

TRUTH IN THE INWARD PARTS

*THE WORK OF GOD IN THE SOULS OF
TEN EARLY QUAKERS*

EDITED BY JASON R. HENDERSON

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Market Street Fellowship
981 W. Market Street Akron, Ohio 44313
email: MSFPrinting@gmail.com
phone: 330-419-1527

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INTRODUCTION

The birth of the Religious Society of Friends (called Quakers) is usually attributed to the preaching and ministry of George Fox (1624-1691) in England, and indeed, Fox was made a mighty instrument in the hand of the Lord for the turning of hearts, and the opening of blind eyes, to the true nature, light, and life of Christianity. But the incredible spiritual awakening and recovery of true Christianity that took place in the 17th century cannot be attributed to the work or teaching of any man. Truth be told, there were many thousands of believers at this time in history (from all persuasions and backgrounds) who had become disillusioned with the many man-centered and lifeless sects of Christendom, and who were crying out for the true light, life, and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Many were wandering from place to place, giving ear to pastors, priests, and scholars, and still groaning under the burden of inward pollution and spiritual darkness, longing for the living waters that were promised to His true disciples. Finding room in these hearts for His implanted Word, the Lord Himself raised up, gathered, and purified a people to worship Him in Spirit and Truth, to testify against all

unrighteousness and idolatry, and to call the world back to the Christianity of the first Apostles, to the everlasting covenant of life and light in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Not only George Fox, but hundreds of other ministers were raised up by the Lord and sent all over Europe, the American colonies, and elsewhere, preaching the true gospel in the demonstration of the Spirit and power. What did they preach? They preached true repentance from the dark and corrupt nature of man, and from all dead works of the flesh, “turning men from the darkness to the light and from the dominion of Satan to God.” They preached Christ as the “Light of life,” the “true Light that enlightens every man,” apart from whom nobody can truly see, understand, or experience the things of God’s kingdom. Indeed, this spiritual light that “shines in the heart to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ” is the only way that the true gospel can be distinguished from the dead opinions, notions, and traditions of men. They preached true freedom from sin and darkness, and an experienced victory over the law of sin and death that reigns in the natural, fleshly man. They were not content to sit down short of God’s many promises to “cleanse the inside of the cup and dish,” and to “purify the conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” Instead they learned and took up the cross of Christ, which is the power of God to crucify and subdue the man of flesh and the power of sin and death that reigns in him. Faithfully they clung to the cross as a heavenly lifeline, knowing that the Second Man could not reign in power and peace wherever the first man remained uncrucified. They preached Christ the living substance and fulfillment of all old covenant

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shadows and testimonies. And as Christ was revealed and formed in their hearts, they witnessed a worship in Spirit and truth in the new (inward) temple of God, and a ministry to the Lord's body that was the outworking of His indwelling life.

The early Quakers did not see themselves as a new Christian sect or denomination, but rather as a return to the primitive Christianity of the Apostles, after a long and dark night of “apostasy” from the true Spirit and glory of the new covenant. In fact, for a time, they had no formal name for themselves, and simply called each other “Friends” because of Jesus' words in the gospel of John, “You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing.” According to George Fox's journal, the name “Quaker” originated with a magistrate named Gervase Bennet. “This Bennet,” says Fox, “was the first person that called us Quakers, because I bade them tremble at the Word of the Lord.” Thus the name Quaker began as a way of ridiculing George Fox's admonition, but soon became widely known and used throughout the world, and was eventually accepted by the Society of Friends.

In my view, the work of the Lord in and through the original Quakers of the 17th century was indeed a return to the original life, light, power, and purity that the first Christians experienced and proclaimed to be the gospel of Jesus Christ. These men and women saw the Lord, grew up in His life, and like their Master, were hated, slandered, and persecuted for it. However, as is often the case with genuine movements of the Spirit of God, their teachings

and practices were misunderstood, corrupted, and grossly misrepresented by the succeeding generations of those who bore their name. Doctrines and traditions can be handed down from one generation to the next, but the life of Christ must be born in, and experienced by, each individual soul. So it is that the Quakers of today bear little or no spiritual resemblance to their forefathers. The life and light of Christ that once reigned in the hungry hearts of the 17th century has been almost entirely forsaken, and the Society of Friends today is barely a shell of what was once perhaps the greatest spiritual awakening since Pentecost.

Some Explanations and Clarifications

Even from the earliest days of their society, many of the principles and practices of the Quakers have been greatly misunderstood and misrepresented. Even today there exists a whole host of strange and untrue opinions and interpretations of their history and theology. Before reading the journals and writings made available in this publication, I strongly recommend reading through the information provided below.

Light Within

The concept of spiritual light shining in the heart or conscience is perhaps the most well-known principle of the Quakers. Sadly, very few today (even among those who still bear the name) understand or rightly represent what the first Friends taught about this essential subject.

When early Quakers spoke of this light, they were not

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referring to anything that belongs to man by nature. Isaac Penington writes,

Man, by nature, is dead in trespasses and sins; quite dead, and his conscience is wholly dark. That which gives him the sense of his death and darkness must be another thing than his own nature, even the light of the Spirit of Christ shining in his dark heart and conscience.

Man is darkness, (Eph. 5:8) and when Christ comes to redeem him, He finds him to be in darkness. Christ finds no light already in man to help him uncover sin. Thus all the discoveries of sin that are made in the heart are by the light of Christ, and not by any light of man's nature.

In other words, natural man has absolutely no true light inherent in himself. There is nothing intrinsically good, true, or pure in man in his fallen condition. It is therefore not the conscience itself that is, or that possesses, divine light (as many wrongly assume). Paul writes, “To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.” Instead, it is Christ the Light sown as a seed in the conscience that brings man to any knowledge of truth and, when obeyed, to the salvation of the soul.

Furthermore, there have been many sad misunderstandings and false conclusions derived from the Quaker's use of the term “universal” in reference to this gift of light. The word universal was used by them to establish an intentional contrast with the prevalent idea of the time that God offers the saving knowledge of Christ to only a small,

predestined few. The Quakers rejected the idea of individual predestination, and insisted that God offers life to all mankind through a measure of His light or grace that witnesses in the heart against sin, and invites the soul to find salvation in Christ. It is this gracious, inward *invitation* that is universal. When received, followed, and obeyed, this light becomes the life and salvation of the soul. When rejected, the same light becomes man's eternal condemnation. See John 3:19-21. Early Quakers were not at all proponents of universal reconciliation.

Customs and Language

There were several accepted customs in the mid 1600's to which early Friends could not conform. The common dress of the day was very flamboyant, with an excess of useless lace, ribbons, flashy buttons, powdered wigs, etc. The normal greetings between peers involved scraping the right foot backwards along the ground, bowing low while removing the hat, and then flattering one another with titles like "your Lordship," "your Eminency," etc. Early friends felt that these and other like customs tended towards vanity, pride, and the "fleshly honor which God would lay in the dust," and so would not practice these things.

Moreover, at this time in history, the correct and plain use of "thee" and "thou" to one person was beginning to give way to "you" and "your." Most modern English speakers are unaware that the words "you" and "your" were originally *plural* pronouns used only to address two or more people, whereas "thee" and "thou" were used to

address one person. In the 1600's, it became fashionable (again, as a means of showing honor or flattery) to use the plural “you” or “your” in addressing people of higher social status, while “thee” and “thou” were reserved for servants, children, or people of lower social or economic position. Early Friends stuck to what was then considered “plain language” (using thee and thou to every single person, and you and your to two or more), rather than showing preference by addressing certain individuals in the plural. These may seem like small matters to the 21st century reader, but it is remarkable how many thousands of Friends were insulted, beaten, imprisoned, and even hanged for refusing to conform to these outward customs that serve no purpose besides flattering the fleshly man.

Silent Meetings

Both from their own personal experience, and from many lamentable occurrences in church history, early Quakers understood well the propensity of uncrucified flesh to seek to lead, govern, and teach in things pertaining to the worship and service of God. The natural man is extremely quick to run into doctrines, opinions, practices, and traditions, employing his own carnal wisdom and ability in an attempt to build the church of God. Friends saw clearly that this creates a false Christianity that stands in the will and nature of fallen man, and which (like King Saul) seeks to offer the Lord the best of what He has already rejected and condemned.

Quakers were therefore extremely careful and intentional about waiting on the Lord in the silence of their

flesh, and feeling after His life-giving Spirit, before they attempted to pray, preach, worship, encourage, or admonish in their meeting together. In the words of Robert Barclay,

When assembled, the great work of one and all ought to be to wait upon God, and, in turning away from their own thoughts and imaginations, to feel the Lord's presence and know the "gathering into His Name" where He is "in the midst" according to His promise. And as everyone is gathered in this way, and met together inwardly in their spirits as well as outwardly in their bodies, there the secret power and virtue of life is known to refresh the soul, and the pure motions and breathings of God's Spirit are felt to arise. And from the Spirit, words of declaration, prayers, or praises arise, and the acceptable worship is known which both edifies the Church and is well-pleasing to God. In this way, no man limits the Spirit of God, nor brings forth his own contrived and gathered stuff, but everyone brings forth only what the Lord puts into their hearts, which is spoken not in man's will and wisdom but "in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit and of Power."

It is important to clarify that silence was never a goal of Quaker meetings. The silencing of the forward, fleshy mind, and the humble turning of the heart to the Lord, was rather a means to an end, and a way to guard against the wisdom and religion of man while they waited for the pure and powerful influences of God's Spirit to feed and govern His own spiritual body.

Perfection

Early Quakers are sometimes known for their teaching that believers can become “perfect” even on this side of the grave. The word perfect is one that can invite a lot of misinterpretation and imagination, and so it is important to understand exactly what they believed in this regard. First of all, this perfection has nothing to do with fixing or changing the fallen fleshly nature. The nature of Adam is not repaired; it is experientially crucified through the inward cross, the power of God, so that the soul becomes progressively free from the law of sin and death, and governed by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Therefore, the progress and perfection of the soul arises from the birth and growth of the Seed of Christ within, and its victory (by degrees) over the body of death. Early Friends believed (and many experienced) that the heart could be united and subjected to the living Truth in such a way so as not to obey the suggestions and temptations of the evil one, to cease from actual sinning, and in this sense be perfect. However, they were always very careful to insist on the following two points: 1) that this kind of perfection always allows for continued spiritual growth. As Christ Himself is boundless and eternal, so our growth in Him knows no limits or restrictions. And 2) that there always remains the possibility of sinning wherever the heart and mind does not diligently and watchfully attend to the Lord.

Persecution Against Early Quakers

Jesus said to His disciples, “You will be hated by all for My name's sake,” and “If the world hates you, you know

that it hated Me before you.” The world's hatred towards disciples of Christ is rarely experienced today, in part because of the prevalence of a cross-less, flesh-friendly gospel. It is uncommon (at least in the western world) for believers in Jesus Christ to suffer for the enjoyment of a clear conscience before God. This, however, was not the case when the Lord raised up the original Society of Friends. The first Quakers were despised, persecuted, slandered, beaten, imprisoned, and killed, both by magistracy and by the Christian sects of their time (Protestant and Catholic). Early Friends lived at a time when very little liberty was granted to citizens to believe and worship as they saw fit. The Church of England was run by the state, and multitudes of laws were made and enforced mandating certain beliefs, specific meeting places and forms of worship, and forbidding all others. Because of their refusal to conform to laws that violated their consciences in the sight of God, Quakers suffered cruel beatings and whippings, long imprisonments in cold, filthy prisons, cutting off of ears, banishment from their native country, and even death. Between the years 1650–1690, prisons in England were literally filled with Quakers who, for conscience sake, would not forgo meeting together to worship God in the way they believed He required of them. Nor did they feel free to attend other compulsory religious services, pay obligatory tithes to persecuting priests, or swear oaths of allegiance in disregard to Christ's command in Matthew 5:34—“Swear not at all...but let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' be 'No.'”

About this Book

This book is a collection of autobiographical accounts taken from the journals and letters of ten early Quakers. There is a surprising quantity of such documents in existence; early Friends were prolific writers, and were careful to preserve whatever writings might prove instructive and encouraging to future seekers of truth. I have chosen the stories of these ten individuals, not because they were necessarily eminent members in the Society of Friends, but because their writings manifest an unrelenting pursuit of truth, and recount (in helpful detail) the steps of their inward journey, and the spiritual growth by which they became “vessels of honor, sanctified and useful to the Master.”

Most of these narratives are shorter excerpts taken from much larger publications, the originals of which are strongly recommended, and can be found in the *Friend's Library*.¹ Each selection has been carefully modernized and minimally edited in the hopes of reintroducing the lives and principles of these remarkable men and women to the modern reader.

Jason R. Henderson
July, 2016

¹ *Friend's Library*, edited by William Evans and Thomas Evans, pub. 1837-1850. Available online (on our website and elsewhere) as PDF scans of the original fourteen volumes.

**THE LIFE OF
STEPHEN CRISP**

(1628 – 1692)

Oh, all you saints, and all you inhabitants of the earth, let the name of Jehovah be famous among you, for there is no God like unto Him! Let His mercies and judgments be remembered and recorded from generation to generation; for infinite is His goodness, and His loving kindness unspeakable. And although no man can fully recount His loving kindness reached out to him, yet let all men testify of His goodness, and declare of His mercies by which He is drawing the sons of men to Himself, and winning and gathering the scattered to the true rest. Therefore, David well said, “I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High; I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember His wonders of old. I will meditate on all Your works, I will talk of Your doings.” (Psa. 77:11-12) Who can feel His goodness and partake of His love, and not be constrained to testify of Him?

In the sweet remembrance of His manifold, innumerable mercies, I am even overcome. For my whole life has

been as a continued series of mercy and goodness, and all my days He has been my upholder. When I knew Him not, He was near unto me; yes, when I rebelled against Him, He ceased not to be gracious; His covenant stood with His Seed Christ, and for His sake He spared me. His long-suffering and patience were extended towards me, or I would have been cut off in the days of my resisting Him. But oh, well may I say He is a gracious and merciful God, long-suffering, patient and full of compassion. Oh, let His name be proclaimed to the ends of the earth, and let the ears of the heathen be opened to hear the sound of His praise.

Surely the Lord has had an eye of tender compassion upon me from the day that He formed me, and has appointed me to His praise, and to witness forth His goodness. For as soon as I can remember, and as soon as I was capable of understanding, He made me understand that there was something in me which did not consent to any evil, but rather stood in my soul as a witness against all evil. This manifested that I should not lie, nor steal, nor be stubborn or disobedient, but should behave myself in meekness and quietness; and it also set the truth before me as that which was better than falsehood. This same witness, even in the days of my childhood, ministered peace and boldness to me when I hearkened to its counsel. But there was a contrary nature and seed in me that was of this world, and not of God. This nature, I found, inclined unto evil, and unto the way and manner of this evil world, pleasing the carnal mind. And an eye began to open in me that saw what was acceptable with man, rather than what was well-pleasing to God.

Now as this eye was daily strengthened by various objects and examples of vanity, a delight sprung up in me for that which was evil, and my senses became exercised with vanity, by which the pure Seed became oppressed and grieved from day to day, and began to cry out against me. Condemnation began to be stirred up in me, and fear entered where before there was no fear, and the pure innocence was lost. And then, when at any time I did or spoke any evil, the divine Light, or pure Seed in me would manifest it to me, and show me that I ought not to have done it. I felt condemnation, which I knew not how to escape. But then the evil spirit (which leads into transgression) would always stand ready to help in this time of need. Sometimes it stirred up a subtlety in me to plead a reason for what I had done, or a provocation, or a good intent, or else to deny, or at least to mitigate, the evil of my deed, and so to stop the mouth of the witness of God, and see if I could escape the condemnation of the witness of God and so procure my own peace.

But alas, this was a miserable help! For the light would often shine through all these pretenses and silence my reasonings. It showed me when I was but a child, in a pure understanding that is from God, that there is no good reason for any evil, let provocations, temptations, or examples be what they may. So was I often stripped naked from all my reasoning and coverings; and then I learned another way to get ease from the judgment.

When I was very young, about seven or eight years old, whenever judgment overtook me for evil, I would yield that it was true and right, and therefore concluded I must do something to please God again. And so I learned to

pray, and to weep in secret, and to make covenant with God for more watchfulness, and so for a time I felt unburdened from my weight. Yet this also was accompanied with many doubtings and questionings, as to whether my evils were indeed blotted out, especially when I saw that I was quickly overtaken by the same evil spirit, and led again into the same evil thoughts, words, or actions. For the witness of God in me cried even then to have my whole mind given up to the Lord, and that in every thought, word, and deed I should serve Him. I did not then know that this pure witness was from God, but this I knew—that I lacked power to answer its requirings in me, which witnessed against evil. And so I had sorrow day and night.

When I was about nine or ten years old, I sought the power of God with great diligence and earnestness, with strong cries and tears. If I had possessed the whole world, I would have given it away to know how to obtain power over my corruptions. And when I saw the carelessness of other children, and their profaneness, and that they did not (as far as I could discern) think of God, nor consider His reproofs, though they were far more wicked than I in their speech and actions—“Oh Lord,” I thought, “What will become of these?...seeing so heavy a hand is upon me that I can find neither peace nor assurance of Your love!”

Then the enemy would tempt me to rest and be quiet, urging that things were better with me than with others. And indeed, my mind strongly desired to make a peace for myself here. But the pure witness followed me and left me not alone, pursuing me night and day. It broke my peace faster than I could make it up, for my mind was in my own works, and I could see no further than myself. I heard talk

of a Christ and Savior, but I did not truly know Him.

At that time I lent my ear to the discourses and disputes of the times, which were very many, and through them many ideas were let into my mind. Sometimes I heard men argue that God sees no sin in His people. "Then," said I, "I am surely not one of them, for He clearly marks all my transgressions." At other times, I heard men talk of an election and a reprobation of persons before time began. I considered this diligently and thought, if it were so, and if I could find signs and marks of being an elect soul, it might bring me to peace, and I would not be so tossed as I had been.

I grew to be a very diligent hearer and regarnder of the best ministers (as they were reputed), and went with as much diligence and cheerfulness to reading and hearing sermons as other children went to their play and sports. And when I heard anyone speak about that point of election, and how a man might know if he were elect—for (in their dark wisdom) they would often lay down signs of a true believer and an elect soul—then I would try myself by their measure, and weigh myself in their balance. In doing so, I would sometimes gather a little peace for myself, finding such things in me as they described as signs, such as a desire against sin, a loathing myself for sin, a love to those that were counted the best people, a longing to be rid of sin, etc.

But alas, here was still the blind leading my poor blind soul! This was not the balance of the sanctuary, and so when I had gotten a little peace and quiet, and desired to hold it, alas, it was soon shattered and broken again! For when God's pure witness arose in me, by which I was

weighed in the true balance, then I found I was far too light! And then an anguish would again be kindled in me, and a cry would come forth, "Oh where shall I go, and what shall I do, that I may come to a settled state, before I go from here and am seen no more!"

In this woeful condition, the thought of death would bring a dread over both soul and body. Indeed, trembling and horror were often upon me, fearing that I was set apart as a vessel of wrath and so must bear the fiery indignation of God forever. And oh, that word *forever* would often seem terrible to me; but how to prevent this I did not know.

Now I began to perceive more clearly my own insufficiency and lack of power, for I saw that it was not in my power to keep myself from sin. I knew that the wages of sin was death, and so I came to a great crisis—sometimes thinking I had better give up seeking, and sometimes thinking that if I perish I had better perish seeking. Here the good got the upper hand for a season, and I became a diligent seeker, and prayer, and mourner, and would often find the most secret fields and unusual places, and there pour out my complaints to the Lord.

When I was but about twelve years old, my general and constant cry was for the power by which I might overcome corruptions. And though I heard the teachers of those times daily saying that none could live without sin, and the doctrine of perfection was held as a dangerous error, yet that did not abate my cry (though indeed it did often weaken my belief of obtaining, and so made my prayers almost faithless and without success). For I knew that without the power of God I must perish, let them say

what they would, and I could not reckon myself saved while I was still captivated by a corrupt and rebellious nature. I remembered the words of Christ, "He that commits sin is the servant of sin," and indeed, I knew I was.

In this iron furnace I toiled and labored, and none knew my sorrows and griefs, which at times were almost intolerable. Indeed, I often wished I had never been born, or that my end might be like the beasts of the field, for I considered them happy, not having such a bitter combat as I had here, nor likely to endure what I feared would be my portion hereafter. I saw my misery clearly, but I saw no way to escape it.

Then I thought I had best not keep my misery to myself, but disclose it to some who might be able to help me. But in truth I can say, I found them all to be miserable comforters; for they counseled me to apply the promises of God by faith, and to suck comfort out of the Scriptures. And they spoke to me of the apostle's condition mentioned in the seventh chapter of Romans, and told me it was this way with him, and yet he was a servant of Jesus Christ. So they offered me this and other deceitful coverings (with which they had also covered themselves), not considering how the apostle called that a wretched and an undelivered state, as I might well do mine. But all these things found but little place in me, for my wound remained unhealed. And He that wounded me and was able to heal me, was near to me, but I knew Him not.

I went groping in that dark and dismal night of darkness, seeking the living among the dead, as many others did; but it was so dark that we could not see one another.

As for the priests and professors of those times, most of them would boast of their experiences and zeal, and of their assurance of the love of God, and what comfort they enjoyed by meditation upon the suffering of Christ for their sins, etc. "Alas!" thought I, "I can think of these things as well as you, but my wound remains fresh, and I see that I am like one of the crucifiers, as long as I live in the sin for which He died."

My soul longed after some other kind of knowledge of Him, besides that which could be attained by reading, for I saw that the worst, as well as the best, could attain such a knowledge. So I dared not lean upon the priests as much as I had done, and began to be somewhat more detached in my mind from them (though I did not yet leave them entirely). I then began to seek out the meetings of those called Separatists, to hear their gifted men (so called), whose doctrine savored more of zeal and fervency than most of the priests did. These seemed to me not so covetous to make a gain of preaching, though I could not then see how they coveted greatness and the applause of men. I was often affected with their preachings, but still the former bond was upon me (and they yet strengthened it): namely, the thought that if I were not elected, I could not be saved; and how I might know, no man could tell me to my satisfaction. The fear of this would often dash my comfort.

I then began to take notice of the loose walking of such Separatists, yes, even the teachers among them. I saw that they were not yet redeemed from foolish jesting, from idle words, and from anger and passion which sometimes broke out brother against brother, and so resulted in

breaches and schisms, and the rending of their churches, which they often both built and pulled down with their own hands. I also saw how inconsistent they were, sometimes letting in one doctrine, sometimes another, tossed by various winds. But I heard not a word about how I might obtain power over sin. Over some sins and some lusts I had power, but over all I did not, and nothing else would satisfy me.

When I was about seventeen or eighteen years of age, I began to seek yet further, and hearing of a people that held forth the death of Christ as available to all men, I went to hear them. After some time I came to see that there was more light, and a clearer understanding of the Scriptures among them. So I began to be conversant with them, and to frequent their meetings, and I came to be established in the belief that there was a dear Son of hope, and a way of salvation prepared for all people, and that none were excluded by an eternal decree (by name or person), but only because of unbelief and disobedience.

This ministered comfort for a while, and I determined to believe, and to get faith in Christ, and to reckon myself a believer, but I found this a hard work, even too hard for me, though I cried aloud many times to have my unbelief helped. When I saw sin prevail over me I said, "Alas, where is that faith that purifies the heart and gives victory? Mine is not such!" Then the pure witness of God would arise and testify against me for my sin, and the more my understanding was enlarged, the sharper was my judgment. Indeed, it grew so sharp, that I knew not how to endure it as well as I had done in my childhood. The rough and rebellious nature had now grown strong, and I, being in

the prime and strength of my youth, and seeing how others spent their time in pleasure and vanity, a secret lust and desire was kindled in me to partake of their cup.

For a time I took delight in the wits and inventions of men in previous times, which I found in books. I was much given to reading, and so gathered many sayings and sentences of wise philosophers and sages, and in part obtained the knowledge of many ages gone before me. These things I thought were like an ornament fitting me for discourse, and for the company of wise men. But alas, all this grew up while self stood uncrucified, and all that I obtained was but sacrificed and offered up for the obtaining a self-reputation, which should have been yoked by the cross. Yet all this served for a while to feed that unwearied, searching, and seeking soul of mine. I met with many things that seemed to give life to my soul for a season, and I began to bless myself that my time was no worse spent.

In this time I found two drawings in me: one strong drawing and enticement was into the world, wholly to give myself up to the pleasures, delights, and vanities of it; the other drawing was unto godliness, watchfulness, and seriousness. And I (poor man!) knew not what to do with regard to religion. Indeed I felt a religious inclination in me as I had from a child, and could have been well content to have taken up some form of Christian profession, but I was sorely discouraged, not finding any that held forth what I needed, either in their life or doctrine, namely: power over corruptions, without which I knew all religion would be in vain, and would not answer the end for which I should take it up.

So I desisted taking up any particular form of worship, and kept in the wild field of this world, wandering up and down, sometimes to one sort of people, sometimes to another. I took a careful inspection into the lives and doctrines of all sorts, though I confess, I left my own garden undressed until many troublesome weeds overgrew it.

I began to lose my tenderness of conscience, which I had had, and began to take pleasure in the company of the wicked. In many things I came to be like them, becoming captivated more than ever with laughter and amusement. I would often sing when I had cause to howl and mourn, and fell to gaming and pastimes, and presumed upon the mercy of God. I had a secret belief that God would one day manifest His power, and bring me out of this state. I therefore often had a dread upon me of running as far into wickedness as some others did, and was kept from many gross evils that my companions ran into. Herein was the infinite goodness of the Lord manifest, which, when I came to see with a true eye, it broke my heart. Yes, my heart and soul praises the Lord for His mercy, who kept me when I knew Him not. And though the provocations and temptations that attended me were many, yet I was preserved out of many abominations. Indeed, I must say and acknowledge (as the Lord said to Abimelech), it was the Lord that kept me.

This course of life went on for a season, about two or three years, until a weariness came upon me. Many times in the very midst of my laughter and lightness, the hand of the Lord would be heavy upon me, and His righteous judgment would kindle in me, and put a stop to my course.

Then I would lament in secret, and sometimes complain to others of my sore captivity and slavery to sin. And I often would argue, and confer with those who were counted experienced Christians, how peace and assurance might be attained. Some would say by reading and applying the promises, but I had tried this way so often and so long that it took but little with me now, and I saw I was in another state than that unto which the promises were made. Others said the only way was to be obedient to the commands and ordinances of Jesus Christ, and to be conformable to the primitive saints in walking in church order and communion. Here, they said, everyone had the strength of many, and all the church was bound to watch over every member.

I hearkened to these counselors, and was willing to do anything to find the power. So I took up the ordinance (as they called it) of water baptism, expecting then to have found more power than before. My will wrought strongly to bridle and keep down the airy part and sinful nature, and for a season I strove to maintain myself in a better state than before. However, I did not feel the virtue that could truly sanctify and wash me (for my mind wandered abroad), and the thing that kept me was not the operation of the pure love of God in my heart, and His grace prevailing in me, but rather an eye to the reputation of my religion, and a fear that I might seem to have run and acted all in vain.

These things held but for a season, before the temptation grew too strong for my will, and the devil entered his own ground and prevailed upon me. Indeed, he led me captive into sin and evil, and drew me again into vain company and sports, barren delights and pastimes as

before. Then I clearly saw that I still lacked what I had lacked before, and had grasped but a shadow and caught nothing but wind. I saw that my baptism came even short of John's, who did indeed baptize with a baptism of repentance that prepared the way of the Lord, and made His path straight. But mine failed to do even this, and so fell even shorter of the baptism of Christ, who baptizes into a fire that burns up all that is offensive to God and grieves His Holy Spirit, and also fills with a Spirit who takes delight in nothing that is corrupt.

This baptism I saw was lacking, and therefore a dissatisfaction began to grow up further in me, both of myself, and of my way. I then testified to the elders (so called) of the church, that God would shortly overturn all our worships and religions (which stood in outward and carnal things) and would make known some way above them all, which would stand forever. When they inquired what that way should be, I confessed I did not know, but waited to see what it might be.

About those days many busied themselves in talking and discoursing about a people called Quakers. I listened to their discourse with great diligence, but could hear no good report of them, but only harmful things, and many false and wicked lies. But I took notice of this: that they suffered patiently under many cruel mockings and grievous sufferings, and I did expect that when the way of God was made manifest, it would surely be hated and persecuted, though I thought this would not at all deter or frighten me from acknowledging and walking in it, once I knew it to be true. But inasmuch as I heard they held the possibility of perfection in this life, this was a thing the

wisdom of the old serpent would not join with. I reasoned strongly against this doctrine in that dark, fallen wisdom in which many are still fighting for sin today. These I now know to be no better than the host of Magog, fighting against the Lamb and His innocent life, saying in their hearts, "Rule in heaven if You will, but on earth You shall have no place; no, not one soul to bear rule and sovereignty over." (I do pity thousands who are fighting the devil's battles in this matter, but having faithfully labored with them in my generation, I leave them now, who are willful and stubborn opposers.)

In this same fallen wisdom I did reason in various ways (too many now to name) against the truth, even while I was in death and in the way of destruction. But I had not yet seen a messenger of this truth, and longed much to see one, wishing night and day that our parts might be visited by them, as I had heard others had been. At last the Lord sent His faithful servant and messenger of His everlasting gospel, James Parnell, to our town of Colchester, about the fourth month, 1655. In the twenty-seventh year of my age, this young man came in the name and power of the Most High God, in which he turned many to righteousness, both here and in other counties before, some of whom remain, and many have fallen asleep.

When I saw this man, I thought to withstand him, for he was but a youth, and I knew not the power or Spirit that was in him. I began to ask questions and to seek discourse with him, but I quickly came to feel that the Spirit of sound judgment was in him, for the witness of God arose within me, and testified to His judgment, and signified that I must acknowledge it as being just and true. On the same day and

hour I testified that all our rods of Christian profession would be devoured by his rod, (alluding to the rod of Moses and the magicians of Egypt), which is and shall certainly come to pass. Later that day I went to a meeting, and heard him declare the everlasting gospel in the name and authority of the Lord, which I could not withstand with all my wisdom and knowledge. Instead, I was constrained to acknowledge and confess to the truth.

* * *

Editor's Note

[James Parnell is said to have been “young, small of stature, and poor in appearance,” but thousands were made to confess that “he spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” He was convinced of the Truth when only fourteen years of age, and became a mighty preacher and promoter of the gospel by sixteen. Following a debate with a prominent priest, Parnell was arrested on spurious charges of being an “idle and disorderly person,” and imprisoned at Colchester Castle. There he was confined to a small hole in the thick castle wall, twelve feet above the ground. He died from sickness and ill-treatment after ten months imprisonment at the young age of nineteen. The following letter of James Parnell was addressed to Stephen Crisp, probably a short time after their first encounter and Crisp's conviction.

Friend,

Stand in, and keep your mind to that which lets you see your enemies to be of your own house. Your imagination is an enemy; your wisdom is an enemy; that which has been precious to you is now your greatest

enemy. Therefore, you must now sacrifice what you have called precious, and yield it up to death, that the Just One may be raised to life, and the righteous Seed be brought forth to reign in you and be your Head. In this way the head of the serpent will be bruised. In your measure, you will come to understand this, as you dwell low in the Light which manifests your condition; for “whatever makes manifest is Light” (Eph. 5:13).

Let that eye be kept open which the god of this world blinds in the children of the world. For by this eye, the children of light can see their enemy, and so the tempter is known, resisted, and denied. So with this eye set a constant watch, and let not the fool's eye wander abroad, which draws the wandering mind out after visible objects. Rather, stand in the warfare, giving no place to the enemy or to his delusions, but be content to become a fool, that all selfish thoughts may be judged. Then you will receive wisdom from Him who gives generously and without reproach to discern and know the enemy's schemes. But know that it is in the cross to your own will and hasty mind that the gift of God is received. Therefore it is said “He that believes will not act hastily” (Isa. 28:16).

Therefore, be not weary of the yoke of the cross, for in faith it is made easy, and the impatient nature is crucified, and patience has its perfect work. So be still in the measure of Light which exercises your mind towards God. Desire after nothing, but let your thoughts be judged, and let the power of God work, that He may be seen to be all. And by this principle alone you must be led and act, keeping in the cross to the carnal part, and denying self, both in the particular and in general. And consider not who is displeased, so long as God is

Truth in the Inward Parts

pleased, for in this you give no just occasion of offense to any. And though there is enmity in the world, yet as this leads you to walk towards God in faithfulness, so it also leads you to walk towards man with a conscience void of offense. So keep your mind to the Light, and be not hasty to know anything beyond your measure, for this is how Eve lost her paradise. Rather, lie down low in the will of God and wait upon His teaching, that He may be your Head, and you will find the way of peace and dwell in unity with the faithful. And though you are hated by the world, yet in God you will have peace and well-being.

—James Parnell

After the death of James Parnell, Stephen Crisp was called upon to write a short testimony to the character and ministry of James Parnell, which he did in a spirit that showed a precious remembrance of Parnell as the instrument of God by which his long wandering and weary soul was turned to the Truth. After speaking of the great work of the Lord in those days, Crisp goes on to say:

Babes have been His messengers, and children have been His ministers, who in their innocence have received the revelation of His Holy Spirit, by whom the deep things of His law and of His glorious gospel of life and salvation have been revealed. And among these babes, who came to receive the knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God by the working of His divine power, was this noble child, James Parnell. He was a vessel of honor indeed, and was mighty in the power and Spirit of Emanuel, breaking down and laying

Life of Stephen Crisp

desolate many strongholds and towers of defense, in which the old deceiver had fortified himself with his children. Much might be spoken of this man, and a large testimony lives in my heart to his blessed life, and to the power and wisdom that abounded in him.]

Returning to Stephen Crisp's Journal

* * *

Seeing that my wisdom and reason were overcome by the truth, I could no longer contend against it. So then, here, at the very beginning of my conviction, the enemy of my soul made an attempt to slay me by enticing me to hold truth in the same part (the natural mind) with which I had formerly withstood it, and to defend it with the same wisdom with which I had resisted it. In this way I remained a stranger to the cross that was to crucify me, but felt at liberty in the talkative and argumentative spirit, employing my wits and abilities for the truth. But although I offered the best that my earth would afford, I soon felt that my sacrifice was not accepted, and that something else was still called for. A cry was in me which called unto judgment, and the earth that had long covered her slain began to be moved, though not yet removed out of its place. Great were the struggles of my thoughts, and a great desire was kindled in me to comprehend the truth in my own understanding, as I had done the doctrines and principles of other professions. But all my labor therein was to no purpose, for a death was determined by the Lord upon my wisdom. At last I saw that my labor was in vain; indeed, my fishing could catch nothing all that night while I worked in the dark, and did not have the guidance of the light.

In this state I continued a month or two, but then a swift sword was drawn against that wise and comprehending mind, and a strong hand gave the stroke. I was hewn down like a tall cedar that at once comes down to the ground.

Then, oh the woe, misery, and calamity that opened upon me! Yes, even the gates of hell and destruction stood open, and I saw myself near falling thereinto. My hope and faith and all else fled from me, and there remained no props upon which I could rest. The tongue that was as a river was now like a dry desert; the eye that desired to see everything, was now so blind that I could see nothing certainly, except for my present undone and miserable state. Then oh, I cried out in the bitterness of my soul, "What has all my Christian profession profited me? I am poor and blind and naked, who thought I had been rich and well adorned!" Oh then I saw the harlot stripped and brought into remembrance before God. I saw her judgment had come, and I knew not how to escape the fire of vengeance which then broke forth. Oh, how wretched were my nights, and how sorrowful were my days! My delights withered even in wife and children, and in all things, and the glory of the whole world passed away like a scroll that is burned with fire. Indeed I saw nothing left in the whole world to give me any comfort. My sun lost her light, and my moon was darkened, and the stars of my course were fallen. I saw not how to direct my way, but became as one forsaken in a howling desert in the darkest night.

When I saw what God had done (for I believed this was His doing), I was ready to cry, "I am forsaken forever, for never was there a sorrow like mine! My wound is incur-

able, and my sickness none can heal!" Alas, my tongue or pen cannot express the sorrows of those days, in which I sat down in silence, fear, and astonishment, and was encompassed with sorrow and darkness. I knew none to whom I could make my complaint. I heard of joy and salvation, but could scarcely think that I should ever be a partaker of it, for I still lacked that living faith which the apostle said was "of the operation of God, who raised up Jesus," the true Seed, which Seed I still felt groaning in me to be delivered from the burden of sin, and from the oppression of the carnal mind.

After long travail, strong cries, and many bitter tears and groans, I found a little hope springing in me that the Lord (in His own time) would bring forth His Seed, even His elect Seed, the Seed of His covenant, to rule in me. This was given me at a time when the sense of my own unworthiness had so overwhelmed me in sorrow and anguish that I thought myself unworthy of any creaturely comforts. Then did the hope of the resurrection of the just spring up in me, and I was taught to wait upon God, and to eat and drink in fear and watchfulness, showing forth the Lord's death till He should come to live and reign in me. Then I waited as one who had hope that God would be gracious to me. There was something in me that was eager to know the time, how long I must wait; but I also found a constant cry in me which called my impatience to death.

On one occasion, being weary of my thoughts in the meeting of God's people, I concluded that none was like me, and that it was in vain to sit there with such a wandering mind as mine. For though I labored to stay my mind, I found I could not as I desired. At length, I decided

to arise and leave, and as I was going, the Lord thundered through me saying, "That which is weary must die." So I returned to my seat and waited in the belief of God for the death of that part which was weary of the work of God. I grew more diligent in seeking that death, that I might know how to put off the old man with his deeds and words, and imaginations, his fashions and customs, his friendship and wisdom, and all that pertained to him. So the cross of Christ was laid upon me, and I bore it.

As I became willing to take up the cross, I found it to be that thing which I had sought from my childhood—namely, the power of God; for by it, I was crucified to the world, and it to me, which nothing else could ever do. And oh, how glad was my soul when I had found the way to slay my soul's enemies! Oh the secret joy that was then in me! For in the midst of all my conflicts and combats I had this confidence: if I only take up the cross, I shall obtain victory, for it is the power of God through faith unto salvation. And as I have found it to be so in some things, so I shall find it in all things, in due time. Then the reproach of the gospel became joyous to me, though in those days it was very cruel and grievous to flesh and blood. Nevertheless, I despised the shame for the joy that was now set before me, for I had a hope I would in time partake of Christ's joy, if I would abide faithful. It was my great care, night and day, to keep so low and out of the workings of my own will, that I might discern the mind of God, and do it, though it be ever so great a cross to my own.

Yet the enemy of my soul followed me closely and very secretly. And taking notice how willing I was to obey the Lord, he strove to get up into the seat of God, and to move

as an angel of light, to betray me and lead me into something that appeared like the service of God. Yes, many sore conflicts did I meet with before I was able to distinguish in all things between the workings of the true Spirit and power, and that which was but the dark spirit transformed. But in that I had now surely tasted the love and goodness of God, I trusted in Him, and committed the keeping of my soul unto Him in singleness of heart. Many and daily were His deliverances which He made known to me, beyond all recount or remembrance of man. Praise the Lord forever, oh my soul, for He cared for you in your infancy, and kept you in the days of your distress!

The more I came to feel and perceive the love of God and His goodness to flow forth upon me, the more I was humbled and bowed in my mind to serve Him, and to serve the least of His people among whom I walked. As the Word of wisdom began to spring in me, and the knowledge of God grew, so I became as a counselor to those who were tempted in like manner as I had been. Yet I was kept so low that I waited to receive counsel daily from God, and from those that were over me in the Lord, who were in Christ before me, against whom I never rebelled, nor was stubborn. And I found that the more I was kept in subjection myself, the more evil spirits were made subject to me, and the more I was enabled to help the weak and feeble ones. So the eyes of many came to be upon me, as one with whom there was a measure of counsel and understanding.

The church of God in those days increased, and my care for it also daily increased, and the weight of things relating both to the outward and inward condition of poor Friends came upon me. And being called of God and His

people to care for the poor, and to relieve their necessities as I saw occasion, I did it faithfully for many years with diligence and much tenderness. I exhorted and reprov'd any that were slothful, and encouraged those that were diligent, making distinction according to the wisdom God had given me.

I continued to mind my own state and condition, seeking the honor that comes from God alone. A cry was in me to keep on my spiritual armor, for all my enemies were not yet put under my feet. So I kept my watch, not knowing where the enemy might again appear, but after a while I found his appearance once more to be very sharp, upon the following occasion.

About the year 1659, I often felt the abounding of the love of God in my heart, and there was a cry in me to stand entirely given up to His will, not knowing or foreseeing what the Lord was intending to do with me. But His eye saw further than mine. His love, tenderness, and compassion wrought so mightily in me that it extended to all men on the face of the earth, so that I was made to cry in spirit, "Oh that all men knew You and Your goodness!" And once, as I was waiting upon the Lord, His Word arose in me, and commanded me to forsake and part with my dear wife and children, father and mother, and to go and bear witness to His name in Scotland, to that proud, professing nation. But when this came to pass, I indeed found that all enemies were not yet slain; for the striving, struggling, reasoning, and disputing against the command of God that I then met with cannot be expressed. Oh, how I then would have pleaded my own inability, and the care of my family, and my service in our particular meeting, and many more

things, and all that I might have been excused from this one thing which the Lord had laid upon me, which I had not thought of, nor looked for!

After many reasonings, and days and weeks by myself, I thought it best to speak of my concern to some of the faithful elders and ministers of the everlasting gospel, secretly hoping that they might discourage me in it. But, quite to the contrary, they strongly encouraged me, and laid it upon me to be faithful. So at last I gave up to the Lord, and acquainted my dear wife of the prospect, which began a new trial, as the enemy worked strongly in her to stop me. But I kept in much patience and quietness, and went and visited Friends' meetings in Essex and part of Suffolk, chiefly to see them, and to take my leave of them. In some meetings the Lord would open my mouth in a few words to the refreshing of Friends, but I rather chose silence, whenever I might do so.

The winter drew nigh, and something in me would have deferred my journey till next summer. But the Lord showed me it must not be my time, but His time. Then I would have gone by sea, but the Lord withstood me, and showed me it must not be my way, but His way; and if I would be obedient He would be with me and prosper my journey, otherwise His hand would be against me. So I gave up all, and with cheerfulness at last I obeyed. Near about the end of the seventh month I went forth, and visited the churches of Christ along the way.

As I went along in Lincolnshire and Yorkshire, I quickly perceived that the Lord was with me more than at other times, and my journey became joyful. And though I was but weak, poor, and low, yet God gave me acceptance

among the elders of His people, and in every place my testimony was owned, and various people were convinced of the everlasting truth. Then I marveled and said, "Lord, the glory alone belongs to You, for You have wrought wonders for Your name's sake, and for Your holy Seed's sake."

I arrived in Scotland in the ninth month that year, and traveled to and fro that winter on foot with much cheerfulness. Many straits and difficulties attended me, which I forbear to mention, it being the time of the movement of the English and Scottish armies, upon which came the revolution of government, and the bringing back of King Charles II into England. About the eleventh or twelfth month I returned to England and traveled into the west to Westmoreland (part of Lancashire), and then southward, and in about five or six months time, I was brought home to my wife and children by the good hand of God. In all my journey I was sweetly accompanied with the presence of the Lord, and His power often filled my earthen vessel and made my cup to overflow. Praises forever be to His name!

In all my journey I lacked nothing that was good for me; for as it was my care in singleness to serve the Lord, so His tender care was over me, and He supplied me with whatever was needful in my journey. Nevertheless, all along a secret hope lived in me that, when the present journey was accomplished, I would be freed from this sort of service, and have liberty to return to my calling and family. Yet it proved quite contrary, for when I had been at home just a few days, it lay upon me to go up to London to visit the brethren and church of God there. I went in great fear and dread of God into that city, and having continued

there a few days, departed northward again at the command of the Lord. Indeed, I found my way prosperous wherever I went, and great encouragement I did daily receive from the Lord, who blessed my labor of love. And besides the peace and joy I felt in myself, I saw the effect of my labor and the travail of my soul made manifest by many being turned from darkness to light, and from the devil's power to the power of God. But still trials attended me and a prison became my portion near two hundred miles from home. Great and grievous threatenings were breathed out against me, and I found that the same spirit which wrought in the persecutors, both in their cruelty and subtlety, strove to work in me also.

But I cried to the Lord, and He helped me, and my faith failed me not. I fulfilled my service and my testimony, and at length was delivered from my prison (along with several thousand others) by a public proclamation from the king. I then returned to my own house after about an eight month absence. My heart was set to serve the Lord who had been so good unto me, yet the hope of being freed from this kind of service continued long in me, for I found this work every day more weighty than before. Many false spirits rose up and transformed themselves into the likeness of truth, yet they were enemies to the life of truth, which are the worst enemies of all. I saw that Zion's enemy, being unable to prevail in any other way, was now trying a false pretense of holiness and obedience, seeking to deceive and beguile the simple. But I cried to God to give me an understanding and discerning heart to comprehend the snare of the enemy so that I might be a help to the weak, and He did so.

As I saw the foundation struck at by the enemy, I grew zealous for the Lord and His house, and testified freely against the secret deceits of the enemy. But this became the occasion for even more exercise and sorrow, for many who could not see the depths of the workings of Satan judged my zeal and fervency against that contradicting spirit to be needless. But in meekness and patience the Lord kept me out of the warring and striving mind, for I dared not strike those whom I knew to be my fellow servants, but only those that pretended to be so, and yet served and promoted another interest. These I often wounded with the weapon God had given me, and those who came to love the judgment were healed, but many perished in their rebellion and stubbornness. Indeed, the Lord arose and blasted the work of the enemy, and opened the eyes of many that were darkened, and they came to see the end of what had been the troubler of Israel. Then peace, unity, and true love were restored in all our borders, and my joy was full, and my cup did overflow with praises and thankfulness to God who had regarded His heritage and people, and had delivered them from the devices of the wicked one.

My soul grew daily more in love with Zion, and there was nothing in all the world as desirable to me as the prosperity of the gospel, and the spreading and publishing of the Lord's name and truth in all the earth. This love constrained me to travel with great diligence from country to country, to make known what God had done for my soul, and to publish the Day of the Lord. Yes, this Day of redemption (in which the captivity of spiritual Israel is brought back to the Lord) did prove glad tidings unto

many who received the report and believed it. These came to behold the revelation of the holy, powerful arm of God, to their soul's satisfaction. And in most parts of England where I traveled, I found the Lord daily adding to the church those who were being saved. In this my joy truly increased, and I began to be more freely given up to the work and service of God, and to the ministry of the gospel.

In about the year 1663, I was moved to cross the seas, and to visit the seed of God in the Low Countries,¹ which I did with cheerfulness. Though I was in an unknown land, and with an unknown speech, I declared the truth to the refreshing of many, and to the bringing back of some from error— sometimes through an interpreter, and sometimes in my own tongue. Having accomplished that visit, I returned in peace to England.

After awhile, I was again required of God to go down into the north country, and I labored in the word and doctrine with great diligence and fervency along the sea-coast, and so down to Newcastle, and somewhat beyond. Being led by the Spirit, I came back again a different way, more eastward through the land, and found throughout my journey that the plant of God's renown was flourishing and growing. The meetings were large, and the hearts of Friends were enlarged in love to me, as mine was to them.

Having returned, a heavy weight came upon me concerning the great city of London, stronger than ever before. I went up full of might and power, and as the Lord opened my mouth and ordered me, I daily warned them of the abominations and wickedness that ran among them

¹ The Low Countries consisted of what is now the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, and parts of France and Germany.

like a stream, and I declared the judgments of God at hand upon them for their great wickedness, which followed speedily both by war and fire, and many more calamities.² After this, in about 1667, it was required of me again to go into Holland, together with my dear companion Josiah Coale. We traveled to and fro, and visited the churches about three months and returned.

I went again into the north of England, my heart being abundantly drawn out towards the noble seed of God in those parts. The love and tenderness of heart I felt towards them made all travels, labors, and perils easy, because I still saw the tender plants of my heavenly Father in a thriving and growing condition. I felt the virtue of life daily springing in me, which was given me to water the heritage and garden of God. As soon as I felt clear, I returned, feeling still more and more the care of the church of God coming upon me. This constrained me to diligence, and to be as swift as I could be, that I might be as serviceable as possible in my generation, and keep myself clear of the blood of all men, which I found to be no easy or slight work.

After I had safely returned, I found the presence and power of the Lord still leading me to and fro from country to country. I was now obedient, not by constraint as formerly, but of a willing mind, counting His service freedom, and feeling myself freed from the cares of this life, having learned to cast all my cares upon Him. After a

2 Most notably, a war beginning in 1665 between the English and the Dutch, which ended in a Dutch victory; the Plague of London in 1665-1666 (in which between 100,000 and 200,000 persons were killed); and the Great Fire of London in 1666 which destroyed 13,200 houses and 87 parish churches.

year or two of more travel in England, the Lord laid yet more of the weight and care of the affairs of His people in the Low Countries upon me, and I found a drawing towards them. So in the year 1669, I went over and visited the meetings, obtained various new meetings, delighting to see to the good order and government of the affairs relating to Truth and Friends.

* * *

Stephen Crisp continued a faithful and diligent minister in the Society of Friends until his death in 1692, at 64 years of age. During his 35 years of ministry, he was known by all to be a tireless laborer, an encouraging father in the church, a prolific writer, and a great sufferer for the cause of truth. His journal omits or passes over some of his most painful trials, as though he desired not to call attention to himself. But he endured frequent abuse from the enemies of the gospel, suffered several cruel imprisonments, lost two wives in the course of his pilgrimage, and all of his children in the plague of 1665. Through all, Stephen Crisp leaned on the mighty arm of the Lord, and found His grace to be sufficient in everything. On his deathbed he was heard to say, "I desire the Lord to deliver me out of this troublesome and painful body. If He will but say the word, it is done. Yet there is no cloud in my way. I have a full assurance of my peace with God in Jesus Christ."

**THE JOURNAL OF
JOHN RICHARDSON**

(1667 – 1753)

I was not above thirteen years of age when my father died, yet the Lord was at work by His light, grace, and Holy Spirit in my heart. I did not then know what it was which inwardly disquieted my mind when anything that was evil prevailed over the good in me, which it oftentimes did, for lack of taking heed to the Spirit of God in my heart. I desired ease and peace some other way, without taking up the cross of Christ to my own corrupt will, and so I strove for some time (as no doubt many do) to make merry over the just witness of God in my heart, until for a season He seemed to be slain, or to have disappeared. Then I took liberty, but not in gross evils which many ran into, being preserved religiously inclined. I sought after professors of Christianity and inquired of them for my information and satisfaction, seeking to find, if I could, anything that was safe to rest in, or any true and solid comfort to my poor disconsolate and bewildered soul. But I was afraid lest I should be deceived, or take up a false rest in anything that was wrong or unsafe—which fear was the great love and mercy of God to me.

I searched and inquired many times among those who were but in the written letter and outward court, where the veil remains over the understanding, and the eye of the mind is not truly opened to see into things that are hidden from all carnal-minded men. So my state and afflictions were hidden from these, along with the various deceitful workings of Satan, and the strong temptations which I met with. These blind guides could not see, nor did they know how to direct me to the true Shepherd of Israel, the Law-giver coming out of Zion, who turns away ungodliness from Jacob and transgression from Israel; for these had not truly experienced deliverance wrought in themselves out of the cloudy, bewildered, and tempted state which I was in.

Oh that people would come to Him that has the eye salve, with which if the eye be truly anointed, it will see things clearly as they are, and not darkly, mistaking trees for men, and things terrestrial for things celestial! Oh that they would buy gold, tried by the fire of Him who is called the Tried Stone, elect and precious, laid in Zion for a foundation! This is Christ whom the true church believes in and builds upon, and so is enriched with His love, power, and virtue, which is better than outward gold. Indeed, this is the anointing, which the true church has, and receives from Christ, the Holy One. And such as do truly put on His righteousness, purity, and holiness, their clothing is better than that of fine linen outwardly. Oh that all the inhabitants of the earth might be thus anointed, enriched, and truly clothed, that no more inward blindness or poverty may be found in the children of men, nor the shame of their nakedness be seen any more! Receive and learn these

things, you that can, of Him that is the faithful and true witness, who always witnesses against the evil in man, but always gives witness to the Father for the good in men which they say and think. This is the Spirit of Him that was dead, and is alive, no more to be known after the flesh (as the apostle gave testimony), but is to be known inwardly and spiritually by the children of men.

It is He alone that opens the blind eye, and unstops the deaf ear, and pierces into the soul that has been clouded and captivated, imprisoned, and misguided, even in a wilderness state, seeing no way for deliverance, like Israel in the land of Egypt, when the Lord Jehovah sent Moses, a lively type of Christ, and employed him in that great work of pleading with and plaguing Pharaoh and the Egyptians. For a time their burdens were increased, and their exercises more bitter, until their deliverance was in a good degree accomplished, which was not until the first-born of man and beast was slain throughout all the land of Egypt. The clear opening I had in the light of what is to be understood and gathered from this is: not the slaying of the outward man, but a putting off or slaying the body of the sins of the flesh, crucifying or putting off the old man with his deeds. And as to the beast, all cruelty, lust, pushing, tearing, devouring, and savageness, is to be slain or put away. The corrupt or strong will of man, as well as what is bestial, must be slain before man can come out from under the power of him who is called the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience. These things must be experienced before the children of men can go forth rightly qualified to glorify God, and to follow His dear Son, whom He

has appointed to be a leader and a commander of His people. This is He, as Moses declared, who is to be heard in all things, under the penalty of being cut off from the people, or of having their names blotted out of the book of life, or being deprived of the comforts of the Lord's holy presence. Read this, you who have heard and understood what the Spirit says unto the churches. These things I saw, after the true witness revived and arose in me, and the light shone which had for a time disappeared or been clouded.

After much searching without, amongst those who proved to me physicians of no value and miserable comforters, I committed myself to a lonesome and retired life, breathing after, and seeking the Lord in fields and private places, beseeching Him that He would bring me to the saving knowledge of His truth. And blessed be the name of the Lord now and forever, I had not sought Him long with all my heart, before I met with His inward appearance to me, in and by His Holy Spirit, light, and grace. But when the true Light did begin to shine more clearly, and the living witness arose in my inward man, oh then my undone, bewildered, and miserable condition began to appear, and great and unutterable were my conflicts and distress! I thought no man's condition upon the face of the earth was like mine. I thought I was not fit to die, neither did I know how to live. I thought in the evening, "Oh that it was morning!" and in the morning, "Oh that it was evening!" I had many solitary walks in the fields, and other places, in which I poured out my complaints and cries before the Lord, with fervent supplications to Him, that He would look upon my affliction and the strong temptations I was under, and that He would

rebuke the adversary of my soul, and deliver it; for I thought my soul was in the jaws of a devouring lion, and amongst the fiery spirits, and under the weight of the mountains. Read and understand the afflictions of your brother, you who have come through great tribulations, and have washed and made your garments white in the blood of the Lamb. This is the beginning of that baptism which does save, and of that washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost which the Lord sheds upon believers in abundance. This is the blood which sprinkles the heart from an evil conscience, so that the children of men, thus changed, may serve the living and true God. This is the life which converts the world, even as many as are converted. This is the virtue, life, and blood which makes clean the saints' garments, and inwardly washes them from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit. I found this was and is He of whom it is said, "By Him were all things made, and He is Lord of all." Indeed, a man ought to be servant to Him, and all things in man subservient to Him, who commands and comprehends all things, and in whom all the types and shadows end and are fulfilled. Read this, you virgin daughter, or clean church of Christ, the Rock of your strength, whose name to you is as precious ointment poured forth; for because of the savor of His ointments the virgins love Him, and are under great obligations to obey and follow the Lamb of God wheresoever He leads.

Although I had seen many things, and had various openings, still great were my trials, and many were the temptations I met with in those days. I lived at a distance from Friends and meetings, which made my exercises the more difficult, as will more fully appear hereafter. Indeed, some of the trials I met with in the course of my travels and

pilgrimage through this vale of tears and troubles were not common; but the Lord helped me through them all, blessed be His name forever!

I now came to witness that Scripture fulfilled which says, “When the Lord’s judgments are in the earth,” or in the earthly hearts of men, “the inhabitants learn righteousness.” There was an aversion in my wild nature to the people in scorn called Quakers, as also to the name itself; yet when the afflicting hand of the Lord was upon me for my disobedience, and when (like Ephraim and Judah), I saw my hurt and my wound in the light, I bemoaned myself, and mourned over that just Seed of light and grace in me which I had pierced with my sins and disobedience. Although that ministration of condemnation worked within and was glorious in its time,¹ yet great were my troubles, which humbled my mind and made me willing to deny myself of everything which the light made me know to be evil.

I was in great distress, and lacked peace and assurance of the love of God to my soul. The weight of this greatly humbled my mind, and I knew not of any calling, people, practice, or principle, that was lawful and right,

1 In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul describes the old covenant as “the ministration of condemnation,” and the new covenant as “the ministration of the Spirit.” Early Friends believed that, just as the one ministration gave way to the other with the coming of Christ in the fullness of time, so this same process or change takes place in the heart of the believer. First, the righteous law of God shines as a light upon the transgressing nature and all of its fruits in man. Then, as the root, branches, and fruits of the fleshly man are yielded up to death on the cross, the ministration of the Spirit comes to be progressively experienced, wherein the Lord reigns in increasing freedom in and over the circumcised heart.

which I could embrace or fall in with. This was surely like the day of Jacob's troubles, and David's fears, and I saw that "the filth of Zion needed to be purged away by the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning" (Isa. 4:4). This is the way of the deliverance and recovery of poor men out of the fall, and the way whereby God restores the kingdom to His true Israel. Read, you that can, and understand. This was the day of my baptism into the love of God, and into a true faith in His beloved Son, as also into a feeling of, or a sympathy with Him in His sufferings, which were unutterable. Then I found that the ministration changed; for that which had been unto death was now unto life. Yes, the ministration which was for condemnation unto the first birth, when that was slain and in a good degree nailed or fastened to the cross of Christ (which is the power of God), then the good prevailed over the evil, and worked out the evil in the mind, and also in the members, making all good and holy. Indeed, the Lord's living power and consuming Word, when it works and prevails, brings all into subjection, and makes holy the very heart or ground in men.

As there had been an aversion in me to the people in scorn called Quakers, and also to their strict living, demeanor, plainness of habit and language, so I learned none of these things from them. But when the Lord changed my heart, He also changed my thoughts, words, and ways, and there became an aversion in me to vice, sin, and vanity, even as there had before been to the ways of virtue. Having tasted the terrors and judgments of God because of sin, I was warned to flee from such things as occasioned Christ's coming "not to bring peace upon the earth, but a sword;" oh, a sword indeed, yes, His heart-

penetrating, searching Word, which is sharper than any two-edged sword, that pierces to the dividing asunder between flesh and spirit, joints and marrow.

Thus I came to see and abhor the evil in myself. And when those who had been my companions in vanity now reviled me, or came in my way, I was often moved to warn and reprove them. Having tasted of the terrors of the Lord for sin, I could not well forbear to warn others to flee such things as I had been judged for. Then I came clearly to be convinced about the hat-honor, bowing the knee, and the corrupt language, as well as finery in clothing;² all of which, for conscience-sake, and the peace thereof, I came to deny and take up the cross to, and I had great peace in so doing.

Though the blessed truth thus prevailed in me, I was still not without great conflicts of spirit, temptations, and trials of various kinds. Nevertheless, my mind was resigned to the Lord, and my prayers were fervent to Him. Truly He kept me and opened my understanding, for I was afraid of being misled in anything, especially things relating to my salvation. I came to be weaned from all my companions and lovers in whom I had taken delight. All things in this world were little to me, for my mind was much redeemed out of the world, not only the corrupt and evil part thereof, but even from the lawful part. So I became much given up to seek the Lord, waiting upon Him to feel His presence and peace, and to know His will, and receive power to do the same.

As my mind came to be thus brought into a dependent and waiting frame upon the Lord, and to be stayed in the

2 See Introduction, pg. 10-11

light, and to experientially and feelingly partake of His love and grace (which helped me against my weaknesses), I found it to be sufficient for me, as I kept to it in all trials and temptations; blessed be His name. Then I came to see that all outward performances in matters of religion do not avail nor render man acceptable to God, but only as the heart comes to be truly given up to Him, that He might not only purge it from defilement, but also keep it clean through the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. As nearly as I remember, I saw clearly through these things before the sixteenth year of my age.

Between the death of my father and this time, I took liberty to go among whatever people I would, my mother giving us great liberty, and I began to attend the meetings of the Lord's people called Quakers as diligently as my circumstances would well admit. My mother was a woman well accounted among all who knew her for her industry and fair dealing concerning the things of this world. When my father died, she was left with five children, the youngest being about three years old. My father left but little of this world's goods to bring us up, though my parents always had as much as kept them above contempt, and nobody lost by them. So I found myself under a necessity to work hard for my own support, for the help of my mother, and for the education of my brothers, especially since my only sister died soon after. But being left on a grazing farm, part of which was tilled, we did well as to the things of this world.

I cannot well omit mentioning one thing which became a great exercise to me, which was this: My mother married one who was zealous for the Presbytery. I was

much against the marriage, and told my mother I was afraid that she had too much an eye to what he had, for he was considered rich as to this world. And if she thought to augment our portion by so marrying, then the hand of the Lord would be against her, and a blasting or mildew would come upon even that which we had gotten through industry and hard labor. But if we kept faithful to the truth, and contented ourselves with our present condition, then the Lord would bless us. My mother confessed that, as to the worldly enjoyments, it had never been better with her than now. I must write with great caution; she was my mother, and a tender mother over me, unwilling to offend me. She had promised, as far as she well dared, not to marry anyone with whom I was not satisfied. But of their procedure in courtship and marriage, from this time forward, I was entirely ignorant until it was accomplished. And then, when my poor mother was married, her cry was, "My son, how shall I ever be able to look him in the face any more? It will be such a trouble to him, he who has not at any time disoblged me; for if I bid him go, he ran, and if I bid him do anything, he did it with all his might," or to this effect, as several told me who heard her. Having now married, what we had was mixed with my step-father's goods. In time, my mother died first, and my step-father married again, made his will, and when dying, left me five shillings for all my part. As nearly as I remember, this marriage was in the eighteenth year of my age, so that what I foresaw about the blast and mildew, came to pass.

I return to my account concerning the troubles that attended me while in my step-father and mother's house. After their marriage, we and what we had were removed to

his house, except for part of the livestock left on the ground. I foresaw that I was likely to come to a great trial, and was brought very low about the marriage, and into exercise of mind concerning my own condition, having so many conflicts of spirit that I was almost in despair. Had not the Lord, in whom I believed, risen in His power to rebuke the adversary of my soul, I would have been overthrown and swallowed up in this day of trouble and travail by the temptations that were cast out of the dragon's mouth. But in an acceptable time, the God of love and pity saw me and helped me in my distress. He who heard poor Ishmael when he cried from under the shrub, giving relief to him and his mother when they had gone out from Abraham's house, saw me in this great strait.

When I came to my step-father's house, I found he was a man much given to religious duties, such as saying grace before and after meals, but I could comply with none of these things unless I evidently felt the Spirit of Truth to attend therein, and to open both the heart and mouth in such things. For I had come to see clearly that there could be no true and acceptable worship performed to God except what was in the Spirit and in the Truth; nor could any pray aright, except as the Spirit helped them and taught them how to pray and what to pray for, and rightly prepared the mind, guiding it in the performance of every service which the Lord calls for from His children. The first day I came to the house, being called to the table with all or most of the family, I thought, "Is it now come to this? I must either displease my heavenly or my earthly father!" Then oh, the awfulness and deep exercise which was upon my spirit! Strong were the cries that ascended to the Lord

for help and preservation that I might not offend Him. My step-father sat with his hat partly off, and with his eyes fixed on me, as mine were fixed on him in much fear. He continued as long or longer than he used to be in saying grace (as they call it), but said nothing that we heard. At length he put on his hat again, to the wonder of the family; but he did not then, nor ever after, ask me why I did not put off my hat. Neither did he ever perform that ceremony again all the time I stayed with him, which was above one year. Thus the Lord helped me, renowned be His great name now and forever.

My step-father seemed for age, spirit, and understanding, to be much more than a match for me (a poor shrub), but the Lord—who caused the pillar of cloud to give light to Israel, and brought darkness upon the Egyptians, and fought against them, and for Israel—I believe smote my poor step-father, so that he could not rise up against the power with which the Lord helped me. Truly, it was not mine but the Lord's doing; to Him be given the attributes of praise, salvation, and strength, now and forever.

I found my step-father was much displeased with my going to meetings, yet I could not see a way to appease his displeasure, except in perhaps being very diligent in his business, which I was, even beyond my ability, working very hard. It is almost incredible what my poor, little, weak body went through in those days, but all would not gain his love. Indeed, the longer I stayed with him, the more his love declined from me, although I told him he need not be uneasy about my wages, for I would leave that entirely to him. I could not see what he could have against me, except my going to meetings, and that was all he alleged.

When other strategies failed, he offered me a horse to ride on if I would but go with him to his place of worship. This I declined, and so met with many a snub and sour countenance from him upon my return on foot from meetings (though I always returned as punctually as my body was capable of doing). On first-day mornings, my step-father commonly sent me a mile or two on foot into the fields to look at beasts, horses and sheep, I suppose with a design to weary me and make me incapable of going to meetings. All of this I bore patiently, and never (that I remember) complained that it was hard usage. Then, after his errands, and to the great grief of my poor mother, I had to walk two, three, four, five, and sometimes six miles to Friends' meetings. After walking fast, or running with my shoes under my arms for lack of time, I have seen many Friends weep when they saw me come into the meeting very hot and in a great sweat. They could not forbear tears, being in part sensible of the hard task I had to undergo. But the Lord's mighty power bore me up, and He gave me (as it were) hinds' feet, and enabled me to go through these exercises, and to bear the burden in the heat of the day of my trials, both inwardly and outwardly, which were many and various.

Now the last stratagem my step-father used to hinder my going to meetings was this: he took me in his arms in a great show of kindness, and said that if I would be as a son to him, I should find he would be a father to me, also expressing something about his having no near kindred. He said something to the same effect to my brother Daniel as well, who was an innocent, wise, and clean-spirited lad. I replied to him, "If in making me your son, you intend to

hinder me from going to meetings, or to oblige me to go with you to the Presbyterian meetings, or anything that is against my conscience, I cannot, upon this foundation, be your son." And, for the same reasons, I also refused to be his hired servant, though he offered to hire me and give me wages if I would cease from meetings. So when he saw that neither frowns, threatenings, hardships, nor great promises of kindness could prevail with me, he told me bluntly and roughly that I could stay no longer in his house. I innocently answered that I could not help it if it must be so, as all I could do would not give him content without hurting my conscience, and the peace of my mind, which I valued above all mutable things of this world. My poor mother heard my pleading with him, and how I offered to do my utmost for him, by night or day, as I always had done, if he would be easy, and let me have his acceptance. But this was his reply: No, I should not stay in the house.

This troubled my mother so, that I was forced to leave my step-father, go to her, and endeavor to alleviate her great sorrow by telling her that, if I was but faithful, the Lord, I believed, would take care of me so that I would not lack. And in order to more fully discharge myself, I reminded her that she had entered into a marriage covenant with her husband, and so she should endeavor to perform it, and in everything to faithfully discharge herself as a wife ought to do to a husband, and to leave me and all else, and cleave to him, and to make her life as easy as she could. I also told her never to send me anything that my step-father did not know of, for I would not be free to receive it.

I write this partly that all who marry may take special

heed that it be done with great caution, and under due consideration, and that the Lord be sought after diligently in it. All must be done in His counsel, and not in name only, but truly in His fear, and then it will doubtless be well with both husband and wife. For these, being equally yoked, will not only be true helpers in all things belonging to this life, but more especially in things pertaining to the world that is to come, and the good of the immortal soul. Oh, how happily and peaceably do such live together in the Lord, as they keep to that which thus joined them!

One remarkable event comes to mind, which happened in this way: My step-father, having come home from the Presbyterian meeting, put my brother upon reading aloud the priest's text (as was his custom), which that day had been from Daniel, concerning his being cast into the den of lions for not regarding the king's decree. Contrary to the king's command, Daniel prayed to the God of heaven with his windows open toward Jerusalem, according to his customary manner. My step-father made his observations as my brother read, and very much magnified Daniel, and said that the Spirit of God was in him, but that there were none such as him in our days. I acknowledged that Daniel was indeed an extraordinary man, but in that there were none endowed with a measure of the same Spirit in our day, I dissented from him. I then gave my step-father a brief account of the many sufferings of our Friends for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus, some of which were past, and some present. I especially mentioned the great sufferings of our dear Friends in New England, where they met with hard imprisonments, cruel whippings, cutting off ears, and banishment if they returned into New

England anymore. I likewise showed him how they put to death Marmaduke Stevenson, William Robinson, William Leddra and Mary Dyer, for no other cause but laboring to turn people from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the living power of God, to His light, grace, and Holy Spirit in their hearts, and laboring to bring the people from persecution, pride, and every evil work and way, to live a self-denying, humble life, agreeable to the Christianity they professed.³ This was the service they were called to, and for it they deeply suffered. And from this I inferred that there was something of the Spirit of God in man in these days, even as there was in Daniel and many more formerly, which helped them and bore them up in their great sufferings. My step-father confessed it was true that some suffered for good, and some for evil. Then he said he had now lived to the age of about sixty-five years, and although he heard us speaking of a Seed or light within, yet he knew not what it was. I replied very meekly, "If you will hear me, I will tell you what it is," which I did in the following words: "When at any time you have been under a temptation to put forth your hand to steal, or to lie

3 These four Quakers were put to death in Boston in 1659, 1660, and 1661 by a Puritan government who had made just *being* a Quaker a banishable offense. Friends at this time suffered greatly under the persecuting priests and magistrates of New England, but most especially at the hands of Boston's governor, the infamous John Endecott. Many were imprisoned, put in stocks, had ears cut off, or were stripped to the waist, tied to carts, and whipped from town to town before being banished. Returning to the Massachusetts Bay Colony after banishment was a capital offense. For a full relation of these events, see William Sewel's *The History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of that Christian People Called Quakers*.

for advantage, or by provocation to swear, or allow any evil work or word, have you not found something in you that has shown you that you ought not to say or do so? And when you have taken heed to this, and not said or done wrong, have you not found great peace and inward comfort in your mind? But if you have said or done wrong, have you not found great disquietness and trouble of mind? This is the inward Seed, light, or grace, that God has placed in man to help and direct him, which we the people of God called Quakers, do hold agreeably to the Holy Scriptures.” My step-father then struck his hands together, and confessed it was true.

A little time before the marriage of my mother, I was brought into the public work of the ministry. Concerning this I had many reasonings, being young (scarcely eighteen years old), and naturally of a stammering tongue, which I could not overcome, though I used all endeavors that lay in my power as a man; all would not do until the Truth helped me. But after my many conflicts, troubles, and temptations, the worst trial I ever met with, and the most piercing sorrow I had been in since I came to the knowledge of the blessed Truth was when, through reasonings, disobedience, and an unwillingness to comply with the Lord's requireing, He in displeasure took away from me the comfort of His holy presence for several months together. Oh, the tribulations I met with in this condition! No tongue is able to express, nor any creature able to conceive the depth of the heart-piercing sorrow I was in. I thought my state was as bad as Jonah's, for surely if there be a hell upon earth, I was in it. What greater hell can there be to a quickened soul and an enlightened understanding, who

has tasted of the goodness of God, and in measure of the powers of the world to come, than to be deprived thereof, and to think they are fallen away from this state? I could scarcely believe I should ever have repentance granted to me, or be restored to the love and favor of God, for I found that river of life dried up which before did make both me, and the whole city of God, truly glad.

Being left under an apprehension of the Lord's displeasure, and in part a partaker of the terrors of His wrath, I thought, "Oh, surely the very mountains and hills are not sufficient, if they could be put into the balance and weighed against the weight of my troubles and afflictions!" But as the Lord, by His judgments, had brought me in a good degree out from the vice and vanity of this world, so now by His judgments He made me willing to give up to His requirings. And in my obedience to Him I began again to feel some comfort of love, and the fellowship of the Spirit of the Lord in myself, and in His people who were partakers of the like fellowship.

Now I return to the matter of my being turned out of my step-father's house. When I saw I must go out, I thought it expedient to acquaint some worthy Friends with it, lest any undue reflections should be cast upon the Truth, or Friends, or myself, that if so, these Friends might be able to contradict them. So I acquainted Sebastian Euethorp, and that worthy minister of the Gospel, Benjamin Padley, two of the chief Friends in Ellington Monthly Meeting. These men came to my step-father's house, and inquired the reasons why I went away, and if my step-father had anything against me concerning the business he employed me in, and whether I was not faithful and dili-

gent in all his affairs he sent me about. He confessed I was, and thought none could exceed me. They said, "Well then, what is the reason of the conflict between you and your step-son? Is it about his going to meetings?" And when they understood his reasons (which it was not hard to do), they expressed pity towards me that I could have no more liberty. And they thought, as I was so diligent in his business, if he perhaps would give me a little more liberty to go to meetings, it would be an encouragement to me. At this my step-father took offense and gave the good men rough language, and asked what they had to do with him and his son. He then bid them go home, and mind their own business, and said, in short, that there was no abiding for me there. At this the Friends were troubled, especially for my sake, and then wondered how I had lived with him so long. But Sebastian Euethorp told me, which was greatly to my comfort, that my step-father had nothing against me, except concerning the law of my God. This is the sense, if not the words, of these wise and good men, which passed between them and my step-father, as they later expressed them to me; for I was not there when they were together.

Though I pleaded with my step-father to let me stay until I could hear of a place of employment, he would not have it—though I was scarcely fit for any kind service, being almost skin and bones, as the saying is, so that most who knew me said I would pine away in a consumption. But turn out I must, and I did, though I was weak, poor, and low in body, mind, pocket, and clothes; for I think I had but twelve pence in my pocket, and very ordinary clothes upon my back. Thus I took my solemn leave of the family, with my heart full, but I kept inwardly turned to the

Lord, and under Truth's government. Many tears were shed when I left them, especially by my poor mother. My step-father said little, but appeared like one struck with wonder to see so much love manifested towards me by the others in the family, and so much wishing that I might not go away.

I came out upon the great fields before-mentioned, where I had had many solitary walks, but none had been like this, for now I knew not where to go. I then thought of Abraham, who was called out of Ur in the land of the Chaldeans; but this was the difference between us—he was called, and I was forced out. I had many friends, but I did not feel free to go to them, not believing any had employment for me; for I was not of a forward, but rather of a backward and shy disposition. As I was walking in the fields, not knowing where to go or where to lay my head, the sense of my weak condition came over me to such a degree that it seemed as though my way was hedged in on every side, inwardly and outwardly. I thought myself like a pelican in the wilderness, or like an owl in the desert, there seeming to me scarcely a man in all the earth in my condition. In the sense and deep consideration of my present wilderness state, I felt myself under a great oppression of spirit, and my heart seemed full, like a bottle that needed vent. I looked round about me to make sure none were near to see my tears or hear my cries, and in the very anguish and bitterness of my soul, I poured forth my complaints, cries, and tears, to the Judge of all the earth. The Lord comforted me in this my deplorable state, and said to me, as if a man had spoken, “Seek first the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, and all these

things that you stand in need of shall be given unto you." I then desired He would be pleased to show me the place I should go to, and the Lord opened my way, and showed me the house where I should go and abide for a time. I said, "Good is the word of the Lord." I believed, and it was a great means to stay my mind, and to settle it in the Truth, with full purpose of heart to follow the Lord and obey His requirings, according to the knowledge and ability given me.

I went to this Friend's house in South Cliff (William Allon by name), and I soon bound myself to him to learn his trade of a weaver. After I was bound, I found this good man loved me, and I loved him to the day of his death. He often said he was blessed for my sake, and all that pertained to him; for he was very poor, but he increased very considerably after I went to live with him.

Three things stood in my way of answering the Lord's commands as fully as I sometimes should have done: first, a painful disorder came upon one of my legs soon after I was bound apprentice, which I (and others) thought was much occasioned by hard usage, heats and colds in excess, even from my infancy. The lameness held me about two years, and it much discouraged and disabled me. The second hindrance was my low circumstances in the world, of which very few knew, because the common thought was that I had rich parents (which was not without some truth). Few knew the difficulties I met with. And yet, my truly religious master, if he understood anything was upon my mind with respect to visiting any meeting or meetings, would say, "Take my mare and go your way, and be not uneasy either about the mare or the business; and do not

hasten yourself.” Such acts of kindness made me often wonder how I might return sufficient acknowledgments, and be duly grateful for his love.

I was diligent in my master's business, not serving him with eye-service, but faithfully, believing it good and acceptable in the sight of God, and I had great peace in it. My master never found fault with me for doing too little, but often for doing too much, and would sometimes say, “I think you will cleave to the weaver's beam! Come off and let us walk into the fields and see how things are there.” The healing of my leg, I attribute to the great and good providence of God; for in a short time after I gave up freely and cheerfully to answer the Lord's requirings, the Lord healed me of my lameness.

The third hindrance was my stammering tongue, and I cried unto the Lord, believing that He was able to take away this impediment, even as He had stopped the violent disorder in my body. Several learned men had given their advice, and showed their skill, which all proved ineffectual. But I came to believe in Jesus Christ, and to press through all unto Him, and to touch the skirt of His garment—that is, the lowest appearance of His blessed truth and power—in which I found true healing virtue to my soul, and also to my body and tongue, even to my admiration. I then came to speak plainly, not only in the testimony the Lord gave me to bear, but also in my common interactions with men.

In those days I was under the dispensation of openings and visions, and thought myself, as it were, upon Mount Pisgah, and saw into the Holy Land, and into things relating to God and His heavenly kingdom. I saw clearly into God's work and way of bringing man out of the fall

and alienation unto Himself again, and into a heavenly state in Christ, as man yields true obedience to the leadings and operation of His blessed grace and Holy Spirit in the heart. But under such dispensations it is of absolute necessity that man be brought into true self-denial, into a dependent frame of mind, and a resignation of his will to the will of God, daily sitting as in the dust with respect to the motions and workings of the creature. For all that is of man's working does but hinder the spiritual work of God in the heart. And we must come truly to know all fleshly motions, and the workings in man's own will and spirit, to be silenced, in order to hear the voice of God, which is a still small voice. Indeed, His voice is not to be heard in the noise and hurries of the world, nor when the mind is busied with things agreeable to our own corrupt wills and depraved nature.

Although I had clear sights into many heavenly things, and also at times had comfortable enjoyments of the living presence of God, yet I was in need of being more established in the unchangeable Truth. In crying out to the Lord, I found that He inclined unto me and heard my cries, and, as David said, plucked my feet out of the mire and clay and set them upon a rock that was higher than I. He established my goings and put a new song in my mouth, even high praises unto the Lord for all His tender mercies to me in those trying times. And now, being more crucified to the world and to the spirit of it, I witnessed a more constant indwelling of His heavenly power and living presence, light, and grace. I came to be brought into stillness, and found it was most agreeable to my condition to keep much in silence, waiting upon the Lord for the renewing of

strength, that I might thereby surmount all temptations and trials with which I might be tried (which were not a few). These things are worthy of commemoration, and proved great confirmations to me in the Truth in those days of tribulation and great trials. Read and believe, you that can, for they are faithful and true sayings.

After the Lord had healed me, He sent me forth in the work of the ministry, and the first journey I took was southward into Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and through Coventry, and so to Warwick, to see William Dewsbury.⁴ He inquired which way I had come, and I gave him an account of the particular towns and places I had passed through, mentioning that Coventry was the last and the worst. For at Coventry some of the rude people flung stones at me with great violence as I was speaking in the meeting, and had the Lord allowed them to hit me, they would surely have spoiled me. But my faith in the Lord, and the strength of the Truth, bore up my mind above the fear of what wicked men could do to me. After William had heard my account, he fixed his eyes on me and said, "You must go back again to Coventry." I appeared unwilling for two reasons: first, because I thought I had cleared myself of that people; and secondly, because I thought it not safe to run back into danger unless I was satisfied the Lord required it of me. But William was positive and said I must go, for there was a service for me to do there. Upon a deliberate consideration, and seeking the Lord to know His will in the matter, I felt my way clear to go back. And indeed, I

4 William Dewsbury (1621–1688) was one of the earliest ministers in the Society of Friends, and though he spent much of his adult life imprisoned for the testimony of Jesus, he was considered by all to be a pillar and an elder in the house of God.

found that there was some service for me there, for there had been a misunderstanding among some Friends in that city, and so I was able to leave them nearer to one another than when I first met with them, much to my satisfaction.

When I returned home from this, and indeed from all my journeys, I took care (as far as my weak body was able) to give myself to business, and not to loiter away my time, neither abroad nor at home. My weak constitution would not well bear the weaving trade, therefore I left it much against my will, and took up clock and watch work, and many other things, in order to supply my necessities. The Lord always allowed me as much time at home as put me in a condition fit for traveling, and then I was inclined to go and visit Friends. Many things I omit, because I am not willing to swell my account too much. But I traveled through most parts of England four times, and twice through most parts of Wales, between the twentieth and twenty-eighth year of my age.

After the Lord had opened my heart, I came (in measure) to understand the Holy Scriptures, and to have experience of that Holy Spirit in which the holy penmen had written them, and a sympathy with the spirits and exercises of the righteous mentioned therein. I took great delight in reading them, and having a good memory, I could thereby better deal with opposing priests and professors of several denominations, with whom I had several disputes and reasonings, both in Yorkshire and in other parts in my travels. But through these disputes, and through much reading, my mind came to be too much in the written letter, and not altogether as much in Spirit and in power as it should have been. Because of this, I met with

a gentle caution from the Lord, which was thus: I heard a voice from the Lord, as plain as if one had spoken to my outward ear, saying, “The fowls of the air lodge in the branches.” This being repeated to me, I sought the Lord to show me what was the meaning of that voice which I heard. Then the Lord, the mighty God, showed me (in His condescending love), that the Scriptures, which were written as holy men were moved of the Holy Spirit, sprung from the living root; yet those who rested only in the letter, and came not to be acquainted with, and live in, and minister from, the same Holy Spirit, are outward, dead, dry, airy, and foolish.

This gentle check was of great service to me, not so as to make me decline from reading the Scriptures, but that I should not have too much dependency upon them, and to caution me against a neglect of waiting for the help of the Holy Spirit. For indeed, the Spirit is the root and pure spring of all right and living ministry, which alone can reach the heart and carry the true evidence to believers that it is of God—which the written letter, of itself, cannot do. I tenderly desire that all concerned in the great work of the ministry may not be ministers of the letter only, but of the Spirit also, and may speak in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. “Let him who speaks, speak as the oracle of God, and he that ministers, do it as of the ability that God gives” (1 Pet. 4:11). This is the last and lasting ministry, which is after the order of Melchizedek, and not after the order of Aaron. This ministry is in Jesus Christ, the High Priest, the one offering, who makes perfect forever all who come to Him through the drawings of the Father. He is the one Lord, and there is but one true faith

in Him, and but one true and saving baptism into Him, or into the likeness of His death. And as Christ died for sin, so we may truly die to sin; and as He was raised by the glory of the Father, so we may walk in newness of life. He is the heavenly High Priest, holy, harmless, separate from sinners, who was tempted, and knows how to succor those who are tempted. He is the advocate with the Father, the propitiation for the sins of all, the true guide and comforter, the leader of them into all truth who obey and follow Him. Though to the world, He is a reprover and a swift witness against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

My writing in this way, from this gentle check from the Lord concerning the fowls and the branches, is not with the least intention either to lessen the Holy Scriptures, or to discourage any from reading them; for I encourage all true Christians to be more conversant in them. Yet my advice, kind reader, from your well-wisher and true friend, is that you breathe unto, and truly seek after the Lord for a measure of His holy and blessed Spirit, who is the only key and the best expositor to open and truly expound them to you. And it is by this same Holy Spirit that your mind and understanding comes to be fitted and enlightened. Indeed, the whole vessel must be brought into a preparation to hold the heavenly treasure, and not to mix the pure with the corrupt and impure. For without the enlightening, preparing, opening, and sanctifying gift of God's holy grace and Spirit, man can neither know the heavenly power of God, nor can he know the Holy Scriptures as he ought to know them. And for this reason it has seemed good to God to hide these things from the learned, wise, and prudent of

this world, that they should not pry into, nor find out the mysteries contained therein, unless they are sanctified, and called of God thereto. As no man knows the things of a man except the spirit of a man that is in him, likewise the things of God are not perceivable by man without the help of the Holy Spirit of God in man.

Thus the Lord opened to me the true meaning of the parable of the mustard seed, in this time of my infancy in the ministry, with which He sent me forth into the world, that my faith might stand in the Lord alone, who is the author and finisher, as well as the giver of true and saving faith—even that faith which “works by love,” and “gives victory over the world.” It was by and through the power and efficacy of true faith (which is the gift of God) that many in former ages, and many now, obtain a good report. It was through this gift that worthy Abel, with his offering, was accepted of God, although he was envied by his evil-minded brother Cain, and also by him slain. The ever-memorable Enoch, through the virtue of this holy gift, walked with God, and God Himself bore witness that Enoch pleased Him. This man walked in faith and obedience even to the end, so that he died not as men commonly do, but was translated, or changed in a peculiar manner. Come, read, you that can, and understand, you that are redeemed out of the power of the first nature, and have overcome the flesh, the world, and the devil in a great measure. For you know that it is by the operation of this gift that the dead in old Adam are raised to a new life and a new way of living in the new man, through the power of the heavenly Adam, who is known to these to be a life-giving Spirit, agreeably to Scripture. Through faith the violence of

fire was quenched, the mouths of lions stopped, the sword turned back, and armies put to flight, even those armies who were aliens or strangers to God, and who fought outwardly against the Lord's people in that day. And indeed, this sets before us, as in a mirror or figure, how and what we are to overcome in this gospel day. For in the gospel day we are not to fight with men, but with our lusts, and to overcome sin and Satan, which is as great a victory as that which overcame ravenous lions. For it is sin and Satan that have power and dominion over the wicked and ungodly to this day.

Consider now while there is time, you who read these lines, whether Christ or antichrist does predominate in you, whether grace or sin most abound in your mortal body. Consider whether the Spirit of Truth, that leads into all truth, or the spirit of error, that leads into all error and untruth, is the most prevalent, and has the greatest place in your heart. For to him to whom you are the most subject, and yield your members as servants, his servant you are. And to him to whom you give way and subject yourself, his servant you will fully come to be in time, and the wages due to his servants you shall have given to you at the end of your work. Therefore consider in due time, while the day of your visitation continues unto you, and while the Lord follows and calls you by His secret checks and reproofs, by which He disquiets your mind. For although you may take some pleasure in vanity and wrong ways when you can get over the just witness of God in your own soul, yet while it strives with you to convert and gather you out of earthly and fading pleasures, to set your mind upon heavenly things and take pleasure in them, you will have

no true comfort in all your lower enjoyments, but rather condemnation and anguish of soul will attend you until you either get over the witness in your heart, or leave the evil. This is the experience of the Lord's people, who have been acquainted with the true inward warfare, and with the saints' victory. Learn to follow Christ by the footsteps of the flocks of His companions, although it be through great tribulations, for it is the way to have your garments washed and made white in the mystical blood of the immaculate Lamb of God. This is He, as John the Baptist said, that takes away the sins of the world. Happy is everyone that truly puts on His lamb-like nature, His humility, righteousness, and purity, and is covered with His Holy Spirit, and lives and walks in and under the influence and direction thereof to the end of time.

* * *

John Richardson's long and fruitful life was truly a "fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing." He remained a traveling minister as long as physical strength permitted, passing several times through most parts of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and crossing the seas twice to minister among the colonies in America. He lived to be 86 years old, and even in his declining years, his friends bore this testimony of him: "When his natural faculties were somewhat impaired, and he was confined at home through old age and infirmities, he appeared more and more heavenly-minded, and seemed to grow in the life of religion."

In 1740, when John Richardson was 73 years old,

Truth in the Inward Parts

Samuel Fothergill (then a young minister in the Society) stayed a night in Richardson's home, and communicated the following to his wife in a letter: "In the afternoon I rode ten miles to the house where the ark rests, i.e., John Richardson's, who went with me next day to Pickering. The life of Truth arose wonderfully [in the meeting], and then that Father in Israel took me home, where we sat up until almost daylight. We then repaired to our respective lodgings, but soon after five in the morning he came and sat by my bedside, and though weak and very poorly, said he would accompany me ten miles to Malton."

**A LETTER OF
ELIZABETH WEBB**

(1663 – 1726)

Worthy friend,¹

Though I am almost a stranger to you, the kind respect you showed me when in London has laid me under an obligation, wherein I find my mind drawn to write to you in the openings of divine love. What I have to write has been on my mind these several weeks, in that pure, innocent love in which the true communion of saints is known. I have no learned method in which to deliver my religious experience, either by word or writing, but plainly and simply as the Spirit of Truth directs. And being the weaker vessel too, I have the greater need to beg to be excused. I shall not write from notions and speculations (for I look on such things as being unsafe, and I know they are also many times unsound), but I shall write a small part of what I have gone through, and what my soul has tasted of the good Word of life, which is near.

¹ The recipient of this letter was Anthony William Boehm, chaplain to Prince George of Denmark. It appears Elizabeth Webb became acquainted with Boehm during a ministerial visit to London, about the year 1712.

Truly, my only desire is that we may have fellowship together in God the Father of our spirits, and in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, whom my soul has known both in mercy and in judgment, to the mortifying (in a good degree) of the fallen and corrupt nature, and to the purifying of my heart in such a way (as I can say to His praise) that I do not see Him through particular forms, sects, parties, or any such thing. No, my dear friend, I never sought after the Lord in these ways, nor for any of these ends. Rather, I sought after Him in my young years for salvation, and I seek Him still for the perfect restoration of my soul in Him. I have nothing of my own to boast of, unless it be weakness and infirmities. Instead, I rejoice in the cross of Christ, by which I am crucified to the world in a good degree, and the world to me—so that I can say, “I die daily.”

With regard to the fondness for education, religious profession, and conversation, these things have cast no mist before my eyes. I can see, acknowledge, and love the image of my Lord and Savior in any sort of profession, if the soul has been educated in the heavenly university or school of Christ. Nevertheless, we cannot see God in, nor find fellowship with, all manner of life and conduct; for the way of the wicked is as if there were no God; “God is not in all their thoughts.” And as for those who despise the image of the meek, humble Jesus, and will follow none of His precepts, nor His self-denying example while they are here, the Lord will hereafter despise their image. For indeed, they shall have an image according to the seed or spirit in which they lay down their body. Every seed shall have its own body in the resurrection of the just and the unjust, and every one shall receive his own sentence.

Letter of Elizabeth Webb

Now, my dear friend, I will give you a short account of the dealings of the Lord with me in my younger years; how He brought my soul through fire and water. For what end this has now come to my mind I know not, except it be for our spiritual communion; but when my soul is lowest and nearest to the Lord in the simplicity of truth, then my heart is opened and my mind filled with divine love respecting this matter. I desire you to peruse it inwardly when you are retired, and not judge it before you have gone through it; and then you may judge as freely as you please.

I was baptized and educated in the way of the Church of England, and was schooled by one of their ministers, a man who showed great kindness and tenderness to me, and who I loved and honored greatly. In those days I looked upon ministers to be like angels who brought glad tidings to the children of men. When I was about fourteen years of age, I went to live at a knight's house, who kept a chaplain. I observed this chaplain's conduct and saw that it was vain, and I thought it ought not to be so, and so I was troubled in my mind. For in those days I began to think on my latter end, and also on eternity, and I found I had no assurance of salvation or a state of happiness, if it should please the Lord to send the messenger of death to call me away. So the fear of the Lord laid hold on my mind, and I began to search the Scriptures, and found they testified that "the wicked should be turned into hell, along with all those that forget God." I saw that both priests and people did too generally "forget God," as soon as they came off their knees, or from their devotion. So I was much afraid of hell, and lacked an assurance of a place in the kingdom of heaven.

I then began to consider the great promises that were

made for me at my baptism (as they called it) whereby they said I was made a member of Christ, and a child of God. In that ceremony it was said that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomp and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh, and should keep God's holy will and commandments. I thought this was indeed the way to obtain a place in the kingdom of heaven; but I found I had no power to do what I ought to do, nor to forsake what I ought to forsake, for I was very proud, vain, and airy. But as I was inwardly exercised in this way, and also outwardly continued to search the Scriptures, my understanding was more and more opened. I read and took notice that the ministers whom Christ qualified and sent forth to preach were to do it freely; for Christ said, "Freely you have received, freely give." I also found that those who ran when the Lord never sent them, "should not profit the people at all," but that the Lord had promised shepherds that would bind up what was broken, and strengthen that which was sick (Ezek. 34).

Many such things opened in my mind, and I used to ponder them in my heart. These and similar portions of the Scriptures became very comfortable to me, for I was sick of my sins, and my heart was broken many times before the Lord. I thought, "Oh, that I had lived in the days of Christ, I would surely have been one of those that followed Him," and I was grieved because the Jews had crucified Him. Thus I loved Christ in His outward appearance, and could have said with Peter, "Far be it from You Lord to suffer!" Yet I did not then know He was so near me by His Holy Spirit.

Then I became convinced that the hireling shepherds, who teach for hire and divine for money, were not the true

ministers of Christ. Indeed this was made manifest to me by the testimony of the prophets and of Christ Himself, who said, "By their fruits you shall know them." For I had continued to hear them until a fear followed me into their worship house, and I thought it would be just for the Lord to make an example of me for my inattention to the Spirit of truth. So at last I left going to hear them, and walked alone.

When I was about fifteen years old, it pleased God to send the Spirit of grace and supplication into my heart, by which I prayed fervently unto the Lord. Indeed there arose a divine breathing in my soul, but I could find no life in any forms of prayer, except the one which Christ taught His disciples (for which I have always had a reverent esteem). But when I was in a state to pray, I found that the Spirit made intercession in me and for me, according to the present need of my soul. I remember the expressions that used to run through my mind, "O Lord, preserve me in Your fear and in Your truth! O Lord, show me Your way, and make known Your mind and will unto me!" I thought I was then ready to obey Him, and I much desired to know the people of God; for my soul cried, "O Lord, where do You feed Your flock; why should I be as one that is turned aside from the flocks of Your companions?"

O, the drawing cords of Your divine love! O, You did draw my soul with longings and breathings after the knowledge of the only true God and of Jesus Christ! There was then no condemnation for the sins of ignorance, which the Lord winked at, but He called me to repent and to forsake my pride and vain company, which was a great cross to the will of the flesh. Yet I took up this cross for

several months, and while I did so, my soul had great peace and divine comfort, so that many times the enjoyment of divine love was more to me than my natural food, or any outward thing. I remember when the family used to ask me why I did not come to meals, I thought to myself, "I have food to eat that they know nothing of." And in my times of retirement, I had manifestations of sufferings that I should go through, and a sight of several things which I have met with since; but in those times I walked alone.

I was early convinced that the Quakers held the principles of Truth, and that their ministry was the true ministry, but I then dwelt far from any of them. But once it happened, when I was about twelve years old, that I was at a meeting or two of theirs, and the doctrine of a man who preached proved to be (as the wise man terms it) "like bread cast upon the waters," for it was found after many days. Indeed, his voice seemed to sound in my mind when I was alone, and some of his words came fresh into my remembrance, which very much suited the exercise of my mind. At that time I met also with a little book of theirs, and finding that the doctrine it contained agreed with the doctrine of the apostles, I was confirmed in my judgment that they professed the Truth. But I did not then join with them; for by that time my flesh and blood began to be very uneasy under the yoke of inward retirement, and it groaned for liberty.

When I was about sixteen years old, I found that the subtle enemy lay near, and he did not lack instruments. I was persuaded by reasoning with flesh and blood that since I was still young, I could seek a little more pleasure, and then serve God when I was older. So I let go my exercise of

watching and praying, left off my daily retirement, and let out my love to many visible objects. Pride and vanity grew up in me again, and the divine, sweet, meek, loving Spirit withdrew, and though I searched for it at times, I could not find it again when I pleased. Yes, I then would have been pleased with the sweet comforts of His love, but I did not like to bear His daily cross. And so having been convinced of the Quakers' principles, and believing that they enjoyed the sweetness of divine love in their meetings, I sometimes went a great distance to seek divine refreshment with them. But this proved to be to no purpose; for I was like a dry stick that had no sap or virtue, unto which the rain and sunshine, summer and winter are all alike. So it was with me for about three years. Oh, the remembrance of that misspent time! Oh, the tribulation that came on me for my disobedience is never to be forgotten!

But when I was about nineteen years of age, it pleased the Almighty to send His quickening Spirit again into my heart, and His light shined into my mind. All my transgressions were set in order before me, and I was made deeply sensible of my great loss. And then, oh then, the vials of wrath of an angry Father were poured out upon the transgressing nature in me! Oh, then I cried, "Woe is me! Woe is me! I am undone; I have slain the Babe of grace! I have crucified afresh to myself the Lord of life and glory!" For though in all this time I had been preserved in moral honesty in all respects, to the degree that I dared not tell a lie, or speak an evil word, and could be trusted in any place, and in any thing, yet notwithstanding my outward righteousness, He whose eye penetrates all hearts, found me so guilty that I thought there was no mercy for me.

Indeed, I found the testimony of our blessed Lord Jesus to be true, namely: Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, there is no admittance into the kingdom of heaven or into favor of God.

Then, after many days and nights of sorrow and great anguish, it came into my mind (having not spoken to a soul) to give myself up into the hands of God. I said, "O Lord, if I perish, it shall be at the gate of Your mercy! For if You cast me into hell, I cannot help myself; therefore I will give up my soul, my life, and all into Your holy hand. Do Your pleasure with me, for Your judgments are just, and I have disregarded Your sweet love and have slain the Babe of grace." And as I sunk down into death, and owned and submitted to the judgments of God, my heart (which had been hard) was broken, and it pleased my merciful Father to cause His divine, sweet love to spring again in my hard, dry, and barren soul, as a spring of living water. Then the fire of the wrath of God was mightily abated, and my soul felt the compassionate bowels of a tender Savior, and a living hope arose in my mind.

Nevertheless, greater afflictions came afterwards, so that I learned by experience, "Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way that leads unto life." And I have cause to believe that none but those who are made willing to be stripped of all that belongs to self or the old man, and become as little children, can rightly or truly enter in at the narrow gate. Indeed, I find by experience, that no vulture's eye, no venomous beast, nor lofty lion's whelp, can look into or tread upon this holy, narrow way. Oh, the longing there is in my soul that all might consider it!

But to proceed: I thought all was well, and I said in my heart, "The worst is now over, and I have come again into the favor of God." So my joy increased, though I remained inwardly in silence. But in a few days my soul was led into a wilderness where there was no way, no guide, and no light that I could see, but rather a darkness such as might be felt. Indeed, the horrors of it were such that when it was night I wished for morning, and when it was morning I wished for evening. The Lord was near, but I knew it not. He had brought my soul into the wilderness, and there He pleaded with me by His fiery law and righteous judgments. The Day of the Lord came upon me, which burned as an oven in my bosom, till all pride and vanity were burned up. My former delights were gone; my old heavens passed away within me (as with fire), and I had as much exercise in my mind of anguish and sorrow as I could bear, day and night for several months, and not a drop of divine comfort. My heart was like a coal of fire, or a hot iron, feeling no brokenness of heart or tenderness of spirit. And though I cried to God continually in the deep distress of my soul, yet not one tear could issue from my eyes. Oh the days of sorrow and nights of anguish that I went through; no tongue can utter, nor any heart conceive that has not gone through the like! I could have wished I were some other creature, so that I might not know such anguish and sorrow; for I thought all other creatures were content in their proper places.

My troubles were aggravated by the strong oppression and temptation of Satan, who was very unwilling to lose one of his subjects. He raised all his forces, and made use of all the weapons which he had in the house. Indeed, I

found him to be like a strong man armed, for he would not allow me to enter into a state of resignation, but led me to look into mysteries that pertain to salvation with the eye of carnal reason. And because I could not comprehend with that eye, he caused me to question the truth of all things that are left upon record in the Holy Scriptures, and would have even persuaded me to believe the Jews' opinion concerning Christ. Many other baits and false resting places were laid before me, but my soul hungered after the true bread, the bread of life, which came from God out of heaven (of which Christ testified, John 6) which I had felt near, and my soul had tasted. And although the devil prompted me with his temptations, my soul could not feed upon them, but cried continually, "Your presence, Lord, or else I die! Oh, let me feel Your saving arm, or else I perish! O Lord, give me faith!" Thus was my soul exercised in earnest supplications unto God night and day; and yet I went about my outward responsibilities, and made my complaint to none but God alone.

I have often since considered how the subtle serpent finds suitable baits for souls, especially for those who are content to feed upon something less than the enjoyment of God. And having known the terrors of God and the subtle wiles of Satan, I am sometimes concerned now to persuade people to repent, and to warn them to flee from the wrath to come.

Now all my faith which I had known before (while still in disobedience), proved to be like a house on a sandy foundation. And all the comfort I formerly had in reading the Scriptures was taken away, and I dared not read for some time, because it added to my condemnation. I was

left to depend upon God alone, who caused me to feel a little hope at times, like a glimmering of light underneath my troubles. This was like a stay to my mind, and if it had not been so, I most certainly would have fallen into despair.

I much desired to be brought through my troubles the right way, and not to shake off or get over them in my own time. So I did not find freedom to make my condition known to any person, for I thought to myself, "If the Lord does not help me, vain is the help of man." And I have since seen that it was well I did not (on several accounts), and that I might have come to a loss if I had done so. For I know now that it was the will of God to humble me, and to expose and throw down all help which might be imputed to man or self, that I might know the true work of the Lord raised from the foundation of His own power, where there is nothing of man's building, and all the glory is given to Him alone. For we are very apt to say, in effect, "I am of Paul, I am of Apollos, I am of Cephas, and I of Christ," as if Christ were divided; but the Lord will not give His glory to another, nor His praise to graven images. For as you, my friend, have well observed, the chief end for which we ought to labor is to make people sensible of their corruption, and to direct them to the Word that is near, and be good examples to them.

So, in the Lord's due and appointed time, when He had seen my suffering of that fiery kind to be sufficient, He was pleased to cause His divine love to flow in my bosom in an extraordinary manner, and the Holy Spirit of divine light and life did overcome my soul. Then a divine sense and understanding was given to me by which to know the

power and love of God in sending His only Son out of His bosom into the world, and taking upon Himself a body of flesh, and going through the whole process of suffering for the salvation of mankind. I saw how He did break through, and break open, the gates of death, and repair the breach that old Adam had made between God and man, and restore the path for souls to come to God. And my simple soul was made to understand how the Almighty did send the Spirit of His Son into my heart in order to lead me through the process of His suffering, so that as He died for sin, so I might die to sin, by bearing the daily cross, and living in self-denial, humility, and obedience to God, my Heavenly Father, in all things He should require of me.

Then my soul came to witness the baptism of the Holy Spirit (which is compared to both water and fire); and I saw that the ministration of judgment and condemnation had a glory in it which made way for the ministration of life. The axe of God's living Word was laid to the evil root of the tree, and my soul heard the voice of Him who preached repentance and called for the mountains to be laid low and the valleys to be raised (that is, the mountains of my natural temper), that a plain way might be made for the ransomed soul to walk. And the Lord showed me how John the Baptist came to be considered the greatest prophet that was born of a woman, for he was the forerunner of Jesus Christ, and indeed, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he that is under John's ministration only. For John's ministration was to decrease, but the ministration of Jesus was to increase, whose baptism is with the Holy Spirit and with fire, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor.

Then I came to witness that it is indeed the work of God to believe rightly and truly on Him whom God has sent, and that this purifying, saving faith is the gift of God, and the very spring and vital principle of it is divine love. Then I mourned over Him whom I had pierced with my unbelief and hardness of heart; and I did eat my bread with weeping, and mingled my drink with tears. I was between nineteen and twenty years of age when these great conflicts were upon me, and by them I was brought very humble.

I then entered into a solemn covenant with God Almighty, promising I would answer His requirings even if it were to the laying down my natural life. But when it was shown me that I ought to take up the cross in little things, I was quick to listen to the reasoner again, and become disobedient in the day of small things. For although I had gone through so much inward exercise, still I was afraid of displeasing my superiors, being then a servant to persons of repute in the world. It was shown to me that I should not give flattering titles to man; and I greatly feared that if I would not be obedient to the Lord's requirings, He would take away His good Spirit from me again. So I was in a strait; I was afraid of displeasing God, and afraid of displeasing man. But at last I was charged by the Spirit with honoring man more than God. For in my address to God I did use the plain language,² but when I spoke to man or woman I would speak otherwise, or else they would be offended. And I saw that the pride of man disdained to receive that language from an inferior which he would freely give to the Almighty. So this became a great cross to me, and became an obstacle in the way of my soul's

² See Introduction, pg. 10-11

progress, until I gave up to the Lord's requirings in this small thing.

These things I signify to you, dear friend, in great simplicity, that you may see how the Lord leads out of the vain customs that are in the world, not only in these things which I have mentioned, but also in many other things. And likewise He leads into that humble, self-denying way which Christ both taught and practiced when He was visible among men. Indeed, Christ is the true Christians' pattern, and His Spirit their Leader.

I speak these things in truth and sincerity, because I desire not to be misunderstood by you. I am a single soul, wholly devoted to the Lord, and so I do not plead for any outward form for form's sake; neither do I plead for a particular sect or people, as a people. For sadly, we have grown to be a mixed multitude, much like the children of Israel when they were in the wilderness. But this I may say to the praise and glory of God—the principle that we make profession of is the very Truth, namely, Christ in the male and in the female, the hope of glory. And Christ, as you know, is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to God but by Him. So there is a remnant who, like Joshua and Caleb of old, are true to the Lord their spiritual Leader, and follow Him faithfully, and these stand in their testimonies against all dead formalities, which are but worthless images when the living principle is withdrawn. And as the Spirit of Jesus leads out of all vain customs and traditions which are in the world, and into the plain, humble, meek, self-denying life and way in which Christ walked while He was visible among men, I could wish all to follow the leadings of His Spirit herein, that thereby they

may truly confess Him before men.

But if it please the Almighty to accept souls without leading them through such fiery trials as He brought me through, or without requiring such things of them as He required of me, far be it from me to judge that these have not known the Lord or the indwelling of His love, if the fruits of the Spirit of Jesus be clearly upon them. For every tree is known by its fruits, and to our own master we must stand or fall. But dear friend, as you well observed, purification is a gradual work—I may say so by experience. For when the old adversary could no longer draw me out into vain talking and foolish jesting, he then perplexed me with vain thoughts, some of which were according to my natural disposition, and some of them quite contrary. Oh, I cried mightily unto the Lord for power over vain thoughts, for they were a great trouble to me! And I stood in great fear lest one day or another I should fall by the hand of the enemy. But the Lord spoke comfortably to my soul in His own words (which are left upon record), “Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;” and with these words, the Lord gave me an evidence that my soul was one of that little flock.

Another time, when I was very low in my mind, these words sprang up with life and virtue: “Although you have lain among the pots, yet I will give you the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers of yellow gold” (Psa. 68:13). Oh, it was wonderfully comfortable to me when the Holy Spirit did bring a promise to my remembrance, and gave me an evidence that it was my portion! So I pondered concerning “the wings of a dove,” and I thought they must be the wings of innocence, whereby my soul might ascend

unto God by prayer, meditation, and divine contemplation. I took delight to pray in secret, and to fast in secret from the outgoings of my mind as well as I could, and my Heavenly Father (who sees and hears in secret) did reward me openly. For then, when I went to meetings, I did not sit in darkness, dryness, and barrenness, as I used to do in the time of my disobedience. Instead, I reaped the benefit of the coming of Christ, who said, "The thief comes only to steal, and to kill, and to destroy; I am come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly." The thief had, in the time of my disobedience, stolen my soul from Jesus, who said, "Whoever loves father or mother, etc., or his own life more than me, is not worthy of me." So it had been with me, and I failed to reap the purpose of His coming for several years. But in mercy He returned, and afforded my bowed-down soul the enjoyment of His divine presence, and was pleased to cause His love (which is the true life of the soul) so to abound in my bosom in meetings that my cup did overflow. And I was constrained, under a sense of duty, to kneel down in the congregation, and confess to the goodness of God, and to pray to Him for the continuation of it, and for power whereby I might be enabled to walk worthy of so great a favor, benefit, and mercy, that I had received from His bountiful hand.

And I remember how after I had made public confession to the goodness of God, my soul felt as if it had been in another world. It was so enlightened and enlivened by divine love, that I was in love with the whole creation of God, and I saw everything to be good in its place. I was shown how things ought to be kept in their proper places—that the swine ought not to come into the garden, and the

clean beasts ought not to be taken into the bed-chamber—and as it was in the outward, so it ought to be in the inward and new creation. So everything began to preach to me: the very fragrant herbs, and beautiful, innocent flowers had a speaking voice to my soul, and things seemed to have another relish with them than before. The judgments of God were sweet to my soul, and I was made at times to call others to come taste and see how good the Lord is, and to exhort them to prove the Lord by an obedient, humble, innocent walking before Him. Then they would see that He would pour out His spiritual blessings in so plentiful a manner that there would not be room enough to contain them, and the overflow would return to Him who is the Fountain with thanksgiving. And at times I was made to warn people that they should not provoke the Lord by disobedience. For although He bears and suffers long (as He did with the rebellious Israelites in the wilderness), yet all shall know Him to be a God of justice and judgment, and shall be made so to confess.

Thus, dear friend, I have given you a plain but true account of my qualification and call to the service of the ministry. But it was several years before I came to a freed state, or to an even temper of mind. For sometimes clouds would arise and interpose between my soul and the rising Sun, and I was often brought down into the furnace. But I found by experience that every time my soul was brought down as into the furnace of affliction, I did come up more clean and bright. And even though the cloud did interpose between me and the rising Sun, yet when the Sun of Righteousness did appear again, He brought healing under His wings, and was nearer than before. I express these things

in simplicity, as they were represented and made manifest to me in the morning of my days.

I came to love to dwell with judgment, and I used to pray often saying, "O Lord, search me and try me, for You know my heart better than I know it! I pray You let no deceitfulness or unrighteousness lodge therein, but let Your judgments pass upon everything in me that is contrary to Your pure, divine nature!" In this way my soul used to breathe to the Lord continually, and hunger and thirst after a more full enjoyment of His presence. And though He is a consuming fire to the corrupt nature of the old man, yet my soul loved to dwell with Him. I found that many sorts of corruptions endeavored to spring up in me again, but I resigned my mind to the Lord, with desires that He would feed me with food appropriate for me. And this I can say by experience, that the soul that is born of God does breathe to Him as constantly by prayer as the newborn child does draw in and breathe out air. Yes, in this same way the child of God draws in and breathes forth the breath of life by which man was made a living soul to God. But all who are still in the old man or fallen nature know nothing of this pure and divine breathing, for it is a mystery to them; yet the babe in Christ knows it to be true. And although the children in our Father's family are of several ages, growths, or statures (in regard to both strength and understanding), yet this I have observed in all my travels, that those who live to God continue in a state of breathing to Him while they are here, and they continually hunger and thirst after a more full enjoyment of His divine presence, so that, though every day brings us nearer to the grave, yet the soul may every day be brought into a greater

divine union and communion with God. It is a certain sign to me of the divine life and health of a soul when I find it sweetly breathing unto the Lord, and hungering and thirsting after His righteousness. And indeed, by one's manner of life it can be clearly seen and easily known what sort of spirit does govern within him. Oh it is true, that many will not believe these things, nor try whether they be so or not, but instead are satisfied with the husk of religion. But what will they do when the rudiments and beggarly elements of this world fall off, and all our works must pass through the fire? My very soul mourns for them! But we must press forward and leave them, if they will not arise out of their false rest.

Dear friend, as you well observe, it is a great help for the soul to know its own corruptions, and to understand from where it is fallen, that it may know how to return. These things are very true, and the knowledge of them has been a great comfort to me, and so have the experiences of the servants of the Lord together with the testimonies left on record, which are like way-marks to the spiritual traveler. Truly we have a great privilege in and by these, and above all in Christ our holy Pattern and heavenly Leader, who said, "My judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me." My soul prizes the knowledge of His footsteps, and the leading of His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, whom the Father has sent to lead us into all truth. "And oh," says my soul, "that we may follow the leadings of our unerring Guide in all things that He may lead us into!" I have good cause to believe He will bring us through all tribulations unto both the honor of God and our own comfort, for the

Lord has brought my soul through many trials, one after another, as He has seen fit, some more of which I will hint at in what follows.

After my inward tribulation had abated, then the outward trials began; and there were some of no small account, which endeavored with all their might and cunning to hinder the work of the Lord from prospering in me. For just as Saul hunted David and sought to take away his natural life, so these trials hunted my soul to take away its life, which it had in God; yet all wrought together for my good. I have often seen, and therefore may say, that the Lord knows what is best for His children far better than we know for ourselves. And so my enemies, instead of driving my soul away from God, drove it nearer to Him. Yes, these trials caused me to prove the spirit which had the dominion of my mind, and I found it to be the Spirit of Truth, which the worldly and self-minded cannot receive; for I found the nature of it to be harmless and holy, and to lead me to love my enemies, to pity them and pray for them. This love was my preservation; and as I gave up in obedience to the operation and requiring of this meek Spirit, it ministered such a peace to my soul as the world cannot give.

But still there was a disposition in me to please all, which I found very hard to be weaned from, so as to stand single to God. I found that when I feared man, I had nothing but anguish and sorrow; and I would often walk alone and pour out my complaint to the Lord. But after a long time, when the Lord had tried my faithfulness to Him as He saw fit, one day as I was sitting in a meeting in silence, waiting upon the Lord to know my strength

renewed in Him, this portion of Scripture was given to me: "Comfort My people, says your God: speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she has received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." This brought great comfort to my soul, and I treasured it in my heart. And I made this observation, that from that time onward the Lord gave my soul (as the apostle Peter expresses it) a more abundant entrance into the heavenly kingdom or New Jerusalem, whose walls are salvation and her gates praise. Indeed, my mind was brought into more stillness, and troublesome thoughts were in a good degree expelled. My outward enemies grew weary of their work and despaired of their hope, the praise for which I freely (and in great humility) offer up and ascribe to Almighty God; for it was His own work to preserve me from so many strong temptations.

So after I had been favored with peace at home every way, I was drawn by the Spirit of love to travel into the north of England. On my journey my soul had many combats with the evil spirit, both when asleep and awake. While I slept he tormented me as long as he could, but an abundance of courage was given me to make war with him, which much comforted my mind. So I looked earnestly to the Lord to give me the same victory over the devil when I was awake, even as He had let me know when I was asleep. The Spirit which led me forth was to me like the needle of a compass, for so it pointed where I ought to go. In those days I had certain manifestations of many things in dreams, which did come to pass according to their significations. Indeed, I was many times forewarned of my

enemies, and so was better equipped to guard against them. I travelled in great fear and humility, and the Lord was with me to His glory and my comfort, and brought me home again in peace.

In the year 1697, in the sixth month, as I was sitting in the meeting in Gloucester, England (which was then the place of my abode), my mind was gathered into perfect stillness for a time. My spirit then seemed as if it were carried away into America, and when it returned, my heart was dissolved with the love of God, which flowed over the great ocean, and I was constrained to kneel down and pray for the seed of God in America. This concern never went out of my mind, day or night, until I gave up to travel there in the love of God (which is a love so universal that it reaches over land and sea). But when I looked at the prospect with an eye of human reason, it seemed a very strange and hard thing to me, for I knew nothing of the country, nor anyone that dwelt there. I reasoned much concerning my own unfitness, and when I let in such reasonings, I felt nothing but death and darkness, and troubles attended my mind. But when I resigned all to the Lord, and gave up in my mind to go, then divine love sprang up in my heart, and my soul was at liberty to worship the Lord as in the land of the living.

Thus I tried and proved the prospect of going to America in my own heart, till at last these words ran through my mind with authority: "The fearful and unbelieving shall have their portion with the hypocrite, in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." This brought a dread upon me, so I then told my husband that I had a concern to go to America,

and asked him if he would be willing give me up. He said he hoped it would not be required of me. I told him it was, but that I should not go without his free consent, which seemed a little hard to him at first. Shortly thereafter, I was taken ill with a violent fever, which brought me so weak that all who saw me thought I would not recover. But being convinced that my day's work was not done, my chief concern during the sickness was my going to America. Some were troubled that I spoke openly about this, for they thought I would surely die, and then some would have cause to speak reproachfully of me. Others urged that, even if I were to recover, my ship would be ready to sail long before I would be fit to go. But I believed if they would only carry me and lay me down in the ship, I should be well; for the Lord was very gracious to my soul in the time of my sickness, and gave me a promise that His presence would go with me. Then my husband was made very willing to give me up, for he said, even if I were away for seven years, it would be better than to have me taken from him forever.

So when at last all obstacles were removed, I sailed from Bristol in the ninth month, 1697, together with my companion Mary Rogers. The dangers we were in at sea, the faith and courage the Lord gave to my soul, and the remarkable things I witnessed before I returned out of America, would be too much here to relate. But this I may say: I had such an evidence of being in my proper place that all fear was taken away. Oh, it is good to trust in the Lord and be obedient to Him, for His mercies endure forever! Great indeed is the condescension and goodness of God to poor mankind, and I may say to His praise that He has been with me through many straits and difficulties

(more than I can number), and these have all wrought together for the good of my soul. Yes, I have good cause to believe, that every son or daughter whom He receives, He chastens, tries, and proves, and those who do not bear the chastisements of God, do prove to be bastards and not sons. But I may truly say, as one did of old, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (Psa. 119:17), and it is good to follow the leadings of the Spirit of God, as faithful Abraham did, who was called the friend of God, and who did not withhold his only son when the Lord called for him. It is my belief the Lord will try His chosen ones as gold is tried, and will yet refine them as gold is refined. And what if He continues to bring us down into the furnace (in whatever way it should please Him) until we are seven times refined? We shall then be the better able to bear the impression of His image upon us in all that we do.

The testimony that Jesus bore to the scribe who desired to follow Him is very true—"Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head." Oh innocent Truth! O plain, meek, humble Jesus! Where does He find rest? Where does He reign without disturbance? Dear friend, excuse my freedom with you, for the love of God constrains me, and I do believe the Lord will show you yet further what testimony you must bear for His name, and what you must suffer for His sake, if you are faithful. For trying times will come, and offenses will be given and taken, but there is nothing that offends those who love the Lord Jesus above all. Many murmured and were offended at Jesus when He told them the truth, and many of His disciples left off from following Him. Then said He to the twelve, "Will you also

go away?" But Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. And we believe and know that You are that Christ, the Son of the living God." So we see that God has always given the faithful to believe. And now the Spirit of Truth has come, and does lead His followers into all truth. Jesus Christ, who is one with His Spirit, was offered once to bear the sins of many, and indeed has appeared again the second time without sin unto salvation.

Oh, surely the goodness of God has been very great to the children of men from age to age, and from one generation to another, ever since the fall of our first parents. The more my mind penetrates into it, the more I am swallowed up in admiration of His condescension and goodness through all His dispensations, but above all in the manifestation of Jesus Christ, our holy Pattern and heavenly Leader. O my soul, praise Him for the knowledge of His holy footsteps, whom God has given for a light to us Gentiles, and to be His salvation unto the ends of the earth! Yes, He has given His Spirit to dwell in us, and has accepted our souls to dwell in Him! O admirable goodness! Shall we leave Him? He is the Word of eternal life, and where else could we go? And in so far as any are followers of Jesus, that far I desire to follow them and be one with them, and no farther. And if any turn back from Him, and return into the sea out of which the beast arises, and receive his mark, our Leader is not to be blamed. For He holds forth His way, and causes His trumpet to be blown in Zion, and an alarm to be sounded in His holy mountain. Whosoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, his blood shall be upon his own head. But he

that takes warning shall deliver his own soul. Oh great is the duty of the watchman! And great is the kindness of God, as expressed in the 33rd chapter of Ezekiel!

O my dear friend, my heart is full of the goodness of the Lord. But I must stop writing, lest I become too tedious to you; and indeed, it might be accounted foolishness for me to write after this manner to one in your station. But I find a constraint thereto, and must commit it to your judgment, be it what it may. And this I will assure you, my heart is plain; I mean what I speak, and I find it safest to do so, and to keep in humble obedience to the Lord in whatsoever He requires of me. Yet I know the wisdom of God appears to be foolishness in the eyes of the wise men of this world, and we know that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God, and will prove so in the latter end to those poor souls who mightily esteem it. But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of the Lord, and though both their life and their death are taken for misery in the sight of the unwise, yet no torment shall touch them, and they shall rest in peace.

So in the love that is pure, does my soul greet you, and remain your friend in true sincerity,

Elizabeth Webb

* * *

Elizabeth Webb was a respected minister in the Society of Friends who travelled extensively in her service for the gospel. As is mentioned in the above letter, she crossed the Atlantic in 1697 to minister among the American colonies, returning to England in 1699. Her family

Letter of Elizabeth Webb

then emigrated from England to Pennsylvania in 1700, where she continued a minister until her death in 1726. On at least one occasion (in 1710), she returned to England in obedience to the Lord's requirings. Little is known about this journey other than her encounter with Anthony William Boehm in London, to whom this letter is addressed.

**THE JOURNAL OF
JOHN BURNYEAT**

(1631 – 1690)

In the year 1653, it pleased the Lord in His love and mercy to send to us His faithful servant George Fox, with others of His faithful servants and messengers of the Gospel of peace and glad-tidings. He was a man furnished with the eternal power of His Word, in the wisdom and power of which he proclaimed the Day of the Lord unto us, in this county of Cumberland, and the northern parts of England, uncovering the right path of life unto thousands that were in error, who sought the Lord, but knew not where to find Him, nor how to become acquainted with Him, although He was not far from us. This blessed man, George Fox, one of a thousand many may say, and chosen before many thousands, was sent among us, in the power of the Most High, filled with the strength of His Word. In the wisdom of God he directed thousands unto the light and appearance of Christ Jesus their Savior in their own hearts, that they might come to know Him, and the glory of the Father through Him in His appearance, and so come to believe in Him with the heart, and with the mouth to confess Him unto salvation.

Blessed be the Lord for the day of mercy in which He visited us, for He was pleased to make this labor of love effectual unto thousands where His servants were sent to labor. And among these, it pleased the Lord to grant me the favor to keep a share of the benefit of this blessed visitation, whereby I came to be informed concerning the right way of the Lord, and directed to the true light which the apostle Paul was sent to turn people unto in his day—from the darkness and the power of Satan unto God and His blessed power—which, in my waiting in the light, I received.

Through this light, deep judgment sprang in my soul, and great affliction grew in my heart, by which I was brought into great tribulation and sorrow, such as I had never known before in all my profession of religion. Indeed, I could say in spirit that it was “the day of Jacob's trouble,” for the God of Heaven, by the light of His blessed Son which enlightened me and shone in my heart, let me see the body of death and power of sin which reigned in me, and brought me to feel the guilt of it upon my conscience, so that I could say He made me, even as it were, “possess the sins of my youth.”

Notwithstanding all my lofty profession of an imputed righteousness, and a belief that, though I lived in the act of sin, the guilt of it should not be charged upon me, but imputed to Christ, and His righteousness imputed to me, yet I found it otherwise when I was turned unto the light which did manifest all reprobable things. For I came to see that the guilt remained while the body of death remained, and while we are still led into the act of sin through its power. Then I saw there was need of a savior to save from

sin, as well as of the blood of a sacrificed Christ to blot out sin, and of faith in His name for the remission of sins past. Then began the warfare of true striving to enter the kingdom. Then I knew Paul's state—*to will* was present, but power was many times lacking *to do*. Then was that cry known, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," and free me from the prevailing power of the law which remained in the members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin?

When this war had truly begun, all my proud conceit in my invented notional faith, and my pretenses and hopes of justification thereby, were overthrown. Indeed, all that I had built for several years in my profession, since the days of my youth (during which time tender stirrings were in me after true acquaintance with the Lord, and the knowledge of Him, and peace with Him), was seen to be but a tower of Babel, upon which God brought confusion. I saw that such a tower could never be made to reach unto heaven, being outside of the faith of His covenant; nor could it bring the heart to truly trust and rely upon His word, but rather led out into inventions, self-willing and self-acting, though true things were spoken of.

Then, seeing all my works confounded by the visitations of God, and by the springing of the Day from on high which discovered things as they were, and seeing them all end at Babel, and the God of heaven bringing confusion upon them, I was amazed, and fear beset me on every side. I began sometimes to fear I was undone forever; for something had entered my heart which turned the fruitful field into a wilderness, and turned what I thought was as the

Garden of Eden into a forest. The Day of God discovered all to be desolation, dryness, and death, and brought my soul to a deep lamentation, to such sorrows as I had never known before. Then I lamented and bewailed myself many times, and my weakness was such that I wished myself in a wilderness where I would neither meet with temptation or provocation from without. For all the notions I talked about regarding Christ's imputed righteousness to be my own, were not confirmed by His Spirit's seal, and so my righteousness was only a presumption. I saw clearly that my supposed righteousness was my own invention, and so it was only like Adam's fig-leaf covering, in which he could not abide God's coming.

Oh the woe that overtook me! The distress that seized me! The horror and terror that sprung in my bosom! The poverty and lack that my soul saw itself in, through the springing up of the discovering light, towards which the eye of my soul was turned! And as this light sprung up, of which the apostle of old wrote, it manifested all things—not only the lack that I was in, but also the things which God reprov'd. Then “sin became exceedingly sinful,” and the load and burden of it became exceedingly grievous, and all the pleasure of it was taken away from me (and many others) in that day. Then we began to mourn after a savior, and to look for a deliverer, and to cry for a helper and a healer. For the Day of the Lord that makes desolate had overtaken us, and the fire and sword that Christ brings upon the earth (by which He takes away peace) had reached to us. Yet we knew not the one from whom all of this came, though His burning and judgment had begun, by which the filth was to be taken away.

And now in this distress, deep were our groans and our cries unto the Lord, which reached unto Him, and He was pleased to hear and show mercy. We often assembled together, as the Lord's messengers (whom He had sent among us) exhorted us, and we minded the light of Christ in our hearts, and whatever it uncovered. And in our spirits (through the assistance of His light) we warred and watched against the evil found there; and with the understanding we received, we waited upon the Lord to see what He would further make manifest, always with a holy resolution to obey His will so far as we were able, whatsoever it cost us.

And this I can testify was the condition of many in that day: We did not value the world, or any glory or pleasure in it, in comparison with our soul's redemption out of that fallen state. Indeed we longed for freedom from the horror and terror we felt under the indignation of the Lord, which we saw ourselves to be in because of the guilt of sin that was upon us. So we gave up to bear the indignation of the Lord (because we had sinned), and we endeavored to wait until the indignation was over, and the Lord in mercy would blot out the guilt that remained (which occasioned wrath), and would sprinkle our hearts from an evil conscience, and wash us with pure water, that we would be enabled to draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, as the Christians of old did. (Heb. 10:22.)

But alas, we had no boldness, for the living faith was lacking! And we did not have a true heart by which to draw near, and therefore could not have full assurance, but instead were surrounded by fears, horrors, and amazement. And yet we came to know that there was no other

way except to dwell in these judgments, “to wait in the way of His judgments” (Isa. 26:8), understanding that we must “be redeemed with judgment,” as was said of Zion, Isaiah 1:27. So waiting therein, we began to learn righteousness, and strongly desired to walk in it, for we were no longer satisfied with a talk thereof. Thus waiting for and seeking after the Lord (though greatly ignorant of Him), in a deep sense of our own unworthiness and unpreparedness to meet Him because of the pollution of our hearts (which was seen by His light that did shine there), we remained bowed down in spirit, afflicted and tossed in soul, and not comforted. Indeed, our hearts were unstable like water—the waves going over our heads, and our souls in jeopardy every moment. Our faith was so little that, like Peter, we were ready to sink, often crying out in the danger.

In this distress and veil of tears through which we walked, our hearts became quite dead to the world, and all its pleasure and glory. We became dead also to all our former religious professions, for we saw there was no life in them, nor help or salvation, though some of us had tried them thoroughly. We saw it was in vain to look to such hills or mountains for salvation. So we began to forsake all on both hands, seeing the emptiness of all—both the glory, vanity, and pleasure of the world, and the dead image of religious profession which we had set up in our imaginations and inventions, and had worshipped with our unprepared hearts and unsanctified spirits (being still slaves and captives to sin, as all are who obey its lusts, according to Romans 6:15-16). Yes, when we had a true sight and sense of the insufficiency of all that we either had or could do to give us ease, help, or salvation, we then denied them all.

And as we had been directed, we turned our minds unto the light of Christ shining in our hearts, and believed in Him (according to His command, John 12:36), and met together to wait upon the Lord in the light.

The lofty professors of our days were ignorant of the Holy Spirit, through their resisting of it. They blasphemed the life and power, and at best, did but feed upon the tree of knowledge. I still remember well, that in my waiting upon the Lord in the deep distress and weighty judgment that was upon my soul, to see if He would appear and break through and give relief from that which kept me down like bars of iron... I say, I remember that in the very first notable breaking in of the power of God upon my soul (or pouring forth of the Holy Spirit upon me), I came to a true discovery of the mystery of the tree of knowledge. In the light I clearly saw on what tree I had been feeding (along with all the carnal professors of religion), and how we had made a profession of that which we did not possess. Indeed, our souls were still in death, feeding upon the mere talk of that which the saints of old did enjoy. Here I saw that there was no getting to the Tree of Life (so that our souls might be healed by its leaves, and feed upon its fruit, and live forever) unless I first came under the wounding, slaying sword that Christ brings, by which the life of the old man comes to be destroyed. And I saw how this man desires to remain in sin, and serve it, and yet profess faith in Christ, and claim to be His servant (which is impossible, according to Christ's own saying, "No man can serve two masters" Mat. 6:24). It clearly opened to me that there was no other remedy—I must either be buried by that fiery baptism of Christ with Him into death, or else

there could be no rising with Him into newness of life. There might be a rising into a newness of profession, notions, and words, but that would not do, for it was newness of life that I needed; the other I had tried over and over. I saw I must die with Him, or be planted with Him in the likeness of death—that is, truly die unto sin—if ever I would come to be united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection, and so live unto God, according to Romans 6.

When these things thus opened in me, I clearly saw we had all been deceived in thinking that while we lived in the flesh, after the flesh, and so in the death (feeding upon the tree of knowledge, which was forbidden for food), we might profess to reap life everlasting. For I soon saw that, as a man lived, and as a man sowed, *that* would he reap, and not what a man professed or talked of.

Then I was willing to bow to the cross, and come under the fiery baptism of the Spirit, and let that which was consumable be destroyed, that my soul might be saved, and come to possess that which would endure and abide and could not be shaken. Thus were the heavens shaken also, as well as the earth, so that what could not be shaken might remain (according to Heb. 12:27). For the light and true witness (as it was acknowledged by us in our hearts) condemned the evil fruits of the flesh, both in our loose conduct and in the lusts and desires of our hearts, and did also discover and condemn our fleshly profession of religion (which was in that same nature and mind), so that our false covering and garment was taken away, and we were comfortless and naked, destitute and without a habitation.

Then we saw clearly that our worship and our sinning were alike in the sight of God. Indeed, even our prayers were rejected and despised, because all was done in one nature, and from one and the same seed and corrupt heart. Therefore, it came to be with us as it was with Judah of old (read Isa. 1 and Isa. 66:3) that their killing an ox, sacrificing a lamb, offering an oblation, and burning incense was like the slaying of a man, cutting a dog's neck, offering swine's blood, and blessing an idol. Thus we saw that, for lack of righteousness and keeping the commandments of the Lord, and not forsaking of our own ways and all that was evil, so our religion was loathed by the Lord, and we were rejected in all our doings, and left in desolation and barrenness. For regardless what we did pretend, that truth of Christ's saying does stand, "A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor a bad tree good fruit; the tree is known by its fruit."

These things opened wonderfully in us, and we discerned not only common sins, which all confess to be sinful (though they live in them), but also the hypocrisy and sinfulness in religion which is performed outside the true Spirit of grace and life (which is the salt with which every gospel sacrifice is to be seasoned, according to the old covenant figure). Therefore we were required of the Lord to withdraw and be separate in our worship, and to wait to have our hearts sanctified, and the spirit of our minds renewed, that we might come before Him with prepared vessels. And we soon learned that it must be true in the substance even as it was in the figure—namely, that all the vessels of the tabernacle were to be sanctified, consecrated, or made holy. Therefore we came out from

among all who claimed to worship but who lived in uncleanness and pleaded for sin.¹

Then the profane began to mock, scoff, and abuse us, and our very relations and old familiar friends became strangers to us, and were offended at us. Indeed they did hate us, and began to speak evil of us, and “thought it strange that we would not run with them into the same flood of dissipation,” as it was of old, 1 Pet 4:4. Also the professors of religion, even those with whom we had formerly walked in fellowship in our lifeless profession, began to reproach and vilify us, and to speak evil against us, and charge us with error and schism, and departing from the faith. They also began to reproach the light of Christ, calling it natural and insufficient, a false light, and a false guide. In this way, Christ, in His spiritual appearance, was reproached, vilified, slighted, undervalued, and rejected by the carnal professors of Christianity in our day, just as He was by the Jews in the day of His appearance in the flesh (who could not see through the veil unto the end).

In this our weak state, we were beset on every side, and greatly distressed, tossed, and afflicted. We were like poor Israel, when the sea was before them, and the Egyptians behind, and their hope was so little that they looked for nothing but death, and said to Moses, “Because there were no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness?” Exo. 14:11. Thus we found that through many tribulations the kingdom must be entered by all

1 The prevalent thought among Protestants (both then and now) is that true freedom from sin is an impossibility on this side of the grave. Quakers referred to such teaching as “pleading for sin,” that is, arguing for the continuance and dominion of sin term of life.

who strive rightly to enter it (Acts 14:22, Luke 13:24).

But when we were sunk deep in our fears, and our minds were not well acquainted with either the true striving (not of self, but in the light and seed of life that does prevail), or with the true waiting or standing still (apart from our own thoughts, wills, and running, which do not obtain) then the Lord sent us His servants who had learned of Him. These showed us in what we should wait, and directed us how to stand still out of our own thoughts and self-strivings, in the light that does uncover all things, and exhorted us to abide and dwell in the judgments that we received therein. And as we turned to the light, so our understandings were by degrees informed, and we got to a measure of staidness in our minds, which before had been like a troubled sea. Indeed, a hope began to appear in us, and we met together, and waited to see the salvation of God (of which we had only heard), longing that He would work by His own power.

In those days, we learned to meet and wait together in silence. Sometimes, not a word was uttered in our meetings for months, but everyone that was faithful waited upon the living Word in their own heart, in order to experience sanctification and a thorough cleansing and renewing of the heart and inward man. And as we were cleansed and made fit, we came to have a greater delight in waiting upon the Word in our hearts, to receive its pure milk (of which Peter speaks, 1 Pet. 2:2). And indeed, in our waiting, we received its virtue and grew thereby, and were fed with the heavenly food that rightly nourished our souls.

So we came to receive more and more of the Spirit of grace and life from Christ our Savior, who is full of it, and

in whom the fullness dwells. He taught us thereby to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, godly, and soberly in this present evil world.” By this we came to know the true Teacher, which the saints of old did witness (as said the apostle in Tit. 2:12). Therefore, though we had left the hireling priests, and also other lofty notionists, and sat down together in silence, still we did not lack a teacher or true divine instructions. For this was our desire: to have all flesh silenced before the Lord and His power, both within us and without. And as we thus came into true silence and inward stillness, we began to hear the voice of Him who said, “I am the resurrection and the life.” Indeed He said unto us, “Live,” and gave unto our souls life, and this holy gift which He has given has been in us as a well of water springing up into eternal life, according to His promise. Therefore, it has been our delight all along to wait upon Him, and to draw near with our spirits unto Him, both in our meetings and also at other times, that we might both be taught and saved by Him.

So we met together in this way for some time, as often as we found opportunity, and were exercised in the living judgments that sprung in the light in our souls, and continued looking for the salvation of God. We also sought the Lord with travailing spirits both night and day when at our earthly callings, and upon our beds (for we could not cease, our souls were so afflicted).

Then, the wonderful power from on high was revealed among us, and many hearts were reached by it, and broken, and melted before the God of the whole earth! Great dread and trembling fell upon many, and the very chains of death were broken by Him, and the bonds were

loosed, and many souls were eased and set at liberty. The prisoners of hope began to come forth, and those who had sat in darkness began to show themselves. And many promises of the Lord, spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, came to be fulfilled unto many. Some witnessed the oil of joy, and a heavenly gladness entered their hearts, and in the joy of their souls they broke forth in praises unto the Lord. Yes, the tongue of the dumb was loosed by Christ, the healer of our infirmities, and many began to speak and utter the wonderful things of God.

Great was the dread and glory of that power, which in one meeting after another was graciously and richly manifested among us, breaking, tendering, and melting our souls and spirits before the Lord. Then our hearts began to delight in the Lord and in His way (which He had cast up before us), and with great fervency and zeal we began to seek after Him, and to meet together more often than before. Truly our hearts were affected with the presence of that blessed power, which daily broke forth among us in our meetings, and through it we were greatly comforted, strengthened, and edified. For this was that same Comforter that our Lord promised to send from the Father, John 14: 26-27, John 16:13-15. And this Comforter, now having come and been received, did teach us to know the Father and the Son. Yes, as we came into acquaintance with it, and into the unity of it, we came to be taught by it, and so were taught of the Lord, according to that new covenant promise—"They shall be all taught of the Lord" (Isa. 54:13, 1 John 2:27).

Then our hearts were inclined to hearken unto the Lord, and our ears (which He had opened to hear) were

bent to hear the Spirit's teaching. Indeed we heard what He said unto the church, and found Him to be the chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, who gathered us into a right gospel exercise and true gospel worship. Through His name we received remission of sins past, and through His blood we had our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and were given the pure water that washed and made us clean. So that with true hearts many began to draw near unto God in the full assurance of faith, as the ancient saints had done, and were accepted. We found access by that one Spirit, and came to be baptized into one body, and made to drink into one Spirit, and so we were refreshed, greatly comforted, and grew up together in the mystery of the gospel fellowship. Thus we worshipped God, who is a Spirit, in the Spirit received from Him (which is the gospel worship, according to Christ, John 4:24).

Then we came to see even more clearly over all the worships in the world which were set up either by imitation, or by man's invention. We saw that it was in vain to worship God in invented and traditional worship, and to teach for doctrines the commandments of men (as our Lord had said, Mat. 15:9, Isa. 29:13). Therefore we were constrained not only to withdraw from them, but (many of us) to go and bear witness against all worship that was without the life and power of God.

Thus, having been gathered by the Lord Jesus Christ (that great Shepherd of our souls) we became His sheep, and learned to know His voice, and to follow Him. He taught us, and led us forth into green pastures, where we did feed and rest together with great delight. He gave unto us eternal life, and manifested the riches of His grace in

our hearts, by which we were saved through faith and delivered from that wrath, fear, and terror which had been so weighty upon our souls. Truly, we came to partake of that life in which the blessing does consist, and so in measure we were freed from the power of that death which had reigned, and had made us miserable and wretched.

Oh the joy, the pleasure, and the great delight with which our hearts were overcome many times in our reverent and holy assemblies! How were our hearts melted like wax, and our souls poured out like water before the Lord, and our spirits were offered up to the Lord like sweet incense of oil, frankincense and myrrh, when not even one word was uttered in all our assembly! Then the Lord did delight to come down into His garden, and to walk in the midst of the beds of spices. Yes, He caused “the north winds to awake, and the south winds to blow upon His garden,” and the pleasant showers to descend for the refreshing of His tender plants, that they might grow still more and more. To those who had known the night of sorrow, now the joyful morning had come (according to that ancient experience of David. Psa. 30:5). And those who had formerly passed through deep afflictions, tosses, and distresses, came to witness the fulfilling of that great gospel promise:

O you afflicted one, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay your stones with colorful gems, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of crystal, and all your walls of precious stones. All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be

the peace of your children. In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you. (Isa. 54:11-14)

Thus, we came to be gathered into covenant with God, and to witness in Christ the fulfilling of the promises of God, in whom all the promises are yes and amen. We came to sit together in heavenly places in Him, and to feed upon the heavenly food, the bread of life that came down from heaven, which Christ (the heavenly Shepherd) gave unto us. For He gathered us out from under those shepherds that fed themselves with temporal things from the flock, but knew not how to feed the flock with spiritual food, for they did not have it.

So we came to be acquainted with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts, and became great lovers of it, and delighted in the enjoyment of it. We counted all things but dross and dung in comparison with the excellence that we found here, and we were therefore willing to suffer the loss of all that we might win Him (as it was with the apostle of old). Blessed be the Lord, for many obtained their desire, and found their beloved, and met with their Savior, and so witnessed His saving health by which their souls were healed. In this way we became His flock and family, or His household of faith. And as His children and blessed family, we continued to meet together twice or more in the week, and being gathered together in His name and holy fear, we witnessed His promise (according to Mat. 18:20) that He was in the midst of us, honoring our assemblies with His heavenly power and presence. This was our

great delight, and the sweetness of His presence did wonderfully constrain our souls to love Him, and our hearts to wait upon Him; for we found the ancient experience of the Church to be true, "Because of the savor of Your good ointments, Your name is as ointment poured forth; therefore do the virgins love You."

Thus growing into this experience of the goodness of the Lord, and of the sweetness, glory, and excellence of His power in our assemblies, we grew in strength and zeal for our meetings more and more, and valued the benefit of them more than any worldly gain. Yes, these times were to some of us more than our necessary food. Continuing thus, we grew more into an understanding of divine things and heavenly mysteries, through the openings of the power which was daily among us, and which worked sweetly in our hearts, uniting us more and more unto God, and knitting us together in the perfect bond of love and fellowship. So we became a united body, made up of many members, of which Christ Himself became the head. Indeed, He was with us, and did rule over us, and further gave gifts unto us, by which we grew in capacity and understanding in order to answer the end for which He had raised us up, and blessed and sanctified us through His Word which dwelt in our souls.

As we kept to our first love, and continued in our meetings, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together (as was the manner of some of old, whose example the apostle exhorted the saints not to follow), the Lord's power continued with us. Many, through the favor of God, grew in their gifts, and had their mouths opened, and so became instruments in the Lord's hand to bear

witness to the world of the Day of the Lord which had broken forth again, even of the great and notable Day of which Joel had prophesied and Peter bore witness. Some were also sent to bear witness against the world, and its evil deeds, and all the false religions with which mankind had covered himself in the darkness and apostasy which had spread over them, but which now was seen and discovered by the light and Day of God.

Thus the Truth grew, and so did the faithful in it, and many were turned unto God. His name, fame, glory, and power spread abroad, and the enemy's work and kingdom were discovered and struck at by the Lamb and His followers. This made the enemy begin to rage, and to stir up his instruments to oppose the Lord's work, and with all his subtlety to hinder people from following the Lamb or believing in His light.

So with pen, and tongue, and hands also, the beast and his followers began to war. They resorted to whipping, scourging, imprisoning, and seizing property. They reproached, opposed, and slandered the way of truth, doing whatever they could to hinder the exaltation of the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. They blasphemed His light and His power, calling His light "natural, insufficient, and a false guide," with many other reproachful names. They called His power and operation "demonic," which power indeed worked in many toward the renewing of the spirit of the mind, and also to the reformation of the conduct from all debauchery, wickedness, unrighteousness, and witchcraft. These were like the Pharisees of old who said of Christ, "By the ruler of the demons He casts out demons."

However, by this time, those who had kept faithful to the Lord (and His light and Spirit in their hearts) and who had come forth through the deep tribulation (as before related) were already confirmed, settled, satisfied, and established in the life that was manifested. In this life they saw over death, and through all men's professions, and could discern where men were and what they fed upon. And they saw that those who cried out against the light and power of Christ were like the mockers in the second chapter of Acts, when they thought the Apostles were drunk with new wine.

From the year 1653 (in which year I was convinced of the blessed truth and the way of life eternal) unto the year 1657, I was not much concerned to travel abroad on account of the Truth, save only to visit Friends that were prisoners for the Truth's testimony. During this time I was mostly at home, following my outward calling. I was very diligent to keep to our meetings, being given up in my heart to attend faithfully, and indeed I found great delight in them. Many times, when a meeting was over, and I was at my outward labor (in which I was also very diligent), I did long in my spirit for the next meeting day, that I might meet with the rest of the Lord's people to wait upon Him. I can also with safety say, that when I was there, I was not slothful, but in true diligence I set my heart to wait upon the Lord for a visitation from Him by the revelation of His power in my soul. And I can say this for the Lord, and on His behalf (with many other witnesses), that as we waited in diligence, patience, and faith, we did not wait in vain. He did not allow our expectations to fail; everlasting glory, and honor, and praise be to His worthy and honor-

able name forever! The very remembrance of His goodness and glorious power, revealed and renewed in those days, overcomes my soul.

Thus, in diligent waiting, the Lord in mercy did visit our hearts by His power, and my soul was daily more and more affected with the glory, excellence, and sweetness of it, and also with a holy dread which filled my heart. This became pleasant to me, and so my spirit was bent to keep near unto this power, and to dwell in that holy fear which the Father placed in my heart. I came to see what David exhorted to in the second Psalm, when he told the kings and judges of the earth “Be wise and learned” and further said, “Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.” Oh the bowings of my soul! Oh the pleasant dread that dwelt upon my spirit, and the reverent tremblings that came over my heart, which filled it with living joy as with marrow and fatness! Then I could say in my heart with David, “I will wash my hands in innocence, and go about Your altar, O Lord.” Oh how pleasant it is to draw near unto the altar of the Lord, having hearts prepared and filled, and souls and spirits anointed with the true anointing from the Holy One, of which John speaks (1 John 2:27). This anointing is the substance of the figure in Exo. 30:25, with which Moses was commanded to anoint the vessels of the tabernacle.

Our hearts were thus fitted, filled, and furnished many a time in our holy assemblies as we sat together under the same dread and power, for the temple or tabernacle in which we worshipped (as children of the new Jerusalem) was but one—“even the Lord God and the Lamb” (Rev. 21:22). And as my heart was thus fitted and filled, I

endeavored to keep my spirit down to the melting sense of the power; and great was the care of my soul that I might in no way miss or abuse this power, or let up a wrong thing into my mind, and so be betrayed by it. I found that if I was careful to keep down all that was wrong, then I would grow into sound wisdom and a true understanding, even of those mysteries of which the world was ignorant. For the Son of God had come, and it was He that “gave the understanding to know Him that is true” (as John had said), and “He was made unto us wisdom” (as Paul said in 1 Cor. 1:30). I often observed with great care and diligence how it was with my own spirit in those blessed and pleasant seasons in which the Lord did so wonderfully appear among us, filling our hearts with the glorious majesty of His power. I kept watch to see whether my spirit was subject to Him, as it ought to be; for I clearly saw that the enemy might beguile and lead up into the heights, and into pride and vainglory. For if the soul was not kept humble, it would soon be deprived of the power, for, “The meek will He guide in judgment, and the meek will He teach His way.”

Thus, even in the greatest enjoyments, I saw there was a constant need of carefulness and fear. For those that grew sluggish, idle, and careless in waiting for the power in a meeting, sat without the sense of it in a dead, dry, barren state. These were not diligent to keep low, humble, and tender, and so to mind the nature of the working of the power, and the state of their own spirits under the power's exercise, and also to watch against the enemy's subtlety (who lays in wait to betray). Indeed these were easily led aside (out of the way of the power) by the stranger, even

while the power was working and the joy was in the hearts of others. I found that, for lack of true fear and care, the soul could come to a loss before it was aware. I believe that some have fallen here, and can scarcely find the reason of it. Oh, it may truly be said, "Great is the mystery of godliness," even the great mystery which Paul writes of in Colossians—"Christ in you the hope of glory." And as He is there (in us), great is the mystery of His working in us by His Spirit, to the opening and clearing of the understandings of all who rightly wait upon Him. For it is the *soul* of man that experiences the sanctification, and the oneness with the life, and the true unction. Indeed, it is the soul that comes to be a priest of the royal priesthood, chosen and elected in God's covenant, and so comes rightly and lawfully to eat the holy things, and to partake of the sanctified holy food. Therefore, the stranger is not to come near this place; and this was signified in the figure—"The stranger was not to eat of the Passover" (Exo. 12:43), and "No stranger should eat of the holy things" (Lev. 22:10), and again Solomon said, "The heart knows its own bitterness, and a stranger doesn't meddle with his joy" (Prov. 14:10). Much more might be said, but this is the point of the matter: The heart that has known its own bitterness in judgment and distress, and has come through this unto peace and joy, must keep therein, and not let that which has no share with it to come and meddle with the joy; for if it does, this will soon overthrow the joy of the soul, and bring it to another state. Then the soul will find no more pity in the day of distress than Judas had from the Jews after he had betrayed his Master, when they told him, "What is that to us? You see to it!"

As I have said before, I continued for these four years mostly following my outward calling, and attending and waiting upon the Lord in the workings of His holy power in my heart, both in meetings and at other times. Wherever I was, or whatever I had to do, I found that as my heart was kept near to the power, it kept me tender, soft, and living. And besides this, I found that as I was diligent in eyeing it, there was a constant sweet stream of divine peace, pleasure, and joy that ran softly in my soul, which far exceeded all other delights and satisfactions. This became the great engager of my soul to keep watch with great diligence, for I found the love of God to constrain me. And furthermore, I observed that if I neglected it, or let my mind out after anything else more than I ought, and so forgot this, I began to be like a stranger, and I saw that I soon might lose my interest in these riches and treasures, and in the true inheritance of God's spiritual Israel, which Christ had purchased for me, and given me the taste of to inherit.

Thus I went on in the holy fellowship of the gospel of life and salvation, with the rest of my brethren and sisters, and many joyful days we had together in the power of the Holy Spirit, which was richly and graciously continued among us, and daily poured out upon us. We continued to grow in favor with God, and in unity one with another, and received daily strength from the Lord, and an increase of His divine wisdom and Spirit, which did greatly comfort us. I do well remember how my heart was satisfied in this pleasant state, and I became settled in a contentment where I was willing to abide. And because of the blessings and rich mercies of the Lord which my soul enjoyed, I

became willing to serve Him in whatever I might, and I willingly received a share of His concern for the church, that I might be helpful in all necessary things.

So the Lord began to stir in my heart by His Spirit, to arise and go forth in the strength of His word, and declare against the hirelings who fed themselves and not the people, and who kept the people ignorant of these good things. But when the word of the Lord came unto me with a message to declare, it became a great exercise to me, and I would willingly have shunned it, and instead continued in that ease, peace, and pleasure into which the Lord had brought me. But I soon came to know there was no peace but in obeying the Lord and giving up to do His will (for I was sure it was the word of the Lord). So then I yielded in spirit, and began to long for the day that I might clear myself, and be eased of the charge that was upon me. Indeed, I could not keep back, for weighty was the dread and majesty of the power of the word of life that lived and burned as a fire in my heart.

When the first day of the week came, I was moved by the Spirit of the Lord to go to Lorton, to speak to a priest named Fogoe, who was preaching to the people in their worship house. I stayed until he had finished, and heard him affirm in his preaching that both he and they were without the life of both the law and the gospel. Then I spoke to him and said, "With what then do you preach or pray, since you are without the life of both the law and gospel?" But after a few words, he fell into a rage and stirred up the people, and they fell upon me, and haled me out of the house, and beat me, and the priest threatened to put me in the stocks.

Two weeks after this I was moved to go again to speak to the same priest at Loweswater, the parish where I then lived. When I came in, the people began to look at me and take notice, but the priest bid them let me alone, and said that if I would be quiet, he would discourse with me when he had finished. So I stood still and quiet, waiting upon the Lord. The priest prepared to go to prayer, but when he saw that I did not put off my hat (for I could not join with him in his dead, lifeless prayers), instead of going to prayer he fell a railing against me, and said I should not stand there in that posture. At last I spoke to him and asked him again, "With what do you pray, since you say you are without the life of both the law and the gospel?" But he continued calling out to the people to take me away. At last, my father (who was present, and was displeased with me for troubling their minister) came himself and haled me out of the house, and was very angry with me. I stayed in the graveyard until the priest and people came out, and then I got to him and spoke to him again. But he soon began to be in a rage, and to threaten me with the stocks, and then got away. Then I cleared my conscience to the people of what I had to say, and so came away in great peace with the Lord.

Not long after, in the same year, I was moved of the Lord by His Spirit to go to Brigham, to speak to a priest named Denton. He was preaching in the steeple-house² to the people, and his sermon (which he had prepared beforehand) had many false accusations, lies, and slanders against Friends, and against the principles of truth. I

2 Knowing the true church to be the spiritual body of Jesus Christ, early Quakers were unwilling to use the term "church" to refer to a physical building, and instead used the term "steeple-house."

stayed until he was finished, and then spoke to him. But I got little answer before some of his hearers fell upon me, and beat me with their bibles and with their staffs all along out of the house, and also out of the graveyard, so that the next day I was sore with the blows. Then the priest commanded the constable to secure me and a Friend who was with me. So the next day we were carried to Launcelot Fletcher of Tallentire, who ordered a warrant to be written for us, and we were sent from constable to constable, and then to the common jail in Carlisle, where I was prisoner twenty-three weeks.

While I was in prison, a burden came upon me for Scotland; but being a prisoner, and not yet deeply acquainted with the way and work of the Lord's power and Spirit in relation to such a service, great was the exercise of my spirit which I was under. For lack of experience and a clear understanding, I was swallowed up, and for a time quite lost in the deep, where great was the distress of my soul beyond utterance. But the merciful God, by His powerful arm and the healing, saving Word of life, did restore and bring up my soul out of the deep, where it was for a time buried. Indeed, He renewed life and understanding, and caused the light of His countenance to shine, and the sweetness of His peace to spring up, so that I may truly say, "He caused the bones that He had broken to rejoice." And when He had thus crushed and humbled me, and let me see how He could make all things become as nothing again, and so hide all glory from man, then in His goodness He revealed His own glory, power, presence, and reviving life. Yes, He so opened to my understanding His good pleasure, that I gave up to it willingly in heart and

spirit, with all readiness and willingness of mind.

After being kept about twenty-three weeks in prison, I was given my liberty, and came home and followed my outward calling that summer. I grew more and more into the understanding of the mind and will of the Lord, concerning those things which I had a sight of while I was in prison. I kept to meetings, and continued waiting upon the Lord in a true travail of spirit for more acquaintance with Him, and more enjoyment of His power and Word. Thus I grew not only into an understanding, but also into a degree of strength and ability fit to answer that service to which the Lord had called me.

So, in the faith that stands in God's power, about the beginning of the eighth month, 1658, I took my journey into Scotland; and traveled in that nation about three months. I was both in the north and west of it, as far north as Aberdeen, and back again to Edinburgh, and down west to Linlithgow, Hamilton, Ayr, and as far as Port Patrick; and back to Ayr and Douglass. Our service was at their steeple-houses, their markets, and other places where we met with people, and sometimes at Friends' meetings wherever there were any. Our work was to call people to repentance, out of their lifeless hypocritical profession and dead formalities (in which they had settled in the ignorance of the true and living God), and so to turn them unto the true light of Christ Jesus in their hearts, that therein they might come to know the power of God, and so come to know remission of sins, and receive an inheritance among the sanctified. Feeling clear of that nation, we returned to England, and came over the water to Bowstead Hill the first day of the eleventh month, 1658.

After my return home, I followed my trade again, and kept to meetings until the third month, 1659, after which I took shipping for Ireland. For while I had been in Scotland, a concern opened unto me in the truth to visit that nation, and while at home, it grew mightily in me through the strength of the word of life. For the Lord often filled and enriched my heart and soul with His glorious power, and so sanctified and prepared me for whatever He set before me. Often in spirit was I carried to Ireland, and I had it sealed unto me that it was my place to go into that nation to serve the Lord, and to bear witness unto the Truth, and to call people to repentance, and hold forth the way of life and salvation unto them.

I waited until the full season came (according to the blessed counsel of God, in which I found His leading power with me, and also going before me), and at the time before mentioned, I took shipping at Whitehaven, and landed at Donaghadee in the north of Ireland. I traveled to Lisburn, and so up to Lurgan, and to Kilmore in the county of Armagh, and so up and down in the north for some time among Friends, and I had meetings. Many people came to meetings, and many were convinced and turned to God from the evil and vanity of their ways. From there I traveled to Dublin, and then to Mountmellick, and so forward to Kilkenny, and to Caperqueen, and Tullow, and to Cork, and Bandon; and back to Cork, and then to Youghal, Waterford, Ross, and to Wexford. I had meetings along the way as I traveled, and according to that ability I received of God, I was faithful and preached the truth and the true faith of Jesus Christ.

Having gone through the country, and in the fear of

God having published His name and truth as I had opportunity, I was willing to return home to England. For that purpose I came down to Carrickfergus; but before I got there, it came upon me that I should return back again to Lurgan and Kilmore, and from there to Londonderry. So I sent word to appoint a meeting at Lurgan, and went on to Carrickfergus, and got a meeting, where many people attended. I cleared my conscience to them in the fear of the Lord, and then returned to Lurgan, as I had appointed. There I met with Robert Lodge, newly come out of England, who also had it in his heart to go to Londonderry. So Robert Lodge and I became concerned in one work, service, and travel together, and were truly united in spirit, in the unity of the faith and life of Christ. In the blessed unity and fellowship of the gospel of the Son of God, we labored and traveled in that nation of Ireland for twelve months, not often parting (though sometimes we were moved to part for the service's sake for a little time, and then to come together again). The Lord gave us sweet concord and peace in all our travels, and I do not remember that we were ever angry or grieved at one another all that time.

Thus we spent our time with diligent labor and hard travel, often in cold, hunger, and hardships in that country, which was then uninhabited in many parts. We were in prison several times—once in Armagh, once in Dublin, twice in Cork; besides other abuses we received from many because of our testimony which we had to bear for the Lord. Having traveled and labored in the gospel together for twelve months, and seeing many convinced and gathered to the Truth, we were clear of our service there, and in

the seventh month 1660, we took shipping for England at Carrickfergus.

At home I again returned to my outward calling, and kept diligently to meetings; for it was still my delight to do so, and while there to be diligent in waiting upon the Lord. For I always found that therein I received an increase of strength, life, and wisdom from the Lord. And as I found any motion upon me from the Lord to go to any meeting abroad, either in our county or any other, I went and cleared myself as the Lord gave ability, and then returned again to my outward calling, and so to our own meeting, where I delighted to wait in silence upon the Lord. I loved our meetings very much because I found an inward growth thereby, through the teachings and openings of His Spirit in my heart. And when something did open in me to speak in our meeting, I gave up to it. And though I was sometimes ready to quench the Spirit through slowness or fear to speak in the Lord's name, yet I grew over this by degrees, and increased in faith and holy confidence more and more.

[The following epistle was written while in Ireland, and is one of many such epistles that can be found in the unabridged *Journal of the Life and Gospel Labors of John Burnyeat.*]

Dear Friends,

In dear and tender love I do salute you all, who are faithful to the Lord, without respect of persons. In His life and love I feel you, in which my heart is opened towards you—those with whom I am daily refreshed

and comforted in Christ Jesus, the fountain and well-spring of life and refreshment. Indeed, He is our Rock and daily refuge, unto whom we flee and are safe in the day of storms and tempest, when the floods arise, and the raging waves of the sea swell and beat. Yet in the Light we have a safe hiding-place, and a sure and peaceable habitation, against which these cannot prevail, as we abide faithful to the Lord therein. His love towards us has abounded, and will abound, as we abide in that to which His love does reach, which is His own Seed. This Seed He has raised in us by His own power and outstretched arm, and in it the issues of life and love are known and received.

Therefore, my dear friends, keep to it, and feel it continually! Keep fresh and living and open-hearted, so that you may always be in the Life, and that nothing may enter that would veil the Seed and oppress it. As one who (with you) has been made a partaker of the rich and endless love of God, I exhort you, dearly beloved ones, to continue in His love, and to abide faithful in the Life, that death may not again pass over anyone. Rather, may the Life which God has raised be felt, and may it rule in every one of us, over him that has the power of death, to the praise and glory of the One who has redeemed us. In Him all comfort, strength, and refreshment are daily received, for He is the life and strength of all who wait upon Him, and is near to preserve all who are upright in their love towards Him. In Him we have boldness, believing that neither tribulation, affliction, persecu-

Journal of John Burnyeat

tion, nor distress shall be able to separate us from the love of God which we enjoy in Christ Jesus. And though the Lord may allow great difficulties to come upon us (as it is at this day) to try us, yet these cannot separate us from one another, nor break our unity in the Spirit in which we feel and enjoy one another.

In this unity, my dear Friends, I have you often in my remembrance, to my joy and gladness of heart. For truly, you are often my rejoicing in the Lord, when all other comforts are taken from me; but only by that Seed in which I feel and enjoy you, in which our unity, life and love stand, and in which I remain,

Your brother in my measure received,

John Burnyeat

Clanbrassil, Ireland, 4th of the Fourth month, 1660

* * *

It would be difficult to overstate the influence that John Burnyeat's life and ministry had in the early Society of Friends. After his death in 1690, George Fox wrote of him: "He was a faithful friend and brother, and an able minister of Jesus Christ... a true apostle of Jesus Christ, who preached Him freely, both by sea and land. He was an elder and a pillar in the house of God, and a man much endued with the wisdom of God, and in it had a care for the welfare of the church of Christ."

Like many of the early laborers that the Lord sent into His harvest, John Burnyeat traveled and ministered unremittingly, preaching to and encouraging the flock of

Truth in the Inward Parts

Christ all over England, Scotland, Ireland, Barbados, and the American colonies. He was imprisoned many times for his testimony, and suffered great injustices at the hands of persecuting priests and magistrates. The last years of his life were spent in Ireland, where he strengthened the hearts of Friends during what is now called the Williamite War, a time of great chaos and bloodshed in the nation. Those who knew him best described him as “a precious instrument in the Lord's hand, able and skillful in the ministry for the comforting of His people... a cheerful encourager of them, a dear friend and true brother, a diligent overseer and tender father, a perfect and upright man in his day.”

**THE LIFE OF
JOSEPH PIKE**

(1657 – 1729)

It is upon me to give some account of my spiritual travels, and the various exercises of soul I have passed through and experienced in the way of regeneration from my youth upward. Though these experiences were so imprinted in my mind by deep affliction that I cannot forget them while memory lasts; yet they have often been livingly revived in my remembrance (by the same Spirit which brought me through them) along with a sense of pressure to commit some of them to writing. I therefore waited the Lord's time in order to be assisted therein by the Holy Remembrancer, so that what I write may be in a living and divine sense of what I experienced in former times. In so waiting, I found a sweet openness to proceed, and was drawn into a divine commemoration of the Lord's wonderful mercies, deliverances, and inexpressible goodness towards me from my childhood up to this day. So it is with great reverence that my soul does humbly bow before Him, as with my mouth in the dust, giving praise to His holy and eternal Name, and beseeching that He would be

graciously pleased to keep and preserve me to the end of my days, and give me an eternal inheritance among the sanctified in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen, says my soul.

Before I was seven years of age, the Spirit of the Lord began to work in my mind, and strove with me to bring me off from childish playfulness and vanities. His holy light in my soul (as I soon after found it to be) convinced me that I ought not to give way to, or to do this or that thing which presented itself. And when, at any time, I did what I should not have done, it brought trouble and condemnation upon me, even in those early days (as it has always done since) when I did anything that offended the Lord. If this were a proper place for it, I could enlarge abundantly upon the divine nature of this holy principle of the Light and Spirit of Jesus Christ in the soul, of which the Holy Scriptures so largely testify. However, I shall be led to do it in the process of this history, knowing from my own certain experience that this light is nothing of our nature, nor any innate notion of our minds, for nothing of or from our own fallen nature can show or convince us of sin.

Though I did not presently know that it was the Lord's Spirit which I felt working in me, (even as Samuel knew not the Lord's voice when a child) yet I was convinced in myself by its holy convictions that I ought not do those things which brought trouble upon me. And when at any time I refrained from doing what caused this trouble, I had sweet peace and satisfaction of mind, which made me all the more to attend to its dictates, and drew me off from many childish actions which youth are prone to. In this way, I grew into sobriety beyond many of my age, until I

came to be about nine years old.

But in a little time after, I began, by degrees, to lose this condition. I well remember how the enemy of my soul worked in a mystery, insinuating to my mind, "What harm or evil is there in things which are accounted innocent diversions?" And being of a lively, active temper, this bait took with me, so that my mind was drawn off from attending to the convictions of the Lord's Holy Spirit in my heart, which often brought trouble and condemnation upon me. Beginning to love playful pastimes, I lost that inward sweetness and peace which I had before enjoyed, and by endeavoring to stifle these secret reproofs, I grew harder, until, from a desire to keep company with other wild boys, I took delight in getting out into the streets to play with them. Thus I grew very wanton, although my dear parents endeavored to restrain me. After spending time with such companions, when I came to be a little still, the Lord's judgments would seize me, and bring me under great trouble of soul. Then I would resolve to refrain, and do so no more. Yet perhaps the very next temptation that presented itself, I could not withstand, but fell into the same snare again.

Thus it was with me, until I came to be about twelve years of age. And though, to the praise of the Lord, I was preserved from any very wicked or gross actions, or even very bad words, yet my mind was drawn away into vanity and wildness, and I was far from being as sober as I ought to have been.

And here, I may be allowed to make a cautionary digression concerning parents: If they have any regard to the good of their children, they should keep a very strict

hand over them, especially when they are prone to wildness, as I was; for had my parents not been careful over me, I would have been much worse than I was. And although my dear mother would never indulge me in any evil practice (being a prudent, discreet woman), yet she loved me exceedingly, which I well knew, and I therefore presumed upon it in some measure and ventured abroad sometimes, which I would not have done, had she corrected me more often. I would advise and caution all parents to take particular care of their children in going to and returning from school, lest they fall into company that would certainly corrupt them. From my own experience, I can say that by giving way at first to small hurtful things, the enemy gets advantage, gradually stealing in, and drawing away the mind into greater evils. It is for this reason we are commanded to abstain from every appearance of evil, which we certainly cannot do, except by the assistance of the Lord's Holy Spirit. But taking up the cross of Christ to every such appearance, we indeed witness an overcoming of the assaults and temptations of Satan.

I now saw in the light that if I persisted in vanity and wildness, I was in the way of destruction. Whenever the terrors of the Lord were upon me, I would take up fresh resolutions to refrain from and avoid such conduct. But these resolutions were made in my own strength, and so they came to nothing, and often the very next temptation would prevail over me. Then, once again, the Lord's righteous judgments laid hold upon me, and so I repeatedly made work for repentance.

At this time, in 1669, we had no afternoon meetings in the room where meetings for public worship were held, but

we had evening meetings, which were held at Friends' houses alternately. William Edmundson¹ of Rosenallis, that worthy and honorable Friend and father in Israel, was concerned at this time to visit Friends of this province. While he was in Cork, the evening meeting fell in course at the house of the widow Bridget Denis (who later became a faithful Friend, and towards her latter end had a testimony for Truth, and I doubt not died in the Lord). I went to this meeting, with great heaviness and sorrow upon my soul, under a mournful sense of my repeated transgressions against the Lord, and also with earnest cries that He would be pleased to forgive me, and grant me power and strength over the temptations of the enemy; for I clearly saw that I was not capable, by any ability of my own, to preserve myself from the least evil, in agreement with the saying of our blessed Lord, "Without Me you can do nothing."

I sat down in this meeting full of sorrow, and William Edmundson's testimony so reached my inward state and condition, and pierced my very soul, that I could not refrain from crying out in the meeting under a sense of my sins, and of the Lord's terrors and judgments, which I then felt beyond what I had ever before experienced. At that time, I was as truly baptized by the powerful preaching of the Word of life by him, as those were to whom the apostle Peter preached in Acts 2:37. Then, oh then, were my sins (and the true sinfulness of them) set before me, and in the agony and bitterness of my soul, I secretly cried unto the

1 William Edmundson (1627–1712) was a highly-esteemed minster and elder in the Society of Friends in Ireland. He traveled and preached tirelessly for over fifty years, and suffered greatly for his testimony to the truth.

Lord for the pardon and remission of them, with humble prayers unto Him that He would be pleased to enable me by His Holy Spirit to walk more circumspectly for the time to come, and do His holy will, and that I might truly serve and worship Him in spirit and in truth.

The Lord's heavy judgments continued upon me for a considerable time, how long I cannot exactly remember, but I believe for some months, until I became obedient to His divine light and good Spirit in my soul, without which I could not perform anything that was acceptable to God. And I have since found by living experience, that although our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, by His sufferings and death, placed me and all mankind in a condition capable of salvation, yet the completion thereof is experienced in our obedience to His Holy Spirit. A measure of this Spirit, according to Scripture, He has given to each of us, "to profit withal," that we may thereby "work out our own salvation."

After the baptizing power of the Lord had thus seized upon me, I had dominion given me over those temptations which had before so often prevailed upon me, and I grew easier in spirit, and had great sweetness and comfort. My companions wondered at this alteration, and when I passed them in the street, I have overheard them say to one another, "What's the matter with Joe Pike? He won't speak to us!" Hearing this I rejoiced greatly in my heart, with humble thanks to the Lord that He had given me so much power and victory over the temptations into which I had so often fallen before. Then did I begin to love the Lord, and I delighted to turn my mind inward, and to diligently wait upon Him by the help of His Holy Spirit, by

which I gradually grew in experience and knowledge of the things of God.

Oh how I did love to go to meetings! Indeed I longed for the meeting days, and when there, I endeavored to have my mind inwardly exercised towards the Lord, whom I loved with all the powers of my soul. And oh how near and dear to me were the faithful ministering servants of the Lord, and also other faithful Friends, in whose company I greatly delighted, and loved to hear them speak of the things of God! Truly my mind was wholly taken off from the vanities, plays, and pastimes of the world; all was nothing to me! Whenever I could, I went into some secret place to wait upon the Lord, and there I poured out my soul unto Him, with overflowing tears of joy that He had so mercifully wrought this great change in me. Indeed I may say, with humble thanksgiving and praise to His holy name, that He was pleased to accept my tender offering of a broken heart, in returning upon my soul at times the sweet incomes of His divine power and living presence, to the overcoming of my spirit with unutterable joy.

I have gone to meetings, and while there, a living faith has attended me, and a full assurance has arisen in my soul that if I diligently waited, with my mind inwardly exercised towards the Lord, then I would feel His life giving presence; and truly, according to my faith, the Lord has broken in upon my spirit with unspeakable comfort. The remembrance of such seasons is renewed within me at this time, for which my soul is melted into tenderness, with humble thanksgiving and praise to His holy and divine majesty. Indeed He has kept me alive in spirit now to an old age, to bear this testimony for Him from my own experience, that

His holy Truth waxes not old, as does a garment. For although I am now decayed in body, and because of great weakness seem to be near the brink of the grave, yet to the praise of the Lord, I can say, I am as strong in Him and in the power of His might, and feel my spirit as zealous for His holy name and testimony, as at any time of my life. For this, all that is within me magnifies and extols (even with my mouth in the dust) the holy and eternal name of the Lord of heaven and earth, who lives forever and ever!

Before I had reached my fourteenth year, by the Lord's Holy Spirit working in me, I came to witness a state of purity, holiness, and innocency, in which not so much as a vain or foolish thought could arise in my mind without the holy light of Christ presently letting me see it and judge it, so that I abhorred all evil thoughts, words, and actions, and loved truth and righteousness with all my soul. I dearly loved all faithful Friends, and felt them as dear to me as my own life; and indeed they loved me, being sensible that I loved the Lord.

And here, let me add a caution to all ministers and elders, to take great care of any undue liberty in words or behavior before those who are young and tender in the Truth, whether in youth or old age. For the newly convinced are very sharp in their observation, and if they observe anything—whether it be in using more words than are necessary, or in behavior, etc.—which they think not agreeable to that solidity which the Truth leads into, it is apt to stumble or confuse them. We find that the great apostle Paul was very tender over those who were young and weak, and denied himself of lawful things, lest he should offend them, saying “though all things were lawful,

yet all things were not beneficial.”

Notwithstanding I had, by the power and Spirit of the Lord, attained to a state of purity, yet, alas, I lost it again for lack of true and diligent watchfulness to the light, and closely following the leadings of it, and not through any gross evil I had committed. Between the age of fourteen and fifteen, I began to grow more negligent in waiting upon the Lord, and from there into greater coldness in my love to Him, and so by degrees I lost that tender frame of spirit I had formerly witnessed. And then the enemy of my soul tempted me with the pleasures and vanities of the world, so that my mind was allured and drawn towards them, and I did love and delight in them.

Among other things, I was inclined to take pleasure in fine apparel as I could get it, of which I remember a particular instance. Having got a pretty fine new coat, the spirit of pride arose in me, and passing along the street, (I still remember the place) I thought myself somebody (as the saying goes). But in the midst of these vain and foolish thoughts, I was in an instant struck as with an arrow from the Lord, and it swiftly passed through my mind after this manner: “Poor wretch! Was not Jesus Christ, the Lord of heaven and earth, meek and low of heart, and His appearance humble on earth! He was not proud and high. And will you, poor worm, be high and proud of yourself or your clothes?” These thoughts so wounded my spirit, that I went home very sorrowful and dejected. But this feeling went off in a little time, for the delights of the world began to take root in me, and my mind went after them, by which I was drawn away from the Lord.

And I bear this testimony, that the adorning of the

body with fine apparel, and with fashionable cuts, as well as extravagance in household furniture, is utterly inconsistent with the plainness which the holy Truth leads into. Indeed, Truth led our ancient Friends out of such things, and to testify against them. For though it is most certain that pride first springs in the heart, yet, by taking delight in outward things, the mind becomes captivated by them, and the root of vanity grows inwardly stronger and stronger.

My mind having thus gone astray from the Lord, it displeased Him, and caused Him to withdraw from me, so that I did not enjoy the sweetness and comfort of His Holy Spirit as I had done before. Yet He took not His Spirit from me, but it became my judge and condemner for loving those things that offended Him. So the terrors of the Lord often seized me, and I could well remember (from the strength of my natural memory) how it had been with me before, when I was in favor with the Lord. Yes, by His holy Light I saw how I had lost the living sense of the sweetness I had formerly enjoyed, which made me sorely lament my present condition.

From this experience, I have learned to understand the vast difference that exists between natural comprehension or memory, and the present, living, experiential witnessing of the life and power of Truth upon the soul, by which the soul is kept alive to God. Solomon, from the strength of his memory, could not forget how excellently he had prayed to the Lord by the Holy Spirit at the dedication of the temple, and yet he lost that living and divine sense when he afterwards went into idolatry. The world has the former capacity, and by the strength of their natural reason, comprehension, and memory, they read,

they study the learned languages, and acquire knowledge (or rather gather notions), being thus furnished and equipped for what they call divinity. But, alas, true divinity is quite another thing, and learned quite another way, even by the Lord's Holy Spirit, and which consists in the enjoyment of His sweet presence in our soul. I say this in measure from my own experience, for when I was obedient to His holy Light and Spirit in my heart, and was taught by it, it led me, though but childish in my natural understanding, to the holy hill of spiritual Zion, even to the enjoyment of His living comfortable presence. But when I declined from it, though I grew in natural knowledge and understanding, yet I lost my innocent condition, and the spiritual communion I once had; so that, instead of His Holy Spirit being my comforter, it became my judge and condemner. These things now livingly flow into my mind, and I give them forth as a testimony for the Lord, and to the operation of His Holy Spirit.

Thus stood my inward condition, from about the age of fifteen to eighteen, during which time I maintained a pretty good character amongst Friends and others. For, through the Lord's great mercy, I never fell into any gross or scandalous evils, nor did I keep bad company, but was generally beloved (as far as I knew) by all that were acquainted with me. Nevertheless, I had gone from, and had lost my inward communion and fellowship with the Lord that I had formerly witnessed.

This leads me to caution all, whether young or old, against valuing or justifying themselves based upon the morality of their conduct, and depending upon it, as I have known some to do. For though a man cannot be a right

Christian without being a moral person, yet he may sustain a moral character and still be very far from being a true Christian, and acceptable to God. This I can speak from my own experience.

When about eighteen years old, the Lord was graciously pleased to grant me a renewed visitation—not in that sudden and extraordinary manner as before, but in a more gradual way. He began to arise, and to give me a full and clear sight of my condition, and how I was estranged from Him in spirit. And I saw plainly that if I continued in this way, I would grow harder and harder, and in the end be undone forever. The sense of this brought me into great horror and distress, with bitter lamentation, under which I lay some time, until the Lord was mercifully pleased to tender my spirit a little, and assist me to pray unto Him for a repentant heart. Indeed my past disobedience (in so ungratefully departing from Him) lay as a mill-stone upon my soul, and brought me into sore agony and distress of spirit.

I then sought to be alone, in unseen places, where I often poured out my soul unto the Lord, with many tears, begging for mercy and forgiveness. I saw that I had come to a great loss, and that I must unlearn many things that I had learned in the night of my apostasy in spirit (though not in principle or profession) from Him, during which time the evil root and nature had grown strong in me. I also saw that nothing could destroy this but the axe, the sword, the hammer, and the fire of His Holy Spirit, and that I must be regenerated and born again before I could ever attain to the condition I had lost. All of this the light of Jesus let me see very clearly.

Then, oh then, the agony, the horror that seized my soul! I am not able to express it! I often thought no one's condition was ever like mine. When I turned my mind inward, my soul seemed like a habitation of dragons which were ready to devour me. Evil thoughts of many kinds presented themselves, with temptations from the wicked one that I was never inclined to before. When I went to meetings, I had no rest there, for I could not stay my mind upon the Lord. Indeed the enemy seemed to roar upon me, as if to destroy my soul, so that I was almost ready to run out of meetings. It appeared to me that the Lord had wholly withdrawn Himself from me, and was far from my help. When night came, I wished for the morning, and when the morning came, I wished for the evening. In the night season, I often lay mourning and bitterly weeping, making my pillow wet with tears. My distress was such that if the Lord (in mercy) had not pitied me, and by granting a little hope and ease of spirit, helped me, I believe I should have sunk under it, my misery was so great. I was at times so overwhelmed with sorrow that I was almost in despair of ever getting through my afflictions, fearing that I was utterly forsaken.

When I had continued in this state a considerable season, ready to faint in spirit, the Lord at last (in His own time, not in mine, nor in so powerful a manner as I desired) began again to arise with a little of the light of His countenance for the ease of my distressed soul. But this peace continued not long with me before I fell again into the same misery. Thus was I afflicted and tossed as with a tempest, until I was almost worn out with sorrow. I was plunged into spiritual Jordan (or judgment) again and

again, not only seven times, but more than seventy times seven. Oh, “the wormwood and the gall” that I was made to drink of in that day! “My soul has them still in remembrance, and is humbled within me.” Yet, with thanksgiving and praise to the holy name of the Lord, He brought me through at last, and set my feet upon His rock.

During this time of sore affliction, I read the Holy Scriptures, particularly the book of Psalms, and that evangelical prophet Isaiah, wherein I found an abundance of experiences that suited my condition. And when, in reading them, the Lord was pleased to influence my mind by His Spirit, how comfortable were they to me! Oh how would my heart be even melted into tenderness, in finding that some of the experiences of holy men corresponded to mine, as face reflects face in a glass, whereby a hope was raised in me that I should get through my exercises, even as they did through theirs. But at other times, when the Lord's Spirit seemed to be withdrawn from me, though I read the Scriptures and understood the words, yet my mind not being influenced and opened by the Lord's Spirit, I did not receive the same benefit or comfort. From this I learned, by living experience, that it is by and through the openings of His Spirit that we receive the true comfort or profit in reading the Holy Scriptures.

I was in this condition, more or less, for about two or three years. At times, when the Lord enabled me to pray to Him, oh the strong cries that would ascend! Indeed, with the most fervent beseeching of soul I did pray, with overflowing tears, and said in my heart, “Oh Lord, depart not from me! Keep me in this praying condition; let me not depart out of it! Keep me from evil! Make me as You would

have me to be, for You know I desire to love You better than the whole world, and I will, with Your assistance, serve You all the days of my life.” But here I was not to stay, not being sufficiently purged, and again I had to go down into judgment and lie under His spiritual baptism. Then did misery, sorrow, and lamentation again take hold of me.

Thus it was with me, from season to season, in my progress heavenwards—yet with this difference, that the intervals of ease grew longer, during which I was ready to say in my heart, “I hope I shall never again be moved!” But again the Lord withdrew and hid His face from me for a season, so that my soul was troubled thereby. Yet His grace was always with me, as an anchor at bottom, and as a monitor, guide, and director to preserve me from running into any gross evil. But though I was thus preserved, still, for lack of keeping close to the guidance of His light, I often offended the Lord in lesser matters. When I did so in thought, word, or deed, His divine judgments seized my soul, and therein I rejoiced, and the cry arose within me, “Oh, let not Your eye pity, nor Your hand spare, until judgment be brought forth unto victory, over this evil nature of mine!” In the evening, I would call to mind my actions during the day, and when I saw I had spoken more than I ought, or used unnecessary words, or did anything that grieved the Lord’s Spirit (although such words or actions were not condemned by others), oh how would I be bowed, and would mourn under the consideration of these things, with humble prayers to Him that He would enable me to do so no more.

I remember, at one time, after a degree of ease, that

the Lord was pleased to withdraw the light of His countenance, and seemed to desert me for about three months, which plunged me into inexpressible sorrow. When I turned my mind inward, I found no comfort, but my heaven was as iron, and my earth as brass for hardness and sterility. Indeed I was seized with such agony of spirit that my flesh seemed to tremble upon my bones! Then I would examine myself and say, "What evil have I committed? How have I so greatly offended, that the Lord should utterly forsake me?" But, blessed be His everlasting name, He did again arise in His own due time, to the joy and comfort of my heart; and I afterwards saw that this was for the trial of my faith and patience.

In all this time of my deepest distress, I never opened my mind fully to anyone, but endeavored to hide my exercises from all mortals. I appeared as cheerful in countenance as I could, even at times when my heart seemed ready to break with sorrow, though my face did often gather paleness, and some asked what ailed me, or whether I was sick. But I dismissed such questions, though I believe some sensible Friends saw that I was under exercise of spirit.

I am somewhat drawn-out in my writing of these things purely for the encouragement of Zion's travelers that they may learn to trust in the Lord, and not to despair of His mercy in the deepest of their exercises and afflictions. For by and through all of these trials, I gradually grew in the knowledge of the things of God. And though, when I was under the deepest of them, I could not see through them or the end of them, yet afterwards, I came to know they were from the Lord. I saw that this was a time of

the “ministration of condemnation,” in order to bring me nearer to the Lord by breaking down and mortifying the natural and fleshly part in me which had grown strong, and which could not inherit the kingdom of God. Through these sore exercises, and by taking up the cross of Christ under them, my own natural will and affections became much broken, and I became (in measure) like a little child, depending upon the Lord for strength and ability to do His will. And by the Lord's Spirit I was often led to deny myself of lawful things, as to eating, drinking, and the putting on of apparel, finding myself too strongly inclined to them. Moreover, the Lord's holy light opened an abundance of Scriptures to me that I did not understand before, so that I have said in my heart, “The world believes the truth of the Holy Scriptures by tradition, but those who come to witness the operation of a measure of the same Spirit in their souls (from which the Holy Scriptures proceeded), are confirmed by their own experience in the truth of them.”

Thus the work went forward in me, until, in the Lord's own due time, I could in measure say, “He brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet (in some degree) upon His rock, and established my steps. Oh blessed be His everlasting name forever!” Though the excess of my troubles and exercises wore off in a few years, and I could at times (when so enabled) sing in my soul both of the Lord's mercies and of His judgments, yet I was not, for many years, at seasons, without sore fights of affliction with the enemy of my soul, nor am I to this day. For most certain it is, that there is no state attainable on this side of the grave beyond that of watchfulness. Our

Lord said to His disciples, "Watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation." I have often compared the soul of man to an outward garden—though it be cleansed from weeds, still it naturally produces them, and if it be not watched and kept clean, the obnoxious and troublesome weeds will sprout again. And if these are allowed to grow, they will certainly choke the tender and good seed that has been sown. Our hearts are "deceitful, above all things," and naturally prone to evil, and as the prophet adds, "desperately wicked." Even when, by the power and sword of the Lord's Spirit, many evil things may seem quite destroyed and dead, yet if we do not diligently watch in the light, the enemy will steal in again, and revive some of those things which appeared to be eradicated, especially such things as we are naturally most inclined to.

I think this may also be alluded to in the parable of Christ relating to the unclean spirit gone out of a man. For this unclean spirit, wandering about and finding no rest, returned to the same house in the man's heart. And finding this house swept and garnished, he takes seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in (surely for lack of watchfulness) and dwell there, and "the last state of that man," says Christ, "is worse than the first." Thus even one who has in a good measure been cleansed from his iniquity, and eased of his inward affliction, may become careless, and allow the enemy again to enter, unless he keep inward to the light, watching unto prayer. Oh this inward watching is too much lacking among many of the Lord's people! Therefore many have not grown in the Truth as they might have done, but have come to a loss, and some have quite fallen away. The school of Christ and

His teachings are within, as says the apostle, "That which may be known of God, is manifest within man." It is there that Christ teaches His people Himself. The more we keep inward to this school, the more we learn of Christ. The less we keep inward, even when involved in lawful things, the less we learn of Christ. Oh read, you that can read in the mystery of life! There is no safety, no preservation, no growing in the Truth, but in true humility, keeping inward to the gift of the Holy Spirit of Christ, continually watching in the light against the temptations of the enemy.

Therefore, the earnest breathing of my soul to the Lord is that He may be graciously pleased to preserve me in watchfulness to the last moment of my life. For I well know that I cannot preserve myself, nor think a good thought, nor do the least good thing, as our blessed Lord said, "Without me, you can do nothing." But the Holy One of Israel gives strength to the poor and needy in spirit, by whom alone they can stand, and not of themselves. Let all might, majesty, power, and dominion, be ascribed unto Him, who lives forever and ever!

Having given some relation of the various exercises I have passed through, I can now, from living and certain experience, say, that it is not being educated in the form of truth; it is not the profession of it, nor being called a Quaker; it is not by frequenting our religious meetings; it is not even being of a moral conduct that will do, or be acceptable to the Lord, unless we also witness the possession and enjoyment of the Holy Truth, and its life and power in our souls. Therefore I earnestly desire that the professors of truth, and all who have been educated in the form of it, may not rest satisfied therein, but turn your

minds inward to the Lord, to the gift of His Holy Spirit there manifested, that you may thereby experientially witness a growth, a progress, and finally an inheritance in the Lord's eternal Truth, of which you make a profession. This alone gives true acceptance, and a union and fellowship with Him.

* * *

Joseph Pike was never a traveling minister in the Society of Friends, but he grew to be such a valuable elder that many Friends (including ministers) regularly sought his wisdom and counsel. He was unusually gifted in the understanding of church affairs and discipline, and applied himself with all diligence to the care and strengthening of the Lord's body. His greatest concern, both for himself and for all who had received Christ Jesus, was that all truly "walk in Him" and "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things."

He continued a faithful pillar in the church until the end, writing shortly before his death, "I am still in the land of the living, yet how long I shall be so is in His divine hand; for I am but weak in body, though I hope strong in spirit, and am now waiting for my dissolution, when the Lord shall please to call me. I pray unto Him with all the powers of my soul for preservation to the end, and that I may be truly prepared for that sure, though uncertain hour, whenever it comes." He died in 1729, at the age of seventy-two.

**JOURNAL OF
JOHN GRIFFITH**

(1713 – 1776)

It has been much upon my mind to write something by way of a journal of my life, travels, and experiences in the gracious and merciful dealings of the Lord with me through the course of my pilgrimage in this world. And as the Lord shall be pleased to open my understanding, it may also afford profitable way-marks to some weary travelers who are seeking a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

I was born on the 21st day of the fifth month, 1713, in Radnorshire, South Wales, being favored with parents who had the substance of true religion in themselves, and were conscientiously concerned to train up their children in the fear of God. I was favored with the heart-melting visitations of God's love, I think when about seven or eight years old, and frequently experienced His name to be in the assemblies of His people "as precious ointment poured forth," whereby my desires were greatly raised to attend meetings for divine worship. For although, like Samuel of old, I was as yet unacquainted with the voice of God, and

did not clearly understand the Source of that precious consolation which I felt, yet I well remember something working powerfully in my tender, weak mind, by way of opposition to that sweet heavenly enjoyment, in order to deprive me of it. This opposing power would often present to my view some transitory delight, and fill my mind with vain, unprofitable, and sometimes wicked and blasphemous thoughts, which were a very great affliction to me. Then he who was a liar from the beginning would suggest that the only way to get over such uneasiness, was to give way to these thoughts, and to be utterly regardless of what passed through my mind. I found the flesh wanted ease, and to save itself, willingly joined with the temptations of Satan. In this way, I obtained a kind of present ease, but it was by such gratifications as tended to heap up wrath for the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgments of God.

Notwithstanding the false ease contrived by my soul's enemy, as I grew up I did often sensibly feel this peace disturbed and broken by a sense of God's wrath revealed from heaven against my unrighteousness, and I was often in great bitterness of spirit when the chastening of the Lord was upon me for sin. At such times I would enter into covenant with the Lord, promising amendment of my ways; but as these promises were made very much in my own will, they were soon broken, and this increased the weight of my horror and distress. But the Lord, in infinite mercy, was pleased to find me out, and to plead with me as in the valley of decision.

In writing this, my mind is greatly moved with pity and compassion towards inconsiderate youth who, for the

sake of trifling vanities, disregard the Lord's mercy to them, and so become subjected to great distress of mind. The case is still worse, when by repeated disobedience and rebellion against God's unmerited grace, they have almost stifled His divine witness in their own hearts, and go on with impunity. Alas, an awakening time will come, sooner or later, which must strike all such hearts with horror and amazement. May it be in mercy!

My godly parents were very careful to prevent my falling into evil company. Nevertheless, without their knowledge I frequently found it, and joined in those vanities which are incident to youth, not falling a bit behind any of my companions in folly. Yet in the cool of the day, I would often feel sharply reproved; yes, sometimes even in the midst of my vanity. But, by this time I wanted to silence the pure witness against evil in my heart. Oh, I have often since then, with deep reverence, thankfully admired the long-suffering of a gracious God, in that He did not cut me off when I willfully resisted the reproofs of His instruction (which are the way to life) because I wanted to live in the vain pleasures of this perishing world.

When I was about thirteen years old, a Friend who had lived some time in Pennsylvania, being in our area, and frequently at our house, gave a very pleasing account of that country. And because I already had two uncles and an aunt there, some of whom had before written to encourage our moving to Pennsylvania, my inclination to go grew very strong. My parents (especially my father) were at first very much against the idea, but I became immovably bent upon going. So when my parents saw this, and that my elder brother also inclined to go with me, they

at length consented, and procured a certificate of our being in unity with Friends. There was another family of Friends also going over in the same ship, and we were given over to their care. So in the year 1726, we embarked at Milford-haven, on board the Constantine Galley of Bristol, and had a passage of about eight weeks from land to land. We were about eighty or ninety passengers, generally healthy, amongst whom three children were born while on board, and none were removed by death. My uncle, John Morgan, who lived about twelve miles from the city of Philadelphia, hearing of our arrival, came on board and conducted us to his house, where I continued for some time. And my brother, being a weaver, settled at my aunt Mary Pennel's and followed his trade.

Removing from under my parents' watchful care furnished me with great opportunities to gratify a vain mind in the foolish amusements of a transitory world, towards which I had too great an inclination. But I have this to say, in order that parents may be encouraged to exert their godly endeavors for the preservation of their children—that I do steadfastly believe that the religious care of my parents over me in my youth impressed so great an awe upon my mind, that (through the blessing of divine providence) it was a great means of my preservation from gross evils, despite having many opportunities of being swallowed up by them after I left home. I hope always to retain a grateful and thankful remembrance of those gracious preservations when I consider how narrowly I have escaped those rocks upon which many have been shipwrecked and ruined.

After my arrival in America, I was sometimes visited

by the Lord, and to a degree awakened to a sense of my undone condition without a Savior, though this happened not so frequently as when I was younger. For having often (oh, very often!) knowingly withstood Him, my taste for worldly pleasures had now grown stronger, and I was very unwilling to give up to the call of Christ. I could plead an abundance of excuses, insisting, among other things, that I was still young, and might live a great many years. I reasoned that, even if I lived loosely for a few years, I might still become religious sooner than many others had done who had become exemplary men in their day. So to make myself more easy for a time, I would fully determine to become a very religious and good man at one time or other; but it must not be yet.

Thus, through the gross darkness which had covered my mind, I was prevailed upon by the subtlety of Satan to run the dreadful hazard of future repentance and amendment of life, having no certainty of seeing the light of one day more. And so I became even worse and more hardened in evil, though I was still preserved out of what are commonly esteemed the grossest pollutions. For I was afraid to tell a lie, except to embellish or exaggerate a pleasant or merry tale or story, thinking it no great crime to tell a lie in jest. I do not remember ever to have sworn an oath, or uttered a curse. Nor was I prevailed upon, in my customary conversation, to depart from the rules of my education respecting the plain language, *thee* and *thou* to one person, and *you* to more than one person.¹ All this time I preserved a pretty fair character among men, for none could charge me with anything accounted as scan-

1 See Introduction, pg. 10-11

dalous. I retained much love and regard for those I thought to be truly religious, especially those weighty, substantial ministers of the everlasting Gospel. I believe I had a better sense of their spirits and labors than some of my companions had, and was therefore afraid to despise or speak contemptuously of them, as some of my associates did. In this carnal, degenerate state, I commonly (in a customary way), attended first-day meetings, and sometimes attended meetings on other days of the week whenever any ministers from distant parts came to visit Abington meeting, to which I belonged. But alas, such meetings were to little or no good purpose, for the labor bestowed upon me (by ministry or otherwise) was like water spilled upon a stone, which immediately runs off again without any entrance. I was indeed for some time “like the shrub in the desert, not knowing when good came” (Jer. 17:6). And if at anytime the Seed of God’s kingdom fell upon my heart, which was like the highway ground, it was soon taken away, and I very quickly lost its savor.

When I had arrived at about nineteen years of age, I was (through infinite mercy, never to be forgotten) visited by the Lord in an extraordinary manner. And since this was the happy means by which He, in a good degree, turned my mind from the perishing vanities of an uncertain world to the God of all sure mercies, I intend to be somewhat particular. One evening, being with several of my companions in vanity, and under no restraint because the heads of the family were not at home, we carried our frothy, vain conversation and foolish, rude actions to a higher degree of wicked madness than I ever was guilty of before, in which I suppose I acted as something of a ring-

leader. Because of this, I felt some sharp lashes of conscience as I went to bed that night, and the thought took hold of my mind that we did not have a being in this world for such a purpose, or to spend our time as above mentioned. I gave some hint of these sentiments to my roommate, yet this conviction did not sink so deep, for I pretty soon fell to sleep.

I had not slept long before a messenger alarmed me with the account that one of my jolly companions—who was then in the house with us, and who, I think, had behaved the best of us—was dying. He desired me to go immediately to him, which I did, and I was exceedingly struck with horror of mind at the thoughts of the manner in which we had spent the evening before, and the sudden stroke that followed upon this poor man. But when I came to his bedside and saw the dreadful agony he was in, my horror increased beyond all expression, for none of us expected he could live many hours. For my part, I was so deeply plunged into anxiety of mind, that it seemed as if the pains and terrors of hell had laid hold of me already. I was then in full expectation that there was no deliverance for me, and that I should surely die before morning with the weight of the distress which was upon me. This happened on a seventh-day night, and though the young man in time recovered, yet he was not fit to be left the following day, which hindered me from going to meeting.

Oh, I was exceedingly desirous to go to meeting, for by this time I was pretty thoroughly awakened to a sense of my duty! But it was a week before the like opportunity presented itself again, and it seemed the longest week I had ever known. Oh how I longed to present myself before

the Lord in the assemblies of His people, that I might pour forth my inward cries before Him in a state of sincere repentance and deep contrition of soul! For, through the effectual operation of His power in my heart, I was then in a condition to do so. Now I clearly saw that repentance is the gift of God, and that His love, (with which He has loved us in Christ Jesus our Lord) leads sinners thereto. My fleshly will was for the present overcome and silenced, and there was now a giving up with all readiness of mind to the Lord's requirings. Indeed, there was not anything too near to part with for the real and substantial enjoyment of the Beloved of my soul; for I was brought in degree to experience that He came "for judgment into this world, that those who see not might see; and that those who see might be made blind." I could no longer look upon my former delights with any satisfaction. Instead, I had a glorious view of the beautiful situation of mount Zion, and my face was turned to it. For the joy which was set before me, I was made willing to endure "the cross of Christ, and to despise the shame;" and though I became a wonder and a gazing stock to my former companions, I did not much regard it, knowing I had just cause so to be. My great change struck them with some awe, for I observed they did not have the boldness to mock or deride me before my face.

The young man who was the instrument in the divine hand for my awakening, together with his brother, were both greatly reached and deeply affected by the above-mentioned wonderful visitation, and there was a very visible change in them for a time. But like the seed that fell upon the stony ground, they withered away and did not become fruitful to God.

When first-day came, I greatly rejoiced that I could go to meeting, which proved indeed to be a memorable one. There were two public Friends,² strangers, who seemed to me to be sent there on my account, for most of what they had to deliver appeared applicable to my state. Now I did, in some degree, experience the substance of what was intended by the “baptism of water unto repentance,” “the washing of water by the Word,” and being “born of water and the spirit,” all of which would be fully seen and clearly understood by the professors of Christianity were they rightly acquainted with the “gospel of Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation.” This power, inwardly revealed, is alone able to work that change in them, without which (our Lord says) none shall so much as see the kingdom of God. But alas, being carnal in their minds, a spiritual religion does not suit them! For even as the Scripture says, “The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” So it is that the professors of the Christian name hold tightly to signs and shadows, while the substance is neglected. They plead for the continuance of types, when the antitype is but little regarded. But where this substance is experienced, all shadows and types vanish and come to an end, as did the types and figures of the law, when Christ, the antitype, came and introduced His dispensa-

² The term “public Friend” was used by the early Quakers to refer to those members of the Society who were frequently engaged in traveling and public ministry among the various established meetings. These ministers never received money for their services in the Lord’s body, being convinced that they should freely give what they had freely received.

tion, which is altogether of a spiritual nature.

This administration of water by the Word continued upon me in a remarkable manner for about three months, in which I found great satisfaction; for it was accompanied by a heavenly sweetness, like healing balm to my wounded spirit, and my heart was melted before the Lord as wax is melted before a fire. Great was my delight in reading the holy Scriptures and other good books, and I was favored at that time to receive much comfort and improvement thereby. But this easy, melting dispensation had to give way to a more powerful one—even the baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire—that the floor might be thoroughly purged. And then the former dispensation of the Lord to my soul seemed much to resemble John's baptism with water unto repentance (being the substance signified by it) in order to prepare the way of the Lord.

Under this fiery dispensation I was, for a time, exceedingly distressed under a sense of the great alteration in the state of my mind; for indeed I felt myself forsaken of the Lord, and attributed the cause to something in myself. All the former tenderness was gone, and I became like the parched ground. Yes, my agonies were so great that when it was day I wished for night, and when it was night I wished for day. In meetings for worship, where I had formerly enjoyed the most satisfaction, I was now under the greatest weight of pain and distress, even to such a degree that at times I could scarcely forbear crying aloud for mere agony. When meeting was over, I would sometimes walk a considerable way into the woods, so that, unheard by any mortal, I might give vent to my greatly distressed soul in mournful cries.

In this dejected state of mind, the grand adversary was permitted to pour forth floods of temptations. I was almost constantly beset with evil thoughts, which exceedingly grieved me. And though I was too much enlightened to willingly allow or join with these wicked and corrupt thoughts, yet I often judged myself not earnest enough in resisting these and other temptations. Oh, what a dark and distressed condition my mind was in! Indeed, I was exceedingly weak in those days, and I am persuaded that the Lord, in gracious condescension, looked mercifully at the sincerity of my intention, not marking all my failings, or I could never have stood before Him in any degree of acceptance. Very great were my temptations, and very deep was my distress of mind for about a year, during which time I was like a little child in understanding the way and work of God upon me for my redemption. Yet, He who will “not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax, until He sends forth judgment unto victory,” by His invisible power lifted up my head above the raging waves of temptation, so that the enemy found he could not overwhelm me. The Lord taught my hands to war, and my fingers to fight under His banner, and through His blessing and assistance, I found some degree of victory over the beast—that is, that part in man which has its life in fleshly gratifications.

Then the false prophet began to work with signs and lying wonders in order to deceive my weak and unskillful understanding. It is written, “Satan transforms himself into an angel of light,” and so I found him, at least in appearance. For perceiving that I was too much enlightened from above to be easily drawn into sensuality, the

enemy of my soul (who goes about seeking whom he may devour) craftily attempted my destruction another way—by setting himself up, undiscovered then by me, as a guide in the way of mortification. For I was then resolved, through divine assistance, to carefully carry my cross, and to deny myself in all things which appeared inconsistent with the divine will. But this subtle transformer, taking advantage of the ardency of my mind to press forward in this necessary concern, suggested that it would be much easier to obtain a complete victory over evil, were I to refrain for a time from some of the necessities of life, particularly from eating and taking my natural rest in sleep, except just as much as would preserve life. He furthermore suggested that I must constantly keep my hands employed in business, as idleness is the nursery of vice; and he was not slow to bring Scriptures, and passages from other religious books, to confirm these requireings. At that time I really believed it was the voice of Christ in my mind commanding these things, and therefore endeavored to be faithful therein, even though my natural strength abated and my body grew much weaker. I was greatly distressed when at any time I fell short of what I apprehended to be my duty in these respects. And I found that he who required this service was a hard master; for though he had power to deceive, yet he could not give me faith that I should ever overcome.

My views in those days were indeed very discouraging, and my poor afflicted soul was almost sunk into despair. My friends took notice that I was in uncommon distress. The family with which I then lived could not help but take notice of my wandering about in the fields at night, and of

my much refraining from food, and of the deep distress which was legibly imprinted on my countenance, though I concealed it as much as I could. They feared (as I afterwards understood) that I should be tempted to lay violent hands on myself. And I had forbidden myself to speak of my condition to any, as I felt that would be seeking relief from without—a very improper and unworthy thing.

Notwithstanding all this, the God of all grace (who permitted this uncommon affliction to fall upon me for a trial, and not for my destruction) was pleased, in wonderful kindness, to move upon the heart of a minister belonging to our meeting to visit me, and to open a way for my deliverance. He carefully inquired concerning my inward condition, informing me that Friends were much concerned about me, as it was very obvious I was under some uncommon temptation. At first I was very unwilling to open my state to him, but at length he prevailed and took the opportunity to show me that I was under a gross delusion of Satan. By this means, through the Lord's mercy, I was delivered from the wicked design of my enemy, which undoubtedly was to destroy both soul and body. And so, in reverent thankfulness, I rejoiced in His salvation. And I then clearly saw that Satan must also be carefully guarded against in his religious appearances; for nothing in religion can be acceptable to God except for the genuine product of His unerring Spirit, distinctly heard and understood by the ear of the soul and the renewed understanding. "My sheep," said Christ, "hear My voice;" which I now began to experience fulfilled. Blessed be the Lord forever!

About this time, I had many precious openings into

the divine mysteries, and when I read the holy Scriptures, they were opened to my understanding far beyond what they had ever been before. Indeed I had very great comfort, and my hope was revived and my faith much strengthened by those things that were written beforehand. I am well assured, by certain experience, that the mysteries couched in those holy writings cannot be rightly understood except by the same Spirit which inspired the penmen of them. It is therefore vain presumption for fallen and unregenerate man, by his earthly wisdom and human learning, to attempt unfolding heavenly mysteries. The lip of truth Himself has signified that they are hidden from the wise and prudent of this world and revealed unto the humble, dependent babes and sucklings—that is, those who sensibly experience their sufficiency for every good word and work to proceed immediately from God, so that Christ “is made unto them, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” The lack of this inward, living sense has been the cause of, and has opened the way for, the great apostasy, darkness, and error, which have overspread Christendom, so called. There is no way for its recovery, except by humbly submitting to Christ inwardly revealed, and learning the nature of true religion from Him, the great Author thereof. I am well assured that the forward, active, and inventing self must be denied, abased, and laid in the dust forever, and the Lord alone exalted in our hearts, before we can rise up in the several duties of true religion with divine approbation.

I saw that the divine light which began to shine out of my darkness, and which separated me from it, was the greater light which was to rule the Day of God's salvation,

and that all the saved of the Lord must carefully walk in this light, wherein there is no occasion of stumbling. I also saw that when it pleased the Lord in His wisdom, for a trial of my faith and patience, to withdraw this holy light, so that there was a sitting in darkness, and in the region of the shadow of death for a time, where I had no distinct knowledge what to do—that it was then my indispensable duty to stand still and wait for my sure unerring Guide. And when, during these times, self would arise and be uneasy, it must be brought to the cross, there to be slain. By such experience, I found I was nothing, and that God was all things necessary for soul and body, and that if I would be brought into a state of perfect reconciliation with Him, I must know all things made new.

About this time I had a distant view of being called into the work of the ministry. My mind was at times wonderfully overshadowed with the universal love of God to mankind in the glorious gospel of His Son, to such a degree that I thought I could (in the strength of His love) give up to spend and to be spent for the gathering of souls to Him, the great Shepherd of Israel. Indeed, at times I felt I could lift up my voice like a trumpet to awaken the inhabitants of the earth. But I soon found that all this was only preparation for this important work, and that I had not yet received a commission to engage therein. A fear and care were upon my mind that I not presume to enter upon this solemn undertaking without a right call; for it appeared to me exceedingly dangerous to speak in the name of the Lord without a clear evidence in the mind that He required it of me, which I then fully believed He would give in His own time, if I would give up to wait for it.

From this time, until I was really called into the work, I frequently had (especially in religious meetings) openings of Scripture passages, with lively operations of the divine power in my mind. Sometimes these came with so much energy that I was almost ready to offer to others what I had upon my mind. But because of a holy awe which dwelt upon my heart, I endeavored to weigh my offering in the unerring balance of the sanctuary, and I found it was too light to be offered. Then I was thankful to the Lord for His merciful preservation, in that I had been enabled to avoid offering the sacrifice of fools. But when the time really came that it was divinely required of me to speak, the evidence was so indisputably clear that there was not the least room for doubt. Nevertheless, through fear and human frailty I put it off, and did not give way to the Lord's requiring. Then oh, how was I condemned in myself! The divine sweetness which had covered my mind in the meeting was withdrawn, and I was left in a very poor, disconsolate state! I was ready to beg forgiveness, and to covenant with the Lord that if He would be pleased to favor me again in like manner, I would give up to His requiring. At the next first-day meeting, the heavenly power again overshadowed me in a wonderful manner, in which it was required of me to kneel down in supplication to the Lord in a few words. I gave way this time in the dread of His power, with fear and trembling, and afterwards my soul was filled with peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, and I could sing and make sweet melody in my heart to the Lord. As near as I remember, I was twenty-one years of age the day I first entered into this great and solemn work of the ministry, which was the 21st of the fifth month, 1734.

I have found my mind engaged to be somewhat particular concerning the manner of my entering into the work of the ministry, so that it may stand by way of caution and proper encouragement to others. For in the course of my observation, I have had cause to fear that some have taken the work of preparation (as before hinted) for the thing itself, and so have proceeded very far to their own great wounding, and the hurt of others. Such as these bring forth untimely fruit, which is exceedingly dangerous and should be carefully avoided. Nothing is a sufficient guard to preserve from this but keeping the eye single to the Lord (through the divine blessing), and fearfully considering what a great thing it is for dust and ashes to speak as the apostle Peter directs, namely: "As each one has received a gift, even so minister it one to another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies." The author to the Hebrews says, "No man takes this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, just as Aaron was." So that regardless of what some may pretend to, or intrude themselves into, unless they are really called of God they have no share in that honor which comes from God alone.

The church of Christ has had its share of trouble from false ministers, both in the primitive times, and in ours. That excellent gospel liberty—wherein all who feel themselves inspired (whether male or female) may speak or prophecy, one by one—has been, and still is, abused by false pretenders to divine inspiration. Nevertheless, this liberty ought to be carefully preserved, and other means found to remedy the abuses in this regard; which would

not be difficult, were the members in a general way more spiritually minded, rightly savoring the things that are of God. Presumptuous and unsanctified appearances in ministry would then be easily contained and suppressed so as not to disturb the peace of the church. But alas, the case is often otherwise, as I have observed in many places. And such barren ministry is often little minded, so long as the words and doctrines are sound, and there is nothing to blame in conduct. But here the main thing is disregarded, which is the powerful demonstration of the Holy Spirit. And the few who are deeply pained at heart with such lifeless ministry find it exceedingly difficult to correct, for lack of strength, especially when they perceive what strength there is against them. For the formal professors of Christianity love to have it so, rather than to sit in silence. I have observed such pretenders to be all mouth or tongue, having no ear to receive instruction; they are fond of teaching others, but very unteachable themselves. I pray God to quicken His people, and to raise our Society into a more lively sense of that blessed power which first gathered us to be a people. Otherwise, I fear this great evil will prove to be a growing one among us, namely: profession without possession.

I was not quite free to omit a remark on this subject, as I am fully persuaded the living members of the church of Christ groan under a painful sense of this sorrowful token of a declined society. May the Lord of Hosts hear their cries, and regard the anguish of their souls in secret, so as to work by His invisible power for His own name's sake, and for their enlargement. And may He turn His hand again upon our Zion to purge away her dross, and to

take away her tin and reprobate silver, that her judges may be restored as at the first, and her counselors as at the beginning. And oh, that many, having their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, may yet appear beautiful upon the mountains! So be it, says my soul!

I have given some hints how it was with me during the time of preparation for the great and important work of the ministry, and also the danger of my being misled, even sometimes when I had right openings, and felt the sweet, efficacious virtue of the love of God, through Jesus Christ to mankind (which, no doubt, is at times the sensible experience and enjoyment of every faithful follower of Christ who is never called to the work of the ministry). I was apprehensive in those days of the danger of being led out into ministry through the wrong door, and I have since more clearly seen the danger of this and other by-paths which would have led me to give away to others what I was meant to live upon myself. Indeed, many are the by-paths that lead out of the humble, dependent state (in which alone there is safety), to have a will and a way of our own, that we might be furnished and enriched with much treasure. But in sincerity of heart, and an earnest endeavor to preserve the eye single, and through the watchful care of divine providence over me, the Day of the Lord shone upon all of these dangers, and I came clearly to see, and experientially to know, that my sufficiency was of God. I saw that there must be a steady dependence upon the Lord to be immediately fitted and supplied every time I was to engage in this solemn service.

I ardently desire that all who have the least apprehension of being called into the work of the ministry, may

dwell in a holy dread of the divine presence, and know their own wills wholly subjected to the divine will, waiting for a distinct and clear certainty of the Lord's requireing, not only in entering upon this at first, but also at all other times. And as self comes to be laid in the dust, they will receive undeniable evidence in their own minds of the certainty of their mission, and will not lack a confirming testimony from the witness for God in the consciences of those amongst whom they are sent to minister. True ministers will be a savor of life to those living in the Truth, and of death to those who are in a state of death. Let it be ever remembered, that nothing of, or belonging to man, can possibly add any luster or dignity to the divine gift. Neither can the best and most perfectly adapted words or doctrines (though they be ever so truly and consistently delivered) be any more than as sounding brass, or as a tinkling cymbal, without the power, light, and demonstration of the Spirit of Christ. And allow me to add—there is no need for those who regard the Lord's power as the substance of their ministry to be anxious about words, as the lowest and most simple are really beautiful when fitly spoken under that holy influence.

Having entered upon the solemn and weighty service of the ministry, I gave up, for the most part, to utter a few words in a broken manner, with fear and trembling, as I found the requireing of Truth (through its own divine power and efficacy) moving upon my heart and subjecting my will. The Lord was exceedingly merciful to me, like a tender father taking me by the hand and making me willing by His mighty power to be counted a fool for His sake and the gospel's.

The meeting I then belonged to was large, and in it there was a body of valuable, weighty Friends. As far as I could observe by their carriage, these did acknowledge and approve of my weak and low appearances in the ministry. Nevertheless, they used Christian prudence, “not laying hands on me quickly,” but giving me full opportunity to make proof of my ministry, and to feel my feet therein.

About this time a fine spring of ministry was opened within the compass of our Yearly Meeting, for about one hundred persons had their mouths opened in public testimony in a little more than a year. Several of these became powerful, able ministers, but some of them withered away like unripe fruit. Within that time, about ten appeared in the particular meeting of Abington to which I belonged.

As I was enabled to wait on my ministry, I experienced a considerable growth and enlargement; and in the faithful discharge of my duty therein, great peace and heavenly consolation flowed into my soul like a pleasant refreshing stream. I also found that this was a means of engaging the minds of Friends in a sweet and comfortable nearness of unity with me, which I had never before so largely and livingly felt.

Many well-minded young people, and some others of little experience, seemed to admire my gift, and would sometimes speak highly of it, which they did not always forbear doing in my hearing. But oh, how dangerous this is, if delighted in by ministers! It may be justly compared to a poison which will soon destroy the pure innocent life. My judgment was against it, yet I found something in me that seemed rather inclined to hearken to it, though not with full approbation. The same thing in me would want to

know what such and such persons (those who were in most esteem for experience and wisdom) thought of me. I sometimes imagined that such looked apprehensively upon me, which would cast me down. But all of this, being from a root of self, I found to be for judgment, and I knew it must die upon the cross before I was fit to be trusted with any great store of gospel treasure.

I began also to take too much delight in my gift; and if divine goodness had not, in mercy, prevented it (by a deep and distressing baptism,³) this might have opened a door for spiritual pride, which is the worst kind of pride, to enter in for my ruin. I have reason to think that solid Friends, observing my large growth at the top, with spreading branches, were in fear of my downfall in case of a storm. But, in the midst of my lofty career, the Lord was pleased for a time to take away from me the gift of the ministry, along with all sensible comforts of His Spirit, so that I was left (as I thought) in total darkness, even in the region and shadow of death. In this dejected state of mind, I was grievously beset and tempted by the false prophet, the transformer, to keep up my credit in the ministry by continuing my public appearances. It might well be said of him that he can “cause fire to come down from heaven in the sight of men, in order to deceive them;” for so I found it to be. Oh, it is hard to imagine how near a resemblance the enemy can make, or how exact an imitation he can form of the things of God! And indeed, with the state of mind I was then in, I was at times ready to say, “Ah, I see

3 He uses the word baptism figuratively, as speaking of being dipped down into the fiery trials, testings, and judgments by which the Lord thoroughly “purges His threshing floor.”

and feel the fire of the Lord coming down to prepare the offering!" And I have been almost ready to give up to this prompting, and to speak on God's behalf, when a godly fear would seize my mind, along with a desire to test it again. By this means, my strong delusion has been discovered, the false fire has been rejected, and my soul has been plunged into deeper anxiety than I was in before.

No tongue or pen can fully set forth the almost constant anguish of soul that was upon me for about the space of four or five months. With regard to my friends, it fared with me in some degree as it did with Job—some conjecturing one thing to be the cause of this fall, and some another thing; though, through mercy, they could not charge me with any evil conduct as the cause thereof. The most probable reason for my alteration, in the mind of many, was that I had been too much set up by others, and so had lost my gift. And indeed, this came the nearest to the truth of the case. Yet it was not so far lost, but that when my gracious Helper saw my suffering was enough, He restored it again, and appeared to my soul as a clear morning without clouds. Everlasting praises to His holy name! My mind was deeply bowed in humble thankfulness under a sense of the great favor of being again counted worthy to be entrusted with so precious a gift. I was therefore careful to exercise it in great fear and awe, and in an even greater cross to my own will than before.

In the course of my religious experience, I have very often had cause to admire and adore divine wisdom in His dealings with me for my preservation in the way of peace. I am well assured that He will so work for all mankind who are entirely given up in heart to Him, so that it will not be

possible for these to miss everlasting happiness. For truly, none are able to pluck out of His almighty hand those who do not first incline to leave Him.

After I had appeared in public ministry somewhat more than two years, I found some drawings of gospel love (as I apprehended) to visit the meetings of Friends in some parts of New Jersey. Being but young in the ministry, I was at times in great fear lest I should be mistaken in what I thought to be the divine requiring. I much dreaded running when and where the Lord did not send me, lest I should bring dishonor to His blessed name, and expose myself to wise and discerning Friends to be without proper qualifications for so great an undertaking. Great indeed was my distress, night and day, crying to the Lord for greater confirmation. These cries He graciously heard, and was pleased, by a dream or night vision, to afford me such full satisfaction that I do not remember having any doubts afterwards concerning it.

I entered upon this journey the 7th of the eighth month, 1736, having a companion who was much older than myself. We visited the following meetings: namely, Pilesgrove, Salem, Alloways Creek, and Cohansey, where my companion left me and returned home, being under some discouragement about the journey in his own mind. But as I found the Lord by His blessed power near—opening my mouth and enlarging my heart abundantly in His work—I was encouraged to proceed, being joined in travel by an innocent Friend belonging to Alloways Creek meeting, who had a few words to speak in meetings. We went from Cohansey, through a wilderness for about forty miles without inhabitants, to Cape May, where we had a

meeting. From there we moved on to Great and Little Egg-harbor and had meetings, and then through the wilderness to the Yearly Meeting at Shrewsbury, which was large and much favored with the divine presence. Various ministering Friends from Pennsylvania were there, namely, Thomas Chalkley, Robert Jordan, John and Evan Evans, Margaret Preston, and others.

It neither suited my growth in the ministry, nor my inclination, to take up much time in those large meetings. I therefore, for the most part, gave way to those who were better qualified for the work, and in my esteem worthy of double honor. I had a great regard in my mind for all who I thought to be pillars in the house of God, whether ministers or elders. And I really think that if any of these had given it as their sense that I was wrong in any of my offerings, at any time, I would have been more likely to depend upon their judgment than upon my own. I looked upon myself, for many years, as a child in experience every way, and therefore thought a subjection was due from me to those who were fathers and mothers in Israel. And I never, that I remember, manifested any disregard to them, which is now a great satisfaction to my mind.

I confess, I have at times since had cause to marvel at the forwardness of some, who though but children in ministry (if rightly children at all) have undertaken the work of men, hardly demonstrating a willingness to give the preference to any. And when these have been admonished by those of much more experience than themselves, they have been apt to dispute, or to plead a divine commission, and that it is right to obey God rather than man, as if they had the sole right of speaking and judging in the body.

But I had many times seen the great danger of being deceived and misled by the transformer, and was therefore afraid of being confident of my own sight, and looked upon it to be safest for me to stand quite open to instruction, let it come from whoever it would; for there was nothing more desirable to me than to be right.

This large meeting at Shrewsbury ended well and sweetly; praises to the Lord over all forever! From there I went to meetings at Chesterfield, Trenton, Bordentown, Mansfield, Upper Springfield, Old Springfield, Burlington, Bristol, the Falls, Ancocas, Mount Holly, Evesham, Chester, Haddonfield and Woodbury Creek, after which I returned home. The Lord made my journey prosperous, and was to me at times as a fountain unsealed, supplying daily for the work He had engaged me in, and wonderfully condescending to my weak state, giving both wisdom and utterance, as it is written, "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings You have ordained strength." Praises to His holy name forever!

But though the Lord had committed to me a dispensation of the gospel, and was pleased to reward my sincere labors therein with the sweet incomes of peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, and with the unity of the brethren in a comfortable degree; yet great were my temptations, and various were the combats I had with my soul's enemies for some years after. Oh, how hard I found it to keep from being defiled (in one degree or another) by the polluting floods which almost continually poured out of the dragon's mouth. Indeed, he sought to carry away my imagination into various unlawful delights, and from these I did not always wholly escape. Sometimes I was prevailed upon to

set bounds for myself, and though I would not directly fall into the evil I was tempted to do, yet I would take some delight and satisfaction in approaching as near to it as I thought was lawful. In this way, for lack of a watchful care (not only to shun that which I knew to be really evil, but also every appearance of evil), I sometimes brought great anguish and deep distress upon my mind. And when I had gone but a little out of the right way, I then found that many (oh many!) weary steps and painful heart-aches were necessary before I was received again into the way and favor of my heavenly Father.

I have often since been humbly thankful for His preservation, even out of gross evils, considering how I sometimes dangerously tampered with these in my imagination. How can weak mortals determine to what length they will go when any ground is given to evil? Most certain it is, that man works greatly to his own hurt by taking any pleasure at all in the thoughts of forbidden things. I have found by woeful experience, that when the least way is given to the enemy, he then gains advantage over us, and we are greatly enfeebled thereby. And so, instead of growing as “willows by the water-courses,” there is danger of withering and becoming one of those that draw back, in whom the Lord has no pleasure. I have found it the first subtle working of Satan to draw me off from a constant care of bringing all my thoughts, words, and actions, to be tried by the light of Christ in my own heart; and instead of this, to examine them by my biased reasoning part. Here many things really evil in their nature or tendency, or both, may carry the appearance of indifference; and the mind then pleads that there is no harm in this, that, or the other

thing. And though there be doubts in the mind, these can be reasoned away (not duly considering that, “he who doubts, is condemned if he receive”). So then (alas!), when the true Judge of all has been pleased to arise, there He has found me with my fig-leaf covering on, having in a great measure lost the garment of innocence and a holy confidence towards God by giving way to wrong things. Oh, how my neglect has occasioned the furnace to be made hot, that all dross might be done away!

Thus it was with me, until the many chastenings of the heavenly Father brought me into more fear, care, and subjection. I could not omit giving these hints of my many weaknesses and failings, that others may learn thereby to be aware. And I also apprehend this to be the chief reason for which God has transmitted to us the failings and miscarriages of His people in the Holy Scriptures. O you traveler Zionward, look forward to the joy set before you, not allowing your eyes to wander about you, lest they convey such delight to your heart as may infect your soul with deadly distempers, by which you will be rendered unable to proceed on your journey towards the holy city. Beware you do not load yourself with the seemingly pleasant fruit of that country through which you travel. Though it may appear to hang plentifully on each side, it will neither be of any use to you in that heavenly country where you are going, nor serve for true refreshment on the way there. If you desire that your own way be prosperous, look steadily forward, with a single eye to the recompense of reward. Bring every motion towards seeking satisfaction in forbidden places immediately to the cross, and you will much sooner find the yoke of Christ made easy and His

burden light. Indeed you will find all His ways pleasant, and His paths peace. This is abundantly better than that uneasy, in-and-out way of traveling—sinning and repenting, repenting and sinning again, which lays a foundation for murmuring, labor, and toil. Such as these cry out (some all their lives) that there is no complete victory to be obtained over sin on this side of the grave. “Miserable sinners we must remain,” they say, when the cause thereof is wholly in themselves—because they will not come into, and abide in, the help of the Lord against the mighty enemies of their soul’s happiness, which is altogether sufficient to give a complete victory over them. Indeed, He is able to give power to triumph and to say, “We are made more than conquerors through Him that has loved us.”

* * *

John Griffith was a minister between 1734 and 1776, around one hundred years after the great outpouring of light and power that gave rise to the Society of Friends. Though the Society continued to grow in number through much of the 1700's, and a living remnant survived even into the 1800's, there was nevertheless a sad and steady decline in true life and godliness after the initial fifty years of prosperity and purity. John Griffith spent his entire life laboring among a waning church, warning them not to lose their first love, and insisting upon the need for the Spirit's leading, light, and power in all things. In one of many similar expressions found in his complete journal, he writes, “It is but about a century since the Lord, by an outstretched arm, gathered our

Society from the barren mountains and desolate hills of empty profession; choosing them for His own peculiar flock and family, as does fully appear by many evident tokens of His love and mighty protection—even when the powers of the earth, like the raging waves of the sea, rose up against them, with full purpose to scatter and lay waste. It may be justly queried, 'What could the Lord have done for us that He has not done?' Notwithstanding which, what indifference, lukewarmness and insensibility as to the life of religion are now to be found amongst numbers under our name! Nay, in some places, this painful lethargy has become almost general."

John Griffith, together with a faithful minority in his generation, poured out their lives for the truths of the gospel, for the purity of the church, and for the glory of the Lord in the earth. He died from complications with asthma in 1776, at 63 years of age.

**MEMOIRS OF
JOHN CROOK**

(1617 – 1699)

I have often been pressed in spirit to write this following history of my life, so that the world, as well as my friends and acquaintances, might know the Lord's dealings with me from my tender years, both for the comforting of the saints, and the information and instruction of all into whose hands this account may come. But above all, my desire is that the God of my life be feared and exalted in the hearts, and by the holy lives, of all the sons and daughters of men forever.

I was born in the north country, of parents that were for the common religion of the times in which they lived. I was brought up with them, and instructed in their way, until about ten or eleven years of age. Within this time, I had many exercises in my inward man, and often prayed in hidden places as words sprang in my mind, and as I learned prayers without a book. Yet many strong combats remained within me, which continued haunting me for many months. One time, above all the rest, I was almost overcome, and I nearly consented to the devil urging me (by a mighty, violent striving) to give up all my resistance

and withstanding of him. But on a sudden, there arose in me a power and life that opposed and denied the enemy, making my spirit say within me, with much boldness and courage, "I will not serve you, O Satan, but I will serve the Lord God of heaven and earth, whatever I suffer, or whatever becomes of me." This, I do remember, my tongue uttered pretty loudly, and with much vehemence and resolution, in full consent to what was spoken inwardly in my heart, and in opposition and contradiction to the evil spirit that strongly tempted me to give up myself to wickedness. After this, I was frightened when I came to consider these two opposite strivings in my spirit, what they could mean, for I had never heard anyone speak of such things. And I was especially amazed when I considered what that voice should be which spoke with such an authority in me, and commanded my tongue to speak so boldly in compliance with it, and against the other which had almost forced me to consent to its evil motions and suggestions. But by the ease and relief I felt in my inward parts, I concluded it was the Lord who had helped me in so great a trial.

I remember after this, when I was tempted or troubled in my mind, I would go into some corner or secret place and pray unto God. And when I had committed sin and evil, and was troubled afterwards, I would then pray to God for His strength against them. And I found that when I was alone, I was sure to hear from Him of all my doings, for my sins would come fresh in my remembrance, and be so set before me that I could not get them out of my sight. Then I would endeavor to get into some private place to pray and weep, and would promise and covenant in secret with God that if He would forgive these, and help me for

the time to come, I would never do the like again. But despite all this, evils prevailed in me, and I could not keep my promises with God. So trouble came upon my spirit, and I often mourned and went about heavily. I took no delight in play or in the pastimes which I saw other children enjoy, which made me often conclude in my mind that they were in a better condition than I, and that surely God was angry with me, which made Him so correct me. For I saw that other children were merry and cheerful, but I had no peace. Yet sometimes I found ease, and was cheerful, but it seldom held long without some intermixture of trouble. I also had many openings in my mind about heaven and hell, and wicked men and good men, which did sometimes much amaze me. And I saw that many of the priests were profane in those parts, giving themselves up to various kinds of wickedness.

When about ten or eleven years of age I went to London, and there attended several schools until I was about seventeen years of age, during which time I had much trouble and exercise in my mind. But though I lived in a wicked family, and among those who scoffed at all strictness in religion, yet I would often get into some hidden place and pray or weep bitterly from the sense of my own sins, and would often reprove my schoolmates and companions for their wickedness. I often walked alone by myself in some secret place when all the rest were busy at play and pastimes. In this way I passed away my youthful days, in reading and in frequent prayers when trouble was upon me, from which I was seldom free whole weeks, either in the night or in the day. But all this time I did not much listen to sermons, being little acquainted with any

who frequented such exercises, until I went to be an apprentice, about the seventeenth year of my age.

About this time I was placed in a parish in London where there was a minister who was called a Puritan. Here I became acquainted with a group of young people that frequented sermons and lectures as often as we had any liberty from our apprenticeship. Yet as I grew in knowledge and understanding of the things of God, still trouble grew upon me more and more. I applied myself to reading the bible and other good books, and prayed often, insomuch that even the family where I was then an apprentice took much notice of it, and would sometimes stand in secret places to hear me pray, though I then knew it not.

But I remember when I was most fervent in my devotion, something in me would still be pulling me back, so that I should not yet wholly leave off the evils I knew myself to be guilty of. I would gladly have had them pardoned and forgiven, and yet I desired to continue in them. I found such a thing within myself, opposing my earnest cries and petitions, desiring both to have peace with God, and yet to continue in those things which I prayed against. This at last made me conclude that I was but a hypocrite, and did not belong to the election of grace, but instead was to become an eminent spectacle of God's displeasure. And I further concluded that that which opposed my earnest cries to God was the devil, and that I was therefore possessed with the devil. So, as often as I had occasion, I would inquire of other professing Christians how it was with them, and what they understood of the condition of those who were possessed with unclean spirits. But all that I could get from any could not remove

the idea from my mind that I was possessed with the devil. Indeed, I thought I felt in myself something sensibly and manifestly opposing the good motions and desires that were in me, as if two had been striving in me for victory. And when I was so tired out with resisting and fighting in myself, I could get no relief or sensible ease except by going to prayer—either secretly within myself, or down upon my knees in some secret place.

Often times, when I was at prayer, I was so possessed with fear that I stopped and looked behind me, lest the devil stood there ready to take me as soon as I rose up. And then I was troubled for giving way so far to my fears as to look behind me. But for all of this, I dared not leave off praying. And what troubled me even more was that those who heard me admired my gift in prayer, and believed me to be a child of God, when I concluded nothing less of myself than that I should deceive them, and cause God's name to be blasphemed by my falling away at last. For I thought it impossible for me to continue long in that condition before I should fall and be made an example to all hypocrites.

Thus I continued professing, praying, hearing, and reading, and yet I could not perceive any true improvement in myself; but still the same youthful vanities drew my mind away whenever opportunities offered. I never gave myself to outward, gross profaneness, but only to idle talk and vain company, mis-spending my time, taking pride in my apparel and such things, for all which I was condemned—as also for wearing long hair, and spending my money in vain, which would have been better employed if used to buy good books, or to give to the poor. All that I

did was condemned, and myself for doing it, yet I dared not leave off my religious duties, for then I thought the devil would prevail over me to make me destroy myself. Oh, I was afraid to see a knife if I was alone, or to have any in the room all night where I lay.

Thus I continued, running to hear lectures whenever I had any time allowed me by my master, which I endeavored to get by doubling my diligence in the day time, and abstaining from sleep in the night time. I sought out private meetings and lectures, going to hear any eminent speaker I heard of, which, by this time, I had obtained a great knowledge of through much acquaintance with hearers of sermons, and frequenters of private fasts and meetings.

Sometimes, when hearing sermons, I had much ado to forbear crying out in the midst of the assembly, "I am damned! I am damned!" which I never did, but would go away full of horror and misery in my mind. The ministers in those days commonly preached how a man might know himself to be an elect child of God, by certain marks and signs if it were so, and other signs if it were not so. This, at times, made me conclude I had saving grace, and at other times to conclude I was but a hypocrite. Thus I was tossed up and down, from hope to despair; and from a sign of grace in me one time, to a sign of a hypocrite and a reprobate again. I could not tell what to do with myself, or whether it was best to go to church, or to stay at home, for I found no rest or lasting peace by all my hearing and running here and there. And I felt no freedom to go to any of these ministers in private to acquaint them with my condition, partly because I thought they could not help me,

and partly for fear, lest they should discourage me and tell me I was a hypocrite, and then Satan should prevail to force me to destroy myself. Indeed, I was afraid of anything that might confirm my own thoughts of my miserable state. For my own thoughts were bad enough, but I was exceedingly afraid to have my thoughts seconded by the judgment of any other. So I never went to any ministers to acquaint them with my condition, but rather bore it secretly in my own bosom, few knowing how it was with me.

Then one day when I was an apprentice, being full of trouble, I resolved on a first-day afternoon (called then the Lord's day) to go whatever way I should feel moved or inclined in my spirit—whether it was up street, or down street, east or west, north or south, without any predetermination or forethought, but only as the staff should fall, so to speak, or as I should be led. Accordingly I walked, as I was led by something within me which I believed in and followed, until it brought me into a parish church (so called). I went in and sat down, and within a small space of time, a young man went up into the pulpit and preached out of this text, Isaiah 50:10; “He that walks in darkness, and has no light, let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon His God.” Upon this text he had preached before, and purposed at this time to show who that man was that feared the Lord and yet walked in darkness. This he performed as if he had known my condition and spoke to me in particular, which did greatly relieve me, and at that time greatly comforted me, having been so providentially brought there, where I never was before.

I went away much gladdened, and continued so for

some time. But trouble soon came upon me again, through some negligence and coldness, which brought about distrust and unbelief. So the old enemy, the tempter, got in again, and tore me worse than before in my mind, so that I questioned all that had ever been given to refresh me as being but a delusion, with no truth in it. Then I began to be full of horror, so that my sleep was much taken from me, and anguish and intolerable tribulation dwelt in my flesh. And when I heard any of the lowest, poor people crying out in the streets of London, I even wished that I were in their condition, for I thought every man or woman was in a better condition than myself. Truly, I thought myself the only miserable man in the world. Had I been made the most contemptible creature in the whole creation, I would have been happy in comparison to my most intolerable misery. And all of this was heightened by Francis Spira's book,¹ which came into my hand, but when I had read but a little, I cast it from me and dared not look on it anymore, for I thought it so resembled my present condition.

In this extreme misery I continued, keeping it to myself and mourning in secret, until one morning, as I was sitting alone, lamenting my present state, on a sudden there sprang in me a voice saying, "Fear not, O tossed as with a tempest and not comforted; I will help you, and although I have hidden My face from you for a moment,

¹ Francis Spira (1502 – 1548) was an Italian lawyer who converted to Protestantism, but under pressure from the Catholic Inquisition denied his own convictions and publicly recanted his faith. The book referenced by Crook is called *A Relation of the Fearful Estate of Francis Spira*, which relates the terror that immediately seized Spira upon his recantation, and the subsequent guilt, horror, and mental anguish that soon ended his life.

yet with everlasting lovingkindness I will visit you, and you shall be Mine. Fear not, for I am pacified towards you, and will never leave you nor forsake you, says the Lord, the mighty God.”

Then, suddenly, all was hushed and quieted within me, so that I wondered what had become of the many vexations, tormenting fears and thoughts that just before attended me. There was such a calm and stillness in my mind for a space of time, that it came to my mind how there was silence in heaven for half an hour. I was filled with peace and joy, like one entirely overcome, and there shone such an inward light within me, that for the space of seven or eight day's time, I walked as one taken from the earth. I was so caught up in my mind, that it was as if I walked above the world, not taking notice (as it seemed to me) of any persons or things as I walked up and down the London streets, being so gathered up in the marvelous light of the Lord and filled with a joyful dominion over all things in this world. In this time, I saw plainly (and to my great comfort and satisfaction) that whatever the Lord would communicate and make known of Himself, and of the mysteries of His kingdom, He would do it in a way of purity and holiness. Yes, I saw then such a brightness in holiness, and such a beauty in an upright and pure, righteous life, and in a close, circumspect walking with God in holy conduct. Although I had before obeyed to the utmost that I could, yet I could not thereby find peace, nor find and feel any of the acceptance and justification before God that I did at this time, when it sprang up freely in me. So I saw that all true religion lay in this communion, and that all profession of religion without this was as nothing in

comparison. And I well remember, that while I abode and walked in that light and glory which shone so clearly in my mind and spirit, there was not a wrong thought that appeared or stirred within me which did not quickly vanish upon being given no entertainment. Indeed, my whole mind and soul was so taken up with, and swallowed up in, that glorious light and satisfactory presence of the Lord thus manifested in me.

During this time, when I was filled with joy and peace, I found I could not perform religious duties as formally as I used to do, but instead did them with much more life and zeal, faith and confidence than before, which caused many of my acquaintance to admire my gift in prayer, and upon occasions to set me upon that duty. But after this time, I perceived an abatement of the glory, and I began to read and perform duties much as I had done before. About this time, I began to follow some ministers that came out of Holland, and some others who were for separation from the parish assemblies; and indeed, I disliked those mixed assemblies, and much thirsted after, and longed for, a pure communion with those who were most spiritual. Having seen something of the beauty of holiness, I longed to walk with those who knew a fellowship with God in holiness, and who were watchful one over another for good, and for the increase of a holy life.

I walked with a company of young men who met together as often as our occasions would permit, and prayed and conferred together about the things of God. And I remember, when several would be speaking out of the Scriptures, by way of exposition, I had very little to say, not having then much acquaintance with the Bible, for I

was brought up in such families and under such tutors as did not much regard the Scriptures. But I would speak forth my own experiences, and I delighted in, and loved most, those who could speak from experience. Yes, my heart was most warmed and enlivened by those experiential discourses and conversations, so that those who were most spiritual delighted to be with me, and I with them. They would often tell me that I spoke from experience, and that I could speak to many conditions and things as though I had had a volume of all subjects written within me, while most gathered their discourses from the Scriptures outside of them.

But in two or three years time, I began to gather Scriptures into my mind and memory, both from hearing others and from my own studies, which occasioned me to dwell more without, and less within. So by degrees, the knowledge in my natural understanding and judgment began to outgrow and overhang the sense of my inward experiences. At last, having little more than the remembrance (now a great way off) of those things which once were alive and fresh and growing in me as though it had been spring time in my heart and mind, my inward parts became like a winter. The inward life retired out of sight, as though into a hidden root, and then many questions about the way of worship, and the ordinances of the New Testament, began to arise in my mind.

Since the Lord had done so much for me, I judged I could not help but be guilty of unthankfulness before Him if I did not now seek out the purest way of worship. So, after I had gone among several sorts of professing Christians of diverse judgments, seeking with whom my spirit

could sit down and unite, at last I met with a group of Independents with whom I joined in communion. We had many refreshing times together, so long as we were kept watchful and tender, with our minds inwardly retired, and our words few and savory. And we were preserved in this spirit by communicating our experiences to each other, as to whether our hearts had been kept towards the Lord all the week, and what had passed between God and our souls from the beginning of the week to the end.

This continued some years, until it grew formal. Then we began to consider our state, whether we were in the right order of the gospel according to the primitive pattern, and in the proper administration of baptism, etc. And so we began to be divided and scattered in our minds about these things, and many questions arose about various subjects which were not at all questioned before, all of which tended to much uncertainty and instability. We then began not only to be careless about our meetings, but also confused in our preaching and services when assembled. So at last we did not meet at all, but by degrees grew estranged from one another, and into carelessness, consulting principles of liberty and ease to the flesh, and from there fell to encouraging and justifying our present carelessness and coldness in religion. Nevertheless, I was not so given over to ease that I was wholly without checks and reproofs for so doing; and oftentimes the inward distress and trouble of my spirit roused me up again to religious duties, such as prayer and reading.

When I was oppressed in my judgment and natural understanding about doctrines and tenets, (which would present themselves to me in my weak and shattered state),

I then found my mind drawn into carelessness about all religion, and into a slighting of my former strictness against sin and evil. I saw how many doctrines and principles would have forced me into a belief that my former apprehensions about wickedness, and the great danger thereof, arose from mere emotion or tradition, and not from grounded reason or true judgment. I was often exercised day and night, and tempted (both by inward suggestions, and outward allurements) to embrace such principles. And sometimes others, who had been as religious as myself, and no less acquainted with inward experiences of like kind, sought to draw me off from the sense and deep impression of truth which remained upon my spirit after the great troubles and consolations I had tasted. But the sensible remembrance of former days did stick upon me, and kept me from the principles of Ranterism² and Atheism which were prevalent and much stirring in those times.

Through faith in what I had tasted, I was supported under many a bitter combat, and under deep waves and billows, and was made to conclude in my heart and mind that “the righteous was more excellent than his neighbor,” (Prov. 12:26) and that there was a far better condition to be known and enjoyed in this world by walking with God in

2 Ranters were a somewhat odd, non-conformist group that sprung up in the mid 1600s. They denied the authority of both the church and the Scripture, and instead promoted a sort of pantheism, insisting that God was in every creature, and that sin was nothing more than the product of human imagination. Ranters would often interrupt established religious gatherings with shouting (ranting), singing, playing instruments, or making other loud noises.

holiness and purity, than by all licentious and voluptuous living, or covetous gathering of riches together to obtain a name in the earth. This I knew from the sweetness I myself had once enjoyed therein, and it continued underneath all the reasonings and dry observations I could make, and lay more deeply lodged in my inward part than all the floating apprehensions in my mind. So I found there was a continued cry and sound in my inward ears which called for watchfulness over my ways, and obedience unto what was made manifest to be the will of God in my conscience, and this I saw was more likely to afford me rest and peace, than all my notions, observations, beliefs, or sacrifices, whatsoever.

But the true meaning of these things was unknown to me, and not understood distinctly until it pleased the Lord to send one of His servants, called a Quaker, to minister to me, even as Philip did unto the eunuch in the chariot. For the eunuch did not understand what he read, but afterwards, by Philip's expounding the Scripture to him, he then believed what he had been ignorant of. So it was with me, through the servant and instrument of the most high God opening my eyes, and speaking plainly, and not in parables or dark sayings, whereby I came to see what it was that had so long cried out in me upon every occasion of serious inward retiring in my own spirit. Then, I could at last say of Christ, "A greater than Solomon was here"—He who divided aright between the living and the dead, and manifested plainly to whom the living child belonged. Yes, He it was who revealed the true woman, or church, which is in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and also made known who was the harlot, or false church and syna-

gogue of Satan, regardless what she could say to justify herself as the true mother-church.

When I first heard this kind of preaching, by the fore-mentioned Quaker (so called), it appeared to me as if the old apostles had risen from the dead and begun to preach again in the same power, life, and authority in which they first ministered and published the new covenant of Jesus Christ. And I could truly say with Jonathan, after I had heard and tasted the honey and sweet ministration of the blessed gospel, that my eyes were opened, and my strength was renewed from that same power by which the gospel was preached at first; for this gospel was free from the dregs and residue of man's wit and inventions, by which man had long darkened counsel by words without knowledge. I speak the truth, and lie not. After I had heard and tasted of the honey of Canaan which flowed freely, without the forced inventions of man's brain, my eyes were opened and my strength was renewed. Then I obtained victory, through that grace of the gospel, over those lusts and corrupt desires which rose up against the little stirrings and movings in my heart after the living God (which I had at times felt working even from my youth).

When the glad tidings of the gospel thus came to be sounded in my ears, and to reach my heart and conscience, it did not make void my former experiences of the love and mercy of God to my poor soul, nor in the least bring my mind into a contempt of His sweet refreshings during my wearied pilgrimage, which were like streams of that brook from which Israel drank by the way in their travels. On the contrary, it brought fresh to my remembrance the many ways the Lord had revived me in my sore bondage, and

manifested my manifold rebellions against His wooings, and my ingratitude for His tender dealings and frequent visits to me; and this occasioned a true subjection from me, as what was most due unto this tender God and Father. And I was made to cry out, “What? Was God in this place, and I knew it not?” (Gen. 28:16) So I found my heart broken and overcome with His love and mercy to me, and I became more tender before Him.

Thus all things were brought to my remembrance, and I came to know Him not only as the One who “told me all that ever I had done” against Him, but also all that ever He had done for me. This rendered the truth even more lovely and acceptable in my heart, in that it should bring old things into new remembrance, and restore an old acquaintance with my long-provoked God. Thus it was with me as it was with Nathaniel, who confessed to Christ just as soon as He told him that He saw him under the fig-tree. In just the same way, I could not withhold my soul's immediate subjection to the Truth when I saw how it thoroughly searched me, and plainly told me where I now was, and how God had several times seen and visited my poor soul. So I have found Christ's promise to Nathaniel also fulfilled in me—for since that day of visitation, I have seen greater things than ever I saw before.

Then I saw that my former condition (before truth fully conquered me, and manifested itself distinctly) was like unto Hagar, who had bread and a skin of water given to her by Abraham, when she was sent into the wilderness for her son's mocking of Isaac. When this bread and skin of water were spent, her condition with her son was most miserable, and she knew no way to fill it again, nor could

she see it, though it was not far from her. But her necessity pierced God's ears, and He then opened her eyes, and she saw "Lahai-roi," that is, "the well of Him that lives and sees me." So it was with me when the bread and water of relief (which God often gave me to maintain me in the wilderness) was spent; I was likely to perish, not seeing any well, or way of supply. But the Lord sent the angel of His presence to open my eyes, and I saw my Lahai-roi—which was there before, but I could not see it, until my eyes had been opened.

Thus for lack of understanding, I (with many others) did pine away many of our days, like Hagar in the wilderness, as a punishment of our lightness, and for joining with Ishmael in despising weaned Isaac, the weighty Seed in our own hearts, who is the heir of all spiritual blessings, and the one with whom God establishes His covenant forever.

So I was convinced of the Truth towards the end of the year 1654 (as I remember), through the servant of the Lord before-mentioned, named William Dewsbury. I did not know of what persuasion he was when I went to hear him, for if I had known he was a Quaker, I think I would not have heard him, being afraid of strange opinions, lest I should be deceived. But being providentially cast where he was declaring, I heard his words, which were both like spears that pierced and wounded my heart, and also like balm that healed and comforted me. I remember the very words that took the deepest impression upon me at that moment. Speaking of several states and conditions of men and women, he described the miserable life of such who, notwithstanding their religious duties or performances, had no peace and quietness in their spirits; for, through

lack of understanding where to find a stay to their minds at all times and in all places, these were like children tossed to and fro, and frightened with the cunning craftiness of men, who promoted their own opinions and ways. This I knew was my own condition at that time, as well as the state of many more poor, shattered people, who “compassed ourselves about with the sparks of our own kindling” (Isa. 50:11). And indeed, this brought us nothing but sorrow whenever we came to lie down and be still, and to commune with our own hearts; for we had nothing inwardly to feed upon and to stay our hearts, besides either formal duties which perished with the using, or disputable opinions about doctrinal things, in the natural understanding and memory. This I came to know and behold afterward, in the appearance of the tried cornerstone laid in Zion, most elect and precious unto them that believed in Him. And in His light I understood certainly, that it is not an opinion, but rather Christ Jesus the power and arm of God who is the Savior. And when He is felt in the heart, and is kept dwelling there by faith, He differs as much from all notions in the brain, as the living substance differs from a picture or image of it.

The reception of the Word of life in my soul was like unto the little book that John was commanded to eat, which proved sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly. So was the Truth unto me, most sweet and delightful unto my taste, even like Jonathan's honey, by which my eyes were opened and my strength renewed with great joy and clearness. So it continued for some months after my first hearing, whereby my judgment was so enlarged and fortified against all batteries and assaults from the disputers of

this world, that I doubtless could have maintained the principles of truth against all opposers. But all this while, I little regarded the outward form or expression of the truth, until I heard the same person declare the word of truth again. Then I began to see that all knowledge was nothing without true practice and conformity to what I knew. And then the truth began (like the little book) to be bitter in my inward parts, because I did not yield obedience to what I was convinced was my duty—as to lay aside all superfluity in apparel, words, and conduct, which was hard for me to do, being then in commission as a Justice of the Peace. But by degrees, I was brought through all consultations and reasonings in this respect, by sore and sharp terrors in my conscience. I came to see all my sins and evils (both outward and great, as well as secret and hidden) by the light in my own conscience; and I knew that all my sins were but as fuel, which the wrath and indignation of the Lord must consume.

I saw that now the axe was to be laid to the root of the tree, and that there was an evil nature to be consumed in me which had long borne sway, notwithstanding my profession of religion. And I saw that my superfluity in apparel, words, and many other things, did but feed and keep alive that nature, and so prolong the fire, to my own great misery. And among many other things, I saw plainly that speaking “you” to a single person, and putting off my hat after the customs and fashions of the world, must all be left and put away, before that fleshly, worldly nature in me could wholly die, and I be perfectly delivered from it. I clearly saw that these things, together with using many words out of God's fear, were but as food to nourish and

feed and keep alive the wrong nature and part in me.

But oh how strongly the reasoning part withstood me in my parting with these and other things! None knows, but those who have been exercised in the like manner, neither can I express the multitude of ways and arguments which the devil used to keep me in those formalities and observances—and so much the more because of my many great acquaintances and public employment. And yet the greatest tribulation I passed through (before I could enter into the kingdom of God) was to part with my own wisdom and knowledge, by which I had profited beyond many of my equals. I found I needed to be beheaded (so to speak) for the testimony of Jesus; for I found by certain experience that, until man be truly crucified with Christ, he cannot bear a true testimony for Christ. Prior to this death, man can but bear witness to himself, which witness is not true; but after he is truly crucified with Christ, and risen with Christ, then if he bears witness of Christ, his witness is true. In this is that faithful saying understood aright, “For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” (Rev. 19:10)

After a long and sharp fight of afflictions and deep exercises in my heart and conscience, I at last gave up to be a fool for Christ, and as one “beside myself for the Lord.” (2 Cor. 5:13) This was not effected without deep agony, for indeed I thought I might lose my mind because of the terrors of God that were upon my soul. But at last, by His grace, He subjected the spirit of my mind unto Himself, so that, through His prevalence, I was made to yield and be still, that He might do with me what He Himself pleased. Then I was enabled to give up to the death of the fleshly

man, mind, and wisdom also, which I saw was like unto the slaying of the first-born in Egypt. And then it was said unto me, "Out of Egypt have I called my son," who was before as one slain, but is now made to live as one born of God in His everlasting covenant forever.

Thus I came to know the One in whom there is no occasion of stumbling. And I saw Him indeed to be the One who silences the disputer and wise of this world, answering fully and most satisfactorily the deep inward cry and need that was in my soul. Yes, He became to me like a most sweet shower that reached unto the root in me, and I saw that all His former revivings were but as summer drops that ushered in a greater drought afterwards, or like a traveling man who stayed but a night. And as I continued on my spiritual journey, I saw the fulfilling of these and many more sayings of Scripture, which were like a brook by the way, which most sweetly gladdened my soul as the Lord made me drink of them. A cup He put into my hand, of which He Himself was my portion.

I must not forget to relate in my journeying, how that after I came to Mount Sinai, I felt the burnings of that fire which burned up all my own righteousness like stubble and straw, and I saw that it was not able to afford me any shelter or preservation from those flames. Then I thought to rely upon the knowledge I had acquired of Christ by reading the Scriptures—such as, that He was my surety, and that God accepted Him in my stead, He having satisfied divine justice. These concepts, together with the sweet experiences I formerly had of Christ before I came into this way, made me say within myself, "Shall I let go all these things?" Unto which question (and to many more reason-

ings of the like nature) it was said in me, “Was it a bare remembrance of Christ, and His merits and surety mustered up, or applied in your own time, or by your own natural understanding, that did save you or help you in your distress? Or was it My free revealing of Him, as My arm and power within you, as really felt by you to comfort you within, even as sin and the devil were truly felt within to torment you?” So I came to know how, when Christ appears, the Seed of the woman does reach to the weak state that man is found in, even when Satan, the old serpent, is most busy, lifting up his head to rule and torment the creature. This Seed is also known to be the Seed of God, which, by the Spirit, does bruise the head of the serpent, putting down all rule, that Christ may be a Prince and a Savior forever.

Thus I came to the saving knowledge of Christ, which did confirm my former experience of His appearance in me and to me, even when I was weak in my understanding, and had but fleshly apprehensions of Him. Nevertheless, the true saving Christ of God is indeed life, power, and virtue, and those who know Him as such, have the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus; for the opinion or concept of Christ in the natural understanding comes too short. But when that Seed within, which wars against sin and evil, is minded and followed, it does rectify the understanding according to the true and right acknowledgment of Him, who is the true God and eternal life, the very Savior of all that believe in Him. Many come only to be dwarfs in experience by giving way to their will, and not to the light in the conscience to command and steer the understanding and judgment. These refuse the light,

saying it is natural and insufficient; and yet, at the same time (by the subtlety of the old serpent), they follow their will and understanding, which are indeed both natural and insufficient.

So I passed from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion; from the ministration of condemnation to the ministration of the Spirit; because of which I could, and truly did, give thanks to God, through Jesus Christ. He freed me from that condemnation under which I lay, notwithstanding all my duties and beliefs, and brought me to Him who is the sum and substance of all, and who was now my rule and guide. He was the guide of my youth in many things, though I knew it not then. But now He is to me the Spirit which gives true liberty from every yoke of bondage. For the ministration of the Spirit does war against the flesh, and is contrary to it, and the soul that walks after the Spirit enjoys life abundantly. But if the spirit of this world prevails, then death and condemnation come again. As it is written, so I found it to be—that “He that is in the flesh cannot please God,” and “He that walks after the flesh shall die.”

After this, I felt the Spirit of truth to rule in me, and my spirit to be really in union therewith, though before I was in union with the spirit of this world. And from that time forward, the Spirit of Truth became the true rule by which I walked and was led unto peace and rest, even as before, when the old man ruled, I was led into trouble and sorrow. So it was verified plainly in me, that “the stability of your times are righteousness and peace;” and also, this other scripture was fulfilled in me, “Neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creature,”

and only those who are accounted for the seed, the Israel of God, and who walk according to this rule, do inherit true peace.

When I thus felt the immortal birth raised up in my inward parts, like a most pleasant plant, I often felt it put forth many sweet and heavenly breathings after God, which were frequently answered by Him, so that I never sought His face in vain, nor asked without a satisfactory return. I found also that praises and thanksgivings did naturally arise and spring up to God from the holy root, even as I had before known a wicked, wrathful nature to cast up mire and dirt, and to send forth fear, horror, trouble, and distrust.

Now my joy was full, and often a cry arose in me unto God to keep me poor and needy in the daily cross; to be nothing in self, but rather free from all self-willing and self-working, in a daily dependence upon the Lord in this pure birth, finding Him to be a treasury and storehouse of all supplies. Both alone, and in meetings, I often felt Him to arise in great power and glory, constraining me to sound out, like a trumpet, living praises to my God. Out of the mouth of this Seed of eternal life, words would proceed within me as I sat in meetings with God's people, and at other times, which I was moved to utter with my tongue. Oftentimes I spoke in the cross to my own will, for the words seemed to my earthly wisdom to be void of wisdom, and most contemptible to my natural understanding, and I knew not the end for which I should speak such words. Yet I was charged with disobedience and was deeply afflicted and troubled in my spirit whenever I neglected to speak them forth. And sometimes, while I was doubting and

reasoning about them, others have spoken forth the same words, which greatly exercised me, knowing that the words were taken from me and given to another that was faithful.

The Lord having thus been pleased to reveal His Son in me, He then showed me the deceitful workings of the “man of sin” in myself, (in the “mystery of iniquity,” 2 Thes. 2:7) and his exaltation in the temple of God, where he is worshipped as God, above all that is called God. And I saw that, though God deserves all worship, yet in this temple He is little known, or little taken notice of by the creature, because of the exaltation and rule of another thing which has appeared as God, but is not. All this I saw in the light of the Lord. And not only so, but I also felt by experience how God raised up the younger, and so made the elder in me to serve the younger, which the Lord had now raised up as a beggar from the dunghill. Then I came to know Him who is both Prince and Savior, and the Minister of the true tabernacle which God had pitched, and not man. And this I did not know in myself while the first tabernacle was standing, nor did I know the holiest of all while the veil was still over my heart, which veil I found to be done away in Christ, and a new and living way opened thereby into the Holy of Holies.

Of this new and living way, the Lord made me a minister, and commanded me to make known what I had seen, felt, handled, and passed through, of the word and work of God. At first this was hard to give up to do, having many reasonings and consultations in my mind, lest I be thought forward in my own will by those I ministered amongst, or that I should go and appoint meetings, gather people together, and then sit as a fool among them, having

nothing to say. These and many other reasonings (being too numerous to mention particularly) did assail me. But being followed with daily stirrings and motions of life, and a command to go to such-and-such a place by name (signified to me by God's Spirit in my inward parts) I found a blessed result, and many were at that time converted, who at this day abide in the truth, and others have died in the faith. The circuit and compass of counties where I should mostly labor in the work of the Lord was shown to me by the Spirit of the Lord, though I traveled in other parts as well when required by the motion of the same Spirit. And I found I was not able to contain myself, but that words would proceed from me in meetings where I was ordered to go among God's people—both at my own habitation and elsewhere. Many places were opened unto me where I was required to go; and having suffered deeply by God's judgment for disobedience in this kind, I gave up freely to go. And indeed, I always found Him to be greater in His goodness than I could expect, and more abundant in the pouring out of His Holy Spirit than my faith could reach—even to the breaking of my heart many a time before Him in secret, when no eye has seen me.

I will omit all the hardships and losses, as to my family and all outward concerns, through which I was obliged to pass as the Lord led me on, both by the melting, heart-breaking sense of His tender mercy to my soul, and by the close pursuit of His anger and displeasure if I disobeyed. So I was constrained to obey the Lord, in my going up and down, according as He sent me, taking no thought what I should say, but often crying out to Him in my spirit, “Keep me poor and needy, believing in You, and

then I shall speak from You, and for You!" Oh, I have an engraven sense of God's mercy upon my soul, that He sent His servants from far away to come and seek me, and to preach the everlasting gospel unto my poor, lost soul. So then, why should I refuse to go and seek others, whose souls are lost, as mine once was? Shall I not love my neighbor as myself? And I, knowing God's terrors, shall I refuse to persuade men in Christ's stead (in obedience to His motions in my soul) to be reconciled to God, knowing Him to be a consuming fire? Such were the workings of my mind, and the thoughts of my heart, when I gave up to go where the Lord directed me, and I never lacked His assistance. But sometimes I felt myself to be the weakest in all the meeting, like an empty vessel without one drop to relieve any, and I wondered what had become of all my knowledge, and why I should now sit as one in poverty, in a posture fitter to be ministered unto, than to minister to others. But though I sometimes had nothing to give, yet I had no lack as to my own condition, only I felt that others expected something from me, which was a trial to my mind. But by degrees I learned to die to all but the will of God, and whether in silence or speaking, to be content.

I began to minister about the year 1656, after I had been some months in Northampton prison for being at a meeting with God's people. There I came to learn divinity through deep outward sufferings, as well as inward exercises, witnessing the opening of the sealed mysteries of God through the passing of woes; for after the first and second woes were passed, new seals were opened into the mysteries of God. Thus God made prisons to be as schools for the true prophets, or nurseries for true ministers of the

gospel. And then, having learned to remain in much fear and awe of God, from the deep sense I had of His majesty and purity in my heart, I spoke of Him as I felt He required it of me. His rewards were in my bosom as a most sweet and comforting liquor, that did lift up my spirit above all discomfort, both from enemies within and without. And though trials did often sorely beset me, even like bees on every side, yet God's blessed power and presence in me and with me did furnish my heart and tongue with words suitable to the conditions of my listeners, above all fear of any thing or person present. I might fill a volume with this subject, but this is spoken to the glory of the Almighty God, and for the comfort and encouragement of His ministers that abide in His counsel, and for the abasing of all flesh. May the all-sufficiency of His Holy Spirit be trusted in, and relied upon, as the only supplier of all ministers and people that go forth in His name. Amen.

This Holy Spirit has been to me both meat and drink, even as the Rock of old that followed the Israelites. Ten times (as I remember) I have been in bonds, and not only incurred the sentence of *premunire*³ with my brethren at London, but also have been tried for my life in the country, and all for the sake of a good conscience before my God. But this Holy Spirit never left me, but many times has caused me to sing in prisons, and often brought fresh courage before my accusers. Indeed, by its virtue cruel

3 *Premunire* was a legal judgment designed to disenfranchise those who refused to formally swear allegiance to the King of England. Those under a sentence of *premunire* were considered traitors to their country. They lost all rights to property and possessions, were removed from under the king's protection, and were often imprisoned for life.

judges have been bound, and envious witnesses have been confounded who sought to destroy the innocent. Yes, by this Holy Spirit all has turned to my joy. My help is in it, my comfort flows from it, and my daily request to my God is that all His people may be guided by it in all things. Oh may God forever be worshipped in His own Spirit, and may His blessed truth be preached through it, that neither wit nor skill, outward learning nor gifts, persons nor forms, be ever set or esteemed above it. But may we who have been baptized in it, be forever found drinking of it while still in the body, so that when we come to lay down the body, we may do so with joy—both to the praise of the riches of His grace, and the comfort of those who survive us in the same truth. Amen.

* * *

John Crook was a wise merchant in the Lord's house, selling all that he had to buy the Pearl of great price. Though he was born into a wealthy family, and by education and natural gifting became a prominent public figure, he came to count all as dung in view of the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Throughout much ill-treatment, ten imprisonments, and several prolonged illnesses, his spirit was kept sweet, humble, and in a true fear of the Lord, so much so that after his death, a friend of more than forty years said, "I do not remember that ever I heard him utter an unsavory word, or impatiently cry out."

Shortly before his death, at 82 years of age, he wrote an epistle to his children and grandchildren, offering them weighty counsel from a life abounding with deep

Truth in the Inward Parts

experience. The letter begins thus: “Dear children, I must leave you in a wicked age, but commend you to the measure of the grace of God in your inward parts, which you have received by Jesus Christ. As you love it, and mind the teachings of it, you will find it a counselor to instruct you in the way everlasting, and to preserve you out of the ways of the ungodly. I have seen much in my days, and I always observed that the fear of the Lord God proved the best portion, and those that walked in it, were the only happy people, both in this life (while they continued faithful) and when they come to die.”

**THE LIFE OF
ELIZABETH STIRREDGE**

(1634 – 1706)

The Lord has been pleased to count me worthy to travel in Zion's way—a way I have found to be straight and narrow. Oh, so many who have been called, and some who have entered into it, have gone into bypaths and crooked ways again; but I have found the blessed effect of keeping in the right way. I therefore have a great concern upon my spirit for my children, who are coming up after me, that they may not be forgetful of keeping in the right way, after the Lord shall be pleased to take me from them. It is in my heart, as my heavenly Father will be pleased to assist me, to leave a short testimony behind me for my children of some occurrences of my life, and of the goodness of the Lord to me all my life long, even unto this very day. Indeed, He is worthy forever to be held in remembrance; and He shall have the praise of His own work forever.

I was born in 1634 at Thornbury, in Gloucestershire, of honest parents. My father's name was William Tayler, and my parents were people fearing God, and very zealous in their day. My father being one of those called Puritans, prophesied of Friends many years before they came. He

said, "There is a day coming wherein truth will gloriously break forth, more gloriously than ever since the apostles' days, but I shall not live to see it." He died in the faith of it seven years before Friends came. His honest and chaste life is often in my remembrance, and his fervent and zealous prayers amongst his family are not forgotten by me.

My parents brought me up after a very strict manner, so that I was much a stranger to the world and its ways. In my tender years I was of a sad heart, and much concerned with inward fear over what would become of me when I should die. Whenever it was my lot to be near any who would talk rudely, or swear, or be overcome with strong drink, I dreaded to pass by them. When I heard it thunder, oh, the dread and terror that would fall upon me! I would get to the most private place that I could to mourn in secret, thinking the Lord would render vengeance upon the heads of the wicked. When I saw the flashes of lightning, "Oh!" thought I, "Where shall I go to hide myself from the wrath of the dreadful and terrible God?" Thus was I possessed with a concern for my soul; and before I was ten years of age, I was so filled with fears and doubts that I could take no delight in anything of this world.

When I grew up to riper years, I went to hear those accounted the best men, who lived up to what was made known to them. I delighted to hear them, and to be in the company of those who talked of good things, and discoursed of Scripture, of God and Christ, and of heaven's glory. Oh, how delightful it was to me! But still I was not satisfied, for I found I was not a living witness of the states and conditions which the people of God were in in former days; and how to attain this I did not know. Then did I

mourn, and say in my heart, "Oh, that I had been born in the days when the Lord spoke to Moses, and to the children of Israel, and with a high and wonderful power brought forth His people out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, that I might have known how to walk in the right way, and to do what the Lord required of me, and been in acquaintance and familiarity with my Maker! Then I might have known when I pleased or displeased the Lord, whom my soul loved, but now I do not know how to become acquainted with Him." What would I not have parted with for the enjoyment of the Lord, and the assurance of salvation? Surely if it were possible for me to have enjoyed all the world, I could freely have parted with it for the peace and satisfaction of my poor distressed soul that mourned as without hope. Many a time, and many hours have I spent alone, reading and mourning, when no eye saw me, nor ear heard me. But I could find no comfort in reading, because the Bible was a book sealed unto me. Then did I mourn and say, "Oh, that I had been born in the days when our blessed Savior Jesus Christ was upon the earth! How I would have followed Him and sat at His feet, even as Mary did! How freely could I have left my father's house, and all my relations, for true peace and assurance of life eternal for my immortal soul!"

Under this exercise I grew very sad, insomuch that my mother apprehended I was wasting away, and greatly feared my death. She would say to me, "Can you take delight in nothing? Can you not walk forth into the fields with the young people for recreation, and delight yourself in something?" So to please her, I did sometimes go forth with sober young people when we had finished our work,

but I found no comfort in that. I then fell into a custom of reading the Scriptures alone in private, reading and crying because I knew not the heavenly power and Spirit to have dominion in me which was in those who gave forth the Scriptures; and nothing else but the Substance would give me true satisfaction.

Then I fell down upon my knees to pray unto the Lord, with my heart full of sorrow and tears running down my face, but I could not utter one word. This seemed very strange to me, and set me to thinking that there was none like me in all the world. This was the enemy's work to persuade me there was none like me, and that because I could not pray in words (as others could), and was under these afflictions, therefore the Lord had no regard for me. But the enemy is a liar, for the Lord was near me in every exercise, and broke my heart and melted my spirit, or else it would not have been so with me. Oh, my soul can now behold His goodness, for He was near me, though I was not aware of it, and thought none were as miserable as I.

The enemy endeavored to cast me down and make me despair, and truly it was the great mercy of the Lord that preserved me from it, for my affliction was great, and my distresses very many. The serpent followed me with his temptations, and I lacked the right understanding as to where my strength was to be found. I should have stood still and waited upon the living God for strength to overcome him. But instead of doing so, the enemy disturbed me and followed me with his subtle allurements—sometimes to draw my mind into the vanities of this world, and to a delight in decking myself with fine clothes that I might appear beautiful in the eyes of the world. “For,” said the

enemy, "This sadness and trouble that you are under will result to no advantage or comfort, nor will you be in any esteem amongst your neighbors; therefore, take your pleasure and be at rest." A liar he is, and ever was from the beginning. Believe him not, my dear children, whenever it is your lot to be under temptations or exercises of any kind, or whatever way the Lord may be pleased to lead you for the trial of your faith and patience. The enemy will betray as many as he can; therefore look unto the Lord, and keep Him in your remembrance, and pray unto Him in your minds, though you cannot utter one word. Know assuredly that He is near to help His afflicted children at all times.

Oh, that I had known this in the days of my ignorance, in my young and tender years, when the Lord was at work in my heart and I knew it not. For lack of understanding, the enemy betrayed me and led me aside. I hearkened to him and to the young people who were my neighbors, and was persuaded that the world had much that would be of great benefit to me. Upon the death of my father, I was left with hardly a friend, and in my distress and afflictions was willing to seek a little rest and comfort. I then lent an ear to the enemy of my soul, and let my mind go forth after fine clothes. And when my mind was drawn out, I found it knew no limits; for even when I decked myself as finely as I could, it would hardly give me content. And when I had one new thing, and then saw another, or a third, I was as desirous of it as for the former, and so was always unsatisfied. The lying enemy had promised me rest and peace, but could not give it. A liar he is and ever was, and my soul is at enmity with him. May the Lord preserve me and my house out of his snares forever.

But though he had thus drawn out my mind, the Lord did not leave me. For many times I felt concern about my condition and what would become of me. And if at any time I was drawn into levity or laughter, I would feel something smite my heart and bring great heaviness over my spirit. And as soon as the enemy had drawn my mind into pride, and to take delight in fine clothes, I found these things became my burden. I knew not what it was that reproved me, and I little thought it was the Lord (who is ever good and gracious, kind, merciful and slow to anger, and not willing people should run into destruction). I did not think the Lord looked so closely at my ways, but since then the Lord has been pleased to open my eyes, and I can look back and admire His goodness. Blessed be His worthy name, and the right arm of His strength, for He early became my guide, and kept me in great degree from running into the evils of the world which greatly attend young people. Yes, He took me by the hand, and led me even in my tender years when I knew it not.

A little time after this, in the year 1654, the Lord (in the riches of His love) was pleased to prepare and send forth His faithful servants and laborers, whose work He greatly prospered—two men of worthy memory, dear John Audland and John Camm. When I heard the report of them, it struck a dread over my heart. Hearing of their plainness, I began to think, “How shall I demean myself to go to hear them?” But a short time after, a meeting was appointed by them where it was my lot to be. When I came into the meeting, dear John Audland was preaching. As soon as I heard his voice, it pierced me; and when I listened to his testimony, and beheld his solid counte-

nance, oh how my heart was troubled within me! I knew not what would become of me.

After the meeting was over, I separated myself from my company, and travelled alone two miles so that no ear should hear me make my complaint to the Lord. In bitterness of spirit, I cried, "Lord, what shall I do to be saved? I would do anything for the assurance of everlasting life. And if You will be pleased to accept me upon any terms, I care not what becomes of this body—even if I must find a cave in which to mourn out the remainder of my days in sorrow, and see man no more." But it pleased the Lord to open the eyes of my understanding, and to lead me by a way that I knew not. He began the first day's work in my heart, which was, "The Spirit of the Lord moving upon the face of the waters," and "dividing the light from the darkness." And when this separation was made, I could see my way in the light, which was the "Light unto David's feet, and the lamp unto his paths," which light will order everyone's way aright, if they take heed unto it.

It would be too tedious to go through every particular state, but my earnest cries were to the Lord to lead me in the right way, and to create in me a new heart, and renew a right spirit within me. I said, "Let me be unto *You* whatever I am, O Lord, and not unto man. I do not take care for this outward body, but redeem my soul from death, out of this horrible pit wherein I am held as in chains of darkness. For if You, in infinite mercy, do not bow Your ear unto my cry and have compassion on me, I shall perish forever, for I can do nothing else." I can truly say, "My heart was filled with sorrow, my sighing came before I ate, and my tears were as my loathsome food." When I lay

down, it was in sorrow; I watered my pillow with my tears before I could take my rest: and when I awoke, it was with the dread of the Lord over my heart.

Oh, my soul can do no less than magnify the living God who is worthy of praise, honor, renown, thanksgiving, and obedience forevermore. And why so? Because He has condescended to the low estate of His handmaid, and bowed His ear to my prayers, and had regard unto my cries. Yes, He has answered my request, and given me my heart's desire, which was to be led in the right way. Zion's poor travelers know very well that this is a beginning, or a step in the way, and I can truly say, that I never coveted heaven's glory more than I desired to walk in the way that leads thereto. I then truly believed that the Lord would redeem a people out of the world, its ways and customs, language, marriage, and burying, and all the world's hypocrisy. Indeed, I looked for this change before I saw any appearance of it. But my fear was that I should not live to see it, for the enemy always followed me with his temptations, to work me into unbelief, and to cast me down into desperation. Oh, my soul cannot but give the Lord God the glory, the honor, and the renown, for He is worthy of it forever and evermore.

And now my dear children, this is for you to remember and to keep close to you, that you may always know the way to heaven's glory, and to enjoy true peace and satisfaction. Oh, it is a straight and narrow way, and whoever thinks it is not is mistaken. Keep to the daily cross all the days of your lives, and to truth's language; and more especially, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." Then you will be brought nearer unto

the Lord, and grow into acquaintance with Him. This is what my soul mourned after in the days of my tender years, which mourning I cannot forget, and I hope never shall, for I find the good effects of it from day to day. Indeed it bows my spirit and humbles my heart, keeping me in a living remembrance of what the Lord has done for me—though He has been pleased to give me a bitter cup to drink, and to feed me with the bread of affliction, and allow temptation upon temptation to come near me.

For the enemy, the subtle serpent, the old dragon, who was more subtle than all the beasts of the field, followed me with his lies, to persuade me that the Lord had no regard for me; for if He had, He would not afflict me so. "There is none like you," said the wicked one, "Look abroad, and see if you can find one whose sorrows are like unto yours." Then would I wander alone in some remote place, where no eye could see me, nor ear hear me, to make my cry unto the Lord, who has sweetly comforted me and refreshed my spirit many a time, and kept my head above the waters. Blessed be the worthy name of the Lord my God, and the right arm of His strength, which has wrought wonderfully for my deliverance. And cursed is the old dragon, who has ever envied man's prosperity. For he endeavored to destroy the blessed work of the Lord (as much as in his power lay) even after the Lord had done much for me, and had in a good measure redeemed my soul from death by a high hand and an out-stretched arm—yes, even after He had brought me out of Egypt's darkness, and through the Red Sea, where my soul had true cause to sing praises unto the most high God who lives forevermore. Oh, let me never forget this great and wonderful

deliverance, but instead keep down in that which bows my heart from day to day, and humbles my spirit before the Lord. He has been pleased to do more for me than my tongue is able to declare. And although I can say my eyes have seen afflictions, and that no affliction seems joyous at present, but rather grievous, yet afterwards it brings the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

And now, my dear children, my aim is to make you a little acquainted with the work of the Lord in my heart, and also with the subtle devices and contrivances of the enemy of your immortal souls. His way is to set his baits according to an individual's nature, for therein he is most likely to prevail. And because I was of a sad heart, and very subject to be cast down, he therefore, with all his might, did endeavor to cast me into despair and unbelief, persuading me I should never hold out to the end. Then I would pray to the Lord to preserve me to the end, for my affliction was very great, both inward and outward. But the enemy cast many things before me which seemed too hard for me to go through. And when my mind was sorrowful, he took ground in me, and filled me with imaginations, until my heart grew hard before I was aware, and I had lost that sweet enjoyment and heavenly fellowship with which I was comforted. And when the enemy had gotten a little ground, he set his baits so agreeably to my nature, that when I had any remembrance of the condition I was in before (and now for a little time had lost) I had great cause to mourn to the Lord, who was able to deliver me, as He had done many times.

Yet the enemy prevailed upon me a little further, even as I was making my complaint to the Lord, saying in my

heart, "There is no sorrow like mine"—for I had lost my Beloved, and my loss was great. This mourning was very suitable to my condition, but the subtle serpent persuaded me that I was discontented, a murmurer and complainer, and that I made the Lord weary with my crying. Then I believed I should be shut out of His kingdom, for I knew it was the murmurers and complainers who perished in the wilderness. So I was caught by his subtlety, and convinced it was in vain to strive any longer, for I should never inherit the kingdom of heaven. But a liar he was, and ever will be, and my soul is at enmity with him. May the Lord, in whom I trust, preserve me and my house forever.

I was twenty-one years of age when I was in this condition. But it pleased my heavenly Father, (who had regard for me) to make a way of escape from this snare; for in a little time, it was my lot to be at a meeting with that faithful servant of the Lord, William Dewsbury. A true messenger of the Lord this man was to many, and on this day his testimony was mostly to the distressed and afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted, in which state many found themselves at that time, 1655. After the meeting had ended, I dreaded to go to him, for I thought he was one of great discerning and would be sensible of the hardness of my heart; and if he should judge me, I would not be able to bear it. Yet I found I could not go away in peace until I had spoken with him. Seeing me approach him so heavily, he held up his hand, and with a raised voice, said unto me, "Dear lamb, judge all thoughts and believe; for blessed are they that believe and see not." And then, with a raised voice again said, "They were blessed that saw and believed, but more blessed are they that

believe and see not." Oh, he was one who had good tidings for me, and great power was with his testimony at that time; for the hardness was then taken away, and my heart was opened by the ancient power which opened the heart of Lydia (Acts 16:14). Everlasting praises be given unto Him that sits upon the throne forever, who has preserved me out of the snares and subtle contrivances of the adversary.

My soul cannot help but bless and praise the Lord my God, who has preserved me out of the evil of the world. My dear children, you have been brought up in the way of truth, and it has been made known to you. Therefore, trust in His name, and believe that He will keep you unto the end—which He will assuredly do if you depart not from Him. My prayers are both night and day for you. And you may well remember the many dangers you have been preserved out of, which could well have been a hazard to your lives. But the Lord, of His infinite goodness, has hitherto kept you all that you may serve Him.

Therefore my children, forget not your duty to the Lord, nor the counsel that Jesus Christ gave to His disciples, which was to watch and pray that you may be preserved out of all dangers, both inward and outward. These you may easily fall into, if you do not keep close to the Guide of your youth. But if you keep to Him, He will never depart from you. And if you "keep in remembrance your Creator in the days of your youth," then He will surely keep you in the hour of temptation, and will take care of you. If you "seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, all other things shall be added unto you." He has spoken who cannot lie; therefore put your trust in Him

forever. Then my heavenly Father will do for you even as He has done for me, in the days of my tender years. For He took me by the hand and led me by a way I knew not. He made darkness light before me, and has preserved me to this very day in covenant with Himself. "Everlasting praises and honor be given to His holy name forever," says my soul.

You may remember many of the straits and difficulties the Lord has enabled me to go through, though but weak and greatly afflicted with sickness, and very near the grave many times. The Lord renewed my strength again and again to bear a faithful testimony for Him and His blessed truth. Various hardships has the Lord, my Redeemer, brought me through, and when I look back and consider how my soul has escaped to this very day, I am filled with admiration. But this saying of Christ Jesus often comes before me, "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." And the Lord said to His disciples, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." Indeed, these have been a comfort to me many times.

I often remember a saying of a faithful servant and minister of Jesus Christ, whose name was Miles Halhead, when I was under a great exercise. He steadfastly looked upon me and said, "Dear child, if you continue in the truth, you will make an honorable woman for the Lord, and the Lord God will honor you with His blessed testimony." And ten years after this, in 1665, he came again to my habitation and said to me, "My love and life is with you, for the sake of the blessed work that is going on in you. May the Lord God keep you faithful, for He will require harder things of you than you are aware. And may He give you

strength to perform His will, and keep you faithful to His blessed testimony. My prayers shall be for you as often as I remember you." Soon after this, the Lord opened my mouth in a testimony, and a great exercise fell upon us, for we were exposed to much suffering through loss of goods, beatings and hurling to and fro, dragging out of our meeting-house, and many other abuses. Because of our persecutors, we went to our meetings in great hazard of our lives. The informers were so wicked and inhuman, and filled with such envy and madness, that they swore "It was no more sin to kill us, than it was to kill a louse;" and "that they would bathe their swords in our blood." And all these things were the least of our sorrows, for in this time of great suffering, a selfish, separating spirit began to break forth among Friends as well. But truly I could say, "My heart is given up to serve the Lord, come what may." And blessed be the Lord our God, who lives forever, we were in no way affrighted at these things, nor concerned at them; for we knew that He in whom we believed was able to deliver His chosen ones who put their trust in Him. My dear children, some of these things you know, for your eyes have seen them. And though you were but young and tender, yet the Lord kept you from the fear of men.

In this time, there fell upon me another great exercise of spirit, which seemed so strange and wonderful that I could not believe the Lord would require such a service of me, for I was so weak and contemptible, so unfit and unlikely, my understanding but shallow, and my capacity but mean and very low in my own eyes. Looking so much at my insufficiency made me strive hard against it; crying often-times within myself, "Surely this must be something

to ensnare me, for the Lord could not require such things of me, seeing there are so many wise and good men who are more honorable and fit for service than I. Oh Lord, remove this far from me, and require anything else of me, that I can better perform!"

Thus did I reason and strive against Him, till my sorrow was so great that I knew not whether the Lord would ever accept me again. Then I cried unto the Lord again and again, "Lord, if You have found me worthy, make my way plain before me, and I will follow You; for You know that I would not willingly offend You." But knowing myself to be of a weak capacity, I did not think the Lord would make choice of such a contemptible instrument as I, nor desire me to leave my habitation and tender children (who were young), to go to King Charles, a hundred miles off, and deliver such a plain testimony as the Lord did require.

This made me go about bowed down for many months under the exercise of it; and oftentimes I strove against it. But I could get no rest, except in giving up to obey the Lord in all things that He required of me; and though it seemed hard and strange to me, yet the Lord made hard things easy, according to His promise. When I was going from my children, and knew not but that my life might be required for my testimony, the will of the Lord appeared so plain; yet as I looked upon my children, my heart yearned towards them. Then these words ran through me, "If you can believe, you will see all things accomplished, and you will return in peace, and your reward will be with you." Forever blessed be the name and power of the Lord, for He sustained me in my journey, gave me strength to do His

will, and afforded me His living presence to accompany me—which is the greatest comfort that can be enjoyed.

This was my testimony to King Charles II, in the eleventh month of the year 1670.

“This is unto you, O king: Hear what the Lord has committed unto my charge concerning you. As you have been the cause of making many desolate, so will the Lord lay you desolate; and as many as have been the cause of persecuting and shedding the blood of My dear children, in the day when I call all to an account, I will plead with them, says the Lord. Therefore hear and fear the Lord God of heaven and earth, for of His righteous judgments all shall be made partakers; from the king that sits upon the throne, to the beggar upon the dunghill.”

This testimony I delivered into his hands, with these words, “Hear, oh king, and fear the Lord God of heaven and earth.” I can truly say, that the dread of the most high God was upon me, which made me tremble, and great agony was over my spirit, insomuch that paleness came over the king's face, and with a mournful voice he said, “I thank you, good woman.” My soul honors and magnifies the name and power of the Lord my God, for keeping me faithful to His testimony, and giving me strength to do His will, for truly He made good His promise, that “If I could believe, I should return in peace, and my reward should be with me.” So the Lord blessed my going forth. His presence was with me in my journey, He preserved my family well, and my coming home was with joy and peace in my bosom.

Everlasting praises, glory, and honor be given to Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb for evermore.

May you remember the goodness of the Lord to His children, who faithfully follow and obey Him with their whole hearts, though they may be attended with many weaknesses. I gave way to the reasoner many times, till my sorrow has been so great that I have not known which way to turn. Indeed, this has dimmed my sight, and hurt my life, and plunged my soul into trouble. But it pleased the Lord to appear in a needful hour, and to turn back the enemy of my soul's peace. And He has shown me that He will choose the weak, and those who are nothing in their own eyes, and can do nothing—no, not so much as utter a word but what the Lord gives them. Thus the Scriptures of truth are fulfilled in this our day, as it was in times past, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

A little time after, the officers came and demanded money for the king because of our meeting together. My husband answered them, "If I owed the king money, I would surely pay him; but seeing I owe him no money, I will pay him none." They asked leave to seize his goods; to which he said, "If you will take my goods, I cannot hinder you, but I will not give you leave to take them; neither will I be accessory to your taking them." The officers saw our innocence, for we were in our shop at our lawful calling, with our hands to our labor, and our children with us. Then the constable (whose name was John) leaned his head down upon his hand, and with a heavy heart, said, "It is against my conscience to take their goods from them." Then I said, "John, have a care of wronging your conscience; for what could the Lord do more for you than to

place His good Spirit in your heart, to teach you what you should do, and what you should leave undone." He said, "I know not what to do in this matter. If paying the money once would do, I would do it myself, but it will never end. It will continue to be thus while you keep going to meetings; for the rulers have made such laws, that never the like was seen in any age." I said, "John, when you have wronged your conscience, and brought a burden upon your spirit, it is not the rulers who can remove it from you. And if you should go to the rulers, and say, "I have done that which was against my conscience to do," then they may say to you what the rulers said to Judas, "What is that to us? You see to it."

The officers who were with him came and pulled down our goods, but the power of the Lord smote them, inso-much that paleness was in their faces and their lips quivered, and their hands did so shake that they could not hold our things long. Then they charged a poor man to take them, but he refused, until they forced him, and laid our goods upon his arms and shoulders. But he, looking much like a dead man, replied, "You force me to do that which you cannot do yourselves; neither can I." He trembled very much, though we had said nothing after they came in, but rather rejoiced that the Lord had found us worthy to suffer for His blessed truth and testimony.

A little time after, there was a meeting to appraise the goods taken from us and other Friends. Many were met together in a house—seven men called justices, the officers and sheriffs, a bailiff, and many more of their confederates, a great room full of them. I was at work in our shop, and seeing the constable carrying away some of the goods to be

appraised, it immediately came into my heart to go after them. I did not know one word that I should say to them, which made me consider a little why I should go; but it more and more rested upon me to go.

When I came within the door, I sat down like one that was a fool for half or three quarters of an hour, not having one word given me to say. But when I came in, they became greatly disquieted in their minds, and hurried in their business. They said, "We can do nothing while she is with us," and the justices called one to another many times to cause me to be taken away, saying, "We shall not do any business this day, but spend our time in vain if this woman sit here." They often tempted me to speak what I had to say, and then be gone; but they could not prevail with me. Then they called to the man of the house to take me away, solemnly protesting never to come to his house again if he would not take me away. But the man had no power to touch me, and being full of trouble, said, "Sir, I cannot lay hands on her, for she is my honest neighbor." Then he turned towards me and said, "Please neighbor Stirredge, if you have anything to say, speak, that you may be gone." One of the justices in great rage and fury, solemnly protested he would never sit with them any more if they did not take me away, and he marveled at their folly for letting me alone. He then opened the back door and went out, as though he would be gone. But in a little time he came in again, saying, "What! Is she still here? I wonder at your folly!"

At last, the power of the Lord fell upon me, and filled my heart with a warning to them. I said to them, "It is in vain to be found striving against the Lord and His people.

Your work will not prosper; for you will find the great God of heaven and earth to be too strong for you. I warn you to repent, and to amend your lives before it is too late; for the Lord will smite you unaware and in an hour not expected by you. Therefore, remember that the Lord has granted you a day of warning, before destruction comes upon you.” This, and much more ran through me at that time, and the Lord was pleased in a very short time to fulfill this testimony upon them. For in a few weeks, as they were making merry at a feast, two of them died on a sudden after dinner, and the rest very hardly escaped. This was about the year 1674.

I write this not to rejoice at the fall of our enemies, but for you to consider the goodness and mercies and dealings of the Lord with His people in all ages, and to keep in remembrance His lovingkindness and forbearance to the very wicked, who are provoking Him to pour down His vengeance upon their heads. Yet so great is His mercy that He always warns the wicked, and gives them time to repent and amend their lives, that He may be clear in the day of account, which will surely come upon all.

Therefore, my dear children, remember your latter end and the day of account, and keep a bridle to your tongues; for he that knows not a bridle to his tongue, his religion is vain. And keep always to the daily cross, which is the power of God to salvation. If you will be heirs of the kingdom of heaven, and of the crown immortal, you must take up the daily cross, for “No Cross, No Crown.”¹ The cross will keep your minds in subjection to the living God;

1 *No Cross, No Crown* is the title of William Penn's famous book, written during his imprisonment in the Tower of London in 1669.

and being in subjection, and standing in awe that you sin not, it will keep you near to the Lord in a living acquaintance with Him. Then He will take delight to bless you more and more, to instruct you, and to counsel you in His way, which is pure and holy, and will not admit any unholiness or uncleanness.

Beware of the world and its people. Be not in too much familiarity with them, nor let in their spirit to mix with yours; for this has been the hurt of many who have made a good beginning and been traveling in the way, yet have erred for lack of watchfulness and keeping to the guide of their youth—the light of Christ Jesus. This is the way to salvation, and whoever comes in any other way is a thief and a robber. The way you know; you have been trained up in it. And now the concern of my spirit is that you may keep in it, and be concerned for your children, as your father and I have been concerned for you. Train them up in the way of truth, and keep them out of the beggarly rudiments of this world, that they may grow up in plainness, and keep to the plain language (which has become a very indifferent thing today among many professors of truth.) Truly I was not clear in the sight of God—my way was hedged up with thorns, and I could go no further—until I had yielded obedience to Him in the little things. Then I walked alone in private, as I frequently used to do whenever things came as a weight upon me. Oh, that desolate place where I used to retire alone, how many times has my soul met with my Beloved there, who has sweetly comforted me when my soul was sick from love, and full of doubts for fear He had forsaken me. But blessed be His name who lives forever, He appeared in a needful time,

when my soul was distressed for Him; it was then I came truly to prize Him. Yes, this is the way of the Lord's dealing with His people, that He may teach them to be humble, and train them up as children, that they may learn obedience in all things to do His will. And this is His end in chastening—to make His children fit for His service.

I little thought that the Lord would have spared me so many years to bear a faithful testimony to His blessed truth, and the powerful appearance and breaking forth of His glorious light and life unto many thousands who sat in darkness. Oh these were in a miserable state, many times past hope of ever seeing a good day, with horror, dread, and anguish in their hearts! But it was these who received and prized the blessed offer of God's everlasting love and glorious appearance, though it was in the way of His judgments. And I can truly say that my heart and soul delighted in judgment, even though one woe was poured out after another. Yet blessed be the day in which the everlasting truth was first sounded in my ears, which was in the nineteenth year of my age; that it may never be forgotten by me is my soul's desire. But more blessed be the name of the Lord our God, and the right arm of His power, which has been made bare from day to day, and from year to year, for the carrying on of His work, and the preservation of His children.

* * *

Elizabeth Stirredge was never a minister in the Society of Friends, but she was known by all to be one who "stood in the counsel of the LORD, perceiving and hearing His word" (Jer. 23:18). She was faithful with

little, and the Lord entrusted with much, giving her grace and wisdom to strengthen many fellow travelers on the narrow path. Throughout her life she kept herself low and little before her almighty Master, bowing before His least appearance, and clinging closely to His cross. Being thus small in her own eyes, the Lord was free to exalt and use her for His own glory and purpose, which He frequently did, often in very remarkable ways (see the remainder of her journal, Friend's Library vol. 2).

Like many others who held fast to the Truth in that day, Elizabeth Stirredge knew her share of persecutions and imprisonments, and at times "joyfully accepted the plundering of her goods." Incredibly, she welcomed such trials as signs of the Lord's love to her, often saying she had no greater joy than to be counted worthy to suffer for His name.

**THE JOURNAL OF
CHARLES MARSHALL**

(1637 – 1698)

I was born in the city of Bristol, in the Fourth Month, 1637. My education and upbringing was after the strictest manner of religion, my parents being such as feared the Lord. I was kept much from the company of other children, and about the fifth and sixth years of my life I learned to read the Scriptures of truth, in which, after a little time, I took much delight. In my very tender years I had an abhorrence of swearing, lying, and such like sins; and not only so, but many times I had inward desires and breathings to know God. So by about the eleventh and twelfth years of my life, I not only longed to know the true and living God, but I also sought after Him, and loved and esteemed sober, honest people who feared the Lord.

I went with my mother to the meetings of the Independents in the days when they were still tender and sincere. Sometimes I went to the Baptists' meetings to hear those men who were esteemed most zealous in their day. Among this people, and in these assemblies, there were sometimes spiritual awakenings through the inward stir-

rings and strivings of the gift of God; and under the sense of this, living pantings and breathings sprung up in many souls after the true, spiritual knowledge of God who is a Spirit. But most went out from this state of tenderness, into a profession of the saints' words, works, and enjoyments, and left this pure measure of light, life, and truth behind.

Now as I advanced in years, I grew more and more dissatisfied with lifeless, empty professions and professors, feeling the burden of the nature of sin which lay upon my spirit. In the sense of my sin, I became solitary and mourned like a dove without a mate. And seeing I could not find the living among the dead professions of Christianity, I spent much time in retirement alone, in the fields and woods, and by springs of water, where I delighted to lie down and drink. And in those days of retirement, strong, great, and many were my cries unto the Lord. Sometimes, being retired into places that were free from all other company, in order to ease my heart I would cry aloud because of heaviness of spirit.

In those days I had openings of the miserable fall and inexpressible degeneration of mankind, and the captivity and bondage which my soul lay in. In a true sense of this state of bondage and slavery, I cried out, "Oh, that my soul might be eased from these heavy burdens and loads of death and darkness! Oh, that I might be saved out of the state of gross Egyptian darkness, and from the land of drought, the land of anguish, the land of horrible darkness! Oh, undeclarable fall!" said my soul, "Oh, inexpressible wall of partition and separation! Oh, gulf unutterable!" For the fallen and undone state of the sons and daughters of

men was opened to me beyond all words to demonstrate.

At that time, as I walked and beheld the creation of God Almighty, everything testified against me. Heaven and earth, the day and the night, the sun, moon, and stars, yes, the watercourses and springs of the great deep, all kept their respective places. The grass and flowers of the field, the fish of the sea and fowls of the air, all kept their order; but man alone, the chief work of God's hand, was degenerate. Then I cried out bitterly, "Man's state in the fall is worse than that of the beast that perishes! 'For the ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib,' but man, in this state, is ignorant of God his maker, and has become a stranger unto Him, walking in enmity and disobedience, and serving and obeying the devil, who neither created anything, nor can preserve any living thing!" From the beginning, Satan's appearance against God has been pure enmity, altogether evil, a destroyer and a murderer. And such is the inexpressible, thick darkness that has come over man, that he gives himself up in body, soul, and spirit, to be led by him. In this I saw that thick darkness had come over the families of the earth, and I could set my seal to the truth of that Scripture, "Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people."

So in a deep sense of man's miserable condition, and particularly of my own captivity and share in this darkness, misery, and sorrow, I fell to the ground, and cried unto God for deliverance and redemption out of this state. And though the witness of God stirred in me in this way, and indeed was the revealer of this miserable state, yet still I did not have a clear knowledge of Him who had revealed it to me.

In that time, which was about the year 1654, many were seeking after the Lord, and there were a few of us that kept one day of the week in fasting and prayer. When this day came, we met together early in the morning, and without tasting anything, we sat down sometimes in silence. As any found a concern upon their spirits and an inclination in their hearts, they kneeled down and prayed to the Lord. Sometimes, before the day ended, there might be twenty of us gathered together. Men, women, and sometimes children, spoke a few words in prayer, and we were sometimes greatly bowed and broken before the Lord in humility and tenderness.

To one of these meetings, in the year 1654, came dear John Audland and John Camm, messengers of the ever-living God. By John Audland's powerful ministry (which was committed to him by the Lord) I was reached and turned to the Spirit of God (the very One who had formerly revealed my condition unto me, as before-mentioned). The testimony that was borne by these two messengers was readily received, and as I kept close to the Spirit, to which I was turned, I saw a great separation made between light and darkness, the day and the night, the precious and the vile. And as my mind loved the light, judgment was set up in my heart, even "laid to the line, and righteousness to the plummet" (Isa. 28:17).

I was brought into great dread, fear, and awe of God, and also had great esteem and regard for His messengers, who brought the acceptable tidings of life and salvation, and through whom true doctrine dropped as the dew. Because their words were gracious words, there was a great fear in my heart of rebelling against any part of the counsel I received from them.

I then experienced a long travel through the administration of condemnation, which indeed was glorious in its time. And as I kept down to the judgment of the Lord in my heart, I found the operation of it was like a sword, a fire, and a hammer, and the evil nature was in some measure overcome, and then something of divine refreshment and love flowed in, which refreshed me in my travels.

But then the old subtle enemy began to lay snares and hunt after my soul, which had in some measure been rescued out of the jaws of death. For when I had precious openings of the way of Truth (through which a secret hope and joy sprang up), then the enemy led me away from sinking down into a sweet enjoyment and treasuring up, to spend my own bread in disputes for Truth against opposers, and to declare it to those who I thought had some love for it. But when I had thus spent the bread which was given to me for the strength of my own soul, and came home and communed with my heart, I found myself quite empty, having leaked out that which was given for my refreshment and consolation, and I saw that my Beloved had withdrawn. Then distress took hold of me beyond expression, and I was greatly bowed down. By having some understanding of the cause, I was ready to promise that if I ever came to my former peace, refreshment, and feeding again, I would not run out recklessly, nor spend my portion, by which that inward trouble and barrenness had come over my spirit. And here the enemy (who by his transforming had thus led me out) worked with subtlety in the day of my trouble, in order to bring great discouragements and unbelief over my spirit.

My soul has in remembrance the great anxiety of spirit, and a sense of the withdrawings and hidings of the

Lord's face, and the veil that then came over me. In this way I was led out in a zeal which was not according to true knowledge (that is, the knowledge which the Lord's power gives in its leadings); and when I had promised and then broken covenant, I was pursued by the Lord as a covenant breaker. But in time the Lord helped me over this exercise, and I learned to stand as a fool, and to sit in silence before the Lord among His people, rather than to wrong my condition and grieve the Spirit of God. And when I thus remained obedient to wisdom's direction, then a secret joy would spring up in me, with pure peace and inward ease. But if I felt life and joy and the light of the Lord shining upon my tabernacle, yet did not keep low in humility (where growth in the Truth is experienced), then the enemy would work with subtlety again to persuade me that there was no need for such a severe watch and inward care, as was necessary before. Through this deception he prevailed sometimes to lead me out into a liberty, both inward and outward, which had a tendency to bring me again into inward bondage.

Through frequent refreshings, openings, prophecies, and promises, I was sometimes ready to conclude that my mountain was immoveable. But I soon found a withdrawing of the Lord's presence, and then came to experience a winter again, and the various storms of the enemy. And not having yet learned to be content in want, as well as in abounding, I not only fell into a poor, murmuring state, but also into great trouble; for because of this change, fears and doubts were ready to enter. I toiled in this night, but could catch nothing that administered any lasting comfort. Here I was willing and running and striving, being in great fear and sorrow; and the more I toiled, "kindling sparks of

my own” (Isa. 50:11), the more my sorrow increased; for I had not yet learned the state of resignation.

Then, having been brought very low, and having mourned many days in the sense of the withdrawals of the presence, love, and power of my God, being in deep distress and amazement, Israel's travels in the wilderness were opened to me—how the Lord tried them with lack of bread and water. I saw that their happiness stood in becoming content and resigned to the will of God, and in the belief of the Lord's faithfulness to help endure the trial. But Israel murmured, and thereby grieved the Spirit of God; and so did I. But through the loving-kindness of God, the state of resignation was opened to me, in which man stood before he fell through transgression into his own working and willing. And when my understanding was thus opened, my soul cried unto the Lord my God, “Oh, preserve me in pure patience and passiveness, and in living, acceptable obedience, and I will trust in You!”

As I believed in the light of the Lord, and in it became comprehended and resigned, God's pure power, love, and life broke in as formerly, which greatly refreshed me. Then the sun shone upon my tabernacle, and I bowed before the Lord, blessing and praising His holy, glorious name. Then the Lord instructed me, and His pure Spirit and power opened in me the way of preservation, which was to center down into true humility. So my soul began to be as the dove that found a place for the sole of her feet.

Nevertheless, the enemy continued to tempt by his allurements, and laid his baits and snares, so that if at any time my heart was drawn to look abroad, or went out to view the land (as Dinah did, Gen. 34), I was in great danger of being defiled. Indeed, I found that if, at any time, I went

out from this pure, preserving power of God which had begun to work in my soul through inexpressible travail, and let in the spirit and reason of the world, and thereby beheld a beauty in any fruit besides what was brought forth by the tree of life, then a wound, a stain, and a defilement would quickly come over me. And if, at any time, the enemy prevailed in the inward ground, causing me to cleave to his temptations through the lust of the flesh or the lust of the eye, then I became afraid (for I knew the wrath of God); and the power of the Lord (in love to my soul) would work mightily to sanctify and cleanse it again.

I passed through this inward exercise when no friend or intimate acquaintance knew of it. Oh, I remember the nights of bitter sorrow that I passed, even though I walked blamelessly among men, and no defilement could be discerned by any. For in the great love of God to my soul, in those days of inward travail and exercise, judgment followed quickly upon any outgoing of my mind. But as I kept single to the Lord, and upright in heart, not joining to any iniquity, I found the Lord near at hand in many exercises that happened in our city and elsewhere, even through the working of the power of darkness in James Nayler, and the runnings forth of John Perrot and others.¹ God let me (who was then but a young lad) see through all those subtle workings and transformings of the enemy, and by a secret hand preserved me. Of those trying times, I

¹ James Nayler and John Perrot were both prominent ministers among the early Quakers who ran out into error and imagination, and so brought a measure of division and disgrace upon the young Society. Nayler openly confessed to his error, publicly repented on multiple occasions, and was restored to the Society of Friends before his death in 1660. Perrot apparently emigrated to Barbados, where he and his views passed away in disrepute.

have not much upon me to leave in writing. Those things are known unto the Lord, along with the ends and causes, and His permission and letting loose of the enemy.

God has desired the keeping low of His people in every generation; and by His power He has secretly struck at everything that has a tendency to rob Him of His honor. He delights in the humble, and dwells with the broken-hearted and contrite in spirit. In this low state is safety and preservation for us in this age, and in all succeeding ages. Through these exercises (of which I have hinted), I have learned that, from the very beginning of the work of restoration and redemption, everyone's preservation is found in an inward retiredness unto the Lord, and in keeping low (in His pure fear, awe, and dread) and feeling after His soul-redeeming, preserving power, which quickens and enlivens. And as this is abode in, it keeps alive in its own pure nature, over the world, and over its spirit and defilement.

I have a sense upon my spirit, beyond utterance, of the potent workings of the enemy in the generations of mankind, to accomplish his end, namely: that after the Lord God Almighty has appeared in any age, in the free dispensing of His love, and the breaking forth of His power, and the making bare of His arm in order to restore man into covenant with Him—then has the enemy appeared with all his power and subtlety, to gradually and secretly undermine and frustrate the work of God. His great end has been, by different snares, to draw the visited people into a lessening of their estimation of the power, appearance, and manifestation of God in their day, and to draw their mind out (by his various transformings) into an esteem for either the manifestation that has been, or what

may be yet to appear. This leads the mind out of a due regard for the *present* manifestation, which alone can work the eternal welfare of the creature. This was the case with those to whom it was said, "Oh that you knew, even in this your day, the things that belong to your peace!" This I have learned of the Lord, and therefore leave it both to Friends to whom it may come in this age, and to God's people in the following generations of the world.

After about sixteen years of travel in spirit, in the year 1670, in the thirty-third year of my age, God Almighty raised me up by His power that had been working in my heart many years, to preach the everlasting Gospel of life and salvation. Then a fresh exercise began, for the enemy tempted me to withstand the Lord, and to look to my own weakness of body and spirit, and to my insufficiency for such a great work. And such was the prevalence of the enemy of my soul, that had not the Lord God (in His inexpressible love) stood by me, bore with me, and helped me, I would have perished after all through disobedience. For when the power of God fell upon me, and a few words were required of me to speak in the assemblies of the Lord's people in Bristol, many reasonings beset me, namely: that these were a wise people, and I could add nothing to them; or that I might hurt my own condition; or that imaginations might be the real ground of such requirings; or that many wise men might look upon me as a presumptuous lad, and so judge me, etc. Thus I reasoned many times through meetings, until I was in sore distress. And when these meetings were over (wherein I had been disobedient), my burden was unbearable. Oh, then I was ready to covenant with the Lord that if I felt the requirings of His power again, I would faithfully give up in obedience to

Him! But when I was tried again, the same rebellious mind would be stirred up by the power of the enemy.

Then the Lord withdrew the motion and feeling of His power, and all refreshment with it, and hid His face from me. I was left in great sorrow, having a sense that others were feeding on the bread of life in our meetings, and drawing the water of life, but my soul went without, having great bars over it, sealing it down (so to speak) under darkness. I beheld the displeasure of the Lord, and was bowed down in great anguish. My soul cried out to the Lord to try me again with the breaking in of His power, and to give me a clear knowledge of His requirings, and I would obey Him. Then the Lord God of life again heard my cry, and opened my heart that was fast shut. And when I began to feel the power of God stir in my inward man, I was glad on the one hand, but very sorrowful on the other—fearing lest I should be rebellious again.

Indeed, it was so hard for me to open my mouth in those meetings of Bristol, that had not the Lord caused His power to be manifest in my heart like new wine in a vessel that needed vent, and so broke through forcibly many times, I might have perished. But the Lord had regard to my state, and also knew the people's state among whom I was gathered. And when, by the great love and power of my God, I had at last broken through, then the enemy's snares were manifest, for which my soul praised the Lord God of my life. Truly I have been, and still am, often broken in the sense of His goodness to me when but a child, no, but a worm. And at this time, in a true sense and fresh remembrance of Your love, I do bless and magnify and extol Your name, O Lord. Indeed, You are God, and do good, and are worthy of all fear, obedience, reverence, and

honor, forever and ever.

After I had gotten dominion in measure (through the goodness, love, and power of God) over that which did hinder me, I faithfully gave up liberty, estate, relations, and all to my God, and was drawn forth into the assemblies of the Lord's people in the city of Bristol, and the places adjacent. As I gave up in obedience, I found my way made easier, and I saw the enemy (who strove to hinder me) more and more conquered. In the year 1670, I received this commission from God: "Run through the nation and visit My breathing, bruised seed, which I begat among My people in the day of their first tender visitation. Proclaim My acceptable year, and the day of perfect deliverance to My breathing, tender seed, and also the day of vengeance to come upon all who have bruised it—either among My people, or in the world." Then I cried unto the Lord, "How shall I visit Your people in these times, when the rod of the wicked is upon their backs, and when men, in almost every place, are endeavoring through violence to scatter the assemblies of Your people? How shall I meet with them?" And the Lord said, "Go, I will prosper your way; and this present exercise which is over My people shall be as a morning cloud, and I will be to them as the tender dew throughout the land." So I bowed before the Lord, and traveled in obedience to His command; and from the latter end of the tenth month, 1670, to the 20th of the twelfth month, 1672, I was at about four hundred meetings.²

² During this long journey in the service of the Gospel, Charles Marshall visited most parts of England, and was several times in London. Once, during a brief stay at his home, he became so ill that nearly all despaired of his life. On another occasion he met with a close trial in the death of his child.

In my travels many were convinced, and the mouths of opposers were stopped, and the Spirit of God fell upon several who now have a testimony to bear for His name. I was many times brought very low in my body, even to the brink of the grave. Yet God Almighty, in loving-kindness, raised me up again in a marvelous manner, particularly on two occasions. Great were the trials, sorrows, difficulties, and jeopardies, both inwardly and outwardly, that I went through, which God Almighty alone knows. And great were His deliverances in many ways. On one occasion, when in Lancashire near Margaret Fox's, I was wonderfully preserved, together with four others. We had come down to the sea shore in order to cross the sands, and two persons who lived on the other side informed us that we might go over safely, and nothing appeared to the contrary. But when I attempted to go, I was stopped in my mind, and after waiting a while upon the Lord, I was clearly forbidden to go. It was shown me, that if any attempted to go at that time, they would certainly perish. This caused me to hinder passengers from going, and in about an hour's time the sea overflowed, so that if we had gone, in all likelihood we would have all perished. When some who were there saw this, they were greatly tendered, and magnified the name of the Lord.

In visiting the city of London, I left a short paper, a copy of which here follows:

A warning to all people who have lent their ear to the declaration of the Truth, but have not received it in the love of it. A warning to those who are convinced of the Truth, but who have not subjected themselves

to it in the pure living obedience. A warning to all that have begun in the Spirit, and set their faces Zionward, that they neither return back into Egypt (spiritually so called), nor sit down along the way.

The dreadful Day of God's vengeance is proclaimed, in which all professors of Christianity and their professions shall be tried. The floor will be thoroughly purged, the wheat fanned, the gold tried, and the Day of God will come upon all images and likenesses. Indeed, there will be a treading down of all that has risen up without the ancient, eternal power. There will be a day of calamity, misery, amazement, and distress, upon the inhabitants of the city of London, and of sorrow upon the nation of England; and after this a day of gathering throughout the nations of the dispersed of Israel, and the scattered of Jacob.

In the name and authority of God Almighty, I also cleared my conscience of the city of Bristol, and did not keep back the counsel of the Lord from them. But in the power and demonstration of His Spirit, and in all plainness, I declared the Truth as it is in Jesus, manifesting the many snares of the enemy that attend Friends of that city. I am clear of the blood of the inhabitants of that city, and of all professing Truth therein; and am assured that a day of deep trial will come upon many of its inhabitants. And as was my testimony to the city of London, so it was to the city of Bristol.

In my travels through the land, there were many attempts made for my imprisonment; but the Lord was

with me, and His word was as a fire in my bones, “to run through the land.” Truly the Lord helped me in spiritual battle against the enemy of the souls of men. At that time, laws were made against all dissenters,³ and magistrates were empowered to fine the owner of any house where a meeting was held twenty pounds, along with twenty pounds for the preacher, and five shillings for each hearer. And the one who informed the magistracy of any such meeting was to receive a third part of every fine. But though this was a time of sore persecution throughout the nation, in my passage through cities, towns, and all the counties in England, no man was permitted to lay hands on me, or stop my way; neither did any man, that I know of, lose five pounds on my account, in all the nation. I leave this to posterity, not out of any glory to self, but to magnify and exalt the holy power of the Lord, and that many travelers yet to be raised up may be refreshed, and trust in the Lord Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength. Though He calls us to hard things, yet He is not a hard Master, for He gives power to all that believe and trust in Him, whose right arm of salvation has done glorious things in our day. Unto Him be given everlasting, ever-living praises, honor, holy thanksgiving and renown, forever and ever.

After this, I did not travel so constantly, nor keep an account of many remarkable things and deliverances that I met with in my travels. But this I can say in truth, and in the presence of my God who opened the door of people's hearts so effectually, that I believe thousands received the Word of life, and many were added to the church in diverse

3 Dissenters were those who would not conform to the doctrines, beliefs, or practices of the Church of England.

places. Some meetings were settled where there was never a Friend before. In one place, a whole meeting was convinced at one time, and I never heard that any of them turned back, but all remained faithful unto the Lord. The tenderness I have seen in many places through the land, and the watering showers of life that descended upon the Lord's plantation, are beyond expression. Many that had apostatized and backslidden were effectually reached and brought back again. And so I may truly say that the Lord was with me, and made way for me, according to His word to me before I went forth.

I continued laboring until John Story and John Wilkinson, with their adherents, opposed the order and discipline that was then set up in the churches of Christ. This opposition was carried out under the deceptive pretense of standing against imposition; but it took its true origin from a desire for undue liberty in the flesh, and from a fearful, slothful spirit that turned away from the power of the Lord and the daily dependence on its fresh arising and quickening. These men sought to retain the ministry of the doctrinal part of Truth in a dry and dead spirit, while endeavoring to lay waste our monthly, quarterly, yearly, and women's meetings, calling them "forms" and "idols," when indeed it was the same divine power and wisdom which gathered us to be a people, that caused the setting up and settling of good order and discipline amongst us.

Great was the travel and work of our ancient and honorable Friend, George Fox, in this weighty concern, in the first breaking forth of Truth in this age. Several other brethren were also deeply concerned in settling meetings in the said good order, and we found the Lord with us in

our work and service. The power of the Lord had worked mightily to settle us in good order that we might appear to the world to be guided by His wisdom, being found in a form of godliness that arose from His power inwardly in the soul.

But the enemy, who desired us to be people in confusion, and a Babel instead of a Zion, wrought in the earthly, sensual wisdom of some loose-spirited men, who had lost their sense of the leadings of the Almighty. These were led into a false imagination that we were going from the inward guidance of God's Spirit, to set up forms like other professions, thereby leaving the light of Christ Jesus, which was to be every man's guide in faith and practice. Hereupon they endeavored, with all their strength, to break down and lay waste the meetings before-mentioned, claiming that "an imposition on conscience," was the cause of their separation, when in truth their opposition arose from the power of darkness working in them, whereby they lost their light and led many into their errors.

This spirit brought great affliction and travail upon some in the beginning of its workings in Westmoreland, and in Bristol, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire, and some other places. Great were the disorders it made in Bristol and Wiltshire, because of which, the Lord concerned me (along with other faithful brethren) to make war against it in His name and power. So in great travail, tears, and distress of spirit, for several years together, we ran between the living and the dead in those counties. I can say in truth that the Lord God guided me to travel in His name and dread throughout the land, and was with me in this day of deep exercise. Indeed I have cause (with great bowing of spirit)

to magnify His glorious name, who preserved me faithful over all discouragement. My bow He made strong, and my quiver He daily replenished with arrows, and I labored as one eating the bread of adversity and drinking the water of affliction, sparing neither strength nor substance.

I very well remember the day that I received instruction of the Lord in a vision concerning that people, in which their work, end, and downfall, was shown to me. So it became the great concern of my soul to invite faithful Friends of Wiltshire to have a meeting on purpose to wait upon the Lord, in a deep exercise of soul, and to cry to Him to appear for His name's sake and His people. Friends readily answered my desire, and we agreed upon such a meeting. When we were waiting upon the Lord, this was the cry of my soul amongst Friends and brethren: "O Lord, what will You do for Your great name that is dishonored? What will You do for Your heritage? For the enemy and destroyer desires now to scatter and devour Your lambs, and trample down Your vineyard!" Thus we cried, with bowed hearts before the Lord, who heard from heaven, His holy habitation, and His power broke forth in a wonderful way, tendering His people before Him. Indeed, His presence and heavenly wisdom comforted and confirmed His servants, and Friends were opened to speak well of the name of the Lord, and the greatness of His power and appearance.

It was afterwards concluded that this meeting should continue, which was the case for many years, and in it our wrestling prevailed with the Lord. Truly He attended us with His heavenly power and presence, and from that time onward we saw a blasting of that dividing spirit in all its

undertakings, and a mighty confirming of the Lord's heritage and people.

The same power of God wrought a great travail in the city of Bristol, where the Lord many times appeared and disappointed the design of those preachers of separation. David's sling and stone smote their Goliath that rose up against the armies of Israel, and the glory of the Lord shone over all. I cannot forget the many days, nights, and years of sorrow I went through in that city and nearby counties, where I labored in the power of the Most High for the settling of the churches of Christ in peace and good order.

After this time the enemy filled the heart of the priest of the parish where I dwelt, and he labored many months to get me into prison and take away my goods.⁴ He spared no cost until he got me into Fleet Prison in London, whereby I came to be separated from my dear wife and children. Here I was confined both before and during the time of the Great Frost,⁵ and after about a year's time, my family also removed to London. In this imprisonment I suffered much in body, spirit, and substance, all of which is known to the Lord who was with me.

4 For conscious' sake, early Quakers would not pay obligatory tithes to the Church of England, and often suffered long imprisonments and loss of property as a result.

5 The Great Frost of 1683/84 is one of the four or five coldest winters on record in the British Isles. The Thames River in London was completely frozen for about two months, and the ice was reported to be some eleven inches thick. The ground was frozen to a depth of 27 inches in London, and more than four feet in Somerset.

After the space of about two years, the priest came to the prison, caused the doors to be opened, and brought me out; and sometime after he died. I then settled with my family near London, and for many years labored in the Gospel in that city. I was greatly concerned for the sick, and in several other services for God's church and people, and was frequently engaged with some in the government on behalf of the Lord's suffering people, and the good of my native country.

For the last three years, I have several times visited the city of Bristol and adjacent counties, and God Almighty has wrought in me a great travail in those visits, and afforded me strength to follow through. Indeed, His glory did shine over all, His river ran, His latter rain descended, the springs of the deep broke open, and the mysteries of the kingdom and travels of spiritual Israel were abundantly opened. And now, my soul's cry to the God of my life is that we may all be a worthy people, to the praise and renown of the name of the Lord!

* * *

Charles Marshall was a medical doctor by profession, but the greater part of his adult life was devoted to the nurture and encouragement of the flock of Christ. In both preaching and writing, he was always careful to stay back to the leadings and movings of the Spirit, convinced that man's natural wisdom and resources contribute nothing to the cause of Christ or the increase of His kingdom. Speaking of his ministry, William Penn (founder of Pennsylvania) once wrote: "He was not one who affected words or elegancy of speech, or leaned upon

memory or former revelations; but one who waited for the feeling of God's living and heavenly power to carry him forth in his ministerial exercises, whereby, as a right gospel minister, he often refreshed the family and heritage of God."

Although he suffered much by the envious persecutors of his day, he was said to be "not moved by abuses or injuries, imputing such things to ill-nature or ignorance." Through many trials and imprisonments he continued faithful to the end, turning many "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to the power of God." In a short testimony to his life, his wife Hannah wrote, "As his last moments drew near, he closed his eyes with his own hand, and with cheerfulness and composure, as one that had the sting of death taken away, resigned his soul to God, the 15th of the ninth month, 1698, in the sixty-second year of his age."

**THE LIFE OF
THOMAS STORY**

(1662 – 1742)

I think it proper in this place to recount some of the gracious dealings of the Lord with me from my early days. I was not naturally addicted to much vice or evil; and yet, through the conduct of rude boys at school, I had acquired, by imitation, some things which tended that way. However, as I came to put these things in practice, by word or by action, I found something in me at such times suddenly surprising me with a sense of the evil, and making me ashamed when alone, even though what I had said or done was not evil in the common opinion of those with whom I conversed, or among men in general. And though I did not know or consider what this reprover was, yet it had so much influence and power with me that I was much reformed by it from those habits, which, in time, might have been foundations for greater evils and grosser vices.

Nevertheless, as I grew up to maturity, I had many flowings and ebbings in my mind, and the common temptations among youth were often and strongly presented to me. And though I was preserved from guilt as in the sight

of men, yet it was not so before the Lord, who sees in secret, and at all times beholds all the thoughts, desires, words, and actions of the children of men, in every age and throughout the world. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, presented their objects before me. The airs of youth were many and potent, and strength, activity, and comeliness of person were not lacking. I furthermore found that a natural capacity of mind and its many acquirements were not afar off, and so the glory, advancement, and preferment of the world were spread as nets in my view, and its friendship began to address me with flattering courtship.

I wore a sword, the use of which I well understood, and had foiled several masters of that science in the north and at London. I rode with firearms also, and knew the use of them, yet I was not naturally quarrelsome. This rule I formed to myself—never to offend or affront anyone willfully or with design. And if, inadvertently, I should happen to disoblige any, I should rather acknowledge my wrong than maintain or vindicate a wrong thing; and I should take ill behavior from others and not be offended wherever no offense was willfully designed. But I was also prepared to punish an affront, or a personal injury, whenever it was done in contempt, or with design. Yet I never met with any such occurrence, save once, and then I kept to my own maxims with success, so as neither to wound or be wounded. The good providence of the Almighty was ever over me, and well knew my intent in all my conduct.

But, in process of time, as these motions of corruption and sin became stronger and stronger in me, so the Lord, in great goodness and mercy, made manifest to my under-

standing the nature and end of them. And then, having a view of them in the true light, and the danger attending them, they became exceedingly heavy and oppressing to my mind. Then was the necessity of that great work of regeneration deeply impressed upon me, but I had no experience or evidence of it having been wrought in me. This apprehension greatly surprised me with fear, considering the great uncertainty of the continuance of natural life, and it began to put a secret stain upon the world, all its glory, and all that I had to glory in. I kept these thoughts within my own breast, not knowing of any soul to whom I could seriously and safely divulge them. And indeed no one, for a considerable time, discerned my inward concern by any outward appearance, which I found afterwards was much to my advantage and safety.

It is admirable by what various steps the Lord is pleased to lead the soul of man out of this world and its spirit, home to Himself. Yet I am apt to think, that in His divine and unlimited wisdom, He does not take the same outward method and steps with everyone, but varies the work of His providence as their states and circumstances may best suit and bear.

By an accident that befell me, I was further alarmed to consider my ways, the uncertainty of life, my present state, and latter end. It was this: Intending to go to a country church with an acquaintance, as we were riding gently along, my horse stumbled, fell, and broke his neck, and then lay so heavy upon my leg that I could scarcely draw it from under him; yet I received no hurt. Then, as we stood by him I had this consideration—that my own life might have been ended by that occasion, and I did not find myself

in a condition fit for heaven, having yet no evidence of that necessary work of regeneration. This brought a great heaviness over my mind, which did not totally depart until, through the infinite mercy of God, I was favored with further knowledge and a better state.

Up to this time, I had known the grace of God in me only as a manifester of evil and of sin, a word of reproof, and a law condemning and judging those thoughts, desires, words, passions, affections, acts and omissions, which are seated in the first nature and rooted in the carnal mind, in which the suggestions, temptations, and influences of the evil one work and prevail. By this divine grace I was, in some good degree, enlightened, reformed, and enabled to shun and forbear all words and acts known to be evil, and I knew moral righteousness restored in measure in my mind, and thereby brought forth in me. I then became weaned from all my former acquaintances and company. Indeed their manners and conversation (though not vicious, for such I never liked) became burdensome and disagreeable to me, for I saw they did not have the knowledge of God, nor such conduct as I wanted. Nevertheless, I did not yet know the divine grace in its own nature, as it is in Christ, that is, as a Word of faith, sanctification, justification, consolation and redemption; for I was yet alive in my own nature. The Son of God was not yet revealed in me; nor was I, by the power of His holy cross, mortified and slain; being still without the knowledge of the essential truth, and in a state contrary to Him, and unreconciled.

But the Lord did not leave me here. In His matchless mercy, He followed me still by His holy admonitions, and more and more inclined my mind in an earnest inquiry

after Himself and His own truth and Word. I did not know of any in all the earth who could teach me these things, for the world (as I judged by the general ways and courses of men, of all forms and ranks) seemed universally and altogether ignorant of the Lord, knowing only some historical and traditional hints concerning Him, and of His doctrine and ways. Such knowledge appeared to have little or no effect or influence upon the minds and lives of men, but instead, was a kind of dead knowledge or image, and so man (being dead while they yet lived) did not really and savingly believe in the true God, and Christ Jesus, though they made profession and talked much of them. I did not then know that the Lord had a people in the world who were owned by His presence among them as His own flock and family.

My mind being truly earnest with God, thirsting unto death for the knowledge of the way of life, He was pleased to hear the voice of my necessity; for I needed present salvation, and the Lord knew my case could not admit of further delay. Being moved by His own free mercy and goodness, even in the same love in which He sent His beloved Son into the world to seek and save the lost; on the first day of the second month, in the evening, in the year 1689, being alone in my chamber, the Lord broke in upon me unexpectedly, as quick as lightning from the heavens, and as a righteous, all-powerful, all-knowing, and sin-condemning Judge. Before Him my soul, as in the deepest agony, trembled, was confounded and amazed, and filled with such awful dread as no words can reach or declare. My mind seemed plunged into utter darkness, and eternal condemnation appeared to enclose me on every side, as in

the center of the horrible pit, never to see redemption from there, nor the merciful face of Him whom I had sought with all my soul. But in the midst of this confusion and amazement, where no thought could be formed, or any idea retained besides eternal death possessing my whole man, a voice was formed and uttered in me, "Your will, O God, be done. If this be Your act alone, and not my own, I yield my soul to You." In conceiving these words from the Word of Life, I quickly found relief. There was all-healing virtue in them, and the effect was so swift and powerful that, even in a moment, all my fears vanished as if they had never been, and my mind became as calm and still and simple as a little child. The Day of the Lord dawned, and the Son of Righteousness arose in me with divine healing and restoring virtue in His countenance; so He became the center of my mind.

In this wonderful operation of the Lord's power, denouncing judgment in tender mercy, and in the hour of my deepest concern and trial, I lost my old self, and came to the beginning of the knowledge of Him, the just and the holy One, whom my soul had longed for. I now saw the whole body of sin condemned in my own flesh—not in particular acts, as though only traveling in the way to a perfect moral state—but by one stroke and sentence of the great Judge of the living and the dead. By this stroke the whole carnal mind, with all that dwelt therein, was wounded, and death began to self-love, pride, evil thoughts, and every evil desire, with the whole corruption of the first state and natural life. Here I had a taste and view of the agony of the Son of God, and of His death and state upon the cross, when the weight of the sins of all

humankind were upon Him, and when He “trode the winepress alone with none to assist Him.” (Isa. 63:3) Now all my past sins were pardoned and done away, and my own willings, runnings, searchings, and strivings were at an end. All my carnal reasonings and conceivings about the knowledge of God and the mysteries of religion (which I saw to be but natural), were over—though they had long exercised my mind both day and night, and taken away my desire for food and natural rest. Now my sorrows ended, and my anxious cares were done away; and a true fear arose, which I found to be an initiation into wisdom, where I discovered the true Sabbath—a holy, heavenly, divine, and free rest, and most sweet repose. This deep exercise being over, I slept till the next morning, and had greater and better refreshment and comfort than I had felt for some weeks before.

The next day I found my mind calm and free from anxiety, in a state like that of a young child. In this condition I remained until night, and at about the same time in the evening when the previous visitation had come upon me, my whole nature and being, both mind and body, was filled with the divine presence in a manner I had never known before, nor had ever thought could be. Surely none can form the least idea of such a thing, besides what the Holy thing itself does give. Divine Truth was now self-evident; there lacked nothing else to prove it. I needed not to reason about Him, for all of that was superseded by a divine and truly wonderful evidence and light which proceeded from Him alone, leaving no place for doubt, or for any question at all. For as the sun, in the open firmament of heaven, is not discovered or seen except by its own

light, and so the mind of man determines things by sight, and without any train of reasoning—even so, and more than so, by the overshadowing influence and divine virtue of the Most High, my soul was assured that it was the Lord. I saw Him in His own light, by that blessed and holy medium which of old He promised to make known to all nations—by that eye which He Himself had formed and opened, and also enlightened by the emanation of His own eternal glory. Thus I was filled with perfect consolation, which none but the Word of Life can declare or give. It was then, and not till then, I knew that God is love, even a perfect love which casts out all fear. It was then I knew that God is eternal light, and that in Him is no darkness at all.

I was highly favored also with a view of the manner of the operation of the Almighty in assuming human nature, and clothing His inaccessible divine light and glory therewith, even with an innocent, holy, and divine soul and mind, comparable to the children of men. This was like a veil, whereby the Most High condescended to the low condition of man, and in whom also man, being refined as the tried gold, and thereby fitted for the holy One, can approach Him, as by a proper medium, and therein dwell with the Lord, and enjoy Him forever.

From that time forth, I desired to know nothing but the Lord, and to feed on that bread of life which He alone can give, and which He does not fail to minister daily. Of His own free will and goodness, He was pleased to open my understanding by degrees into all the needful mysteries of His kingdom, and the truths of His gospel, exercising my mind in dreams, in visions, in revelations, in prophecies, in divine openings and demonstrations. And by His eternal

and divine light, grace, Spirit, power and wisdom or word, He instructed and informed my mind, yet allowing Satan to minister temptations also, and deep provings, that I might see my own weakness and danger, and prove to the utmost the force and efficacy of that divine love and truth by which the Lord, in His boundless goodness and mercy, had thus visited my soul.

All things I saw and heard in His wonderful works of creation testified of Him—my own mind and body, the animals, reptiles, and vegetables of the earth and sea, their ranks and subservience one to another, and all of them subservient to the children of men. The sun, moon, and stars, the innumerable host of heaven, and that boundless space in which they move without interfering, or any way annoying one another, all depending one upon another. I saw all of this was connected without division, and was governed by the steady laws which the almighty Word and Decree, who gave them being and formed them, placed them under, and settled them in. But, as the crown of all, and the only true and certain way, it pleased the Most High (by the effusion of His own goodness) to reveal in me the Son of His love, even His wisdom and power by whom He designed and effected all things. Then I was taught to fear Him; then I was taught to love Him; then, and not rightly till then, was my soul instructed and informed indeed.

But these secret operations were confined to my own breast, so that no one knew anything of them. An alteration was observed in me, but the cause of it was not seen. I put off my usual pretension, my jovial actions and address, and laid aside my sword (which I had worn, not through design of injury or fear of man, but as a modish

and manly ornament). I burnt also my instruments of music, and divested myself of the superfluous parts of my apparel, retaining only that which was necessary, or deemed decent. I ceased to attend the public worship, though not with a design to join myself to any other sect, for I was apt to conclude, from what I had observed, that these manifestations were peculiar to me, and that there was not any people with whom I might properly associate. I was also induced to believe that one day I would be obliged to oppose the world in matters of religion, but when or how that should be brought to pass, I did not foresee.

I remained in a still and retired state, and as the Book of Life was opened in my mind, I read what the Lord Himself, by the finger of His power, had written, and what the Lion of the tribe of Judah opened there. The Scriptures of truth, written by Moses and the prophets, the evangelists and apostles of Christ, were brought to my remembrance daily, even when I did not read them. These were made clear and plain to my understanding and experience, so far as they related to my own state, and also in a general way—though I lusted not to know any mystery or thing contained in them besides what the Lord, in His own free will and wisdom, thought fit to manifest. As the nature and virtue of divine truth increased in my mind, it wrought in me daily a greater conformity to itself by its own power, and reduced my mind to a solid quietude and silence. This was a state more fit for attending to the divine Word, and distinguishing it from all other powers, and discerning its divine influences from all imaginations and other motions. And being daily fed with the fruit of the Tree of Life, I

desired no other knowledge than that which was thus given to me.

On the afternoon of the 21st day of the eleventh month, 1689, silence was commanded in me (though not by me), in which I was made to remain till the evening. Then the scripture John 13:10 was brought to my remembrance. I began to write in the following manner as things opened in my mind:

“Jesus said to him, 'He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean'” The washing of the feet signifies the cleansing of the ways, and those who are washed in the laver of regeneration will walk in clean paths, and bring forth fruit according to the nature of the Tree of Life. Such will walk in faith, love, obedience, peace, holiness, righteousness, judgment, mercy, and truth. And whosoever says he is of the Father, and has not love, he is a liar, and the living Word does not rule in him. For whosoever has known the Word, and abides therein, has the Father, because the Word of Truth bears witness of the Father; and whosoever is born of God will keep His commandments.

Hear, O you mountains, and give ear, O you cedars of Lebanon—the Lord, the light of Jerusalem, the life of saints, has put a song of praise in my mouth, and caused me to rejoice in the valley of Jehoshaphat. I was in the desert, and He led me forth by the power of His right hand. I was fallen, and He stretched out His arm, and set me upright. Yes, I was dead, and behold, He raised me from the grave! I was

also hungry, and He has fed me with the bread of His everlasting covenant. I weakly fainted in the way, but the King of the holy mountain revived me by the word of His promise. He has laid my foundations with beauty, with precious stones of diverse colors, and the architecture is all glory. Fear not, you of low degree, for with our God there is no respect of persons. Fear not, you little ones, for He showed you His lovingkindness of old, and with Him there is no shadow of turning. Awake, awake, you who sleep in trespasses and in sins, for the trumpet sounds aloud in the city of our King. Be raised, you dead, and stand upright before Him, for He is true and faithful who sent forth His Word. Conquer, O conquer, you holy love of God, all those who in ignorance oppose Your mercy. Smite Your people with great thirst, O Lord God of mercy, that they may drink abundantly of the waters of Your salvation. Make them hungry, O Life of the just, that they may eat abundantly and be refreshed by the bread of life everlasting. Call them from the husks of outward shadows, and feed them with Your hidden manna and Tree of Life. Take from them the wine of the earth, which they have abused to abomination, and give them the fruit of the living Vine at the Father's table. Wash them in the laver of regeneration by Your Holy Spirit, and cleanse them by Your righteous judgments, that they may retain Your love. Consider their weakness, O Father of mercies; for they are flesh and blood, and cannot see through the veil into Your holy habitation. Rend the veil of

carnal wisdom in the earthly mind, You wonderful Counselor, and display Your glory in its full perfection. Dissolve the great world of pride, covetousness, drunkenness, lying, cursing, oppressions, filthy communications, and whoredoms, and establish righteousness and peace forevermore.

I was silent before the Lord, as a child not yet weaned. He put words in my mouth, and I sang forth His praise with an audible voice. I called unto my God out of the great deep, and He put on bowels of mercy and had compassion on me, because His love was infinite, and His power was without measure. He called for my life, and I offered it at His footstool; but He gave it me as a prey, with unspeakable addition. He called for my will, and I resigned it at His call; but He returned me His own in token of His love. He called for the world, and I laid it at His feet, with the crowns thereof; I withheld them not at the beckoning of His hand. But mark the benefit of the exchange! For He gave me, instead of earth, a kingdom of eternal peace; and instead of the crowns of vanity, He gave a crown of glory. They gazed upon me; they said I was mad, distracted, and had become a fool. They lamented because my freedom came. They whispered against me in the vanity of their imaginations, but I inclined my ear unto the whisperings of the Spirit of Truth. I said, "What am I, that I should receive such honor?" But He removed the mountains out of my way, and by His secret workings pressed me forward.

[At another time he penned the following prayer:]

O Almighty, incomprehensible, and infinitely merciful Lord God, forasmuch as none can enter into Your rest, unless he be regenerated and renewed, I humbly beg, in the name and for the sake of Your Son Christ, that You will be pleased to wash me in the water of life, and purify my polluted soul with the holy fire of Your infinite love. O that I may live in You, and walk in the living way of truth, love, peace, joy, righteousness, holiness, temperance, and patience, so long as You are pleased to continue me in this garden of labor. Be my strength and my righteousness, that I go not astray from Your paths through the frailty of this earthly tabernacle. Give me daily the bread of life, which You freely hold forth to the hungry all the day long. And inasmuch as none can eat of this bread but those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, give me (O You who are my salvation) a fervent desire, and a saving faith, a living faith, to lay hold on Your most certain promise, that I may be made a partaker of the glory that is laid up for Your servants in Your everlasting habitations.

Finding that the conversation of mankind was generally upon trifles, not worthy of the thought of rational creatures, and tending much more to vice than to virtue—and since my mind had been a little renewed by the influence of the divine truth, I remained much in silence and alone. At times I had thoughts upon other objects, which I wrote (without any search or labor) as they were from time to time presented in my mind. [The following written prayer shows that he also experienced ebbings of the divine life

after the seasons of enjoyment of which he has spoken.]

O Lord, take pity on a perishing soul, borne down under a multitude of vile affections, trodden under foot by the insolence of the wicked one! I faint under the yoke, O most faithful and true, and have no hope but in You. My heart is weary with sighing under troubles, and my pains increase. When shall my day come? When shall I see the seal of my salvation? O work in me the law of everlasting love, and fix my boundaries there forever and ever. You who said to the worlds, "Be finished!" and it was so—say now unto my soul, "Be perfect!" and it shall be done. Purify me, O God, by the judgments of Your right hand, and let Your mercies be ever before me. Raise me, that I may praise You in the firmament of Your power. Humble me, that I may exalt Your name in the midst of the nations.

A deep consideration entered into my mind concerning the states of many persons in the national way of worship, as also among the various dissenters from it. I had occasionally heard some of their preachers, particularly Dr. Richard Gilpin of Scaleb Castle, an able physician and an ancient, celebrated preacher among the Presbyterians, and I had observed many others who seemed to have sincerity and good intentions in their respective modes of worship. Therefore a question arose in me whether it might not be through my own fault, for lack of the true knowledge of God in myself prior to this time, that I had been kept from enjoying His presence among them as I now did, ever since I had been visited by the Lord and

drawn into retirement by the comfort of His secret presence. Upon this consideration, I determined to go again and see whether the good presence of the Lord would be manifested in me there, as it was alone in my retirement.

The place I went to was called St. Cuthbert's, in the city of Carlisle, where there were usually prayers and a sermon in the afternoon on first-days, but not with that pomp, noise, and show, that attended the service at the cathedral. Being seated there with my mind retired inward to wait upon the Lord (as He Himself had taught me to do), I found that the Lord would not own their worship by His sensible presence, nor me in that place, though He Himself is omnipresent. Instead, my mind became filled with darkness and overwhelmed with trouble to so great a degree that I could hardly stay till the time was over. But lest I should do something which might be looked upon as indecent, I continued to the end, and then, returning to my chamber in trouble, I went among them no more.

However, though I declined all outward worship (or that which was called so), determining to follow the Lord wheresoever it might please Him to lead me, yet I found universal love, good will, and compassion in my mind, to all sorts of people, whether Protestants of different denominations, Romans, Jews, Turks, or heathens. But I observed their several religions to be mostly the effect of education, tradition, or chance. For he who is born and educated among the Protestants of any sect respectively, is such. He who is born and educated among the Romans, is a Roman. And so it is with all the rest, until by circumstance or interest they change from form to form; or sometimes (though more rarely) through the inward convictions

of the Holy Spirit of God, they obtain a right understanding and come to worship Him in truth. Therefore I stood still, and waited for the further leadings of the Lord, and the evidence of His presence as to what to do, or where to abide, though the Protestants, in general, and especially the national church, were still nearer to me than any other sect.

Thus, the world, in general, appeared to be dead (like walking statues) with respect to the true knowledge of God, notwithstanding the truth of some notions they held in relation to matters of fact and literal interpretation. I did not then see that the Lord God had any collective body of people in that day who truly worshipped Him according to His own institution; nor did I know of anyone on earth who had learned of God by His own free grace, and who could communicate to me that which I could neither ask nor think. However, I found in due time I was mistaken in these things, even as the prophet of old, who thought he had been alone while all Israel departed from the Lord.

As the life of the Son of God prevailed in me, I became more and more innocent, humble, loving, and charitable to the poor, to whom I gave money according to my ability, and without ostentation, or expectation of reward. One instance of this I think might be proper to relate, as it was attended with some particular circumstances. At the time King William III was subduing Ireland, some persons and families fled from the inconveniences and hardships of the war and came into England. Among others, an Independent minister and his young son came to my father's house in Carlisle where I then lived, and being in need, requested charity. I gave him half a crown, which, being more than he

expected or had received elsewhere, gave occasion for him to enter into discourse concerning some points of religion. He civilly asked of me what form of worship I attended. I replied I had formerly frequented the national worship, according to my education, but that for some time I had declined it, as also all other outward forms, keeping retired in my chamber on the usual days appointed for that purpose. When he heard this, he asked if his company might be acceptable the next Lord's day (as he called it), for the national worship was not agreeable to him. I gave liberty, and he and his son came accordingly to my chamber, where I was sitting alone in silence, waiting upon the Lord. After a civil reception and short pause of silence, he began to magnify the great providence of God in re-establishing and advancing the Independents and Presbyterians, who had been so much hated, persecuted, and suppressed, but were now to be made the chief instruments of deliverance, restoration, and reformation to the right way of the Lord, and to His own glory. As he spoke, I observed that he himself was not upon the true foundation, nor acquainted with the mind of the Lord on that account, but rather spoke from his own imagination and partiality to his own sect, according as he and they desired it should have been. His mind was natural and carnal, and his views were outward and directed toward the power and dominion of this world, even as the Jews were at the time of Christ's appearance among them.

As soon as he came to a period, I found my mind filled with the sweetness and meekness of divine truth, and replied, "The divine providence is indeed great over the children of men, and apparently over this nation and her

dependents at this day. And indeed, the necessity of a right and thorough reformation is very great, and in the proper time and way of the Almighty it will surely be brought to pass. But it will be neither by the means nor the instruments which are now in your view. For all the contenders, one against another, by destructive force, are of one spirit divided against itself, under different forms and views, and the strongest will advance themselves and their own way. But these cannot, by such means, reform either themselves or others, as they ought to do in the sight of God, for He does not approve or countenance violence, bloodshed, and unrighteousness in one sect, and then condemn the same things in another. The Lord will therefore bring about the right reformation by instruments of a different kind, and by another means and way, as it is written, "Not by might, nor by power; but by My Spirit, says the Lord." Upon this the stranger was much broken in spirit, and as he sat by me the tears ran down his beard and dropped upon his knee. Then, being filled with love (the same which had reached him from my spirit), he embraced me in his arms, rejoicing that he had met with me, but said no more on any religious subject. Soon after he departed, and I saw him no more.

I now proceed with the account of my further progress. In writing the last paragraph of a piece, the people called Quakers were suddenly, and with some surprise, brought to my mind. So strongly were they impressed upon my remembrance that, from that time forward, I had a secret inclination to inquire further concerning them, their way and principles. It was sometime in the fifth month, in the year 1691, when an opportunity was presented. The

occasion took place in the west part of Cumberland, when lodging at an inn kept by one of that profession. As I inquired of the innkeeper concerning some points of their religion, I perceived no material difference between his sentiments and mine; and he also perceived I was nearer to acknowledging them than he, or perhaps any other, had thought; for I had formerly opposed the same man in some things. This gave him occasion to inform me of a meeting to be held the next day, at a country village called Broughton.

As I had been desirous to be rightly informed concerning that people, and to see them as in truth they really were, I was pleased with the opportunity. So the next morning the Friend and I set forward toward the meeting. He being zealous to have me further informed and convinced of the truth of their way, spoke of many things as we rode along, and no doubt had good intent. But my mind was composed, and its attention directed towards God (who knew I wanted only to see the truth, and not to be deceived), so I could not take any distinct notice of what the Friend said. Perceiving this, after some time he desisted and said no more, and we rode some miles together in profound silence, in which my mind enjoyed a gentle rest and consolation from the divine and holy presence.

We arrived at the meeting a little late, when it was already fully gathered, and I went in among the throng of people on the benches and sat still among them in an inward condition of mental retirement. One of their ministers, a stranger, began to speak to some points held by them, and to declaim against some things held by others—

particularly predestination, as it is asserted by the Presbyterians. I took little notice of what was said, not doubting that, like all other sects, these might have something to say both for their own principles, and against the opinions of others. My only concern at that time was to know whether they were a people gathered under a sense of the enjoyment of the presence of God in their meetings—or, in other words, whether they worshipped the true and living God in the life and nature of Christ, the Son of God, the true and only Savior. The Lord answered my desire according to the integrity of my heart; for not long after I had sat down among them, that heavenly and watery cloud overshadowed my mind and broke into a sweet shower of celestial rain. Then, the greatest part of the assembly were broken together, dissolved and comforted in the divine presence of the true, heavenly Lord, which repeated several times before the meeting ended. In this same way, and by the same divine power, I had often been favored by the Lord when alone, when no eye but that of heaven beheld me. And now, even as many small springs and streams descend into one place and form a deep and weighty river, so I felt an increase of the joy of the salvation of God while meeting together with a people who were gathered by the living God into a sense of His divine and living presence, through Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world. And my joy was the more full, perceiving I had been under the like mistake as the prophet of old, but now was otherwise informed by a sure evidence, by the witness of the divine truth, in which no living soul can err or be deceived—being self-evident and undeniable in all those who truly know Him.

Our joy was mutual and full, though in many tears, as in cases of the deepest and most unfeigned love. Friends there were sensible I was affected and tendered with them by the influence of the divine truth that they knew and made profession of, and they concluded it had been at that time, and not before, that I was convinced and had come to the knowledge of the way of truth. Their joy was like the joy of heaven at the return of a penitent; and mine was like the joy of salvation, seeing the work of the Lord so far carried on in the earth, when I had not long before thought there had scarcely been any true and living faith, or knowledge of God in the world.

When the meeting had ended, the peace of God which passes all the understanding of natural men, and is inexpressible by any language but itself alone, remained as a holy canopy over my mind, in a silence out of the reach of all words, and where no idea but the Word Himself can be conceived. I was invited, together with the ministering Friend, to the house of the ancient widow Hall, and so went willingly with them. However, there remained a sweet silence commanded within me, and so I had nothing to say to any of them until the Lord was pleased to draw the curtain and veil His presence. Then I found my mind pure, and in a well-bounded liberty of innocent conversation with them. Having stayed there a short time, I was invited to dinner at the house of Richard Ribton, an ancient and honorable Friend in the village, where I was made kindly welcome, and where I had great freedom of conversation.

I was now satisfied beyond my expectation concerning the true people of God, in whom the Lord had begun, and in a good measure carried on, a great work and reforma-

tion in the earth. I then determined to lay aside every business and thing which might hinder or veil in me the enjoyment of the presence of the Lord (whether among His people or alone) or obstruct any service whereunto I might be called by Him. I cast off all things of an entangling or confining nature, not regarding what the world might say, or what name they might impose upon me.

When I had finished with the business which had brought me into that part of the country, I returned to Carlisle. After this I attended some other meetings of Friends, but little notice was taken of it by any of my relations or acquaintances until the time of the court sessions at Carlisle, where some Friends were prisoners in the county jail for non-payment of tithes. Various other Friends attended these sessions (as was their custom) to help prevent trouble or hurt to any of the Society, and to minister counsel or other help as need might be. These Friends gathered for a meeting at Scotby, about two miles from the city, and there I went also. During the time of the meeting I found an unusual load upon my spirit, and a hardness in my heart to such a degree that I could hardly breathe under the oppression. I had no sense of the comforts of the divine presence there, but the heavens were as thick brass, and their bars as strong iron. But though I had no enjoyment in myself, yet I was sensible that the presence and goodness of the Lord were there, and many were greatly comforted thereby. I therefore concluded that my condition of mind was from some other cause, and not related to the state of the meeting in general.

After the meeting had ended, one of them asked me

how I was. I answered indifferently, so that he and some others perceived my spirit was oppressed, and sympathized with me therein. I could not, all this time, perceive the particular matter which thus affected me, for I knew of nothing I had done or said to bring it upon myself. But that evening, being returned to my father's house very solitary, silent, and inward, there came in one Thomas Tod who desired to speak with me. He told me that he had a trial coming on the next day concerning certain houses of his in the town of Penrith, which were the greatest part of all he had in the world. One of the witnesses to his deed of conveyance was dead, another had gone into Ireland, but he hoped that I, being the third, and having had prepared the documents, would help him against his unfair adversary. He desired me to be in readiness in the morning, for the trial was likely to come on very early.

As soon as he began this relation, the Word of life began likewise to work in me in a very powerful manner. I sensibly felt the hammer of the Lord, and saw it to be lifted up against that hardness of heart which had for some time been my state. My heart began to be broken, softened, and dissolved, and the sense of the love of God was then in some degree renewed. Then I saw plainly that this was the hard thing I had to go through, and that now was the time of trial wherein I must take up the cross of Christ, acknowledge His doctrine in this point fully and openly, according to the understanding given me. I saw I must despise the shame, reproach, and whatever sufferings (which I well knew would ensue quickly), or I must forsake the Lord forever. For if I denied His doctrine, having been given such a clear and plain sense of it, this would be a denying

of Him before men. And if I denied Him, I could expect no less (according to His word) than to have been immediately and forever denied by Him, and left under that hardness of heart and lack of enjoyment of His divine presence with which I had been favored before. But, by reason of the advances of His Word and work in me at that time, my heart inclined to Him. And by the time my acquaintance was done speaking, I was furnished with a full resolution to give him a plain and direct answer, which was according to this manner: "I am truly concerned and will appear and testify what I know in the matter, and do whatever I can for you in that way; but I cannot swear." This was so great a surprise to him, both from the nature of his case and the confidence he had of my ready compliance—he having had no suspicion of my present condition till that moment—that he broke into a passion, and with a curse, said, "What, you are surely not a Quaker!" Though the divine presence had sensibly returned in me, yet upon this question I was again silent until I felt clear in my understanding what to answer in sincerity and truth. For since nobody before that time had called me a Quaker, I had not yet assumed the name. Nor did I then know whether I had complete unity with all their tenets as might justify me in owning the name, for I had known them only in the unity of divine love and life, and not as yet heard all of their doctrines. But the power of the Life who forbids all oaths and swearing, arose yet clearer and fuller in me. The Lord opened my understanding, cleared my way, and enabled me to reply, "I must confess the truth: I am a Quaker."

As this confession brought me still nearer to the Son of God, so that I felt His love yet increasing in me, so it

likewise heightened the perplexity and disturbance of my friend, whose case thereby became the more desperate in his own view. Upon this, in an increase of heat and expressions that suited his obvious disappointment, he then threatened to have me fined by the court and proceeded against with the utmost rigor of the law. "What!" he said, "Must I lose my estate because of your groundless notions and whims?" But the higher my enemy arose and raged in this well-meaning but mistaken man (who, without design, had become the instrument of my trial), the fuller and more powerful was the love of God in me, whose cause I had now upheld through His own aid and the power of an endless life made manifest in me. I replied in that calm resignation to the will of God which the life of the Son of God teaches and enables to perform, "You may do what you think proper that way, but I cannot comply with your request in this matter, whatever be the outcome." He then departed under great dissatisfaction, with all the threats and reproaches that his enraged passions could suggest under a view of so great a loss.

Immediately I retired into my chamber, for I perceived my grand enemy to be yet at work to introduce a slavish fear, and by that means to subject my mind and bring me again into captivity and bondage. I desired to be alone and free from all the interruptions of company, that I might more fully experience the arm of the Lord and His divine instructions and counsel in this great exercise. The enemy, being a crafty and subtle spirit, wrought upon those passions which were not fully subjected, and artfully applied himself to my natural reason and understanding, which were not fully illuminated. He urged the fine and

imprisonment, and the hardships accompanying that condition, and how little help I could expect from my father or friends, who would be highly displeased with me for so foolish and unaccountable a resolution, as they would think it. He also suggested the scoffing, mocking, derision, scorn, contempt, loss of friends and friendships in the world, with other similar inconveniences, hardships, and ill consequences. During all this time, from about eight in the evening till midnight, the eye of my mind was fixed upon the love of God, which still remained sensibly in me, and my soul cleaved to it in great simplicity, humility, and trust, without yielding to Satan and his reasonings on those subjects, where flesh and blood in its own strength is easily overcome by him. But about twelve at night, the Lord put him to utter silence, with all his temptations, and the life of the Son of God alone remained in my soul. Then, from a sense of His wonderful work and redeeming arm, the saying of the apostle arose in me with power, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." Then the teachings of the Lord were plentiful and glorious, and my understanding was further cleared. His holy law of love and life settled in me, and I was admitted into sweet rest with the Lord my Savior, and given up in perfect resignation to His holy will, in whatsoever might relate to this great trial of my faith and obedience to the Lord.

In the morning I went up toward the hall where the judges sat, expecting to be called as a witness in the case before mentioned. But before I reached the place, I saw my said acquaintance approaching me, with an air in his countenance denoting friendship and affection. When we met,

he said, "I can tell you good news! My adversary has yielded the cause, and we are agreed to my satisfaction." Upon hearing this, I stood still in the street, and as I reviewed in my mind the work of the Lord in me the night before (as already related), this Scripture came fresh and livingly into my remembrance, "It is God who works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." I was sensible it was the Lord's doing, and accounted it a great mercy and deliverance.

Nevertheless, by this means I was exposed to the view and observation of all, the pity of many, and the scoffs and censures of the baser and more ignorant sort. This event happening at the time of the court sessions, and people from all quarters being there, I quickly became the common subject of discourse and debate. Few could believe the report that I was now a Quaker, and many came to see and talk and wonder. When they happened to see me afar off in the streets, they would come in crowds to gaze. Some would take off their hats, and pretend to show more than ordinary complaisance, saluting me as at other times; but as I did not make any return of that kind, some would smirk, and giggle, and scoff, and grin, and run away in loud laughter, saying I was mad. Some others were struck with another passion—they turned pale, looked sorrowful, and returned weeping. And one who had been educated at a university, to show at once his temper, manners, and learning, after he had gazed upon me a while with many of the baser sort, cried out, "He knows not a genus from a species!" when there was not anything previous leading to such an expression. Yet he was mistaken in that; for I knew very well that dog is a genus, and that bull-dog and blood-

hound are distinct species of that genus. And at that time, I saw the nature and way of these brute animals too much appearing in that giddy mob, though I said very little to any of them, but instead gave them my face to their fill of gazing.

Some, who but a day or two before dared not have given me a disobliging look, now insulted and triumphed. This put me in mind of a saying of Job, "But now they mock at me, men younger than I, whose fathers I disdained to put with the dogs of my flock." Yet the fool's pretended pity and instruction, who could not see and pity his own miserable case, was the hardest to bear. But all these things did not provoke or move me; for the grace and presence of the Lord were with me, and these were my strength and preservation. Indeed, my heart was surrounded with a rampart of invincible patience, and my soul was filled with divine love. This treatment gave me a much clearer view of the low, mean, miserable, brutish state of many men than I ever had before, or could have imagined.

When the business of the court sessions was over, some of my acquaintances (gentlemen both of town and country, who wished me well in their own way) thinking I had been deluded by the Quakers, consulted how to restore and reclaim me (though I do not think any of them knew what the true Quakers or their principles were). Several ways were proposed to help me, especially by a meeting and consultation with some of the clergy, who, they imagined, might solve any doubts I might be under, supposing my sentiments to be but lately embraced, and I not yet settled in them. The clergy generally shunned me, and I quickly observed a particular enmity in them against me,

though I had no more aversion to them as men than to others. But some of the above-mentioned well-wishers, having seen my former levity and cheerfulness turned to silence and gravity, supposed me to be melancholy. These got together in a tavern, along with my father, and intended to have me drink a hearty glass, seeking to raise my spirits into a more sociable temper, and bring me off from such thoughts.

While they were contriving this scheme, I was retired alone in my chamber, and favored with a sense of the good and soul-nourishing presence of the Lord. But after some time, a concern came upon me, which gave me to expect something was in agitation concerning me. Soon after, an acquaintance who was an attorney at law, came to me from the company and mentioned a certain gentlemen who desired to see me at the tavern. I was not hasty to go, nor did I refuse, but looked for the countenance of the Lord in the matter. After a short while, my father and some others grew impatient to have me among them, and likewise came to see me. I arose from my seat when they came in, but did not remove my hat to them as they did to me, upon which my father fell to weeping and said I did not use to behave so to him. I entreated him not to resent it as a fault, for though I now thought fit to decline that ceremony, it was not in disobedience or disrespect to him or them, for I honored him as much as ever, and desired he would be pleased to think so. Through grace, I became aware of their intentions, but soon found freedom in my mind to go among them.

When we came to the tavern, they placed me so that I was in the midst of them, and then began to put the glass

around; and in order to relish it the more, they proposed to drink to the health of King William. The glass went forward till it came to me, and then I told them, "I wish both the king and them well, and if I could drink to the health of any, I should more especially drink to the king's, but I shall do such things no more," and so refused it. The glass never went around, for several of them fell to weeping and were much broken, and all of them were silenced for a time. When this was over, some of them said they believed I intended well in what I did, and that every man must be left to proceed in the way he thinks right in the sight of God. So we parted in solid friendship.

It was the secret grace of God which wrought this; and to Him, the Lord alone, I did impute it. Many disputes have I had with many people since, in various parts of the world, but I never began any controversy, being always on the defensive side. And I rarely entered upon any point in question, with any man or sect, until I felt the divine truth risen over all in my own mind, and my will subjected by it. And my next care was generally not to provoke my opponent; for, by keeping him calm, I had his own understanding, and the measure of grace at work in him, to work against the error for which he contended. For when a man gets into a passion, he may be confounded, but not convinced. Passion is like a scorching fire without light. It suspends the understanding and obstructs the way to it, so that it cannot be gained upon or informed. So my chief aim in disputes in matters of religion has been to gain upon people's understandings for their own good, or else all will end in vain and unprofitable jangling, which displeases the Holy One. In two or three times in the course of my life, in

too hasty of engagements in my own strength, my mind has been ruffled, and though I have gained the point by force of argument (from the principle of reason only, and not from the principle of divine Truth), yet I have not had that peace and satisfaction of mind which is to be found in the virtue of truth alone. And this has also taught me to be totally silent, and sometimes even insulted by ignorant people, as if I had nothing to say, until the power and virtue of truth has arisen in my mind. But when it arises, it has never failed, by its own light and evidence, to support its own cause.

I had not, all this while, conversed with any Friend about their principles, or read any of their books, nor did any of them come near me for some time, for my father would not then allow them to come to his house. Some of them not long after sent me three small books, which I took kindly, knowing it was well intended. But I was favored of the Lord with something more excellent than books, which gave me both understanding and support in time of need. Indeed, that book, which had been sealed as with seven seals, was now, in measure, opened by the powerful voice of the Lion of the royal tribe, the Holy Lamb of God—even the book of the eternal law of God, the law of the Spirit of life from the Father, by Christ the Son, the Redeemer of the world, and it was my delight to read day and night therein. By this I profited more in a short time in the knowledge of God and the things of His holy kingdom, than if I could have read and understood all the written and printed books in the world. I therefore declined reading the Friend's books till a more proper season, and then I looked into one of the books concerning prayer. For

surely, the reading of good books (especially the holy Scriptures, the chief of all) is highly profitable and commendable.

I went constantly to the meetings of Friends, where, in a state of silence, my heart was frequently tendered and broken by the divine influence of truth, to my unspeakable satisfaction. I found there a holy pleasure and enjoyment which neither the world, nor anything therein, could afford. Our meetings in the north in those days were frequently broken and melted when in silence, as well as when under a powerful, living ministry by the Word. My delight was continually in the truth, and I desired no company but that of Friends. I frequented meetings on all occasions, where my heart was often made so tender by the truth that it reached and affected others through me. In this way I became very dear to Friends, and they to me. And as this tenderness was something of an involuntary ministry, being an operation of the Spirit of God without words, I found for some time great satisfaction and safety in it.

Desiring to see Friends in some other places, I took a short journey with Andrew Taylor, a powerful and able minister in his day of an affable and cheerful temper, and one of my particular friends. On the 20th day of the twelfth month, 1691, we went from Heatherside, in Cumberland, and that night lodged two miles beyond Alston. The next day we journeyed to Welgill; on the 22nd to Thomas Williamson's; on the 23rd to Walkmill; on the 24th to Steel, and on the 25th to Benfieldside— having meetings at several of these places. From there we went on the 27th to Newcastle, and lodged at Jeremiah Hunter's, being at their

meeting the next day. On the 29th we went to Caleb Tenent's at Shields, and had a meeting there. On the 1st day of the first month a meeting was appointed at Sunderland. We intended to cross the River Tyne at Shields in order to attend, but the wind being very strong, the horses were frightened with the fluttering of the sails as we put off from the key, so that Caleb's mare, being strong and sprightly, jumped overboard and carried him along with her as he strove to stop her by the bridle. They both went under the water, for it was very deep, but as good Providence would have it, the mare came up with her head towards the shore, and Caleb came up behind her at so little distance, and with such presence of mind, that he laid hold on her tail, and got on shore without any other hurt than the surprise and the wet clothes.

The meeting at Sunderland proved a very comfortable time in the enjoyment of the good presence of the Lord, with which my heart was plentifully furnished. In the time of silence, I was greatly tendered and soon bathed in a flood of tears from divine, melting love; and the like effect was seen over the entire meeting. After this, Robert Wardell, a ministering Friend at whose house we lodged, spoke some sentences, by which I perceived he thought I should have uttered some words by way of public ministry at that time. But I did not apprehend my time was then come for that service, and besides, the ministration of the Word, by a more immediate operation, had had the same effect, or perhaps greater, than the utterance of many words.

After the meeting many Friends came to me and expressed so much love and respect as gave me occasion to

consider what could be the reason of it, for they were all strangers to me, and I to them. Being but a child in the knowledge of the invisible operation of the Word of truth and its effects by instruments, even in a way of silence and sympathy, I had looked at its effects only in myself, for my own strength and consolation. I did not yet know that when truth broke in upon one in an eminent manner, it often affected the living part of the meeting the same way, at the same time. It has since become clear to my understanding, by experience, that there is an unspeakable communication of divine love through the one Spirit among the sanctified in Christ, as the members of Christ sit together in a state of holy silence in their heavenly places in Him.

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Thomas Story went on to become an extremely gifted and serviceable minister in the Society of Friends, traveling all over England, Ireland, Scotland, Holland, Jamaica, Barbados, and the American colonies. He was known for both his spiritual depth and his intellectual genius, and his writings became very influential among Quakers.

In 1695 Thomas Story befriended William Penn, and in 1698 sailed to Pennsylvania (at Penn's request) where he held several public offices in the developing province. He remained there for sixteen years, always putting ministerial duties in the Lord's body above his business in the world, and even declining positions and advancements that might encumber his service to the church. He married in America, but lost his wife after only six years,

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and then returned to England where he continued a minister until his death in 1742.