many species of things there are which are distinguished from each other in terms of their substance or essence. If we look closely into this, we will discover there are only three, which, as was said above, are God, Christ, and creatures; and that these three species are really distinct in terms of their essence has already been proved. No argument can prove that there is a fourth species distinct from the other three. Indeed, a fourth species seems altogether superfluous. Since all phenomena in the entire universe can be reduced to these three aforementioned species as if into their original and peculiar causes, nothing compels us to recognize a further species according to this rule: whatever is correctly understood is most true and certain. Entities should not be multiplied without need. Furthermore, because the three aforementioned species exhaust all the specific differences in substances which can possibly be conceived by our minds, then that vast infinity of possible things is fulfilled in these three species. How could a place or space be found for a fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh species? It has already been shown that these three species have this capacity. Certainly insofar as something can be called an entity, it is either altogether immutable like God, the supreme being, or altogether mutable, that is for good or bad, like a creature, which is the lowest order of being, or partly mutable in respect to good, like Christ, the son of God, the mediator between God and creatures. In what category then could we place some fourth, fifth, sixth, or seventh, etc. species which is not clearly immutable or clearly mutable, nor partly mutable nor partly immutable. Besides, whoever posits some fourth species distinct from the previously mentioned three in terms of essence or substance destroys, in fact, the most excellent order which we find in the universe, since there would be not only one mediator between God and creatures but two, three, four, five, six, or however many can be imagined between the first and the last. Furthermore, since it agrees with sound reason and with the order of things that just as God is one and does not have two or three or more distinct substances in himself, and just as Christ is one simple Christ without further distinct substances in himself (insofar as he is the celestial man or Adam, the first of all

6 Here Lady Conway is adapting elements of Descartes' famous "method" for her own purposes.
creatures), so likewise all creatures, or the whole of creation, are also a single species in substance or essence, although it includes many individuals gathered into subordinate species and distinguished from each other modally but not substantially or essentially. Thus, what Paul says about human beings can also be understood about all creatures (which in their primitive and original state were a certain species of human being designated according to their virtues, as will be shown), namely, that God made all tribes and troops of creatures from one blood. Surely this is the explanation of the following two things: that God made all tribes of human beings from one blood so that they would love one another and would be bound by the same sympathy and would help one another. Thus God has implanted a certain universal sympathy and mutual love into his creatures so that they are all members of one body and all, so to speak, brothers, for whom there is one common Father, namely, God in Christ or the word incarnate. There is also one mother, that unique substance or entity from which all things have come forth, and of which they are the real parts and members. And although sin has weakened this love and sympathy in creatures to an astonishing degree, nevertheless it has not altogether destroyed it.

S. 5. Having acknowledged the three previously mentioned types of being, and these three alone, which are completely noninterchangeable among each other, we will proceed securely in the middle way of truth concerning the nature of substance, leaving the greatest errors and confusion to the right and left. First, there are those who maintain that all things are one substance, of which they are the real and proper parts. These confuse God and his creatures, as if these two notions were only one essential thing, so that sin and the devils would be nothing but parts or the slightest modification of this divine being. From this come dangerous consequences. Although I would not want this to be taken badly by all those who have fallen into this opinion by mistake, I should warn my readers where such principles lead so that they might consider them better and avoid their absurdity. Second, there are others who maintain that there are two kinds of substance, God, that supreme and utterly immutable being, and creatures, the lowest and altogether mutable beings. These, moreover, do not sufficiently consider that excellent order, described above, which appears in all things. Since they might perhaps have observed elsewhere that in addition to the two extremes there is also a certain mediator which partakes of both, and this is Jesus Christ, whom the wiser among the Jews recognize, no less than some among the so-called Gentiles, maintaining that there is such a mediator, which they call by different names such as Logos, Son of God, first-born Son of God, Mind, Wisdom, the Celestial Adam, etc. And, thus, they also call him the eternal mediator.

If these matters are correctly considered, they will contribute greatly to the propagation of the true faith and Christian religion among Jews and Turks and
other infidel nations; if, namely, it is agreed that there are equally strong reasons by which we can prove that there is a mediator between God and human beings, indeed, between God and all creatures, as there are for proving that there is a God and a creation. Therefore, those who acknowledge such a mediator and believe in him can be said truly to believe in Jesus Christ, even though they do not yet know it and are not convinced that he has already come in the flesh. But if they first grant that there is a mediator, they will indubitably come to acknowledge also, even if they are unwilling, that Christ is that mediator.

There are others, moreover, who multiply specific entities into their own distinct essences and attributes almost to infinity. This altogether upsets that exceptional order of things and quite obscures the glory of the divine attributes so that it cannot shine with its due splendor in creatures. For if a creature were entirely limited by its own individuality and totally constrained and confined within the very narrow boundaries of its own species to the point that there was no mediator through which one creature could change into another, then no creature could attain further perfection and greater participation in divine goodness, nor could creatures act and react upon each other in different ways.

S. 6. We shall illustrate these things with one or two examples. Let us first imagine a horse, a creature endowed by its creator with different degrees of perfection, such as not only bodily strength but also certain notions, so to speak, of how to serve his master. In addition, a horse exhibits anger, fear, love, memory, and various other qualities which are in human beings and which we can also observe in dogs and many other animals. Therefore, since the divine power, goodness, and wisdom has created good creatures so that they may continually and infinitely move towards the good through their own mutability, the glory of their attributes shines more and more. And this is the nature of all creatures, namely that they be in continual motion or operation, which most certainly strives for their further good (just as for the reward and fruit of their own labor), unless they resist that good by a willful transgression and abuse of the impartial will created in them by God. Now, I ask, to what further perfection or degree of goodness of being or essence does or can a horse attain after he has performed good services for his master and has done what was and is appropriate for such a creature? Is a horse a mere machine or dead matter, or does it indeed have some kind of spirit which possesses thought, sense, love, and various other properties which are appropriate to its spirit? If it has such a spirit — something which must clearly be conceded — what happens to this spirit when the horse dies? If it is said that it returns to life and obtains the body of another horse, so that it becomes a horse as it was before but stronger and more beautiful and with a better spirit than before, excellent! If it dies a second, third, or fourth time, does it always remain a horse, even though it becomes continuously better and more excellent, and how often does its spirit return? Now, I ask, whether the species of horse possesses such infinite perfection that a horse
can always become better and better to infinity, yet always remain a horse? To be sure, it is almost common knowledge that this visible earth will not always remain in its present state, which can be proven by the best arguments. Therefore it necessarily follows that the continual generation of animals in their crass bodies will also cease. For, if the earth assumes another form and produces no more vegetation, then horses and similar animals will cease to be as they were before. Since they would not have their proper nourishment, they could not remain the same species. Nevertheless, they will not be annihilated, as it is easy to conclude, for how can anything be annihilated since the goodness of God towards his creatures always remains the same and since the preservation or continuation of his creatures is a constant act of creation? It is generally agreed, as has been demonstrated above, that God is a perpetual creator acting with as much freedom as necessity. Yet, if one replies that the earth will change, as suggested above, then horses and other animals would change their configurations along with the earth, and the earth would produce nourishment for them according to their new configurations because of their changed condition. I then ask whether the creatures remain the same species during such a change, or whether there is not indeed some future difference between this and that state, such as, for example, that between a horse and a cow, which is commonly recognized as a different species. Furthermore, I ask whether some species of creatures so excel others to infinity that a certain individual of one species always increases in perfection and comes closer to some other species, yet is never able to reach that species? For example, a horse approaches the species of human being in many ways more than many other creatures. Is human nature therefore infinitely different from the nature of a horse or only finitely? If this distance is finite, the horse will surely change eventually into a human being — to be sure, in respect to its spirit, for in respect to its body, the matter is obvious. If this distance is infinite, then a certain actual infinite excellence will be attributed to a human being of the lowest and meanest understanding, an excellence such as only accords with God and Christ but to no creature. For the highest excellence of a creature is to be infinite only in potentiality, not in actuality. That is, it is always able to become more perfect and more excellent to infinity, although it never reaches this infinity. For however far a certain finite being may progress, it is nevertheless always finite, although there are no limits to its progress. For instance, if we could ever attain the least minute of eternity or a similar part of an infinite duration, this would not be infinite but finite.

In saying this, we do not contradict what was said in chapter III about the infinity of creatures, for that does not concern their infinite goodness and excellence but only their number and size, neither of which may be numbered or measured by any understanding of a created intellect. Nevertheless, individual creatures are only finitely good and finitely distant in terms of species. However, they are also potentially infinite, that is, they are always capable of greater
perfection without end. Thus if someone places a stairs which is infinitely long and has an infinite number of steps, nevertheless the steps are not infinitely distant from each other, for otherwise there would be no possibility of ascent or descent. Moreover, the steps in this example signify species which cannot be infinitely distant from each other, or from those which are closest to them. In fact, daily experience teaches us that various species change into each other: earth changes into water, water into air, air into fire or ether and, vice versa, fire into air, air into water, etc., and these are nevertheless distinct species. Similarly, stones change into metals and one metal into another. However, let no one say that these are only bare bodies and have no spirit. We observe the same thing not only in plants but in animals. Just as wheat and barley can change into each other and in fact often do so, which is well known to farmers in many countries, especially in Hungary where, if barley is sown, wheat grows. In other more barren places, and especially in rocky places such as are found in Germany, if wheat is sown, barley grows instead, and in other places barley becomes plain grass. Among animals, moreover, worms change into flies, and beasts and fish that feed on beasts and fish of another species change into their nature and species. And does not rotting matter, or body of earth and water, produce animals without any previous seed of those animals? And in the creation of this world did not the waters produce fish and birds at God’s command? Did the earth not also at the same command bring forth reptiles and beasts, which were, on this account, real parts of earth and water? And just as they have their bodies from the earth, so they have their spirits, or souls, from the earth. For the earth produced living souls, as the Hebrew text says, and not simply material bodies lacking life and spirit. For this reason the difference between human beings and beasts is exceedingly striking. For it is said about human beings that God made them in his image and breathed into them the breath of life and they became living souls, so that they received his life, the principal part that makes them human beings, which is really distinct from the divine soul or spirit which God breathed into them.

Moreover, since the human body was made from earth, which, as has been proved, contained various spirits and gave those spirits to all the animals, without doubt the earth gave human beings the best and most excellent spirits which it contained. But all these spirits were far inferior to the spirit of human beings, which they received from above and not from the earth. The human spirit ought to have dominion over these spirits, which are only terrestrial, so that it might rule over them and raise them to a higher level and, indeed, to its

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7 Lady Conway never traveled in Germany or Hungary. These examples come from van Helmont’s writings.
8 Lady Conway accepts the traditional idea that animals were spontaneously generated from decaying matter. This idea was disproven by the microscopic observations of Marcello Malpighi (1628–94), among others.
own proper nature; and this would have been its true increase and multiplication. For their sake, it allowed the earthly spirits existing in it to have dominion over it, so that it would be like them. For this reason it is said, “You are of the earth and you shall return to earth,” which has a spiritual as well as a literal meaning.

S. 7. We already see how the justice of God shines so gloriously in this transmutation of one species into another. For it is most certain that a kind of justice operates not only in human beings and angels but also in all creatures. Whoever does not see this must be called completely blind. This justice appears as much in the ascent of creatures as in their descent, that is, when they change for better or worse. When they become better, this justice bestows a reward and prize for their good deeds. When they become worse, the same justice punishes them with fitting penalties according to the nature and degree of their transgression. The same justice imposes a law for all creatures and inscribes it in their very natures. Whatever creature breaks this law is punished accordingly. But any creature who observes this law receives the reward of becoming better.

Thus under the law which God gave to the Jews, if a beast has killed a man, the beast had to be killed. A human life, it is said, is to be sought at the hand of every beast (Genesis 9: 5). If anyone has sexual dealings with a beast, not only the man but the beast must be killed. Thus, not only the wife and her husband (Adam and Eve) received a sentence and punishment from God after their transgression but also the serpent, which was the brute part in man that he took from the earth. God endowed man with the same instinct for justice towards beasts and the trees of the field. For any man who is just and good loves the brute creatures which serve him, and he takes care of them so that they have food and rest and the other things they need. He does not do this only for his own good but out of a principle of true justice; and if he is so cruel toward them that he requires work from them and nevertheless does not provide the necessary food, then he has surely broken the law which God inscribed in his heart. And if he kills any of his beasts only to satisfy his own pleasure, then he acts unjustly, and the same measure will be measured out to him. Thus, a man who has a tree in his orchard that is fruitful and grows well fertilizes and prunes it so that it becomes better and better. But if it is barren and a burden to the earth, he fells it with an ax and burns it. Therefore, there is a certain justice in all these things, so that in the very transmutation from one species to another, either by ascending from a lower to a higher or by descending in the opposite way, the same justice appears. For example, is it not just that if a man lives a pure and holy life on this earth, like the heavenly angels, that he is elevated to the rank of angels after he dies and becomes like them, since the angels also rejoice over him? However, a man who lives such an impious and perverse life that he is more like the devil raised from hell than like any other creature, then, if he dies in such a state without repenting, does not the same justice hurl him
down to hell, and does he not justly become like the devils, just as those who live
an angelic life become equal to angels? But if someone lives neither an angelic
nor a diabolical life but rather a brutish or animal life, so that his spirit is more
like the spirit of beasts than any other creature, does the same justice not act
most justly, so that just as he became a brute in spirit and allowed his brutal part
and spirit to have dominion over his more excellent part, he also (at least as
regards his external shape) changes his corporeal shape into that species of beast
to which he is most similar in terms of the qualities and conditions of his mind?
And since that brute spirit is now superior and predominant and holds the other
spirit captive, is it not likely that when such a man dies, his brute spirit always
has dominion over him and takes away his human spirit and compels it to serve
the animal spirit in every possible way? And when that brute spirit returns again
into some other body, it rules over that body and has the ability and freedom to
shape the body according to its own ideas and inclinations (which it did not
previously have in the human body). It necessarily follows that this body, which
the vital spirit forms, will be that of a brute and not a human, for the brute spirit
cannot produce or form any other shape because its formative power is governed
by its imagination, which imagines and conceives as strongly as possible its own
image, according to which the external body must take shape.

S. 8. In this way the justice of God shines forth wonderfully, since it assigns
the due and appropriate punishment for each kind and degree of wrongdoing
nor does it demand hellfire and damnation for every single wicked sin and
transgression. For Christ taught the opposite in that parable where he shows
that only the third degree of punishment is to be sent down to Gehenna, as
when one rashly says to his brother, “You fool!” (Matthew 5: 22).

What objection can be made to the justice of God? If it is said that the dignity
and nobility of human nature is diminished and sullied when it is decreed that
the body and soul is to be turned into the nature of a brute, one may reply
according to the common axiom, “the worst corruption is that of the best.” For
when a human being has so greatly degraded himself by his own willful
wrongdoing and has brought his nature, which had been so noble, to a lower
state, and when that nature has demeaned itself in spirit to the level of a most
foul brute or animal so that it is wholly ruled by lust and earthly desires and
becomes like any beast, indeed, worse than any beast, what injustice is this if
God compels him to bear the same image in his body as in that spirit into which
he has internally transformed himself? Or which degeneration do you think is
worse, to have the image of a beast in one’s spirit or body? Certainly it must be
said that to be like a brute in spirit is the greatest possible degeneration. There is
hardly anyone with any genuine nobility of soul who does not admit that to be a
brute internally is worse than to be a brute externally. For it is far worse to be a
brute in spirit than to be a brute in outward form and shape. However, if
someone says that it is too mild a punishment for those who have lived a brutal
life throughout all their days merely to return after death in the condition and
state of a beast, let them know that the most just creator and maker of all things
is wiser than they and knows better what punishment is appropriate for each
sin. God has arranged all things as justly and wisely as possible so that no one
living carnally like a beast can enter the kingdom of heaven. Furthermore,
Christ expressly teaches us that not every sin must be punished with the penalty
of hell and that “where the treasure is, there also is the heart and spirit of man”
(Matthew 6: 21). Also, if a man is united and joined with something, he then
becomes one with that thing. He who unites himself to God is one with him in
spirit, and he who unites himself to a prostitute is one in flesh with her.
Shouldn’t someone who is united to a beast become one with that beast for the
same reason and similarly in every other case? For, according to Scripture,
anyone who obeys another is his servant inasmuch as he obeys him. Besides, it is
said that, “by whatsoever measure you shall measure, you shall be measured by
the same” (Luke 6: 38). That is to say, that all degrees and kinds of sin have
their appropriate punishments, and all these punishments tend toward the good
of creatures, so that the grace of God will prevail over judgment and judgment
turn into victory for the salvation and restoration of creatures. Since the grace of
God stretches over all his work, why do we think that God is more severe and
more rigorous a punisher of his creatures than he truly is? This obscures and
darkens the glory of God’s attributes in an astonishing way and does not foster
love for God and admiration for his goodness and justice in the hearts of men as
it should, but does precisely the opposite.

S. 9. For the common notion of God’s justice, namely, that whatever the sin,
it is punished by hellfire and without end, has generated a horrible idea of God
in men, as if he were a cruel tyrant rather than an benign father towards all his
creatures. If, however, an image of a lovable God was more widely known, such
as he truly is and shows himself in all his dealings with his creatures, and if our
souls could inwardly feel and taste him, as he is charity and kindness itself and
as he reveals his intrinsic self through the light and spirit of our Lord Jesus
Christ in the hearts of men, then, and only then, will men finally love God above
everything and acknowledge him as the most loving, just, merciful God, fit to be
worshipped before everything, and as one who cannot inflict the same punish-
ment on all sinners.

S. 10. Then, why did he destroy the original world with water and decide to
destroy this world with fire, such as happened with Sodom? Surely, to show
that he uses different kinds of punishments for different kinds of sins. The first
world was bad, and this one, which had to be destroyed by fire, would have
been worse. For this reason it was to have a greater punishment. But the
different nature of this transgression, for which different punishments have
been devised, seems to consist in this, that the sins of the old world were more
carnal and brutal, as the word of God reveals when he said, “My spirit will not
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always strive in man because he was made flesh” (Genesis 6: 3); that is, he was made completely brutal or bestial by obeying the desires of the flesh. Consequently, if that generation had not been wiped out, the whole human race (with the exception of Noah and his family) would have been bestial in the following generations, which evil God wished to avert by drowning them in water so that by this punishment they might revert from the nature of beasts to that of men. But the sins of this world, like those of Sodom, which had to be destroyed by fire, appear to be more like the sins of the devil than anything else because of their hostility, malice, cruelty, fraud, and cunning. Therefore their appropriate punishment is fire, which is the original essence of those so noble, yet degenerate, spirits, and by this same fire they must be degraded and restored.

For what is fire, but a certain kind of ethereal and imperfect substance enclosed in combustible bodies, which we always see ascend and immediately vanish because of its remarkable tenuousness? In regard to their spirits, angels as well as men originate from this ethereal substance, just as brutes originate from water. Just as all the punishments inflicted by God on his creatures are in proportion to their sins, so they tend, even the worst, to their good and to their restoration and they are so medicinal as to cure these sickly creatures and restore them to a better condition than they previously enjoyed.

S. 11. Now, let us consider briefly how creatures are composed and how the parts of this composition can change into one another because they originally had one and the same essence and being. In every visible creature there is body and spirit, or a more active and a more passive principle, which are appropriately called male and female because they are analogous to husband and wife. For just as the normal generation of human beings commonly requires the conjunction and cooperation of male and female, so too does every generation and production, whatever it may be, require the union and simultaneous operation of those two principles, namely spirit and body. Moreover, spirit is light or the eye looking at its own proper image, and the body is the darkness which receives this image. And when the spirit beholds it, it is as if someone sees himself in a mirror. But he cannot see himself reflected in the same way in clear air or in any diaphanous body, since the reflection of an image requires a certain opacity, which we call body. Nevertheless, it is not an essential property of anything to be a body, just as it is not a property of anything to be dark. For nothing is so dark that it cannot become bright. Indeed, darkness itself can become light. In the same way, light which is created can turn to darkness, as the words of Christ plainly show when he says, “If the light within you is darkness,” etc., by which he means the eye or spirit which is in the body and which sees the image of something. Just as every spirit needs a body to receive and reflect its image, it also needs a body to retain the image. For every body has this retentive nature in itself to a greater or a lesser degree, and the more perfect
a body is— that is, the more perfectly mixed it is— the more retentive it is. Thus water is more retentive than air, and earth is more retentive of certain things than water. The semen of a female creature, on account of its so perfect mixture, because it is the purest extract of the whole body, has a remarkable power of retention. In this semen, as in the body, the masculine semen, which is the spirit and image of the male, is received and retained together with the other spirits which are in the woman. And whatever spirit is strongest and has the strongest image or idea in the woman, whether male or female, or any other spirit received from outside of one or the other of them, that spirit predominates in the semen and forms a body as similar as possible to its image. And thus every creature receives its external shape.

In the same way, the internal productions of the mind (namely the thoughts which are true creatures according to their kind and which have a true substance appropriate to themselves) are generated. These are our inner children, and all are masculine and feminine; that is, they have a body and spirit. For, if they did not have a body, they could not be retained nor could we reflect on our own thoughts. For all reflection takes place because of a certain darkness, and this is the body. Thus memory requires a body in order to retain the spirit of the thing conceived of; otherwise it vanishes, just as an image in a mirror immediately vanishes when the object is removed. Thus when we remember something, we see within ourselves its image, which is the spirit that proceeded from it, while we looked at it from the outside. This image, or spirit, is retained in some body, which is the semen of our brain. Thus a certain spiritual generation occurs in us. Consequently, every spirit has its own body and every body its own spirit. Just as a body, whether of a man or brute, is nothing but a countless multitude of bodies collected into one and arranged in a certain order, so the spirit of man or brute is also a countless multitude of spirits united in this body, and they have their order and government, such that one is the principal ruler, another has second place, and a third commands others below itself, and so on for the whole, just as in an army. For this reason, creatures are called armies and God the leader of these armies. Just as the devil, who assaulted the man, was called Legion because there were many of them. Thus every human being, indeed, every creature whatsoever, contains many spirits and bodies. (The many spirits which exist in men are called by the Jews Nizzuzuth, or sparks.)

9 See Kabbala Denudata, ii, pt. 2, De Revolutione Animarum, pp. 255-68, etc.
9 Lady Conway accepted the Galenic theory of reproduction. Galen was a second-century Roman physician, who believed that both males and females produced semen. During the seventeenth century this egalitarian view of reproduction was replaced by a revival of the Aristotelian view that only males produced semen. Therefore, while males contributed spiritual and mental characteristics to the fetus, the female contribution was limited to the physical and material. Analogies were drawn between the womb and an oven, in which bread was baked, or a field, in which seed was sown.
body is a spirit and nothing else, and it differs from a spirit only insofar as it is
darker. Therefore the crasser it becomes, the more it is removed from the
condition of spirit. Consequently, the distinction between spirit and body is
only modal and incremental, not essential and substantial.
Chapter VIII

S. 1. It is further proved by three additional proofs that spirit and body, insofar as they are creatures, do not essentially differ. And a fourth reason is taken from that intimate union or bond which exists between spirits and bodies. S. 2. If the way in which the soul moves the body is illustrated by the way that God moves creatures, this comparison is altogether false. S. 3. The union and sympathy of soul and body can be easily demonstrated, as can the way in which the soul moves the body, from the above mentioned principle that spirit is body and body spirit. S. 4. A fifth argument is taken from earth and water, which continually produce various kinds of animals from rotting and corrupt matter. S. 5. How gross matter is changed into spirit and becomes, as it were, the mother of spirits. An example is drawn from our corporeal nourishment, which through various transmutations in the body is changed into animal spirits and from these into more subtle and spiritual spirits. S. 6. Concerning the good and bad angels of men, which are properly human angels, and which proceed from him just like branches from roots. S. 7. The sixth and last argument is taken from some passages of Scripture.

S. 1. The fourth argument, to prove that spirit and body do not differ in essence but in degree, I take from that intimate union or bond which exists between spirits and bodies, by means of which spirits have dominion over bodies with which they are united, so that they move them from one place to another and use them as instruments in their various operations. For if spirit and body are so opposed to each other that while spirit is alive or a living and perceiving substance, body is merely a dead mass, and if spirit is penetrable and indivisible, while body is impenetrable and divisible – all of which are opposing attributes – then what, I ask, is it that unites and joins them so much? Or what are those chains or ties which hold them so firmly together and for such a length of time? Furthermore, when a spirit or soul has been separated from a body, so that the spirit no longer rules over it or has power to move it as before, what is the cause of this separation? If one says that the vital affinity of the soul for the
body is the cause of this union and that this vital affinity ceases with the
corruption of the body, I answer that one must first ask in what this vital affinity
consists? For if they cannot tell us in what this affinity consists, they are talking
foolishly with inane words which have sound but not sense. For, surely,
according to the sense in which they take body and spirit, there is no affinity
whatsoever. For body is always dead matter lacking life and perception, no less
when spirit is in it than when spirit leaves it. Thus there is no affinity at all
between them. But if some affinity does exist, it would clearly remain the same
whether the body is whole or corrupt. If they deny this because spirit requires
an organized body to perform the vital actions of the external senses and to move
the body and transfer it from place to place, which organization is lacking in a
corrupt body, this does not solve the difficulty. For why does spirit require such
an organized body? For example, why does the spirit require a corporeal eye so
wonderfully formed and organized that I may see through it? Why does spirit
need corporeal vision so that it may see corporeal objects? And why is it
necessary for the image of an object to be transmitted through the eye so the
soul may see it? If it were altogether spirit and in no way body, why does it need
such different corporeal organs, which differ from its nature so greatly?
Furthermore, how can a spirit move its body or any of its members if the spirit
(as they affirm) is of such a nature that no part of its body may resist in any way,
as one body usually resists another when, as a result of its impenetrability, it is
moved by it? For if spirit so easily penetrates every body, why, when it moves
from place to place, does it not leave the body behind since it can so easily pass
through it without any or the least resistance? Clearly, this is the cause of all
those motions which we see in the world when one thing moves another, namely
that the two are impenetrable, in the sense already explained. For were it not for
this impenetrability, one creature could scarcely move another because they
would not oppose or resist each other in any way. We have an example of this in
the sails of ships by means of which the wind drives the ship — and all the more
strongly the fewer the openings, holes, and passages there are in the sails. On the
contrary, if instead of sails, a net were unfurled through which the wind would
pass freely, the ship would barely move, even though a great storm was blowing.
Thus we see how this impenetrability causes the existence of this motion and
produces it. Moreover, if there were no impenetrability, as in the case of body
and spirit, then there could be no resistance, and consequently spirit could not
cause any motion of a body.

S. 2. If they object that God, who is completely incorporeal and intimately
present in all bodies, nevertheless moves whatever bodies he pleases and that he
is the prime mover of all things, yet has nothing impenetrable about him, I
answer that this motion by which God moves a body is completely different
from the way a soul moves a body. For the will of God, which gave being to
bodies, also gave them motion. Hence motion itself comes from God, through
whose will all motion occurs. For, just as a creature cannot give being to itself, so it cannot move itself. But in him and through him we move, live, and have our being (Acts 17: 28). Therefore motion and being come from the same cause, God the creator, who nevertheless remains unmoved himself and does not go from place to place since he is equally present everywhere and bestows motion on creatures. But it is a very different case when the soul moves the body, for the soul is not the author of motion but merely limits it to this or that particular thing. And the soul itself moves together with the body from place to place, and if the body is imprisoned or bound with chains, the soul cannot depart from the prison or chains. If anyone wishes to illustrate the motion of the body produced by the soul through the example of God moving his creatures, the comparison is very inappropriate; indeed, they are as dissimilar as if someone wished to describe how an architect builds a ship or house by giving the example of God creating the first substance or matter. In this case the dissimilarity is clearly great. For God gave being to creatures, but a carpenter does not give being to the wood from which he builds a ship.

Indeed, no one thinks that because I say that the motions of every creature come from God that he is or could therefore be the author or cause of sin, for although the power to move comes from God, yet sin in no way comes from God but from the creature which has abused this power and directed it to something other than it should. Thus sin is ataxia, or a disorderly direction of motion or the power of moving from its appropriate place or state to another. If, for example, a ship is moved by wind but is steered by a helmsman so that it goes from this or that place, then the helmsman is neither the author nor cause of the wind; but the wind blowing, he makes either a good or bad use of it. When he guides the ship to its destination, he is praised; but when he grounds it on the shoals and suffers shipwreck, then he is blamed and deemed worthy of punishment.

Furthermore, why does the spirit or soul suffer so with bodily pain? For if when united to the body it has no corporeality or bodily nature, why is it wounded or grieved when the body is wounded, whose nature is so different? For since the soul can so easily penetrate the body, how can any corporeal thing hurt it? If one says that only the body feels pain but not the soul, this contradicts the principle of those who affirm that the body has no life or perception. But if one admits that the soul is of one nature and substance with the body, although it surpasses the body by many degrees of life and spirituality, just as it does in swiftness and penetrability and various other perfections, then all the above mentioned difficulties vanish; and one may easily understand how the soul and body are united together and how the soul moves the body and suffers with it and through it.\(^9\)

\(^9\) That this is the opinion of the Hebrews appears from a passage in the Kabbala Demudata, i, pt. 3, Dissertio 8, ch. 13, pp. 171 ff.
S. 3. We may easily understand how one body is united with another by that true affinity which one has for another in its nature. Thus the most subtle and spiritual body can be united with a very gross and dense body by means of certain mediating bodies, which share the subtlety and crassness in various degrees between the two extremes. These median bodies are truly the ties or links through which such a subtle and spiritual soul is connected to so crass a body. The union is broken when these mediating spirits are absent or cease.\textsuperscript{12} From this basic principle, we easily understand how the soul moves the body just as one subtle body is able to move another crass and dense one. And since the body itself is sentient life or perceiving substance, it is no less easily understood how one body can wound or bring pain or pleasure to another body, because things of one or of a similar nature can easily affect each other. And this argument can be used to answer similar difficulties, namely, how spirits move other spirits, and how spirits contend or struggle with other spirits, and also how good spirits promote unity, harmony, and friendship with each other. For if all spirits can be intimately present within each other, how can they contend or struggle about their location and how can one expel another? And yet a few people who know their own hearts have learned from experience that there is such an expulsion and struggle of spirits, especially of good spirits against evil ones.

But if one says that the spirit of God and Christ is intimately present in all things and that it wages war and contends against the devil and his spirits in the human heart, I answer that this comparison is invalid when the operations of God and his creatures are compared. For God’s ways are infinitely superior to ours. Nevertheless, one valid objection remains. For when the spirits of God and Christ struggle against the devil and the evil spirits in the human heart, they unite with certain good spirits whom they sanctify and prepare for this union and which serve as a vehicle or chariot in their struggle and conflict with wicked spirits. And so far as these evil spirits struggle against those good spirits in the human heart, they struggle against God and Christ. These good spirits are the spirits of that pious and faithful person who was made good even though he was wicked before. God and Christ help every pious person in this struggle so that they may prevail over evil spirits; however, God allows those who are evil and unfaithful to be captured and vanquished by evil spirits. For God helps no one who does not fear and love him, and who does not obey him and believe in his power, goodness, and truth. When he unites with these people, then the good spirits of such men are like so many arrows and swords which wound and drive back those dark and impure spirits.

\textsuperscript{12} That there were innumerable spirits of differing degrees of density linking body and spirit was a standard aspect of Renaissance philosophy. John Donne presents this in "The Extasie," II. 61–4:
\begin{quote}
As our blood labours to beget
Spirits, as like souls as it can,
Because such fingers need to knit
That subtile knot, which makes us man.
\end{quote}
If one asks, how can the human soul, even in the highest state of purity, be united with God, since God is pure spirit, whereas the soul, though pure in the highest degree, always partakes of corporeality? I answer that this happens through Jesus Christ, who is the true and appropriate medium between the two. Christ and the soul can be united without any other medium because of their great affinity and likeness, which those learned men cannot demonstrate who say that the nature of body and spirit are completely contrary to each other.

S. 4. I take the fifth argument from what we observe in all visible bodies such as earth, water, stones, wood, etc. What an abundance of spirits are in all these things! For earth and water continually produce animals, as they did in the beginning. Hence a pool full of water produces fish, although there were no fish put there to propagate. Since all other things come from earth and water originally, it necessarily follows that the spirits of all animals are in the water. For this reason Genesis says that the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters, so that from the waters he would bring forth whatever was created afterwards.

One might say that this argument does not prove that all spirits are bodies, but only that all bodies have in themselves the spirits of all animals; hence every body has a spirit in it, and although spirit and body are united, they always remain different from each other in their natures and cannot therefore be changed into each other. I reply, however, that if every body, even the smallest, has in itself the spirits of all animals and other things, just as matter is said to have all forms within itself, does a body have all these spirits in it actually or only potentially? If actually, how is it possible that so many spirits essentially different from the body can actually exist in these different essences in a small body (even in the smallest conceivable) unless by intimate presence, which cannot be communicated to any creature, as proved above? Furthermore, if all kinds of spirit exist in any body, even the smallest, how does it happen that such an animal is produced from this body and not from another? Indeed, how does it happen that all kinds of animals are not immediately produced from one and the same body? This is contrary to experience, for we see that in all its operations nature has its order according to which one animal is formed from another and one species proceeds from another, either ascending to a higher perfection or descending to a lower state. But if one says that all spirits are contained in every body in their different essences, not actually but only potentially, then one must concede that the body and all those spirits are the same; that is, that body can be changed into them, as when we say that wood is potentially fire (that is, is changeable into it) and water potentially air (that is, is changeable into it), etc.

Yet if spirits and bodies are so inseparably united to each other that no body can be without spirit, indeed without many spirits, this is surely a weighty argument that they are of one original nature and substance. Otherwise, we could not comprehend why they would not finally separate from each other in
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various and startling dissolutions and separations, as we see when subtle matter separates from grosser matter.

How, finally, does it happen that when a body putrefies, other species are generated from this putrefaction? Thus animals come forth from putrefying water or earth. Even rocks, when they putrefy, turn into animals. Thus mud or other putrefying matter generates animals, all of which have spirits. How does the corruption or dissolution of the body lead to the new generation of animals? If one should say that the spirits of these animals are, as it were, released from their chains and set free by this dissolution, and they then form and shape new bodies for themselves from the aforesaid matter by means of their plastic natures, I reply, how did the first body hold those spirits captive to such a degree? Was it because it was so hard and dense? From this it follows that those spirits are nothing but subtle bodies because the hardness and denseness of the body could imprison them so that they could not escape. For, if spirit could as easily penetrate the hardest body as the softest and most fluid, it could as easily go from one to the other without need of putrefaction or death to generate new life. This captivity of spirits in certain hard bodies, and their liberation when the bodies become soft, offers a clear argument that spirit and body are of one original nature and substance, and that body is nothing but fixed and condensed spirit, and spirit nothing but volatile body or body made subtle.

S. 5. Let it be noted here that in all hard bodies, such as stones (whether common or precious), and also in metals, herbs, trees, and animals, and in all human bodies, there exist many spirits which are as if imprisoned in gross bodies and united with them because they cannot flow out or fly away into other bodies until death or dissolution occurs. There are also many other very subtle spirits which continually emanate from them and which, because of their subtlety, cannot be contained by the hardness of the bodies in which they dwell; and these subtle spirits are productions or conjunctions of the grosser spirits detained in the body. For although these are detained therein, they are not idle in their prison since the body serves as their work place to make those more subtle spirits, which then emanate in colors, sounds, odors, tastes, and various other properties and powers. Therefore the gross body and the spirits contained in it are like the mother of the more subtle spirits, who take the place of children. For nature always works toward the greater perfection of subtlety and spirituality since this is the most natural property of every operation and motion. For all motion wears away and divides a thing and thus makes it subtle and spiritual. In the human body, for example, food and drink are first changed into chyle and then into blood, and afterwards into spirits, which are nothing

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13 As a dualist More needed these so-called “plastic natures” to bridge the gap between passive matter and active soul. Because Lady Conway accepted the monist view that matter and spirit were simply different aspects of one substance, she rejected this concept as superfluous and unnecessary. This rejection is further evidence of her independence of mind.
but blood brought to perfection. These spirits, whether good or bad, always advance to a greater subtlety or spirituality. Through those spirits which come from blood, we see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and feel, indeed, think, love, hate, and do everything we do. From these spirits also come the semen, through which the race propagates, and especially the human voice and speech, which is full of those good or bad spirits made and formed in the heart. As Christ taught: “The mouth speaks from a full heart and the good man produces good deeds from the good treasure of the heart” (Matthew 12: 34–5). Likewise, that which goes into a man does not defile him (Mark 7: 15), but that which proceeds from him returns to him in the same way it left him.

S. 6. And these are the proper angels of men or their ministering spirits (although there are other angels, both good and bad, which come to men) mentioned by Christ when he says of the little ones who believe in him, “Their angels look upon the face of my heavenly father” (Matthew 18: 10). These are the angels of believers who become like little children.

S. 7. I draw the sixth and final argument from certain texts of both the Old and the New Testament, which prove in clear and certain words that everything has life and is truly alive in some degree. As it is said in Acts 17: 25, “He gives life to all things,” etc. In 1 Timothy 6: 13 it is said of God that “he makes everything live.” Furthermore in Luke 20: 38 it is said, “He is not called the God of the dead but of the living” (although this applies primarily to human beings, it is nevertheless generally true of everything else). Certainly, he is the God of those things which have their resurrection and regeneration in their own species, just as human beings have theirs within their species. For the death of things is not their annihilation but a change from one kind or degree of life to another. For this reason the apostle proves the resurrection of the dead and illustrates it with the example of a grain of wheat which, having fallen to the ground, dies and rises again exceptionally fruitful (John 12: 24).