

THE WRITINGS OF

ISAAC PENINGTON

VOLUME 1

EDITED BY JASON HENDERSON

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Forward

About Isaac Penington

Isaac Penington (1616–1679) was the eldest son of a well-known English politician and Puritan Congregationalist. He was brought up in a wealthy and influential family, and “well cultivated and polished with an ingenuous and full education.”¹ Nevertheless, Penington's aspirations, from his earliest days, were entirely fixed upon things above, and not upon the many things of the world that were within his reach. He says of himself: “My heart from my childhood was pointed towards the Lord, whom I cared for and sought after from my tender years. I felt that I could not be satisfied with (nor indeed seek after) the things of this perishing world which naturally pass away; but I desired a true sense of, and unity with, that which abides forever.” Indeed, Penington's hunger and desperation for the true knowledge and experience of God (as the reader of this volume will no doubt recognize) was the hallmark of his life. Seeking, he found; knocking, the door swung wide open before him. He sought the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind and strength, and without a doubt, the Lord was found by him.

¹ From *The Testimony of Thomas Ellwood Concerning Isaac Penington*. Written upon the occasion of Penington's death.

Isaac Penington lived in a time of perhaps unequaled political, social, and religious upheaval in England. In the thirty years during which Penington wrote his letters and papers, England experienced a civil war, the trial and execution of King Charles I, the turbulent rule of Oliver Cromwell followed by the bloody return of Charles II, the terrible Plague of 1665, and the Great Fire of London in 1666, after which the French joined Holland in war against England. In the midst of these troubled times, the Lord raised up a people who both experienced and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that was perhaps unknown to the world since the times of the first Apostles. The original Society of Friends (who in scorn were called Quakers) were a people whose Christianity stood in, and flowed out from, the light and life of Jesus Christ reigning in the inner man. In his searching after God, Isaac Penington turned to this light, and quickly became a shepherd among this people and a teacher of the truth that the Lord was restoring to His body.

The collected works of Isaac Penington were first published in 1681, just two years after his death. A second addition was printed in 1761, consisting of four volumes. A third edition appeared in 1784, and a fourth (which is available online in various digital formats) was printed in 1863. In the 1990's, Quaker Heritage Press transcribed and reprinted the 1863 edition of his complete works in four hardcover volumes, which can be purchased through their website at www.qhpress.org. Although the language is a bit more archaic and the punctuation more cumbersome, I strongly recommend these four volumes for the serious student of Penington.

About This Edition

Most readers find the original four volumes of Penington's works somewhat difficult to read. Though his writings are considered to be of the Early Modern English period, today's readers often find aspects of the language, punctuation, and syntax to be fairly distracting or burdensome. Because of this, many give up on this tremendous book rather than make the effort to wade through it.

My desire in putting together this edition is twofold: First, I have tried to reduce the four volumes down to a more manageable two volumes by retaining the bulk of his spiritual writings and letters, while eliminating certain things I judged to be less weighty or relevant to our day. Some of Penington's writings were papers addressed to Parliament, the City of London, or the Army, having to do with specific laws, events, and persecutions of his time. Others were lengthy examinations and refutations of books or papers published against Quakers. Most of these, and other writings of this nature, were not included in this publication.

My second goal in preparing this edition was to make the English somewhat more readable without changing Penington's meaning or over-modernizing his language. I struggled with this. I deeply appreciate Penington's carefulness with words, and I know that he was profoundly aware of both what and how he was communicating. Furthermore, I have no doubt but that the Spirit of God was the true Author behind much of his work. On account of this, I approached the task of editing and modernizing these writings with great care, and in a measure of the fear of the Lord. In my attempts to make his writings a bit more reader-friendly, I sought to never change his meaning, or even paraphrase his

intent with my own words as much as that was possible. Sometimes, however, I found this to be unavoidable. And at other times, I felt obliged to clip out small portions so as to avoid wordiness or repetition. Still, the vast majority of the changes I made were to small things like punctuation, word order, and spelling. An example of the kind of changes I made can be seen below.

Original Edition

Thou takest up Cain's weapons, and fain wouldst thou kill thy brother, because his sacrifice in the faith testifies against thine.

This Edition

You take up Cain's weapons, and you would eagerly kill your brother, because his sacrifice in the faith testifies against yours.

Some words from Penington's era simply do not carry the same meaning today. These words were replaced with the closest modern equivalent I could find. A few words and concepts warranted further explanation which can be found in footnotes. The reader will also notice that pronouns and other terms referring to deity (like seed or lamb) are usually not capitalized in this volume (though there are some exceptions). It was not customary to capitalize such words in Penington's era, and I have left them as he wrote them.

About the Quakers

According to George Fox's autobiography, the name Quaker originated with a magistrate named Gervase Bennet.

“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 it soon became widely accepted and used by both Quakers and their enemies.

In my view, the work of the Lord in and through the original Quakers of the 17th century was a return to the original life, light, power, and purity that the first Apostles knew and proclaimed as 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.²

However, as is often the case with genuine movements of the Spirit of God, their teachings and practices were very quickly misunderstood, corrupted, and misrepresented by the succeeding generations of those who bore their name. Customs, principles, and empty forms 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 that once reigned in the hungry hearts of the 17th century has been largely forsaken, and Quakerism has become a collection of dead doctrines, earthly causes, and religious traditions. Penington is still venerated by many as a founding father of the movement, but most who respect him for his intellect, devotion, or sufferings, also hide from the light that he knew and loved so dearly.

As with all of our publications, free copies of this book

² To read more about of the message, history, and persecution of the original Quakers, I recommend *The History of the Rise, Increase, and Progress of the Christian People Called Quakers* in two volumes, by William Sewell (1653-1720). Being a contemporary and personal companion of many of the original Friends, Sewell is generally regarded to be the foremost authority on the history of the Quakers.

can be obtained through Market Street Fellowship by visiting www.marketstreetfellowship.com. The publishing company requires that I also make copies available for sale online through Amazon, but all proceeds from sales go to the free distribution of this and other publications.

Jason Henderson

September, 2014

Chapter I
Memoir of Isaac Penington

The following is a testimony written by Thomas Ellwood after the death of Isaac Penington, containing two short autobiographical narratives taken from Penington's own writings.

* * *

Although I am not ignorant that many weighty and living testimonies have been already given by true and faithful witnesses upon the same occasion,¹ which might well seem sufficient to excuse mine, yet am I not thereby clear. Rather, I find a pressing upon my spirit to write a few lines also concerning this my dear deceased friend, to whom I owe both affection and gratitude. Love him I did, and that entirely, and I am sure very deservedly; for he was worthy indeed of love from all men, but more especially from me, to whom he had been abundantly kind. For in the day wherein it pleased the Lord to awaken my soul and call me out of the pollutions of the world with respect to both worship and manner of living (for which I became the derision of my country, the scorn and contempt of my family and acquaintance, and in a

¹ The occasion of Isaac Penington's death.

manner an outcast also), how welcome was I then to him! How affectionately did he receive me! How regardfully did he take care of me! How tenderly and like a father did he watch over me that I might not be drawn back, or in any way be betrayed from the simplicity of truth as I had received it! And can I ever forget his love, or let his manifold kindness slip out of my mind? Oh no; the remembrance of him is pleasant to me, and I cannot think of him without delight. For as a friend, I truly loved him; as a father (for such was his care unto me), I revered him; as an elder, I honored him, and that (as he right well deserved) with double honor. My spirit was truly united to his; indeed, my soul was linked and knit unto him in the holy covenant of life, which death has not been able to dissolve. Bear with me therefore a little I entreat you, whoever you are, under whose eyes these lines may chance to fall, if I take liberty to express my sense of this my beloved friend. And I seem somewhat particular, know that my acquaintance with him was so.

He was naturally furnished with a sharp and excellent wit, one that was well cultivated and polished with an ingenious and full education. His disposition was courteous and affable, free from pride and pretense. His ordinary discourse was cheerful and pleasant, neither morose nor light, but innocently sweet, and tempered with such a serious gravity as rendered his conversations both delightful and profitable.

From his childhood (as I have heard him occasionally say) he was religiously² inclined, and sought the Lord in his tender years. And although the way of truth was not then made manifest unto him, as it had been since, yet he had then, at times, some true touches and tastes of life, some openings and sights of heavenly things (though not so clear,

² In these writings, the word *religion* does not carry the negative connotations with which it is sometimes associated today. Here it is used in a positive sense to refer to the knowledge and worship of God.

unmixed, and abiding as after). At first, the manifestation of truth unto him was not without doubts and jealousies concerning it, as he himself relates. Nor was it free for some time from disputes and reasonings against the smallness of its appearance. Yet, after it pleased the Father, in the riches of his grace, to reveal his Son in him (thereby giving him to see and know with certainty what was the good, acceptable and perfect will of God), oh how joyfully did he receive it! How willingly did he bow before it! How readily did he yield his neck to the yoke of Christ! And how constantly and delightfully did he wear it!

Did he then regard the pleasures of the times, or value the preferences and honors of the world (though living at that time in the favor and abundance of it)? No, no. He turned his back upon it all, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And casting down his crown at the foot of Jesus, he willingly became a fool to the world and to the wisdom thereof, that he might be made truly wise to God. And surely herein he obtained his desire; for as he honored the Lord and preferred him above all, so the Lord did highly honor him, and gave him liberally of the true and heavenly wisdom, adorned with humility. Thus he was learned, and yet humble; he was full of knowledge (heavenly knowledge), yet not thereby puffed up. And as he had freely received of the Lord, so did he freely and readily communicate thereof (as the following pages do witness) unto those who stood in need of counsel, advice, information, or direction in their travel to the heavenly country. To this service he was fitted and very well furnished by the experiences of his own travel; for the Lord had led him through many a distress and difficulty, through many temptations, trials, and exercises, by which he had tried and proved him. Not only through the Red Sea and the Wilderness had he passed, but

the bottom of Jordan had he also seen, and the upholding, delivering arm of the Lord through all had he known and felt. And so he was able to speak a word of wisdom to the bewildered passenger; a word of encouragement to the weary and fainting traveler; a word of comfort to the afflicted soul, and of consolation to the wounded spirit. And oh, how sweetly have I heard it flow from him! How it has dropped like the dew, and distilled like the gentle rain! Ah, how tender, how compassionate, how full of tenderness and feeling sympathy was he! Surely his words have been many times as apples of gold in settings of silver.

For of a truth the Lord was with him, and his heavenly power did often fill his temple. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, and the fruits thereof were plentifully brought forth through him, in love, in joy, in peace, in long-suffering, in gentleness, in goodness, in faith, in meekness, and in temperance; so richly did the word of the Lord dwell in him. His delight was in the service of God, to which he was wholly given up, and in it spent most of his time, either publicly in meetings waiting upon God, or privately in visiting and ministering unto those that were distressed, or in any way afflicted in mind or body. And when at home, he was frequent in retirements, and very inward with the Lord. Very fervent he was in prayer, and very frequent; for the Spirit of grace and supplication was plentifully poured upon him, by which he often wrestled with the Lord, and not in vain.

The holy Scriptures he read much, and with great delight and profit. He made it not a cursory or formal business, nor sought to pick out the meaning by his natural wit or learning. Rather, with a great composedness of mind and reverence of spirit, he waited to receive the true sense of them from the revelation of that divine Spirit by which the authors of them were inspired. Great and strong was the travail of his spirit

for the salvation of others; and in a more especial manner did his love flow and his heart yearn after the professors³ of religion. For these he continually and earnestly labored, both by word and writing, that they might be brought out from the shadows, and come at last to inherit substance. And blessed be the Lord, by the powerful operation of the Spirit of God through his ministry, many were turned to the truth, and many others confirmed in it. For the Lord was with him and spoke by him, so that his teaching was with divine authority, in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.

As to the world, and the affairs of it, he was very much a stranger; but he was deeply experienced in the things of God. For his affection being set on things above, his citizenship was in heaven, and his life hid with Christ in God. He was but a pilgrim on the earth, and is now gone home. In his family he was a true pattern of goodness and piety, not only by his serious example, but by his savory instructions and exhortations to godliness. To his wife he was a most affectionate husband; to his children, a loving and tender father; to his servants, a mild and gentle master; to his friends, a firm and fast friend; to the poor, compassionate and open-hearted; and to all, courteous and kind. Very zealous was he for the truth, unwearied in promoting it, bold and undaunted in the defense of it, faithful in his testimony to it, patient and cheerful in his suffering for it. A right good and pious man indeed was he, one that truly feared God, and watchfully renounced all evil.

How great and diverse were his trials in the times of his former professions. How earnest and pressing was his spirit then after the pure enjoyment of God. How strange and admirable were the dealings of the Lord with him. And how

³ Throughout this book the word *professor* will be used often to refer to those who *profess* faith in Christ. Here the word has nothing to do with teachers or educators.

far he came at last to see the travail of his soul, and to be satisfied, as he of all men best knew (and so has occasionally scattered hints thereof in several places in the following pages). I had once thought to have collected and presented these together; but finding among his loose papers a summary account thereof, written with his own hand above a dozen years ago, when, being in bonds for Christ's sake, he was sick near unto death, I chose rather to include that here.

The first account that Isaac Penington gives of his own spiritual travail is as follows:

"A true and faithful relation, in brief, concerning myself, in reference to my spiritual travails and the Lord's dealings with me. I say true and faithful because it is of the truth, and not given forth in my own will, but in the Lord's will and requiring of me at this time, for his service. The relation is as follows:

"I have been a man of sorrow and affliction from my childhood, feeling a need of the Lord, and mourning after him. I was separated by him from the love, nature, and spirit of this world, and turned in spirit towards him, almost ever since I can remember.

"In the sense of my lost estate, I sought after the Lord; I read the Scripture; I watched over my own heart; I cried unto the Lord for what I felt the lack of; I blessed his name in what he mercifully did for me, and bestowed on me, etc. Whatever I read in the Scriptures as the way of God, according to my understanding, I gave myself to the faithful practice of, being contented to meet with all the reproach, opposition, and several kinds of sufferings, which it pleased the Lord to measure out to me therein.

And I cannot but say that the Lord was good unto me, did visit me, did teach me, did help me, did testify his acceptance of me many times, to the refreshing and joy of my heart before him.

"But my soul was not satisfied with what I met with, nor indeed could it be, there being further quickenings and pressings in my spirit after a more full, certain, and satisfactory knowledge. I yearned after the sense, sight, and enjoyment of God, as was testified in the Scriptures to have been felt and enjoyed in the former times. For I saw plainly that there was a stop of the streams, and a great falling short of the power, life, and glory which they partook of. We did not have the Spirit, nor were we in the faith, nor did we walk and live in God, as they did. They were come to Mount Zion, and the heavenly Jerusalem, etc.; while we had hardly so much as the literal knowledge or apprehension what these things were. So I saw the whole course of religion among us was, for the most part, but a talk, compared to what they felt, enjoyed, possessed, and lived in.

"This sense made me sick at heart indeed, and set me upon deep crying to God, close searching the Scriptures, and waiting on God, that I might receive the pure sense and understanding of them, from and in the light, and by the help of his Spirit. And what the Lord did bestow on me in that state, with thankfulness I remember before him at this very day. For he was then my God, and a pitier and a watcher over me, though he had not yet directed me how to stay my mind upon him. And then I was led (indeed I was led, I did not run of myself) into a way of separation from the worship of the world into a

gathered society,⁴ for this both the Scriptures and the Spirit of God in me gave testimony unto. And for what we then met with, and what leading and help we then felt, there is a remembrance and testimony in my heart to this day. But there was something lacking, and we mistook our way. For whereas we should have pressed forward into the Spirit and power, we ran too much outward into the letter and form.⁵ And though the Lord in many things helped us, yet in this he was against us, and brought darkness, confusion, and scattering upon us. I was sorely broken and darkened, and in this darkened state sometimes lay still for a long season, secretly mourning and crying out to the Lord night and day. Sometimes I ran about, searching after what might appear or break forth in others; but I never met with anything in which there was the least answer in my heart, except in one people, who had a touch of truth, but I never expressed so much to any of them, nor indeed felt them at all able to reach my condition.

"At last, after all my distresses, wanderings, and sore travails, I met with some of the writings of this people called Quakers,⁶ which I cast a slight eye upon and disdained as falling very short of that wisdom, light, life, and power, which I had been longing for, and searching after. I had likewise, some time after this, an opportunity

⁴ That is, he departed from the traditional forms of Christian worship and began meeting together with an independent congregation comprised of others who shared his hunger and dissatisfaction.

⁵ Penington often uses the word *form* to express any physical or outward ceremony, structure, or system used in religion.

⁶ Quakers of today bear little or no spiritual resemblance to their predecessors. As is often the case, what began as a genuine awakening in hearts to the life and light of Christ, quickly became a collection of doctrines, causes, external forms, and religious traditions.

to meet with some of them, and a few of them were by the Lord moved (I know it to be so since) to come to me. As I remember, at the very first they reached to the life of God in me, which life answered their voice, and caused a great love in me to spring to them. But still, in my reasonings with them and disputes in my mind concerning them, I was very far off from accepting them as truly knowing the Lord, or appearing in the life and power that my condition needed and my soul waited for. Indeed, the more I conversed with them, the more I seemed in my understanding and reason to get over them, and to trample them under my feet as a poor, weak, silly, and contemptible generation. I felt they had some smatterings of truth in them, and some honest desires towards God, but were very far off from the clear and full understanding of his way and will. And this was the effect of almost every discourse with them. Yet they still reached my heart, and I felt them in the secret place of my soul, which caused my love to continue towards them, and even sometimes to increase. But daily my understanding got more and more over them, and therein I daily more and more looked down on them.

"After a long time I was invited to hear one of them speak (as I had been often, they in tender love pitying me, and feeling my lack of that which they possessed). I went with fear and trembling, and with desires to the Most High, who was over all, and knew all, that I might not receive anything for truth which was not of him, nor withstand anything which was of him, but might bow before the appearance of the Lord my God, and none other. And indeed, when I came, I felt the presence and

power of the Most High among them, and words of truth from the Spirit of truth reaching to my heart and conscience, opening my state as in the presence of the Lord. Yes, I did not only feel words and demonstrations from without, but I felt the dead quickened, the seed raised; insomuch that my heart (in the certainty of light, and clearness of true sense) said, *'This is he, there is no other! This is he whom I have waited for and sought after from my childhood; who was always near me, and had often begotten life in my heart; but I knew him not distinctly, nor how to receive him, or dwell with him.'* And then in this sense (in the melting and breaking of my spirit), I was given up to the Lord, to become his, both in waiting for the further revealing of his seed in me, and to serve him in the life and power of his seed.

"Now what I met with after this, in my travails, in my waiting, in my spiritual exercises, is not to be uttered. Only in general I may say this: I met with the very strength of hell. The cruel oppressor roared against me, and made me feel the bitterness of his captivity, while he had any power. Yes, the Lord was far from my help, and from the voice of my weeping. I also met with deep subtleties and devices to entangle me in that wisdom which seems able to make wise in the things of God, but indeed is foolishness and a snare to the soul, bringing it back into captivity, where the enemy's contending prevails. And what I met with outwardly from my own dear father, from my kindred, from my servants, from the people and powers of the world, for no other cause but fearing my God, worshiping him as he has required of me, and bowing to his seed, which is his Son, who is to

be worshiped by men and angels forevermore, the Lord my God knows, before whom are my heart and ways. And he preserved me in love to them, in the midst of all I suffered from them, and does still so preserve me; blessed be his pure and holy name.

"But some may desire to know what I have at last met with? I answer, I have met with the SEED. Understand that word, and you will be satisfied and inquire no further. I have met with my God; I have met with my Savior, and he has not been present with me without his salvation. I have felt the healing drop upon my soul from under his wings. I have met with the true knowledge, the knowledge of life, the living knowledge, the knowledge which is life; and this has had the true virtue in it, which my soul has rejoiced in, in the presence of the Lord. I have met with the seed's Father, and in the seed I have felt him to be my Father. There I have read his nature, his love, his compassion, his tenderness, which have melted, overcome, and changed my heart before him. I have met with the seed's faith, which has done and does that which the faith of man can never do. I have met with the true birth, the birth which is heir of the kingdom, and inherits the kingdom. I have met with the true spirit of prayer and supplication, wherein the Lord is prevailed with, and which draws from him whatever the condition needs—the soul always looking up to him in the will, and in the time and way which are acceptable with him. What shall I say? I have met with the true peace, the true righteousness, the true holiness, the true rest of the soul, the everlasting habitation in which the redeemed dwell. And I know all these to be

true in him that is true, and I am capable of no doubt, dispute, or reasoning in my mind about them; it abiding there, where it has received the full assurance and satisfaction. And also, I know very well and distinctly in spirit where the doubts and disputes are, and where the certainty and full assurance is, and in the tender mercy of the Lord I am preserved out of the one, and in the other.

"Now the Lord knows, these things I do not utter in a boasting way, but would rather be speaking of my nothingness, my emptiness, my weakness, my manifold infirmities, which I feel more than ever. The Lord has broken the man's part in me, and I am a worm, and no man before him. I have no strength to do any good or service for him. No, I cannot watch over or preserve myself. I feel daily that I keep not alive my own soul, but am weaker before men, yes, weaker in my spirit, as in myself, than ever I have been. But I cannot help but speak to the praise of my God, for I feel his arm stretched out for me. And my weakness, which I feel in myself, is not my loss, but my advantage before him.

"These things I write, as having no end at all therein of my own, but felt it this morning required of me, and so in submission and subjection to my God have I given up to do it, leaving the success and service of it with him."

Isaac Penington

Aylesbury Jail, 15th of 3d month, 1667

The following is a second autobiographical sketch taken from Penington's writings which he entitled, "*A Brief Account of My Soul's Travel Towards the Holy Land.*"

“My heart from my childhood was pointed towards the Lord, whom I cared for, and looked after, from my tender years. I felt that I could not be satisfied with (nor indeed seek after) the things of this perishing world which naturally pass away; but I desired a true sense of, and unity with, that which abides forever. There was something within me even then (the seed of eternity) which leavened and balanced my spirit almost continually; but I knew it not distinctly, so as to turn to it, and give up to it entirely and with understanding.

“In this temper of mind I earnestly sought after the Lord, applying myself to hear sermons, and read the best books I could meet with, but especially the Scriptures, which were very sweet and savory to me. Yes, I very earnestly desired and pressed after the knowledge of the Scriptures, but was much afraid of receiving men's interpretations of them, or of fastening any interpretation upon them myself. So I waited much, and prayed much, so that I might receive from the Spirit of the Lord the true understanding of them, and that he would chiefly endue me with that knowledge which might feel sanctifying and saving.

“And indeed I did sensibly receive of his love, of his mercy, and of his grace, which I felt freely to move towards me, even at seasons when I was most filled with the sense of my own unworthiness, and had least expectations of the manifestations of them. But I was exceedingly entangled about election and reprobation, (having drunk in that doctrine of predestination, as it was then held forth by the strictest of those that were called Puritans). I feared that, despite all my desire and seeking

after the Lord, he might in his decree have passed me by. I felt it would be terribly bitter to me to bear his wrath, and to be separated from his love forevermore. And yet, I thought, if he had so decreed, it would be; and I would, (despite my fair beginnings and hopes), fall away and perish in the end.

“In this great trouble and grief (which was much added to by not finding the Spirit of God so in me and with me as I had read and believed the former Christians had), and in mourning over and grappling with secret corruptions and temptations, I spent many years, and fell into great weakness of body. And often casting myself upon my bed, I did wring my hands and weep bitterly, begging earnestly of the Lord daily, that I might be pitied by Him, and helped against my enemies, and made conformable to the image of his Son, by his own renewing power.

“And indeed at last, (when my nature was almost spent, and the pit of despair was even closing its mouth upon me), mercy sprang, and deliverance came, and the Lord my God owned me, and sealed his love unto me. Light sprung within me, which made not only the Scriptures, but even the outward creatures appear glorious in my eye. So that everything was sweet and pleasant and joyous round about me.

“But I soon felt that this state was too high and glorious for me, and I was not able to abide in it, for it so overcame my natural spirits. Wherefore, blessing the name of the Lord for his great goodness to me, I prayed to him to take that from me which I was not able to bear, and to give me such a proportion of his light and presence as was suitable to my present state, and might fit

me for his service. Whereupon this was presently removed from me; yet a savor remained with me, in which I had sweetness, and comfort, and refreshment for a long season.

“But my mind did not then know how to turn to and dwell with what gave me the savor. Nor did I know how to read what God did daily write in my heart, which sufficiently manifested itself to be of him by its living virtue and pure operation upon me. I looked upon the Scriptures to be my rule⁷ and so I would weigh the inward appearances of God to me by what was outwardly written. I dared not receive anything from God directly, as it sprang from the fountain, but only in that indirect way. In this way I limited the Holy One of Israel and exceedingly hurt my own soul, as I afterwards felt and came to understand.

“Yet the Lord was tender to me, and condescended exceedingly, opening Scriptures to me freshly every day, teaching and instructing, warming and comforting my heart by this. And truly he did help me to pray, to believe, and to love him and his appearances in anyone; yes, to love all the sons of men, and all his creatures, with a true love. But there was that in me which knew not the appearances of the Lord in my spirit, but would limit him to words of Scriptures formerly written. A fabric of knowledge out of the Scriptures grew, and became my perfect rule (as I thought) concerning my heart, my words, my ways, my worship. With much seriousness of spirit, and prayer to God, I found myself helping to build an independent congregation, in which

⁷ The word *rule* is used throughout to refer to that which governs, rules, or has true authority in the life of the believer.

the savor of life and the presence of God was fresh with me (as I believe there are yet some alive of that congregation that can testify).

“This was my state when I was smitten, broken, and distressed by the Lord. I was confounded in my worship, confounded in my knowledge, stripped of all in one day (which it is hard to utter), and became a matter of amazement to all that beheld me. I lay open and naked to all that would inquire of me, and strove to search out what might be the cause that the Lord should deal with me in this way. Some were at first sure that I had sinned and provoked him so to do it; but when they had scanned things thoroughly, and I had opened my heart nakedly to them, I do not remember anyone that ever retained that sense concerning me. My soul remembers the wormwood and gall, the exceeding bitterness of that state, and is still humbled in me in the remembrance of it before the Lord. Oh, how did I wish with Job, that I might come before him, and knowingly plead with him! For indeed I had no sense of any guilt upon me, but was sick with love towards him, and was as one violently rent from the bosom of his beloved! Oh, how gladly would I have met with death! For I was weary all the day long, and afraid of the night, and weary also of the night-season, and afraid of the ensuing day.

“I remember my grievous and bitter mourning to the Lord. How often I did say, 'Oh Lord, why have you forsaken me? Why have you broken me to pieces? I had no delight but you, no desire after any but you. My heart was bent wholly to serve you, and you have even fitted me (as appeared to my sense) by many deep exer-

cises and experiences for your service. Why do you make me so miserable?' Sometimes I would cast my eye upon a scripture, and my heart would even melt within me. At other times I would desire to pray to my God as I had formerly done; but I found I knew him not, and I could not tell how to pray, or in what way to come near him. In this condition I wandered up and down from mountain to hill, from one sort to another, with a cry in my spirit, 'Can you tell news of my beloved? Where does he dwell? Where does he appear?' But their voices were still strange to me; and I retired sad and oppressed, and bowed down in spirit from them.

“Now surely, all serious, sober, sensible people will be ready to inquire how I came satisfyingly to know the Lord at length; or whether I do yet certainly know him, and am yet truly satisfied.

“Yes indeed, I am satisfied at my very heart! Truly my heart is united to him whom I longed after, in an everlasting covenant of pure life and peace.

“Well then, some will say, how did this come about? The Lord opened my spirit. The Lord gave me the certain and sensible feeling of the pure seed, which had been with me from the beginning. The Lord caused his holy power to fall upon me, and gave me such an inward demonstration and feeling of the seed of life, that I cried out in my spirit, *'This is he! This is he! There is not another, there never was another. He was always near me, though I knew him not, (not so sensibly, not so distinctly as now he was revealed in me and to me by the Father). Oh that I might now be joined to him, and he alone might live in me!'* And so, in the willingness

which God had wrought in me (in this day of his power to my soul), I gave up to be instructed, exercised, and led by him, in the waiting for and feeling of his holy seed, that all might be wrought out of me which could not live with the seed, but would be hindering the dwelling and reigning of the seed in me, while it remained and had power. And so I have gone through a sore travail, afflictions, and temptations of many kinds. Yet the Lord has been merciful to me, helping me and preserving the spark of life in me, in the midst of many things which had befallen me, whose nature tended to quench and extinguish it.

“Now thus having met with the true way, and walked with the Lord therein, wherein daily certainty, yes, and full assurance of faith and of understanding is at length obtained, I cannot be silent, (true love and pure life stirring in me and moving me), but must testify of it to others. And this is it: to retire inwardly, and wait to feel something of the Lord, something of his Holy Spirit and power, uncovering, and drawing away from that which is contrary to Him, and into his holy nature and heavenly image. And then, as the heart is joined to this, something is received, some true life, some true light, some true discerning, which the creature not exceeding (but abiding in the measure of), is safe. But it is easy erring from this, but hard abiding with it, and not running out before its leadings. But he that experiences life, and begins in life, does he not begin safely? And he that waits and fears, and goes on no further than his captain goes before him, does he not proceed safely? Yes, very safely, even until he comes to be so settled and

established in the virtue, demonstration, and power of truth, as nothing can prevail to shake him.

“Now, blessed be the Lord, there are many in this day who can truly and faithfully witness that they have been brought by the Lord to this state. And these things we have learned of the Lord, not by the high striving, aspiring mind, but by lying low, and being contented with a little. If but a crumb of bread, yet is bread; if but a drop of water, yet is water, and we have been contented with it, and also thankful to the Lord for it. Nor by cleverness and wise searching and deep considering with our own wisdom and reason have we obtained it. But rather, in the still, meek, and humble waiting, have we found that brought into the death which cannot know the mysteries of God's kingdom; and that which is to live, we have seen made alive, and increase in life.

“Therefore he that would truly know the Lord, let him take warning of his own reason and understanding. I tried this way very far, for I considered it most seriously and uprightly. I prayed, I read the Scriptures, I earnestly desired to understand and find out whether what this people called Quakers testified of was the only way and truth of God (as they seemed to suggest). But for all this, prejudices multiplied upon me, and strong reasonings against them, which appeared to me as unanswerable. But when the Lord revealed his seed in me, and touched my heart with it, I presently felt them to be the children of the Most High, and so grown up in his life, power, and holy dominion, (as the inward eye, being opened by the Lord, sees), as drew forth from me great reverence of heart, and praises to the Lord, who had

appeared so mightily among men in these latter days.

“So as God draws, in any respect, to himself, give up in faithfulness to Him. Despise the shame, take up the cross for indeed it is a way which is very cross to man, and of which man's wisdom will be exceedingly ashamed. But that wisdom must be denied and turned from, and the secret, sensible drawings of God's Spirit must be waited for and given up to. Mark: he that would come into the new covenant, must come into the obedience of it. The light of life, which God has hidden in the heart, is the covenant. And from this covenant God does not give knowledge to satisfy the vast, aspiring, comprehending wisdom of man; but rather he gives living knowledge, to feed what is made alive by him; which knowledge is given in the obedience, and is very sweet and precious to the state of him that knows how to feed upon it. Yes, truly, this is of a very excellent, pure, precious nature; and a little of it weighs more than the great, vast knowledge in the intellectual part, which man's spirit and nature so much prizes and presses after.

“And truly, friends, I witness at this day a great difference between the sweetness of comprehending the knowledge of things expressed in the Scriptures (which I fed much on formerly); and tasting the hidden life, the hidden manna in the heart (which is my food now, blessed forever be the Lord, my God and Savior). Oh, that others had a true, certain and sensible taste of the life, virtue, and goodness of the Lord, as it is revealed there. Surely it could not but kindle the true hunger, and inflame the true thirst, which can never be satisfied but by the true bread, and by water from the living fountain.

This the Lord (in the tenderness of his love, and in the riches of his grace and mercy), has brought us to; and this we earnestly and uprightly desire and endeavor that others may be brought to also. We desire that they may rightly (in the true silence of the flesh, and in the pure stillness of spirit), wait for, and in the Lord's due time receive, that which answers the desire of the awakened mind and soul, and satisfies it with the true, precious substance forevermore.”

Isaac Penington

Neither to Isaac Penington was it given only to believe, but to suffer also for the sake of Christ. His imprisonments were many, and some of them long, which he underwent with great constancy and quietness of mind. But because so general an account of his imprisonments may perhaps not satisfy the desire of the reader, I will here present a more specific, albeit brief report of his sufferings.

His first imprisonment was at Aylesbury jail, in the years 1661 and 1662, being committed there for worshiping God in his own house.⁸ There, for seventeen weeks (a great part of it in winter), he was kept in a cold and very incommodious room, without a chimney. From such hard usage his tender body contracted so great and violent an illness, that for several weeks after he was not able to turn himself in his bed.

His second imprisonment was in the year 1664, being taken out of a meeting, where he with others was peaceably waiting upon the Lord, and sent to Aylesbury jail, where he

⁸ Because of the political insecurity of the times, a law had been passed forbidding all religious gatherings except those taking place at the times and places authorized by the state. For conscience sake, Penington and many others continued to meet together in homes.

again remained a prisoner between seventeen and eighteen weeks.

His third imprisonment was in the year 1665, being taken up, with many others, in the open street of Amersham, as they were carrying and accompanying the body of a deceased friend to the grave.⁹ From here he was sent again to Aylesbury jail. This imprisonment led to an order of banishment, but only for a month, or thereabouts.

His fourth imprisonment was in the same year, 1665, about a month after his release from the former. Until this time, his imprisonments had been by the civil magistrates; but now, that he might experience the severity of each, he fell into the military hands. A rude soldier, without any other warrant than the sword that he wielded, came to his house, and told him he came to fetch him before Sir Philip Palmer, one of the deputy lieutenants of the county. He meekly went, and was by him sent with a guard of soldiers to Aylesbury jail, with a kind of court order saying, "that the jailer should receive and keep him in safe custody during the pleasure of the Earl of Bridgewater;" who had, it seems, conceived so great, as well as unjust, displeasure against this innocent man. And although it was the year of the plague,¹⁰ and the sickness was suspected to be in the jail, the Earl of Bridgewater would not be prevailed with (by the earnest pleas of persons of considerable quality and power in the county) even to permit Isaac Penington to be removed to another house in the town, and there kept prisoner until the jail was clear of the sickness. But after a prisoner died in the jail of

⁹ This funeral procession was considered an illegal religious gathering by the priests and magistrates who were bent on persecuting early Quakers.

¹⁰ The Great Plague of 1665-1666 was the last major epidemic of the bubonic plague to occur in England, killing an estimated 100,000 people, about 15% of London's population.

the plague, the jailer's wife (her husband being absent) gave leave to Isaac Penington to remove to another house, where he was shut up about six weeks. After this, by the procurement of the Earl of Ancram, a release was sent from the said Philip Palmer, by which he was discharged, after he had suffered imprisonment three quarters of a year, with apparent hazard of his life, and that for no offense.

By the time he had been at home about three weeks, a party of soldiers from the said Philip Palmer (by order of the Earl of Bridgewater, as was reported) came to his house, and seizing him in bed, carried him away to Aylesbury jail again. There, without any cause showed or crime objected, he was kept in prison a year and a half, in rooms so cold, damp, and unhealthy, that it very near cost him his life, and procured him so great an illness, that he lay weak from it several months. At length, a relation of his wife's, by a *habeas corpus*, removed him to the King's-Bench bar, where (with the wonder of the court that a man should be so long imprisoned for nothing) he was at last released in the year 1668. This was his fifth imprisonment.

His sixth imprisonment was in the year 1670, in Reading jail, where he went to visit his friends that were sufferers there for the testimony of Jesus. Upon notice of this visit being given to one called Sir William Armorer, a justice of the peace for that county, Penington was abruptly brought before him and committed to the jail, thereby becoming a fellow-sufferer with them whom he came to visit. Here he continued a prisoner a year and three quarters, and was brought under the sentence of premunire;¹¹ but at length the

¹¹ 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 kings protection, and were often imprisoned for life.

Lord delivered him.

Thus through many tribulations did he enter into the kingdom, having been exercised, tried, proved, and approved by the Lord. Long was he in the warfare, and, like a good soldier, endured the fight of afflictions. But having fought the good fight, and kept the faith, he has now, in the Lord's good time, finished his course, and is gone to possess the crown of righteousness laid up for him, and for all those that love the bright appearance of the Lord. A faithful laborer he was in the Lord's vineyard for many years; but now has he ceased from his labor, and his works follow him. He walked with God, and is no more. To the Lord he lived, and in the Lord he died, and by the Spirit of the Lord he is pronounced blessed: blessed forever be the name of the Lord therefore.

Chapter II

The Way of Life and Death Made Manifest and Set Before Men

Preface

Be wise, O you wise ones! Be religious, O you religious ones! Open the eye and ear that have been shut; shut the eye and ear that have been open. Stumble no longer, lest you fall and rise no more. I know you cannot see; for the wrong eye is open, and the Lord has designed to hide his wisdom from that eye. Become poor in spirit; lest at last you prove to be the rich man whom the Lord will send away empty. Sell all quickly, that you may have what is needed to buy the pearl. You have not known the appearance of the Lord; but in your wisdom you have disdained it. The children, the fools, the blind, can see the way, and enter into life. But you that are men, that are wise, that have both your eyes, that can judge in religion, and determine what is orthodox, and what is erroneous, you cannot.

Oh hear, that your souls may live! You know not how short your time is. The day of your visitation passes away faster than you are aware. The cry has long gone forth,

Behold, the bridegroom comes, and his spouse has been preparing for his bed! You must put off your old garments, and put on the new. You must have the true oil in your lamps, or the door of the kingdom will be shut upon you, and there will be no entrance for you. In plain terms, you must part with all your religion which you have gathered in your own wisdom, which has grown up in the apostasy,¹ and which only can make a fair show in the dark; but cannot endure the searching light of the day of the Lord. You must lay hold of the true religion, the true righteousness, the true innocence and purity of Christ. The old must be done away, truly done away, and the new come in its place. So that flesh and self may be quite destroyed, and nothing but Christ found in you, and you found nowhere but in Christ, if you are to enter into his kingdom; for no unclean thing can enter.

Therefore put away pride and passion and enmity and fleshly reasonings. Seek out that which is pure, and enter into it, taking up the cross against all that is contrary. And turn from all imaginings and conceivings about the meanings of Scriptures in the uncertain and erring mind, and come to that which is infallible. Know the silencing of the fleshly part, that the spiritual part may grow in the wisdom, that so you may learn in the spirit, and know the word of God, and be able to speak it.

My heart is towards you, and from it this has been written, not to anger or shame you, but to provoke you to jealousy against that dark and evil spirit which leads you to

¹ Penington and many of his contemporaries used the word *apostasy* to refer to the condition of the church from the period of time beginning shortly after the first apostles until the time these writings. In their mind, the predominantly dead, external, and man-centered form of Christian religion that had spread and prevailed over the centuries was the great falling-away, or apostasy, that had been foretold by Christ and the apostles.

destruction under the guise and appearance of light. My desire is not to glory over you; for my soul lies down in shame and sorrow before the Lord, and the reproach of my own apostasy, and my seeking relief from the world (turning from the Lord, who had wounded me, to earthly vanities for comfort), will not easily be recovered.

The Lord had been kind to me in breaking me in my religion, and in visiting me with sweet and precious light from his own Spirit; but I knew it not. I felt, and could not but acknowledge his power upon me, and I might have known what it was by allowing it to purify my heart, and beget me into the image of God. But I demanded this power to appear in a way of demonstration to my reason and earthly wisdom, and for lack of satisfaction therein, I denied and rebelled against it. And so, after all my former misery, I lost my entrance, and sowed seeds of new misery and sorrow to my own soul, which since I have reaped.

So now I have no cause to boast over others; but only to lie low in abasement of spirit. And what I write is not in any dominion and authority of mine own; but rather to bring others into that dominion and authority which it is good for me, and for everyone else, to be subject to. May the Lord strip us of our own understanding, and of that righteousness which is but ours (though we have called it his), so that we may be gathered into and receive his understanding, and be clothed with his righteousness, and feel his rest and peace! And happy is he that loses all to gain this. But he that keeps what he has too long will in the end lose all. Therefore, be no longer wise in the eye of flesh, or according to what man calls wisdom; but be *truly* wise.

SOME POSITIONS
Concerning the Apostasy from the
Christian Spirit and Life

Position I

That there has been a great apostasy² from the Spirit of Christ, and from the true light and life of Christianity: which apostasy began in the apostles' days, and ripened quickly afterwards.

Now, that the apostles and Christians in their days had the true Spirit, the true light, and true life, I think will not be denied. "We know that we are of God, and that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life." 1 John 5:19-20. They were truly born of God, and knew the Son of God come, receiving from him a true understanding, and the true light and knowledge in that understanding. Both the understanding and the knowledge were rooted and seated in him that is true, where their position and abiding were ("we are in him that is true"), where they met with the true Spirit, the true God, the true life, even life eternal. That they had the true Spirit from God, ("because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts..." Gal. 4:6) that they had the true light from God, ("God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined into our hearts..." 2 Cor. 4:6) that they had the true life from and in the Spirit, ("if we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5:25) is generally acknowledged concerning them.

² i.e. falling away, departure

Now the Scriptures make mention of an apostasy from this, beginning even in the apostle's days, and to be completed not long after. The Apostle Paul speaks expressly of the thing, that there must come "a falling away," and a revealing of "the man of sin, the son of perdition." 2 Thess. 2:3. Christ had showed and declared the path of life; had disclosed the true church, which was "the pillar and ground of truth," against which the gates of hell could not prevail. He had sent the true Spirit, which could "lead into all truth," and preserve in the truth. But we read there must spring up a "man of sin, a son of perdition," who, in a mystery, should work against this, and cause a falling from this to another thing. And of this the apostle did not only touch on here in writing, but he had also told them of these things in person, to which he refers in verse 5. Many more evidences of scriptures may be given.

Christ foretold of false prophets, Mat. 7:15. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." The Lord sent true prophets under the law, and gave them true visions to declare. Christ sent true apostles and ministers under the gospel, and gave them the truth which they should preach and propagate. But then there were also false prophets, false apostles, and ministers to come after, who were never sent by Christ, nor ever received the truth from his Spirit. Now these did not come to gather into the life and truth of Christ, but to scatter from it; and thereby to begin an apostasy, a falling away. And, says Christ, beware of them; for they come very subtly. They come in sheep's clothing; they put the garment of the sheep upon their backs, even that very garment which the sheep did wear. But these do not have the nature of the sheep, but rather the nature of the wolf, which is ravenous towards the life of the sheep. Consider this: where there is

the garment without, but not the nature within; where there is the form of godliness, but not the power; where there are scripture words and practices, but not the Spirit of life from which they came; there is the false prophet! there is the wolf! there is the apostate! there is the seducer from Christ!

Again, Christ foretells of many false prophets, Mat. 24:11. "And many false prophets will rise, and will deceive many." And verse 24, "For there will arise false christs, and false prophets, and will show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they will deceive the very elect."

And as Christ himself, so his apostles also after him, by the same Spirit, foretell of the same thing.

The Apostle Paul speaks of seducing spirits in the latter times, and of doctrines of devils, which would prevail to cause a departure in some from the faith. 1 Tim. 4:1. -- And if, in those days, the power of seducers was so great as to draw from the truth, which was then so manifest and living, how easy it would be to keep from the truth afterwards, when it had been long lost and out of remembrance, and thereby deceit gotten into the place and name of it.

The Apostle Peter also foretold of "false teachers," who should "privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them:" These would so prevail, says Peter, that their "pernicious ways" should be followed by many, and "the way of truth evil spoken of." 2 Pet. 2:1-2.

Again, Paul, in his 2nd Epistle to Timothy, speaks of the last days, that the times therein should be "perilous;" chap. 3. Christ had said, "The love of many should wax cold, and iniquity abound." Mat. 24:12. And Paul shows how the times would prove very perilous, by the abounding of iniquity. "In the last days perilous times will come; for men will be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural

affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God." 2 Tim. 3:1-4. Behold what kind of fruit sprung up from the false doctrine of the false teachers in this apostasy from the truth. And yet all this came under a form of godliness; "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." verse 5. Christ sent the power of godliness into the world, to subdue the root from whence all this springs; to kill the evil nature inwardly. But in the apostasy the evil nature is not killed, because the power is denied which would kill it, and the outward form of religion is kept up to cover the evil nature within.

Look anywhere among the leaders of the apostasy and see: Is self-love killed? Is covetousness killed? Are boasting and pride killed? Is the love of pleasures killed? Are persecutors and oppressors killed? And are man's honor and glory laid in the dust? No, they are but covered with an outward form. Their life is still in them, for the power wherewith they should be killed was at first denied, and now is lost and not known. Where there is the life, there is the power; and where there is the power, the evil nature is killed. But where the evil nature is not killed, there is only a form of godliness, a covering, a painted sepulcher, but rottenness within.

Now those last days and last times were not far off, but began then: for the apostle exhorts Timothy to turn away from such, verse 5. "From such turn away:" implying that even then there were such to be turned away from. And he says, verse 8, that they did then resist the truth, like Jannes and Jambres; who did strive to resist the life and power that was in Moses. Thus these were come even then, when the apostle wrote this epistle to Timothy.

And Jude says, that "ungodly men, turning the grace of

God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ," were "crept in" already, verse 4 of his epistle. And the Apostle John speaks very expressly, 1 John 2:18-19. "Little children, it is the last time; and as you have heard that antichrist will come, even now there are many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us," etc. Christ, instructing his disciples concerning the last times, tells them there will arise false christs, with great power of deceit. Mat. 24:24. Now, says John here, there are come "many antichrists, whereby we know it is the last time." These did not abide in the doctrines of the apostles, who preached "the everlasting gospel," nor in the spirit and principle which they were in; but "went out" from them, from their spirit (from the anointing to which they kept, and by which they were kept) into another spirit, and preached another gospel. The gospel of antichrist was not the power of God to kill what is earthly, but rather consisted in a dead, literal knowledge of things whereby the earthly might be fed and kept alive.

Look now into the estate of the churches then, according to what the Scripture records of them, and the symptoms of the apostasy will plainly appear. The church of Ephesus (among whom some of the grievous wolves had entered, Acts 20:29) had left their first love. Rev. 2:4. The churches of Galatia were bewitched from the gospel. Gal. 3:1. The church at Colossae was entangled, and made subject to the rudiments of the world, and ordinances (which perish with the using) after the commandments and doctrines of men. Col. 2:20,22. The church at Corinth also was haunted with false apostles, 2 Cor. 11:12-13, insomuch that the apostle was afraid lest that church should be corrupted by them. verse 3. The church in Pergamus had those who held the doctrine of Balaam. Rev. 2:14. The church in Thyatira allowed the

woman Jezebel, which called herself a prophetess, to seduce and bring forth children in the apostasy. Rev. 2:20,23. The church in Sardis had a name to be alive, but was dead; Rev. 3:1. having defiled her garments. verse 4. The church in Laodicea looked upon herself as rich, and increased with goods, and as having need of nothing; but was wretched, miserable, poor, blind (so then the eye was put out), and naked, lacking the gold, lacking the clothing, lacking the eye-salve. Rev. 3:17-18. And lastly, all the Gentiles were warned by Paul, in his epistle to the church at Rome, to look to their standing; lest they, falling from the faith, from the truth, from the life, into the apostasy (as the Jews had done), might also feel the severity of God, as the Jews had. chap. 11:20-22.

Thus it is evident that the apostasy had gotten footing, and begun to spread in the apostles' days: and the Apostle John, in the spirit, beholding the future state of things, sees it over-spread and over-run all: "all nations drunk with the cup of fornication." Rev. 18:3. The way of truth had been maligned long before, 2 Pet. 2:2 and the Rock of Ages, which alone can establish in the truth, had been forsaken. All became as a sea; and up rose the beast (which could not rise while the power of truth stood), and the woman upon the beast, with the cup of deceit and error from the life in her hand. And this she gives all the nations to drink, and they drink, and are drunk with it, so that all nations have been intoxicated with the doctrines and practices of the apostasy. They have taken that for truth which the harlot told them was truth, and they have observed those things as the commands of God which the harlot told them were the commands of God. And by this means they have never come to be married to Christ, to be in union with him, to receive the law of life from his Spirit, and to know the liberty from the bondage of corruption. Rather, they have been in the bed of fornication

with the harlot, and have pleased, glutted, and satisfied themselves with this fornication. Thus corruption did overspread all the earth.

And though God reserved to himself a remnant to worship him, and to give some testimony to his truth during all this time; yet the "beast" (which was managed by the harlot) had power over them: power to make war with them; power to overcome them. Rev. 13:7. The "beast" had power over all "kindreds, tongues, and nations" everywhere; to overcome the "saints," and suppress the truth they were moved to give testimony to; and to set up the worship of the "beast," and make all the earth fall down before that. Rev. 13:7-8.

Now, by what has been expressed, is it not manifest to every eye in simplicity and plainness, that there has been a great apostasy from the true knowledge of Christ, and that a universal corruption and power of death has sprung up in the place of the power of his life and grace? "The grace of God, which brings salvation," has disappeared; and "the abomination of desolation" has taken up its place, and filled it with deadly venom against the truth, and against the life: so that enmity against God, under a pretense of love and zeal to him, has reigned generally in the hearts of men, from the times of the apostles to this present day.

Position II

That in this great apostasy, the true state of Christianity has been lost. If they apostatized from the Spirit, from the light, from the life; then they were gone from it—they lost it.

Now, it could be described in a multitude of particulars how the state of Christianity has been lost: but this would be

too vast and tedious. It may suffice, therefore, to set forth a few considerable examples.

1. The true rule of Christianity was lost. The rule of a Christian, which is to direct, guide, and order him in his whole course, was apostatized from, and lost.

Question: What is a Christian's rule,³ whereby he is to steer and order his course?

Answer: A Christian is to be a follower of Christ, and consequently must have the same rule to walk by as Christ had. A Christian proceeds out from Christ, has the same life in him, and therefore needs the same rule. Christ had the fullness of life, and of his fullness we all receive a measure of the same life. "We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Ephes. 5:30. Indeed, we came out of the same spring of life from whence he came: "For both he that sanctifies, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Heb. 2:11. Now what was his rule? Was it not the fullness of life which he received? And what is the rule of those who are sanctified? Is it not the measure of life which they receive? Was not Christ's rule the law of the Spirit; the law which the Spirit wrote in his heart? And is not their rule the law of the Spirit; the law which the Spirit writes in their hearts?

How was Christ made a king and a priest? Was it by the law of a carnal commandment, or by the power of an endless life? And how are they made kings and priests to God? Rev. 1:6. Is it by the law of a carnal commandment, or is it by the power of the same endless life? "Lo, I come to do your will, O

³ The word *rule* is used throughout to refer to that which governs, rules, or has true authority in the life of the believer.

God," says Christ, "when he comes into the world." Heb. 10:5,7. But by what rule? By what law? "Thy law is within my heart." Psalm 40:8. And the same Spirit who wrote it there, is also to write the new covenant, with all the laws of it, in the heart of every Christian, from the least to the greatest. Heb. 8:9-10. Yes, the same Spirit that dwelt in Christ's heart, is to dwell in their hearts, according to the promise of the covenant. Ezek. 36:27.

This was Paul's rule, according to which he walked, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus." Rom. 8:1-2. This made him "free from the law of sin and death." Where is the law of sin written? Where is the law of death written? Is it not written in the heart? And must not the law of righteousness and life be written there also, if it be able to deal with sin and death? The Spirit forms the heart anew, forms Christ in the heart, begets a new creature there, which cannot sin "(He that is born of God sins not)." And this is the rule of righteousness, the new creature, or the spirit of life in the new creature. Gal. 6:15-16. "In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them." Mark: here is the rule; the new creature, which is begotten in everyone that is born of God. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature;" and this new creature is to be his rule. And as any man walks according to this rule, according to the new creature, according to the law of light and life that the Spirit continually breathes into the new creature, he has peace. But as he transgresses that, and walks not after the Spirit, but after the flesh, he walks out of the light, out of the life, out of the peace, into the sea, into the death, into the trouble, into the condemnation. Here then is the law of the converted man—the new creature; and the law of the new creature is the Spirit of life which begat him, which lives, and breathes,

and gives forth his law continually in him. "You have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things." 1 John 2:20. How came they to know all things? Does not John say it was by the "anointing"? The anointing was in them, a fountain or well-spring of light and life, issuing forth continually such rivers and streams of life within, as they needed no other teacher in the truth and way of life. verse 27. The "Comforter" did refresh their hearts sufficiently, and led them into all truth.

Search the apostles' epistles, and you will find them testifying of the Lord's sending his Spirit into the hearts of Christians. You will find exhortations to them not to grieve or quench the Spirit, but to follow as they were led. They were to "live in the Spirit," and to "walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5:25. And the Spirit was to walk, and live, and bring forth his own life and power in them. 2 Cor. 6:16. And what can be the proper and full rule of God's sons and daughters except the light of the Spirit of life, which they receive from their Father? In this way God did advance the state of a believer above the state of the Jews under the law. For the outward Jew had the law written with the finger of God, yet in tables of stone. But we have the law written by the finger of God in the tablet of our hearts. Theirs was a law without, at a distance from them, and the priest's lips were to preserve the knowledge of it, and to instruct them in it. But now there is a law within, close at hand, the immediate light of the Spirit of life shining immediately in the heart. Those that know this inward law need no man to teach them; but have the Spirit of prophecy in themselves, and living teachings from him continually. These are made such kings and priests to God, as the state of the law did but represent.

The gospel is the substance of all the shadows contained in the law. A Christian is he that comes into this substance,

and lives in this substance, and in whom this substance lives; and his rule is the substance itself, in which he lives, and which lives in him. Christ is the substance, who lives in the Christian, and he in Christ. Christ lives in him by his Spirit, and he lives in Christ by the same Spirit. There he lives, and has fellowship with the Father and the Son, in the light wherein they live, and not by any outward rule. 1 John 1:6-7.

Question: But what is the rule now in the apostasy?

Answer: Among the Catholics, the rule is the Scripture, interpreted by the church (as they call themselves), with a mixture of their own precepts and traditions.

Among the Protestants, the rule is the Scriptures, according as they can understand them by their own study, or according as they can receive an understanding of them from such men as they account orthodox. And from here arise continual differences and groups and sects; one following this interpretation, another that.

This is a grievous apostasy, which is the root, spring, and foundation of all the rest; for he that misses in his beginning, he that begins his religion without the true rule, how can he proceed aright in anything afterwards?

Objection: But are not the Scriptures the word of God? And is not the word of God to be a Christian's rule? If everyone should be left to his own spirit, what confusion and uncertainty would this produce!

Answer: The Scriptures are not that living Word, which is appointed by God to be the rule of a Christian; but they contain words spoken by the Spirit of God, testifying of that Word, and pointing to that Word which is to be the rule.

"Search the Scriptures, for in them you think to have eternal life, and these are they which testify of me; and you will not come to me that you may have life." John 5:39-40. The Scriptures are to be searched for the testimony which they give of Christ; and when that testimony is received, Christ is to be found, and life received from him. But the Pharisees formerly, and Christians since (I mean Christians in name) search the Scriptures, but do not come to Christ for the life. Rather, they stick to the letter of the Scriptures, and oppose the life with the letter. They keep themselves from the life by their wisdom and knowledge in the letter. In this way they put the Scriptures into the place of Christ, and so honor neither Christ nor the Scriptures.

It would have been no honor to John the Baptist to have been taken for the Light. John's honor was to point to it. Nor is it any honor to the Scriptures to be called the Word of God; but their honor is to uncover and testify of the Word. Now hear what the Scriptures call the Word; "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." John 1:1. "And the Word was made flesh." verse 14. This was the name of Christ, when he came into the world in the flesh, to sow his life in the world. And when he comes again into the world, out of a far country, to fight with the beast and false prophet, and to cleanse the earth of the harlot's fornication and idols, he shall have the same name again; "his name is called the Word of God." Rev. 19:13. Therefore Peter calls that, "the Word of God which lives and abides forever." 1 Pet. 1:23. And this Word that lives and abides forever was the Word that they preached. verse 25. And they that believed did not simply applaud the words that the apostles spoke for the Word; but rather received the thing they spoke of, "the ingrafted Word;" which being received with a meek, quiet, and submissive spirit, "is able to save the

soul." Jam. 1:21. This is "the Word of faith" that is "nigh, in the heart and in the mouth." Rom. 10:8. This is the Word that stands at the door of the heart, and speaks to be let in "(Behold, I stand at the door and knock)." And when it is let in, it speaks in the heart what is to be heard and done. It is nigh; it is in the heart, and in the mouth; to what end? "That you might hear it, and do it." The living Word, which is "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," dividing in the mouth, and dividing in the heart, the vile from the precious. Yes, it reaches to the very inmost part of the heart, and cuts between the roots, Heb. 4:12. This Word you are to hear and do. You are to part with all vile words, the vile manner of living, the vile course and worship of the world outwardly, and the vile thoughts and course of sin inwardly, as fast as the Word uncovers them to you. And you are to exercise yourself in that which is folly and madness to the eye of the world, and a grievous cross to your own worldly nature. Indeed, when the Word reaches to the very nature, life, and spirit within, then the fleshly life in the heart must not be spared. Nor should the foolish, weak thing (to man's wise eye) which rises in its place be rejected: which, when it is received, is but like a little seed, even the least of seeds. This is the word of life; this is the true, living rule, and way to eternal life; and this is the obedience; this is the hearing and doing of the Word. "He that has an ear, let him hear."

Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith: prove yourselves. "Know you not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except you be reprobates?" 2 Cor. 13:5. Are you in the faith? Then Christ is in you. Is Christ not in you? Then you are in the reprobate state, out of the faith. Is Christ in you, and should he not hold the reins, and rule? Should the living Word be in the heart, and not be the rule of the

heart? Should he speak in the heart, and the man or woman in whom he speaks run to the words of Scripture formerly spoken, to know whether these be his words or no? No, no, his sheep know his voice better than this. Did the apostle John, who had seen and tasted and handled and preached the word of life, send Christians to his epistles, or any other part of Scripture, to be their rule? No, he directed them to the anointing as a sufficient teacher. 1 John 2:27. "He that believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:38. He that has the fountain of life in him, issuing out rivers of living water continually, has he need to go elsewhere to fetch water? "The kingdom of heaven is within you," says Christ; and he bids "seek the kingdom." Light the candle, sweep your own house, seek diligently for the kingdom; there it is, if you can find it. Now he that has found the kingdom within, should he look without, into words spoken about the kingdom, to find the laws of the kingdom? Are not the laws of the kingdom to be found within the kingdom? Is the kingdom in the heart, and yet the laws of the kingdom written without in a book? Is not the gospel the ministration of the Spirit? And shall he who has received the Spirit run back to the letter to be his guide? Shall the living Spirit, that gave forth the Scriptures, be present, and not have preeminence above his own written words?

What is the proper intent of the letter? Is it not to testify of the Spirit, and to bring one to the Spirit? The law, the prophets, John, led to Christ in the flesh; and he was to be the increasing light, while they should decrease. Christ's words in the flesh, the apostles' words afterwards, and all words since, are but to lead to Christ in the Spirit, to the eternal and living substance. And when the words of Christ, of the apostles, or any other words spoken from the same

Spirit in these days, have brought one to the Spirit, to the feeling and settling of the soul in the living foundation, and to the building and perfecting of the man of God therein, they have then attained their end and glory. But to praise the written words, without understanding their voice, while keeping at a distance from the thing that they invite to, this puts the words out of their place, out of their proper use and service, and so attains neither their end nor their glory. And even if man puts upon these words that which seems to be a greater glory, namely, to make them his rule and guide, this is but a dishonor both to them and to the Spirit who gave them for a different purpose.

Now for the other part of the objection, that if men should be left to their own spirits, and should follow the guidance of their own spirits, it would produce confusion and uncertainty: I do acknowledge it; it would indeed do so! But we are not here speaking of leaving a man to his own spirit, but rather directing and guiding a man to the Word and Spirit of life; to know and hear the voice of Christ, which gathers and translates man out of his own spirit into Christ's Spirit. Here there is no confusion or uncertainty; but rather order, certainty, and stability.

The light of God's Spirit is a certain and infallible rule, and the eye that sees it is a certain eye. Man's understanding of the Scriptures is uncertain and fallible. He, not having the true ear, receives a literal, uncertain knowledge of things into his uncertain understanding, and deceives his soul. In this way, in the midst of his wisdom and knowledge of the Scriptures, man is lost in his own erring and uncertain mind, and his soul deceived, for lack of a true root and foundation in himself. But he that is come to the true Shepherd, and knows his voice, he cannot be deceived. Yes, he can read the Scripture safely, and taste the true sweetness of the words that

came from the life.

But the man who is outside of the life feeds on the husks, and can receive nothing more. He has gathered a dead, dry, literal, husky knowledge out of the Scripture, and this he can relish. But when the life of the words and things there spoken of is declared to him, he cannot receive them, he himself being outside of that wherein they were written, and wherein alone they can be understood. So then, such a man having lost the life, what else can he do? He can do no other than praise the written letter, though his soul is starved, and lies in famine and death, for lack of the bread of life.

The Scribes and Pharisees made a great noise about the law and ordinances of Moses, claiming that Christ and his disciples were breakers and profaners of them. Yet they themselves did not truly honor the law and ordinances of Moses, but rather their own doctrines, commandments, and traditions. So it is now with those who make a great noise about the Scriptures, and about the institutions of the apostles. These do not honor the Scriptures, or the institutions of the apostles; but rather their own meanings, their own conceivings, their own inventions and imaginations thereupon. They run to the Scriptures with that understanding which is outside of the truth, and which never shall be let into the truth. And when they are not able to reach and comprehend the truth as it is, they then study, they invent, they imagine a meaning. They form a likeness, a similitude of the truth as near as they can, and this must pass for the truth; and this then they honor and bow to as the will of God, though it is not the will of God, but a likeness of their own inventing and forming. They do not worship God, nor honor the Scriptures, but they honor and worship the works of their own brain. And every scripture which man has in this way formed a meaning out of, and has not read in the true and

living light of God's eternal Spirit, he has made an image thereby; he has made an idol of. And the respect and honor he gives to this meaning, is not a respect and honor given to God, but rather to his own image, to his own idol.

Oh, how many are your idols, you Christians of England! How full of images and idols are you, you spiritual notionists! You have run from one idea to another, with the same mind and spirit with which you began at first! But the founder of images has never been discovered and destroyed in you, and so he is still at work among you all; and great will your sorrow and distress be when the Lord's quick eye searches him out, and reveals his just wrath against him.

In my heart and soul I honor the Scriptures, and I long to read them with the pure eye, and in the pure light of the living Spirit of God. But the Lord preserve me from reading one line of them in my own will, or interpreting any part of them according to my own understanding, but only as I am guided, led, and enlightened by him, in the will and understanding which come from him. In his light, all Scripture, every writing of God's Spirit which is from the breath of his life, is profitable to build up and perfect the man of God. But the instructions, the reproofs, the observations, the rules, the grounds of hope and comfort, or whatever else which man gathers out from the Scriptures (he himself being outside of the life), these do not have the true profit, nor build up the true thing.

2. The true worship was lost.

The true worship of God in the gospel is in the Spirit. "The hour comes, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks

such to worship him." John 4:23. The true worship is in the spirit, and in the truth, and the true worshipers worship there. Such worshipers the Father seeks, and such worship he accepts; but all other worship is false worship, and all other worshipers are false worshipers. Did not God refuse Cain's sacrifice formerly? And can he now accept any sacrifice or worship that is offered in that nature? He that worships without the Spirit, he worships in Cain's nature. But he that worships aright, must have his nature changed, and must worship in that faith, in that life, in that nature, in that Spirit whereby and whereto he is changed. For without being in this, and abiding in this, it is impossible to please God in anything.

He that is the true worshiper must keep to the law of faith, the law of the Spirit of Life in him, the law which he receives by faith fresh from the Spirit of Life continually. He must hear and observe the voice of the living Word in all his worship, and must worship in the presence and power and guidance of that Word.

I shall give only the example of prayer. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." Eph. 6:18. Notice: all prayer and supplication must be in the Spirit. If a man speak ever so much from his own spirit, with ever so much earnestness and affection, yet this is no prayer. It is prayer only so far as the Spirit moves it, and so far as the Spirit leads and guides in it. If a man begins without the Spirit, or goes on without the Spirit, this is not in the true worship; this is in his own will, and so it is will-worship.⁴ It is according to his own understanding and nature, both of which are to be crucified, and not to be followed in any way under the gospel. "We are the circumcision, which worship

⁴ Will-worship is a term used to refer to any form of worship that comes from man's resources and is according to man's will.

God in the Spirit," (here are the true worshipers, "the circumcision;" and here is the true worship, "in the Spirit;") "and have no confidence in the flesh." If a man address himself to any worship of God without his Spirit, is this not confidence in the flesh? If he begins without the moving of his Spirit, does he not begin in the flesh? If he goes on without the Spirit's carrying on, does he not proceed in the strength and confidence of the flesh? But the worship of the Spirit is in the Spirit's will, and time, and is carried on by his light and power. This power keeps down the intellectual and affectionate part of man, wherein all the world worships, offering up the unaccepted sacrifices, even the lame and the blind offerings, which God's soul hates.

Now the worship that is not found in man's will and time, but rather in that which abides forever, this worship is continual. There is a continual praying unto God. There is a continual blessing and praising of his name, in eating, or drinking, or whatever else is done. There is a continual bowing to the majesty of the Lord in every thought, in every word, in every action. This is the true worship, and this is the rest or sabbath wherein the true worshipers worship.

When the creation of God is finished; when the child is formed in the light, and the life breathed into him; then God brings him forth into his holy land, where he keeps his sabbath. These are in the faith which is the substance of the things hoped for under the law. They have come out from all the shadows and types of the law, and from all the heathenish observations of days and times in the spirit of this world, into the true sabbath, into the true rest, where they have no more to work, but God works all in them in his own time, according to his own pleasure. "We who have believed, do enter into rest." Heb. 4:3. "And he that is entered into his rest, has ceased from his works, as God from his." verse 10. He that

has the least taste of faith knows a measure of rest, finding the life working in him. His soul is daily led further and further into life by the working of the life, and the heavy yoke of his own laboring after life is taken off from his shoulders. Now this is the truth, the life, the sabbath, and the worship of the soul that is led into the truth, and preserved in the truth.

Question: But what is the worship now in the apostasy?

Answer: Among the Catholics, it is a very gross worship; a worship more carnal than was ever the worship of the old covenant law. For though the law in its nature was outward and carnal, yet it was taught and prescribed by the wisdom of God, and was profitable in its place, and to its end. But the worship among the Catholics was invented by the corrupt wisdom, and set up in the corrupt will of man, and has no true profit, but keeps one from the life, from the power, from the Spirit, in fleshly observations, which feed and please the fleshly nature. Look upon their days consecrated to saints, and their canonical hours of prayer, and their praying in an unknown tongue [Latin], with their fastings, feastings, saying of Ave Marias, Paternosters, Creeds, etc. Are not all these outside of the life, out of the Spirit, and after the invention and will of the flesh?

And the worship of the Protestants is not much different. For their worship is also from a fleshly principle, and in their own times and wills, and according to their own understanding and apprehension of things. It comes not from the rising up and guidance of the infallible life of the Spirit in them; for that they will quench. They also observe days and times, and perishing ordinances, and are not come out of the flesh, into that Spirit where true worship is to be known.

3. The faith, the true faith, was lost.

The faith which gives victory over the world; the faith which feeds the life of the just, and slays the unjust; the faith which is pure and gives entrance into the rest of God; the faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen; this faith has been lost.

For those who bear the name of Christian, and say they believe in Christ, and have faith in him, cannot with their faith overcome the world; but rather are daily overcome by the world. Are not these Christians found in the honors, or in the fashions, or in the customs, or in the worships of the world? Indeed they are so far from overcoming these, that they are overcome by them!

And the faith of these Christians (so called) is not a mystery⁵ (they know not the mystery of it, which is held in a pure conscience), but rather consists in believing a historical relation, and in a fleshly improving of that, and can be held in an impure conscience.

They have not entered into rest by their faith; for they do not know the true sabbath in the Lord, but are still in a shadowy sabbath. Neither is it the substance of what they hope for; but the substance of what they hope for is still foreign to them. They are not come to "Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, to God the Judge, Christ the Mediator, and the blood of sprinkling," and so to unity and certainty in the life. Rather, these remain in mere opinions, ways, and practices suitable to the earthly spirit; which may

⁵ Penington uses the word *mystery* to refer to that which cannot be known by natural faculties, but must be revealed by the Spirit of God.

easily be shaken, and must be shaken down to the ground, if ever they will know the building of God, and the true faith.

4. The love, the true love, was lost.

The innocent love, which thinks no evil, nor wishes evil, much less can do any evil to any; but suffers long, and is kind, meek, humble, not seeking its own, but the good of others; this love was lost. The unfeigned love was banished; and a feigned love, such a love as enmity and violence proceed from, has taken the place of it. The true love loves the enemy, and cannot return enmity for enmity, but seeks the good of those who hate it. But this counterfeit love can persecute and hate that which it calls a friend, yes, even a brother, because of some difference in opinion or practice. The love that was in Christ taught him to lay down his life for his sheep; and he that has the same love, can lay down his life for his brother. But the love that is now among Christians tends rather to the taking away of life.

What is the love among the Catholics? Look to their inquisitions, their wraths, their burnings at the stake, etc. What is the love in New England? It is a love that will imprison or banish their brother if he differ even a little in judgment or practice about worship. Indeed, they whip, burn in the hand, cut off ears, just like the bishops of Old England. If one had told them, when they fled from the persecution of the bishops here, that they themselves would do such things, they would have been apt to reply, 'What? Are we dogs that return to vomit?' But they fled from the cross, which would have crucified that persecuting spirit, and so they carried it alive with them to New England.

And what is the love here in Old England? Is it not a love

that whips, stocks, imprisons, stones, and mocks? Yes, the very teachers (which should be patterns of love to others) will cast into prison, and take the goods of their brother. See the *Record of Sufferings for Tithes in England*, which may make any tender heart bleed to read it, and will lie as a brand of infamy on the magistracy and ministry of England to succeeding generations.

Is this the love of the righteous seed? Or is it Cain's love, which is a mere profession, in word, in show, but not in deed and in truth? How can such men love God? No, if the true love of God were in them, this enmity could not stand, nor such bad fruit spring forth. These have not seen the Father or the Son.

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." -- And by this all men may know, that those that now go for Christians are not Christ's disciples, in that they *do not* love one another. They are not at unity in the light, and so cannot love one another there. Their unity consists only in outward forms, in opinions, in professions, in practices; and so any difference there quickly stirs up the enmity, causing risings in the heart against each other. But true love grows from true union and fellowship in the light. Where that is not known, there cannot be true love in the Spirit, but only a feigned love in the flesh.

5. The true hope, joy, and peace are lost.

The true ground of hope is Christ in the heart, and the true hope is that which arises from this ground, from the experiencing of Christ there; "Christ in you the hope of glory." Col. 1:27. What is the true Christian's hope? It is

Christ in him; he "has eternal life abiding in him;" and he knows this cannot but lead to glory. But what is the common Christian's hope? He fastens his hope upon the words he has read, upon belief in a written testimony. He reads, "He that believes shall be saved." I believe, he thinks, therefore I shall be saved. And thus, even as he has raised up the wrong faith, and the wrong love, so he raises up a wrong hope. And this hope will perish; for it is the hope of the hypocrite. It is a hope in the hypocritical nature, which complies with scripture words, but is not in union with God, nor with the life of the Scriptures. And so being without the anchor, is tossed by the waves of the sea.

The true joy is in the Spirit, from what is felt, and enjoyed, and hoped for there. But the common Christian's joy is from things which he gathers into and comprehends in his understanding; or from flickers of emotion which he feels in the affectionate part, from a fire and sparks of his own kindling, where he finds his warmth and comfort.

And the true peace stands in the reconciliation with God, by having that broken down which causes the wrath. The Lamb of God breaks down the wall of separation in the heart. The blood of Jesus (wherein is the life) cleanses away the sin there, makes the heart pure, and unites the pure heart to the pure God. Here is union, here is fellowship, here is peace. But the common Christian's peace is from a misunderstanding of Scriptures, while the wall of separation remains standing, and while wickedness still lodges in the heart. They reason among themselves, using scriptural words, that God is at peace with them, and that they are in union with him. But all the while, that which is truly of God within them witnesses against them, wars with them, and there is no peace.

6. The true repentance, conversion, and regeneration have been lost.

The true repentance is from dead works, and from the dead principle from where all the dead works proceed. But these have not been repented of, but rather cherished in the apostasy. The building up and exercise of religion in the apostasy has been in that understanding which must be destroyed. And the carnal will, which should have been crucified, has been pleased and fed with this religion.

The true conversion is from the power of Satan to God, from the darkness to the light. But in the apostasy, men have not known God or Satan, the light or the darkness; but have erred, taking the one for the other, worshiping the devil instead of God, Rev. 13:4. and following the dark conceivings of their own minds concerning Scripture, and calling it light.

Regeneration is a changing of man by the birth that is of the Spirit. It is the stripping of the creature of its own nature, of its own understanding, of its own will, and forming it anew in the womb of the Spirit; so that the old creature is passed away, and a new thing comes forth, which grows up daily in the new life towards the fullness of Christ. But now, if men could only open their eyes, they would see that their birth is fleshly, and consists, at best, in a conformity to the letter, which the old nature may imitate and attain. But the immortal seed is not sprung up in them. They are not dead to the mortal, nor alive to the immortal.

7. The true wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption are lost.

The true wisdom stands in the fear of God, and in departing from evil. Those who are taught of God learn this

wisdom, and are thereby made wise unto salvation. But most that are called Christians are not come to the fear of God; and look down upon it as legal, and not pertaining to the gospel.

The true righteousness stands in the faith, in hearing and obeying the word of faith. From what came the righteousness of the law, but by hearing and obeying the voice of the law? From what comes the righteousness of the gospel, but by hearing and obeying the Word of faith, who is preached (and who is the Preacher) in the heart? The Apostle Paul makes this comparison. Rom. 10. The righteousness of the law speaks thus, "The man that does these things, shall live in them." But how speaks the Word of faith? "The word is close to you, in your mouth, and in your heart;" he that does and hears that Word, shall live in it. "The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live." Disobedience to the written law was unrighteousness, and brought death. Likewise, disobedience to the living Word is unrighteousness, and cannot be justified, but condemned. When the soul hears, believes, and obeys, then it is justified; then its former sins are forgotten, and this is imputed to it as righteousness. But when the soul will not hear, will not believe, will not obey, this unbelief is judged in him, and his sins are retained, and not remitted.

The true sanctification consists in the growth of the seed, and its spreading, like leaven, over the heart, and over the whole man. By faith Christ is formed in the heart; and as this seed, this leaven, this man grows, so he makes the person holy in whom he grows. The seed of life, the kingdom of heaven, is a holy thing; and as it grows and spreads, it purges out the old leaven, and makes the lump new. But now, in Christians that have grown up in the apostasy, this seed is not known. This leaven is not discerned. So their holiness

consists in a conformity to rules of Scripture, received into the old heart and understanding. And what a noise has man's holiness made in the world, throughout all the night of the apostasy!

Redemption consists in being bought by the price of the life, out of sin, out of death, out of the earth, out of the power of the devil. It is a casting off the strong man out of the heart, with all that he brought in, and a delivering from his power. It is a dissolving of the work of sin, which the devil has wrought in the heart, and a setting the soul, which is immortal, at liberty, free from sin, and free unto righteousness. This is the true redemption. But the redemption in the apostasy is a feigned redemption, wherein salvation from sin, and the devil, and his power, is not felt or experienced; but the strong man is still in the heart, and keeps the soul in death, and brings forth fruits of death daily.

The Christians formerly (in the first day of the breaking forth of God's power) had Christ in them, the living Word. They opened their hearts to him, received him in, felt him there, and found him made unto them their wisdom, their righteousness, their sanctification, their redemption. 1 Cor. 1:30. They had the thing that these words signify and speak of, and knew the meaning of the words by an experience of the thing. But Christians now, in the apostasy, have a multitude of apprehensions taken from the words, without experiencing the thing the words speak of; and therein lays their religion.

8. The church, the true church, was lost.

The true church was a company gathered out of the world into God, begotten of, and gathered into his life by the

living Word, and so they had a true place and habitation in God. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, calls them the “church in God.” The church under the gospel is made up of true Israelites, gathered out of their own spirits and nature into the measure of the Spirit of God in them. They are begotten of God, born of his Spirit, led by him out of Egypt, through the wilderness, to Zion the holy mount. There they find the elect and precious cornerstone which is laid in Zion; and being living stones, they are built upon it into Jerusalem the holy city. 1 Pet. 2:5-6. Heb. 12:22. This is the true church.

Everyone that believes in Christ is a living stone; and being a living stone, he is laid upon the living foundation, and so is a part of the building in the temple of the living God. Yes, his body and spirit being cleansed, he himself is a temple wherein God dwells, appears, and is worshiped. And the gathering of any of these stones together at any time in the life and name of Christ, is a larger temple, and such a temple as Christ never fails to be in the midst of.

But what has the church been in the apostasy? A building of stone, say some; and that not only among Catholics, but among Protestants in England also. Many have called a stone building the church, the temple, the house of God, claiming it to be a holy place; and have showed it by keeping off their hats while they were in it. Others say it is not the stone building, but the people that meet there. But these still scoff if they hear a man speak of being moved by the Spirit.

9. The ministry, the true ministry, has been lost.

The true ministry was a ministry made and appointed by the Spirit, by the gift that the Spirit bestowed on them, and

by the Spirit sending them and appointing them to their work. Christ bid his apostles and disciples wait at Jerusalem for the promise of the Spirit. And when he had given them the Spirit, he gave these to the church for the work of the ministry. Eph. 4:11-12. Acts 20:28. Now, if none can be a member of the true church but by being begotten out of death into life by the Spirit, surely none is able to minister to him who is so begotten, except by the same Spirit. So these receiving their ministry of the Lord Jesus, Acts 20:24. and the gift of the Spirit from him, they were made "able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:6. They were able in God to minister from his Spirit to the spirits of his people. They did not minister a literal knowledge of things to the intellect of man; but they led men to the Spirit of God, and ministered spiritual things to that spiritual understanding which was given them of God. Neither did they make use of their own wisdom and art to tickle the natural ear; but spoke to the conscience, with the demonstration of the Spirit in the sight of God, as it pleased the Spirit to give them utterance.

But how have ministers been made in the apostasy? By orders from men, set up in their own wills, after their own inventions. And how have they been qualified, but by human arts and languages, which have been of high esteem in the church, since the language and skill of the Spirit of God has been lost. Here God does not choose who will be his ministers; but any man can appoint his son to be a minister, if he will only educate him in learning, and send him to the university. These then are able to minister unto man the things of man, according to human skill; and this, in the dark night of apostasy, has passed for a true call to the ministry of God. Thus ministry also is but an invention of man, made by

man, and comes not from the Spirit, nor is able to minister spirit to spirit.

Objection: But has there been no true religion since the days of the apostles? No true rule, no true worship, no true faith, no true love, no true hope, joy, or peace? No true repentance, conversion, and regeneration? No true wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? No true church, no true ministry? What is become of all our forefathers? Did they all perish? And has not this ministry converted many to God? Were not you yourselves converted by it? Indeed, have not many of them been martyrs, and witnessed to the truth of God?

Answer: The worship in the nations, the faith, love, hope, joy, peace, repentance, conversion, regeneration, etc., which have been declared in nations for the truth, the churches, the ministries, these have been corrupted, and have never recovered their true and original state to this present day. There have been changes from one thing to another; but a true restoration has not been known.

Nevertheless, even throughout all the ages and generations, God reserved a seed to himself, which he caused to spring up in a remnant, and which he moved and carried on to witness against these corruptions. And just as fast as the beast killed and knocked these down, God raised up more.

Now this seed, this remnant, though they were not able to recover the full possession of the life and power that was lost; yet they had a true taste of it, and their testimony which they gave out from that taste was true. And so far as they kept to this testimony in the faith and patience which they had learned and received from God (though but in a low measure), they were accepted of him. So that all were not

lost in this night of darkness; but such as feared God, and knew and hearkened to his voice, these had the testimony of his presence with them, and tasted of his life and power in measure. God was not a hard master to them; but tender and gentle, and contented to reap what he sowed. But the appearance of God in this dark time was weak and low, and easily made a prey of. And this is very observable, that so long as the simplicity ran pure, it was preserved. But just as soon as the spirit of man was tempted to establish outward forms (either old, or newly invented) the wisdom of the flesh got in with it, grew up larger than it, corrupted the vessel, betrayed the simplicity, and lost the life.

Chapter III

Some Principles Guiding Out of the Apostasy and Into the True Christian Spirit and Life

1. That there is no salvation except by the true knowledge of Christ.

The knowledge of Christ is not literal, traditional, or fleshly, nor can it be received by the natural understanding; rather it is spiritual, and the understanding must be given by God. "He has given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true." 1 John 5:20. A man may read Scripture or hear sermons and thereby gather knowledge into the old understanding. But neither this understanding, nor the knowledge itself which is gathered, is spiritual, but rather fleshly, and so it cannot save. He that comes to receive an understanding from Christ, and to have the knowledge of Christ poured forth into his heart, knows the difference between this and the understanding into which man gathers things. The knowledge of Christ after the letter (and the kind of faith that corresponds to such knowledge) will not save. A man must know Christ in that Spirit, life, and power wherein he lives, if he rightly hopes to be saved by him. 2 Cor. 5:16-17.

2. That Christ saves by the new covenant: not by anything acquired by the mind in the oldness of the letter; but by a life begotten, which is new.

There are two covenants made mention of in Scripture, one of which is called the old, the other the new. The old belonged to the Jews, which is now done away, with their ceremonies, nation, and kingdom. Christ is the Mediator of the new covenant, which is better than the former. Heb. 8:6. By mediating between God and the creature, by bringing them together in and according to this covenant, he saves. But man, left in a state of disunion and distance from God, perishes. So then he that is not led by Christ into that covenant, is not in the state of salvation.

3. That the new covenant is written in the heart.

There is no other way of coming into the new covenant, of which Christ is High-priest and Mediator, but by having the laws of God written in the heart. "This is the covenant... I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts... They shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest." Heb. 8:10-11. Here he is speaking of the covenant whereof Christ is Mediator, ver. 6. which he calls a new covenant, ver. 8. and says it is not like the old, ver. 9. showing in two main particulars how the two are different: 1) The old was written outwardly in letters, to be read by the outward eye. The new is written inwardly in the heart and mind, and so can only be read by a spiritual eye. 2) Under the old they needed teaching from men. The priest's lips were to preserve knowledge, and the people were to seek the law at the priest's mouth. But in the new the law

should be so near to them, so clearly written in them, that they should need no one to teach them.

From the law comes the knowledge of God, and now the law is in the heart. And from the law in the heart springs up the true knowledge of God both in the least and in the greatest that are within this covenant. These need not say to one another, 'know the Lord.' This is the state of the new covenant, which the Christians came to in the first days of the church. 1 John 2:27. But it has been a foreign thing in this dark night of apostasy, and is still a foreign thing to many. "They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest." Observe: even the least in this covenant has the law so written in his heart that he need not seek elsewhere for knowledge.

4. That the Spirit of God alone can write the covenant in the heart; or that Christ writes the covenant by his Spirit.

Man, by all his wisdom, cannot attain this. Man is driven out from God, and cannot find the way back again to him without the teaching and leading of God's own Spirit. It is not in being educated in any way of religion from one's childhood, or by running to Christian denominations and sects that avails anything; but only the hearkening to the true voice of the true Spirit. It is written in the prophets concerning the children of this covenant that they shall all be taught of God: "And all your children shall be taught of the Lord." It is the Lord alone, who by his Spirit teaches them to come to Christ and to receive the new covenant into their hearts from Christ. Man is incapable of knowing or receiving Christ, or his covenant, until the Spirit has fitted and taught him. John 14:17. -- But when the Spirit has prepared and fitted a heart, then with his own finger he writes the pure law of the nature

and life of Christ therein. Receiving this, man comes out of his own dark spirit and nature into the true knowledge of God, and into union with him. "I will put my Spirit within you." Ezek. 36:27. This is part of the covenant, and indeed it is that part through which all the rest is realized.

5. Therefore, the first proper step in religion is to know how to meet with God's Spirit.

There is no true progress to be made in true religion until a man comes into the covenant; and there is no coming into the covenant but by the Spirit. Therefore, the first thing that is absolutely necessary to be known in religion is the Spirit of God, that is, his writing, or at least his motions and stirrings in the heart.

All things in religion that are acceptable to God flow from the Spirit. All knowledge is to come from him; for he alone has revealed and can reveal truth, and is appointed by Christ to lead into all truth. All worship is to be offered up in him: they that worship the Father, must worship him in the Spirit and in the truth; for the Father seeks such to worship him, and rejects all other worshipers and worship. Prayer is always to be in the Spirit. Eph. 6:18. Jude 20. So too with singing. Indeed the whole life and conduct of the Christian is to be in the Spirit. Gal. 5:25. The mortifying of all corruption is to be done by the Spirit. "If you, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, you shall live." Rom. 8:13. Indeed a Christian is nothing, and can do nothing, without the power and presence of the Spirit of God in him. So then, if nothing in religion can be done (and be accepted by God) without the Spirit, then the Spirit is the first thing to be looked after by him who would be truly religious.

6. *The first way of meeting with the Spirit of God is as a convincer of sin.*

Here is the true entrance. This is the key that opens into life eternal; he that can receive it, let him. It is not by soaring aloft into high imaginations and forms of worship; but by coming down to this low thing; namely, convincement of sin. This is the first and most proper work of the Spirit of God toward fallen man, whereby he opens the way toward the writing of God's law in the heart.

When Christ promised the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, he said this concerning him, "that he would convince the world of sin." John 16:8. Now, to those who are created anew in Christ and become his disciples, these receive *comfort* from the Spirit. But what is the Spirit to the unbelieving world? Or how may they feel any operation of him? He is to them a convincer of sin, and they find him checking them for, and convincing them of, their sins. Thus the great objective for man, while he lies in the darkness (for when he is translated into light this will be easy) is to distinguish the movings and stirrings of the Spirit of God. And here is the best way for a man in this state to know the movings of the Spirit: that which uncovers and exposes the evil, *that* is good. That which uncovers what is spiritually evil, *that* must of necessity be spiritually good. Or, that which discovers what is undoubtedly pure, and inclines the heart to it, *that* must be of God. And to know this, and be joined unto it, is a joining of the creature unto God. This is a true beginning of life eternal.

7. *The way that the Spirit of God convinces of sin is by his light shining in the conscience,¹ or inner man.*

Fallen man is darkness. The light shines in the darkness and shows man the evil which otherwise would lie hidden in him. Man fell from God, lost the image of God, and became wholly darkness. But the Spirit of God is light, and shines in the darkness, and strives with man to reduce him back again to that light from which he fell. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God," etc. 2 Cor. 4:6. Where did the apostles and Christians in those days meet with the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in Christ? God shined in their hearts. He that made the light to shine out of the deep darkness by his Spirit, Gen. 1:2, by the same Spirit he made the light of the knowledge of life shine in their dark hearts. And there it is also that the work of conviction is wrought by the same Spirit. He that perfects the good work in the heart, the same is he that begins it there. This beginning is by reproofing and convincing of sin so that man can turn his heart from it unto God, and unto an obedience to the righteousness which God makes manifest.

Now, he that does not meet with the Spirit in the beginning of his work, or slinks back, and does not go on with him, but rather smothers his reproofs, will never meet with him in the end. And then it will be too late for him to blame that

¹ Pennington and his contemporaries understood the conscience to be the deeper faculty of knowledge in the soul that can either agree with or disagree with the mind. It is important to note that both the mind and the conscience of the unbeliever are naturally defiled. Paul writes, Titus 1:15 "To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled." Therefore it is not the conscience *itself* that is, or that possesses, divine light (as many falsely assume). Rather, it is Christ the Light *in the conscience* that brings man to the knowledge of the truth and, when obeyed, to the transformation of the soul.

religion wherein there was only a dead form, and not the living power of God. He that will come to life eternal must be translated out of his dead understanding, and all his dead ways and worships, into a living seed, and remain in that seed. Then he shall know life indeed, and the true food of that life, and the true worship and service out from that life, and the reward belonging to all.

8. That this light which convinces of sin, shines in every conscience.

"He has showed you, O man, what is good." Micah 6:8. "The life," which was in Christ, was "the light of men." John 1:4. Christ is "the light of the world." John 8:12. God, as he loved the world, so he manifested his love to the world by sending his light into it, to "enlighten every man that comes into the world," John 1:9, that with the light they may see his Son. And as many as receive him, to these he gives power to become the sons of God. God desires "all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth;" so he has given that light to all, which may lead them to the knowledge of the truth which saves. "The grace of God, which brings salvation, has appeared unto all men." Titus 2:11.

As the enemy got possession of every man's heart by filling it with darkness, so Christ pursues and seeks to dispossess the enemy by the light that he sends after him into every man. And this is the condemnation of man: not that he lacks a light to witness against and draw him out from the enemy, but that he loves the enemy, and chooses to be one with the enemy, hating the light, and turning from it. John 3:19-20. Man hearkens to the reasonings of his mind against the light, and so smothers and chokes it. He does not turn to the light to have all the reasonings of his mind subdued by it, and subjected to it.

9. The true way to life eternal is by believing in the light of the Spirit, which shines in the conscience.

Man is in darkness, which keeps him in death; and there is no way to come out of the death except by coming out of the darkness. And there is no way to come out of the darkness but by following the light which exposes it, and calls out from it. The one that follows that light cannot remain in the darkness, but will surely come out.

There is an evil seed in man, calling for evil; and there is a good seed calling out from the evil unto the good. Now he that follows the good, cannot follow the evil, but departs from it. "I am the light of the world (says Christ); he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." John 8:12. But man's ruin is found in this; that he loves the darkness, he loves the world, the course of the world, the worships of the world. He loves his own understanding and his own will, and so he hates that light which crosses and contradicts these, and which would teach him, by the denial of them, to crucify that nature from whence they spring.

It therefore comes to pass (because the love of sin is strong, and Satan, the strong man, keeps the house) that the motions of God's Spirit are easily trampled, either by reasonings of the understanding, or by perverseness of the will. But if any man dare entrust himself to the motions of God's Spirit, he would quickly find of what nature they were by the strong opposition of the strong man against them. It is indeed a straight and narrow way into which no flesh can enter and walk. And yet it is the only way: for there is no life in God, no peace with God, while the enemy lives in the heart. But when the light is received and turned to, then the power begins to work, which slays the enemy in the heart; and that being done, there is no more war, but peace. Then

the true peace, which passes understanding, fills and refreshes the heart.

10. That believing in the light of the Spirit, which shines in the conscience, unites the soul to God, and opens the springs of life to it.

Belief in darkness (which is unbelief towards God) disunited the soul from God, and closed up the springs of life from it. Belief in the light, which is sent to lead out from the darkness, unites again, and opens the springs again. God is light; he dwells in the light, and there enjoys the fullness of life. He gives a measure of his own light to draw out from the darkness; and he who believes and follows this is led by it unto God, from whom it came. Now, having come out of the darkness unto God, the soul begins again to feel the springs of life, the fresh springs of life which are in him. He that believes is come to the well of salvation, and draws living water out of it, and drinks of the living water continually, so that he can thirst no more. Indeed, "out of his belly flow rivers of living water." This is the fruit of the true faith. This is the true way, the narrow way, (I can, in the presence of the living God, set my seal to the truth of it) which it has pleased God to uncover, and make manifest again, after the long dark night of apostasy. And we come not to it by hearing or receiving new notions or apprehensions of things, but by experiencing that which puts an end to all creaturely notions and apprehensions; and we grow in it by the increase of that thing in us. That is to say, the seed to which the promise was made, the seed which was before Abraham, is felt and known, and his day is seen and rejoiced in. And by the light thereof the darkness is discovered, and the kingdom of darkness is assaulted.

Some Objections and Answers

Objection 1. This is a new way, a new light. We knew religion before this came up, and we will keep to that.

Answer: It is new indeed to them who have lain long in the apostasy and set up another light. But it is not new in itself, but is the same that was in the beginning; yes, even before the beginning. Christ was the same yesterday, to-day, and forever; and the light that comes from him is like him, also being the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. It was the same light under the law, the same before the law, the same since the law.

"That which was from the beginning," said the apostle John, "we declare unto you." 1 John 1:1. And "this is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." verse 5. And the goal of preaching this message is to draw out of the darkness into the light; to bring men to the experiencing of the light of God in them, and so to union with it. God, who is light, is close to every man, who is darkness, even though man's senses are very thick and can hardly see or feel him. A light from God shines in man's darkness; but man's darkness does not comprehend it. Therefore, this light is not new in itself, but only new to the old spirit, which has long lain hid in the region of darkness and death, and has not known the light of life.

Objection 2. That this is a natural light, or the light of old Adam's nature and conscience.

Answer: It is in one sense a natural light; it is of the nature of him from whom it comes; the nature of God, and of his

Christ. But it is not of the nature of corrupt Adam, whom this light has always reproved, and against whom it still stands a witness, condemning all corruption. Man is darkness; Eph 5:8 and when Christ comes to redeem him, he finds him to be in darkness. Christ finds no light in man to help him uncover sin, so 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. The Lord is the searcher of the heart, and he searches it with his own candle, and not with any light left in man's nature. Man fell into darkness, and knew not where he was; but the Lord comes after him with his candle, and manifests his state to him. It is the light from which man fell, and against which he sins, that alone is able to make his disobedience manifest to him.

"We know" says the apostle, "that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal." Rom. 7:14. The law is the lowest appearance of the light; and yet it is spiritual, and of Christ's nature, and not of Adam's nature. Whoever knows the nature of that which manifests sin, knows it to be spiritual. It is the fallen man who calls the light darkness. Man has set up a light of his own; has raised up a light by his study and invention, in the strength of the fallen wisdom. And now, setting this up for his light, he is bound to call the true light darkness, as the Pharisees did Christ.

Objection 3. That this light makes the Scriptures void and useless.

Answer: Not so. The light came from the Spirit that gave forth the Scriptures; it is of the same nature with the light that shone in them that gave forth Scriptures. It speaks the same thing as Scriptures, it leads to the same thing, and it opens and witnesses to the words which the Scriptures speak.

Therefore, the light brings the Scriptures (which have long been abused) into their true use. Indeed it puts an end to the corrupt use of Scriptures, and to man's inventing and forming things out of them, and brings them into their true use and service. It takes the Scriptures out of man's hand, who has slain the life by his use of them. It puts the Scriptures into the hands of the Spirit, who makes the words again pure and quick and living; purging away man's defiled and dead conceivings and interpretations of them.

A man must know the Spirit, come to the Spirit, be joined to, and be in union with the Spirit, before he can have the true understanding of the Scriptures. The Scriptures indeed are the words of God, or various expressions of his mind. Now the man who searches these before he has the Spirit cannot know the truth, but can only guess and imagine. And it is from here that so many sects and denominations are sprung up in the world, according to the variety of their imaginations. One sort of men cry, 'This is the way, this is the truth, this is the church, this is the worship.' Another sort cry, 'That is not it; that is superstition and error; but this is it!' And so a third and fourth, etc. It is the same with the Scriptures. One says this is the meaning; another says it is not so, but this is the meaning. They let their own reasonings and imaginations loose, and there is no foundation of certainty. But if they had waited for the Spirit to begin with, and gone on no further than he opened to them, all these doubts and dissensions would have been choked.

I do not altogether deny the reading of Scriptures, even in this state of blindness and uncertainty, so long as a man read with fear and trembling: not setting up his own understanding, or the understanding of any man; but waiting for the Spirit, which can alone give him an understanding to receive the true knowledge. But this I dare boldly affirm, that

man's reading of the Scriptures in his own wisdom and self-confidence (or in confidence in what interpretations others have given) does him no good at all, but rather much harm, tending to the building up of that which God would again destroy.

He that begins with the Spirit of God, giving himself up to the light which comes from him, comes to true union with God, and to the experience of the life. This one finds a true growth and knowledge of the Spirit of God, whereby he comes to know and understand the Scriptures, which came from the same Spirit. In this way he also comes to be able to measure the deceit of his own spirit, which formerly led him astray, and also to see and measure the spirits of deceivers. But he that is in the deceit, in the imaginations, outside of the true knowledge, he cannot know the deceit of his own spirit, or the spirits of deceivers.

Objection 4. That this light teaches things contrary to the Scriptures.

Answer: The light which comes from the same Spirit which the Scriptures came from cannot teach things contrary to the Scriptures. But man, who has taken the tools of his understanding, and formed images and likenesses out of the Scriptures (I mean invented meanings and senses, and judged these to be agreeable to the Scriptures), he will of necessity judge that which is contrary to his meanings as contrary to the Scriptures. The truth, however, is one in itself, and it agrees with whatsoever is true in this age, or in former ages; and differs only from that which is not true.

Objection 5. That this sets up free-will. When persons are exhorted to embrace the light, to let in the light, then they cry out, 'Is it up to man to believe? Is it up to man to receive the light? Does man have free-will?'

Answer: As for your speaking of free-will, you do not know what you speak of. For the will, with the freedom of it, either stands in the image and power of him that made it, or in a contrary image and power. While it is in the image and power of him that made it, it is free unto good, and not to evil. While it is in the image and power of him who corrupted it, it is free unto evil, and not to good. The will is not of itself, but stands in another, and is servant to that in whom it stands, and there its freedom is bound and comprehended. For there is no middle state between the two, wherein the will stands of itself, and is free to both equally. The will of man is a servant, and under the command of one of these powers. If it be under the command of sin, of the power of darkness, it is free from righteousness. And if it be under the command and power of righteousness, it is free from sin. But such a free-will as men commonly speak of is mere imagination, and has no foundation in the true state of things.

Three Things, By Way of Advice

And now you who find your hearts touched and convinced of the truth, and find a desire kindled in you after the living God, and a hungering and thirsting after his righteousness, take notice of these three things, which I have upon my heart to say to you, by way of advice:

1 . Know and take up your cross, the cross of Christ, the daily cross of Christ.

The cross of Christ is that which runs contrary to the natural; and this is the power of God to deliver from the natural. How should the earthly understanding, the earthly will, the earthly affections, with the elementary nature (which have had their reign in the earth) be crucified and slain, except by the cross of Christ? The one seeking a religion to please himself in anything, must not come here. And the one, after coming to the cross, who then seeks anything pleasing to the earthly, will deny and turn from the cross, and so go backward and not forward. It is no wonder that there is such an enmity in all men against the truth; for it strikes at their life, yes, at the very root of their life.

If this were any new way or form of religion held forth, then man's understandings and affections might by degrees be made fit for it, and find pleasure in it. But the cross is a direct death to that nature and spirit that has lived in any form of religion, and to the whole course of that nature and spirit. Nevertheless, through this death the true life springs up, in those who receive its strokes. Therefore be willing, and learn to die daily, bringing everything which is contrary to Christ to the cross. Deny self in everything, take up the cross in everything, follow Christ in everything. This is the way by which Christ himself prescribed to become his disciples: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me." Seek not ease in the flesh, no, not in the least; but take up the cross every day, in everything, till the earthly be slain; until the wisdom and strength of the flesh be wholly subdued, and then the wisdom and power of God will become natural.

2. Keep to the sense, feeling, and experience, and beware of the understanding, the imagining and conceiving mind. The mind cannot be useful to God, nor bring forth anything for God, until it be newly cast, and newly molded.

The one seed of life lies in the invisible inner man of the heart, among multitudes of seeds of death; all of which have their growth up into, and strength in, the corrupted natural part. Therefore, this seed of life cannot shoot up into any part of the creature without the other seeds shooting up with it, and endeavoring to choke it. Now the other seeds spring up in two ways: either in a way of opposition against the true seed, or in a way of similitude. There cannot be a good thought, or desire, or beam of light that enters into the understanding or will, without multitudes of evil thoughts, evil desires, or fleshly reasonings against it, springing up with it, and striving to overcome it. But if, after such an assault, the enemy is at length overcome (by the power of God fighting with him and vanquishing him) then he also can put on his garment of light. Then he brings in thoughts and desires, and motions which appear to be like God's, and which easily pass for good, if the soul does not keep a close watch.

Now the only way of safety is to keep out of the natural, whereof the enemy has possession, and where his strength lies, and to keep in the sense and feeling of the invisible seed, and only to come forth with him into the natural, in that sense and feeling. And when he comes, he will come with strength, above the strength that the enemy has in the natural, and by degrees conquer him. But by no means rest or abide in the natural, but retire with the Lord into the resting-place. These words may be hard to you at present; but hereafter (as you come into the exercise) you will experience them.

3. Wait patiently for the Lord. Be not hasty after life and salvation in the will of the flesh; but leave the Lord to choose his own season for the showering down of his mercy and blessing.

The soul must know and feel that it has been an evil thing and bitter, that it has forsaken the Lord, the living fountain of living mercies, and has sought life from vanities, and among dead idols. And all the idols must be thrown away, and the heart washed from that nature that ran after them, and become a pure virgin to bear and bring forth the living seed. Now, by faithfulness to that seed, and waiting in that seed, in the Lord's season it shall receive the mercy and the blessing and the inheritance which belong to that seed. The farmer does not immediately reap, but waits long, even till the seed is grown up to maturity. Therefore lie still, and bear the indignation of the Lord against that which has transgressed, till he judge it, and deliver from it, and lead into the innocency and righteousness. And think not the race long, nor the battle hard, nor be weary of the afflictions and chastisements in the way. Follow the Captain, the Guide, the Leader; whose light, strength, courage, and wisdom will overcome all, and bring the soul which abides in it into his own throne.

Now as you thus wait, taking up the cross, and keeping in the feeling of the seed; so the corrupt natural, the mortal, wherein Satan's throne and power has been, will wither, decay, and grow weak daily. And the tender plant of God, the immortal seed, will shoot up, and gather strength daily; and you will come to a new will in God, and a new understanding in God. And that which is of God will manifest itself; and you will come to know, and desire, and take delight in the things of God. Then the soul, which is immortal, will come to hear, and receive, and feed on the immortal word, which is the

bread of life, and which alone is able to preserve and nourish up to eternal life. Then you will know what it is to tremble at this word, and to have all the powers of nature melt and fail before it. Then you will know the faith which gives the victory, and the knowledge which lets into life, and the fear which keeps the heart clean, and the hope which anchors the soul immortal in the immortal God, and the patience which wins the crown. And so you will come to witness the several conditions of the saints in Scripture as you grow up into them. You will not need men to give you their meanings of Scriptures from their brain-studies and acquired arts and understandings; but you will know the meaning from the thing itself in your own hearts. You will hear the words from the living voice of the Spirit that first spoke the Scriptures, who alone is able to interpret his own mind, and open the words which he himself spoke. Then you will know and love the true life, and need no more exhortations to depart from all dead, corrupted, and corrupting forms, which have forever been, and will forever be, enemies to the life. And so the peace of God, the rest of God, the true Sabbath of God, the everlasting light and life of God, will come to be your own, and be enjoyed by you, past all doubting or disputing.

Chapter IV

The Axe Laid to the Root Of the Old Corrupt Tree

Preface

There was a glorious day, and a bright appearance of Truth in the times of the apostles. They had the true Comforter, who led them into all Truth, and kept them alive in Truth, and Truth alive in them. By this Spirit, they, as living stones, were built up a spiritual house, founded upon Zion, the holy mount; into Jerusalem, the holy city, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of Truth. And here they had their citizenship in heaven, with God, the judge of all; with Christ, the Mediator; and with the spirits of just men and the holy angels, which always behold the face of God. They lived in the Spirit, they walked in the Spirit, they prayed in the Spirit, they sung in the Spirit, they worshiped in the Spirit, and in the Truth which made them free. They had God dwelling in them, and Christ walking in the midst of them; and, by the presence and power of his life in them, were truly dead unto sin, and alive unto God. They did not strive against sin with man's legal spirit, but by the power of grace, which made them more than conquerors through him that loved them. This was part of the glory of that early state, in the day of the sunshine of the gospel.

But, behold! A thick night of darkness overspread the beauty of this! Some false brethren went out from the true church into the world, and getting the sheep's clothing, and making a great outward appearance, they drew the world after them; yes, even some from among the true churches. (How hard was the apostle Paul obliged to plead with the Corinthians about his own apostleship and doctrine, that he might preserve that church from the false apostles!) And when they had gathered a sufficient following in the world, they gained ground against the true sheep and lambs of Christ, fought with them, and overcame them. And when they had overcome those that had the living testimony of Jesus, and the true power and presence of the Spirit among them, then they set up their own dead form, and cried out over all the nations of the earth, saying: "Revelation has ceased! There is no looking now for such an infallible Spirit, and such immediate teachings as the Christians had in the apostles' days, who had the anointing to teach them all things." So they pointed men to traditions, to the church, as they called it (which title the harlot has controlled since the days of the apostles), or to searchings of the Scripture, and reading expositions upon it, and religious works, formed by the intellectual part in man to instruct the intellectual part. Thus, the whole course of religion, and of the knowledge of God, came to be outside of that Spirit and life wherein it first came forth (and wherein it first stood). Christianity now consisted in doctrines of men, and a form of worship and knowledge which the wisdom of man had constructed, in an imitation of that which formerly stood in the life.

And now, men being gone from the life, from the Spirit and his immediate teachings, into an outward form of knowledge and worship of God in the wrong nature, antichrist has risen up, and the dragon sits in the temple, appearing there

as if he were God, giving out public laws and ordinances of worship, and requiring private duties and exercises of devotion. Antichrist is obeyed and bowed down to in the observation of these things; but the true, living God is not known, nor his secret, still voice which calls man out of these things heard; because of the great noise which the dragon makes in his temple (for it is his now, he having gained it, though it was formerly God's).

Yet it pleased the Lord, throughout all the night of this darkness, to raise up some witnesses against the dragon and all his invented forms of worship. These witnesses, however, were hunted, persecuted, knocked down, and their testimony cried out against as error, heresy, schism, and blasphemy. In this way, the Roman Catholics cried out against the Protestants as heretics and schismatics, who were witnesses against them; and the Protestants cried out against the Non-conformists, Separatists, and Brownists, who were witnesses against them. And every sect cries out most against those who are led further from the darkness. The form¹ always kills the life, which stirs underneath, and which once made an appearance with some freshness. But when the life (from which the form derived its seeming beauty and luster) dies, then the form soon withers and dies also: so that the living seed being once slain, there remains nothing but the dead spirit, feeding on the dead form.

Oh hasten out of this spirit! Hasten out of Babylon! For this is the great error of this age: man, with an acquired knowledge from scriptural words, without the true faith and life, goes about trying to evaluate that life and knowledge which comes from true faith; and because it will not align with the apprehensions which he has taken into his mind, he

¹ Penington often uses the word *form* to express any physical or outward expression, ceremony, structure, or system used in religion.

condemns it. And thus, being in the earthly wisdom and observation (to which truth was never revealed, but forever has been an offense) he stumbles at it, as did the Pharisees of old.

Listen therefore to my exhortation, you who love your souls; come to that faith and church which is received, gathered, and defended by Christ, the One Horn of Salvation. Leave off your reasoning and disputing in that wisdom which has slain the life, and come to that wisdom which springs from the life. You will find more certainty and satisfaction in one touch of true life, than in all the reasonings and disputes of wise men to the world's end.

The ground wherein man's religion grows (even the most zealous of men) is bad. It is the same ground wherein the Pharisees' religion stood and grew. This ground has brought forth such a kind of fruit; namely, a conformity to the letter of Scripture which stands in the understanding and will of man, but it keeps far from the life, and from growing up in it. But the true religion stands in receiving a seed of life; which, by its growth, forms a vessel for itself. And all the former part (wherein stood sin on the one hand, or self-righteousness on the other), passes away.

The Faith of Man vs. the Faith Which is of God

There is a faith which is of a man's self; and there is a faith which is the gift of God. Or, there is a power of believing which is found in the nature of fallen man; and a power of believing which is given from above. As there are two births, the first and the second, so they each have their faith; and each believes with his kind of faith. Both claim to lay hold of the same thing for life; and the contention about

the inheritance will not be ended till God determines it. Cain will sacrifice with his faith, and he believes he will be accepted; if he had not believed so, he would not have been so angry when he found it otherwise. And the Cainish spirit in man, the one cast out from the life of God, which has not the eternal life of God abiding in him, is busy with the same faith at this very day, and has the same expectation from it as Cain had.

This is the root of the false religion; of the false hope; of the false peace; of the false joy; of the false rest; of the false comfort; of the false assurance; as the other is of the true. In the faith which is of man, and in the improvement of it, stands all the knowledge, zeal, devotion, and worship of the world in general, and of the worldly part in every man in particular. But the true knowledge, the true zeal, the true devotion, the true worship, stand in the faith which is given of God, to those who are born of the immortal seed; who live in God, and in whom God lives forever.

Now it deeply concerns every man to consider from which of these kinds of faith his knowledge, religion, and worship proceed, and in which of them they stand. For if they proceed from, and stand in, the faith which is of man, they cannot please God, nor be conducive to the salvation of the soul. Even though they may taste very pleasantly to man's palate now, and administer much hope and satisfaction to him at present, yet they will fail at the time of need. For, as Christ said concerning the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, so may I say concerning this faith—Except your faith exceeds that faith which is found in man's nature (and all the works thereof), it will never lead you to the kingdom of God, nor grant you entrance into the inheritance of life. For he that will inherit the promise, must be the right heir. He must have the faith of Abraham, the faith of

Isaac; which springs up from the root of life in the seed; and this leads the seed into that spring of life (out of which it shot forth as a branch) which is the inheritance promised to the seed. And here is Christ, Alpha and Omega, in every particular soul where life is begun and perfected, running its course through time, and back to that which was before the beginning.

Therefore observe, and consider well, what this faith which is of man's self can do; and how far it may go in the changing of man, and in producing a conformity to the outward letter of Scripture. And then also consider where man's faith is shut out, and what it *cannot* do, what change it cannot make, what it cannot conform to. Thus a true distinction may be established in your mind, and not a foundation laid for so great a mistake in a matter of such great importance.

1. A man may believe the history of the Scriptures; yes, and all the doctrines of them, so far as he can reach them with his understanding, with this faith which is of man. Reading a relation of the fall of man, of the recovery by Christ, of the way to life, etc., man's faith can believe the relation of these things just as well as it can believe the relation of other things.

2. This being believed from the relation of the history of these things, this faith naturally sets all the powers of man at work (kindling the understanding, will, and affections,) towards the avoiding of misery, and the attaining of happiness. What would a man not do to avoid perpetual misery of soul and body forever, and to obtain a crown of everlasting blessedness? Such ideas stir up the affections, and set the understanding on work to the utmost, to gather all the rules

of Scripture, and to practice all the duties and ordinances mentioned therein. What can the Scriptures propose to be believed, that man will not believe? What can it propose to be done, that he will not do? Must he pray? He will pray. Must he hear? He will hear. Must he read? He will read. Must he meditate? He will meditate. Must he deny himself, and all his own righteousness and duties, and hope only for salvation in the merits of Christ? He will seem to do that too; and will say, when he has done all he can, he is but an unprofitable servant. Does the Scripture say he can do nothing without the Spirit? He will acknowledge that too, and hope he has the Spirit. God has promised the Spirit to them that ask it; and he has asked long, and asks still, and therefore hopes he has it. Thus man, by a natural faith, grows up and spreads into a great tree, and is very confident and much pleased; not perceiving the defect in his root, and what all this growth will come to.

3. This being done with much seriousness and vigor, there will of necessity be a great change in man. His understanding will be more and more enlightened; his will more and more conformed to that to which he gives himself and bends himself with all his strength. His affections will be more and more weaned; he will find a kind of life and growth in this (according to its kind). Let a man's heart be in any kind of study or knowledge, applying himself strictly to it, gathering understanding in his mind, and warmth in his affection: so it is also here.

4. Now, how easy is it for a man to mistake here, and call this the truth! First, he mistakes this for the true faith; and then he errs in applying to this all that which belongs to the true faith. Thus entering into the spirit of error at first, he errs in

the whole course of his religion, from the beginning to the end. He sees a change made (by this natural faith) in him; and this he accounts the true conversion and regeneration. This leads him to ask, and seek, and pray; and this he accounts the true praying, the true seeking, the true asking. This cleanses (after its kind) his understanding, will, and affections; and this he takes for the true sanctification. And now this man feels safe! He is a believer; he is a worshiper of God; he is a Christian; he is an observer of the commands of Christ. When the overflowing scourge comes, it will not touch him. All the judgments, plagues, threatenings in the Scriptures, belong not to him, but to the unbelievers! But, the growth of this faith, and the spreading of it into all his knowledge, zeal, and devotion, has not changed the nature of it all this while. It remains the same that it was at the beginning, *even a power of nature in the first birth*. And all these fruits are but the fruits of the first nature, which is still alive underneath all. And everything which stands on this false faith can never kill the seed out of which it grows; but rather feeds it more, and fattens it for the slaughter.

Thus far can man's faith go: but then there is something that it is excluded from at the very first. There is something that this faith cannot receive, believe, or enter into. What is that? It is the life, the power, the inward reality. Though it may seem to have unity with all the Scriptures according to the letter; yet it cannot have unity with one scripture according to the life: for its nature is shut out of the nature of the things there described.

For instance: it may have a literal knowledge of Christ, according as the Scripture speaks of him; of his birth, preaching, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, intercession. Yes, but the actual thing spoken of it knows not. The nature of Christ is hidden from that eye. So it may have a

literal knowledge of the blood of Christ, and of justification; but the actual life of the blood it cannot feel; but can only talk of it, according to what it reads in the Scripture. So it may have a literal knowledge of sanctification; but the thing that truly sanctifies, this it cannot receive into itself. So it is for redemption, peace, joy, hope, love, etc. It may get into the outward part of all these; but the inward part, the life, the spirit of them, it is shut out of. It cannot touch or come near; nor can it witness that change which is felt and known here.

And here is the great contention in the world between these two births: the one contending for its knowledge in the letter, and the other contending for its knowledge in the life. The one sets up its faith from the natural part, calling it spiritual; and the other, which has felt the judgment of God upon man's faith (and thereby come to know the difference), sets up the faith of the true heir: which faith has a different source, and a different growth from the other. The faith that is from God will be welcomed into the land and kingdom of life. The other will be manifested to be but the birth of the bond-woman, and will be cast out with its mother to seek bread elsewhere. For the seed of the bond-woman is not to share the inheritance with Isaac, the seed of promise.

Question: What then is that faith which is a gift of God? And how is it distinct from the faith which is of man?

Answer: It is that power of believing which springs out of the Seed of eternal life; and leavens the heart, not with notions of knowledge, but with the powers of life. In contrast, the faith which is of man is drawn out of man's nature, by considerations which affect the natural part, and it is kept alive by natural exercises of reading, hearing, praying, studying, meditating, etc. But the faith which is from God

springs out of a seed of life given, and it grows up in the life of that seed, and feeds on nothing but the flesh and blood of Christ. This faith, at its first entrance, strikes that part dead in which the other faith did grow, and by its growth perfects that death, and raises up a life which is of another nature than ever entered into the heart of man to conceive. And by the death of this part in us, we come to know and enjoy true life. And by the life we have received, we come to see that which other men call life (and which we ourselves were apt to call life formerly) to be but death. And from this true knowledge, we give a true testimony to the world of what we have seen and felt; but no man receives our testimony.

It grieves us to the heart to see men set up a perishing thing as the way to life. In tender love do we warn men of the pit into which they are generally running so fast; though men reward us with hatred for our good will, and become our bitter enemies because we tell them the truth.

Now be not rough and angry; but meekly read the following parable aright, and it will open up into life. The parable is just this: That which sold the birthright, seeks after the birthright with tears and great pains; but will never recover it. But there is that which lies dead, which has the promise, which does not stir till he is raised by the power of the Father's life, and then he wrestles with the Father, prevails, and gets the blessing from him. Therefore, know the part in you that rises up first, and is so busy in willing and running, and makes such a noise about duties, and ordinances, and keeps down the life which it has slain. Know also that seed of life which is the heir, which lies underneath all this, and must remain slain while this first part lives. But if ever you hear the voice of the Son of God, this seed will live, and the other die. And happy forever will he be who knows this! But misery will be his portion, who cannot witness a

thorough transformation by the almighty power of the living God, but has only painted the old nature and sepulcher. Misery will be the inheritance of those who never knew the old vessel broken, and a new one formed, which alone is able to receive and retain the new wine of the kingdom. For the other vessel, like the Pharisees, can only receive words about the kingdom written in the letter.

**Some Assertions — Concerning Faith, Its Nature,
Rise, and Its Receiving of Christ.**

Assertion I

That the true faith (the faith of the gospel, the faith of the elect, the faith which saves the sinner from sin, and makes him more than a conqueror over sin and the powers of darkness) is a belief in the nature of God, which gives entrance into, fixes in, and causes an abiding in that nature.

Unbelief enters into death, and abides in the death. But faith is an engrafting into the vine, a partaking of the nature of the vine, a sucking of the juice of life from the vine; which nothing is able to do but the faith in the nature. And nothing can believe in the nature, but that which is one with the nature. So then, faith is not a believing the history of the Scripture, or a believing and applying the promises, or a believing that Christ died for sinners in general, or for me in particular; for all this may be done by the unbelieving nature (like was seen in the Jews).

Assertion II

That the true faith springs from the true knowledge of the nature of God in Christ. He can never believe in the

nature of God who has not first the nature of God revealed to him. If a man were to search the Scriptures all his days, hear all that can be said by men concerning God, Christ, faith, justification, etc., be able to dispute about them, and think he can prove his arguments against all the world; yet, if he has not received the true knowledge of the nature of these things, all his professed faith in them cannot be true.

Assertion III

That the true knowledge is only to be had by the immediate revelation of Christ in the soul. No man knows the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son reveals him. The dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear will live. There is no raising of a dead soul to life but by the immediate voice of Christ. Outward preaching, reading the Scriptures, etc., may direct and encourage men to hearken after and wait for the voice, but it is the immediate voice of Christ in the soul which alone can quicken the soul to God. Until the light of life shine immediately from Christ in the heart, the true knowledge is never given. 2 Cor. 4:6.

Therefore, they that have never heard the immediate voice of Christ in the soul are still dead in their sins, and have not yet received the true, living knowledge, but rather a dead, literal knowledge, which gives a false shining of things in the dead part. Indeed, the proper use of all means is to bring the soul to the immediate voice, life, and power; and till this be done, till the soul come to that, to hear that, to feel that, to be rooted there, there is nothing done that will stand. But he that knows God comes into the immediate presence; and he that daily lives in God, lives in the immediate life. The true faith leads to this, giving the soul such a touch and taste of it at first, as makes life unsatisfiable without it.

By this Christ excluded the Jews, with all their zeal and knowledge. John 5:37-38. "You have not heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form; and you have not his word abiding in you." There is a true hearing of the voice, seeing of the form, and having the word of God abiding in the heart, that keeps the soul alive, living in the life. The voice gives life, the sight of the form daily conforms into the image, which is beheld by the eye of life; and the word abiding in the heart nourishes and feeds the living soul with the pure bread of life. But the Jews knew this not; but were exalting their sabbaths, the law of Moses, the ordinances of Moses, the temple of God, the instituted worship of God, and yet were shut out of the thing itself to which these things pointed. And in the same way, many zealous ones at this day, not having come to this, no more than the Jews did, but sticking in the letter of the gospel (as the Jews did in the letter of the law) stumble at the present dispensation of life, and cannot do otherwise.

Assertion IV

That Christ's immediate revelation of the nature of his Father is unto babes. Not to the wise, not to the zealous, not to the studious, not to the devout, not to the rich in the knowledge of the Scriptures without: but to the weak, the foolish, the poor, the lowly in heart. Man does not receive these revelations by study, by reading, by willing, by running, but by being formed in the will of life, by being begotten of the will of the Father, and by coming forth in that will, lying still in that will, and growing up in that will. Here the child receives the wisdom which is from above, and daily learns the cross which crucifies the other wisdom and the other will, which loves to feed on the shadowy and husky part of knowl-

edge, without the life.

Therefore, if ever you desire to receive this knowledge from Christ, you must come to discern that eye in you which must be blinded, the eye to which Christ will never reveal the Father.

The true knowledge is only poured into the new vessel. It is the living soul alone that receives the living knowledge of the living God from Christ the life. The old nature, the old understanding, is for death and destruction. The wisdom of the flesh, though painted to look like spiritual wisdom, is not to be spared anywhere; but that wisdom, with all its zeal and growth and progress in religion must perish. All men's knowledge of the Scriptures which they have gathered in that dead part will profit them nothing, but rather hinder them. Every building which the leprosy of sin has overspread, is to be pulled down.

Assertion V

That this faith (which springs from the true knowledge) is God's gift, and is not that power of believing which is to be found in man's nature. It is of another nature, even the nature of the Giver. And when man is called to believe, he is not called to produce that faith wherewith he believes other things; but to receive and exercise the gift of faith, which is from above. That which is to be believed in is spiritual; and that must be spiritual which believes in it. Man, with all the powers of his nature, is shut out. Let him believe and read and pray and hear and exercise himself in that which he calls duties and ordinances ever so much; for all these, set up in the wrong part in man, only feed the wrong part; and this, with all its food and nourishment, falls short of the life.

Therefore the true entrance into life is to experience that

power which slays man's natural ability and propensity to believe, that thereby the gift of the true faith may be received. For there is no rising up and living of the second, without the death of the first, with all its natural faculties and powers.

Assertion VI

That by this faith alone, which is the gift from above, (and not that faith which grows in the garden of the old nature, and is fed by the oldness of the letter and not by the newness of the Spirit) is Christ received. For Christ can be received by the faith alone that comes from him; and that faith which comes from him cannot do otherwise than receive him.

Man's faith refuses him, though it receives a literal knowledge of him from what it hears from men, or reads in the Scripture concerning him. It cannot be otherwise; for man's faith, not being of the nature of it, cannot help but refuse it. But the faith which is given of God, which is from above, being of the same life and nature with Christ, cannot refuse the spring of its own life; and so receives him immediately. There is no distance of time; but just as soon as faith is received, Christ is received, and the soul is united to him in the faith. As unbelief immediately shuts him out, so faith lets him in immediately, and centers the soul in him. And the immortal soul feels the immortal virtue, and rejoices in the true spring of its own immortal nature.

But the faith of man never reaches this, never receives Christ, but receives only a description of things concerning him. And with this faith which stands in the letter,² the faith which stands in the life is opposed. And here is the spirit of

² Whenever Penington speaks of *the letter* he is referring to the literal words of Scripture that testify (and can *only* testify) of the true spiritual substance. See Rom 2:29, 7:6, and 2 Cor. 3:6.

antichrist; here is the mystery of iniquity, changing from one form into another. For antichrist does not directly deny Christ, or deny the letter; but rather applauds Christ, and commends the letter, but in such a way that these may feed the faith of his own nature, and maintain a hope there. And thus the spirit of man is at unity with what will feed his own nature, with what interpretations his own understanding can gather out of the Scriptures. And thus can he venerate Christ, and say he hopes to be saved by him, even while the spirit of enmity against the nature of Christ lodges in his heart. This is antichrist, wherever he is found; and this is his faith, and great is his knowledge, and many are his disguises. Nevertheless, the Lord is searching him out, who will strip him, and make his nakedness appear.

Assertion VII

That Christ is received as a grain of mustard seed, and that every eye, except the eye of true faith, despises him. He is the stone which the wisdom of the builders, in all ages, has rejected. They look for a glorious Messiah; but they know him not in his humiliation, in the little seed, out of which he is to grow up into his glory. And so missing him entirely, they build up the things concerning him with only their high imaginations in the airy mind.

When God sent Christ in the flesh, there was neither majesty nor beauty in him. Thus the Jews, whose hope and expectation lay there, saw no beauty, no desirableness in him. It is so even now. When God comes to offer himself to those who claim to have their hopes in him, they see no loveliness in him, but refuse him daily. “What?” they say, “this little thing, small, like a grain of mustard seed, can this be the glorious Christ which the Scriptures have spoken so much of?”

Why, we know the descent of this (its father, mother, and kindred are with us), we find this in our own nature.” Thus, like the Jews of old, they make a great noise about Christ, but refuse the thing itself, and this they do for a lack of the true eye of faith. For if they had that eye, they would see the virtue in the little seed, and receive him in his humiliation in their hearts, where he knocks daily for entrance. They would not be content till this grain of mustard-seed grew up into a great and glorious tree. But for lack of this eye, they keep him out, and let in the painted³ murderer, who dwells in them, and covers himself with a knowledge, a zeal, a faith, and hope, etc., in the old nature, in the old vessel, in the old understanding. Thus they give God and Christ good words, while the evil spirit has their heart and dwells there, bringing forth his own old, evil fruit under an appearance of devotion and holiness.

Hear now, you who are wise in the letter, but strangers to the life! There is a twofold appearance of Christ in the heart. There is an appearance of him as a servant to obey the law, to fulfill the will of the Father in that body which the Father prepares there for him. And there is an appearance of him in glory, to reign in the life and power of the Father. He that knows not the first of these in his heart will never know the second there. And he that knows not these inwardly, will never know any outward, visible coming to his comfort. For if Christ should come outwardly to reign (as many expect), yet be sure he would not reign in you whose heart he has not first entered into and subdued to himself; which is only to be done by his appearance there, first as a servant, then as a king.

But what state are Christians (so called) now in, who do

³ Penington and his contemporaries frequently use the word *paint* or *painted* to refer to a false covering or an outward beautifying of something that is corrupt or carnal underneath.

not know the one in them who is able to serve God? These are striving and fighting in that nature where sin has the power, and which can never overcome, being not in union with, but strangers to, that life and power which is the conqueror! Therefore, let all consider in the depths of their hearts; for this is infallibly true: they that never received the seed of life in their hearts, never received Christ.

Assertion VIII

That this seed being received within, grows up into its own form. There it grows up into the body which is to serve the Lord. Just as a seed cast into good earth, or the seed of man or beast sown in a fitting womb, receives form and grows into a plant, or living creature, so it is with Christ's seed in its land.

Now, this new creature, (or the Spirit of life in this creature, which is in union with it) is the Christian's rule.⁴ Gal. 6:15-16. 1 John 2:27. Heb. 8:10, 12. Formerly, outward rules were given to the outward state, that is, to men under the law who were not brought to the life, but were exercised under shadows and representations of the life. But the Son, who dwells within, who is the substance of all, who is the life, who is one with the Father, he is not tied to any outward rule, but is to live and walk in the immediate light of the Spirit of his own life. And he that has the Son has this rule. He that has not this rule has not the Son. And he that has not the Son, has not the true faith (which immediately receives him) and so is no Christian; but has stolen the name from the letter, having never received the nature from the Spirit, to which alone the name belongs.

⁴ The word *rule* is used throughout to refer to that which governs, rules, or has authority in the life of the believer.

Assertion IX

He that has Christ, or the seed of eternal life, which is Christ, formed in him (which seed the Spirit always dwells in, the same Spirit which gave forth the Scriptures), he alone is capable of understanding those scriptures which that Spirit gave forth, because the Spirit leads him into the understanding of them. But he that has not received that seed which is like a grain of mustard seed, and so has not Christ nor his spirit (whatever he may pretend to), he, by all his studies, arts, languages, reading of expositors, conferences, or even experiences, can never come to the true knowledge of the Scriptures. For such a man lacks the true key, which alone can open. He may have collected a great many wrong keys, none of which can open. But he lacks the true key of the true knowledge, and so is shut out of it, and only let into such a kind of knowledge as the wrong key can open.

Assertion X

He that has received the new covenant into his heart, with the laws of the life written there by the Spirit of life, he understands that this living writing is his rule. The Scriptures testify of where the covenant and law of life is written; and if I desire to read it, there I must go. I must go to where the Scriptures point me. I must go to Christ the book of life, and read there with that eye which Christ gives.

The Scriptures are willing to surrender up their glory to Christ, who was before them, and is above them, and will be after them. But there is a false spirit, which has seated itself in a literal knowledge of the Scriptures, and has formed images and likenesses of truth from it (everyone after the imaginations of his own heart). Now all of these images and likenesses fall whenever Christ the life appears. But this false

spirit claims the Scriptures in a way of deceit, just as the Jews claimed Moses. It is a seducing spirit which rears up buildings and forms of knowledge from the letter of the Scriptures, and not come to feel after, unite with, and live in, Christ the life. And unless you come to this life, your reading of the Scripture is vain, and all your gathered rules of practice, and comforts from promises, will end in vanity. There is no possibility of knowing or receiving it, but by experiencing the true touch of the inward life of it. "Wisdom is justified of her children:" but they that are not born of her cannot justify her womb or birth.

To the Jews, who were an outward people, there was an outward rule given, a law of commandments, statutes, judgments, and ordinances, proper to that state wherein they were. But all this was to be done away and to end in that which all this represented. So that to Christians, Christ the substance being come, who is the end of all these shadows, the true Jew being raised up into the immediate life, now there is a necessity for the immediate life to be our rule. To them under the gospel, to them who are come to the substance, to them who are begotten and born in the life, there can be no other rule proportionate to their state besides Christ the substance, Christ the life. Here he alone is the light, the way, the truth, the rule. The Spirit is here the rule, the new creature is the rule, the new covenant the rule; all which are in unity together, and he that has one of them has them all, and he that has not them all has none of them.

Therefore, written directions taken out of the Scripture cannot be the rule to him who is the true Christian; but rather the measure of grace, the measure of the light, the measure of the Spirit, the measure of the gift received into the living soul from the spring of life, this alone is the rule of life. But Christians in the degeneration have lost this, and so

they have taken up words for a rule (which were not given for that purpose). And so with deductions by the earthly mind, they feed the earthly part. What can be fed by men's Scripture knowledge except the earthly understanding? Is not the earthly will stimulated, and are not the earthly affections warmed? And when (as with Cain) such fruits are offered to God and rejected, the earthly man becomes angry, seeing that God has raised up Abel, the younger brother, who offers up the Lamb to God, and serves the living God in his own living Spirit, and with the faith which comes from him. Abel's religion stands not in that part wherein all other men's religion stands, but in the death of that part; and in the raising up of another part, wherein life springs.

A Necessary Warning

Hear and consider: It is recorded, Rev. 22:18-19:

"If any man will add unto these things, God will add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man will take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Great are the plagues that are written in this book, even the pouring out of eternal wrath without mixture; torment day and night, in the presence of the Lamb, etc. Great also is the life and blessedness that are promised to those that fight with and overcome the mystery of iniquity. Now, to face all the plagues mentioned here, and to miss all the blessedness promised, would this not be a terribly sad state? And the

Lord says that this is what will befall the one who adds to the things here spoken, or diminishes from the words of this prophecy. Therefore, in the fear of the one who has spoken this (and will surely make it good), let everyone search and consider, *who is the adder, who is the diminisher.*

Now consider, is it not true that he who gives another meaning to any scripture besides what is the true, proper meaning thereof, this one both adds and diminishes? He takes away the true sense, and adds a sense that is not true. The Spirit of the Lord is the true expositor of Scriptures; he never adds nor diminishes. But man, being without that Spirit, can only guess, imagine, study and invent a meaning, and so he is ever adding or diminishing. 'This is the meaning,' says one. 'This is the meaning,' says another. 'No, this is the meaning,' says a third and a fourth. Another that is witty and learned declares them all to be correct. Still another, perhaps more witty than he, says none are correct, and invents a meaning different from them all. Does this not plainly show that he who speaks in this way lacks the Spirit of the Lord to open the Scripture to him and manifest the true meaning? Is he not but working in the mystery of darkness? And yet this very person, who is working with his own dark spirit in the dark, will in words confess that there is no true understanding or opening of Scripture except by the Spirit of God. If this be so, how will you dare set your imagination, your fancy, reason, or understanding upon this work, and so be guessing at that which the Spirit has not opened to you? Are you not, in this way, found to be adding and diminishing?

Now he that is the adder, he that is the diminisher, cries out against the Spirit of the Lord. He cannot possibly avoid this in the way that he is in; for having first judged his own darkness to be light, then, in the next place, he must neces-

sarily judge the true light to be darkness. He that has first set up his own invented meaning of any scripture to be the true meaning, he must of necessity oppose the true meaning, and call it false. Thus man, having begun wrong in his knowledge of the Scriptures, stands engaged to make use of them against the Lord, and against his own soul. And yet, in himself, he thinks he makes a right use of them, that he serves the Lord, and that he is not opposing his truth, but rather opposing error and heresy. All the while, he himself is in the error, and in the heresy, and against the truth; being a stranger to that Spirit, in whose immediate life and presence the truth grows.

Question: But how may I avoid adding to the things and diminishing from the words of this prophecy and of other scriptures; that I may not meet with the weight of this curse, or miss of the blessing?

Answer: 1. Wait for the key of knowledge, which is God's free gift. Do not go with a false key to the Scriptures of Truth; for it will not open them. Man is too hasty to know the meaning of the Scriptures, and to enter into the things of God, and so he climbs up over the door with his own understanding. He does not have the patience to wait to know the door, and to receive the key which opens and shuts the door, and so he gathers death out of words which came from life. And this I dare positively affirm, that all that have gone this way have only a dead knowledge; and it is death in them that feeds upon this knowledge, and the life is not raised.

Consider now the weight of this counsel: there is no opening of the Scriptures but by the true key, nor is there any coming to the key till the Lord is pleased to give it. What

then is to be done, but only to wait⁵ (in the silence of that part which would be forward and running ahead) till the key be given.

2. Do not run in your own understanding, or in your own will, to search out the meaning of Scripture; for in this way you feed with the Scripture that which it is the intent of all words of life to destroy. But as you wait for the key at first, so continually wait for the appearances and movings of the user of the key, and he will shut out your understanding and will continually, and let you into the life of both the prophecies and doctrines.

3. Do not graft any of the fruit of the tree of life upon the tree of knowledge; for it will not grow there. An appearance, or a likeness of the true fruit may grow there; but the true fruit itself will not. My meaning is, do not heap up a treasury of knowledge in the intellectual part, which is to perish. Rather, know the true treasury of all the things of life, which is in the life itself; and in that understanding which is formed, kept, and lives in the life. Set no manna aside to feed upon in the old store-house (lest the fleshly part should be running there whenever its fleshly appetite is kindled after food); but daily receive the continual bread from the hand of life.

4. There is a knowledge of things by the Spirit's opening the words which speak of them, or by inward, immediate prophecies from the word of life in the heart. This is an excellent knowledge, and not to be found in the earthly part of man.

⁵ Penington speaks often of waiting upon the Lord. This waiting, as he describes elsewhere, is not a passive waiting that has reference primarily to the passing of time. Rather, it is an active waiting, a purposeful turning of the heart, looking unto the Lord, and abiding in the measure of Christ's light that is currently working in the heart.

This is very precious, and a much more full and certain knowledge than the other, having the nature and immediate power of life in itself, and so it is perfectly able to preserve. Therefore, be not satisfied in opening of prophecies, or true meanings of things (though this kind of knowledge is very excellent, and has been very rare), but wait to experience the thing itself which the words speak of, and to be united by the living Spirit to that, and then you will have a knowledge from the nature of the thing itself. This is more deep and inward than all the knowledge that can be had from words concerning the thing.

5. When you feel such things, then seek their preservation in the spring of their own life. Let the root support you, and all your knowledge, with all that is freely given to you of God. When you feel yourself leavened with the life, and become a branch shot out of the life, then learn how to abide in the life, and to keep all that is given to you there. Have nothing which you may call your own anymore, but be lost to yourself, and found in him. Know the land of the living, wherein all the things of life live, and can live nowhere else.

Now in all this, there is stability and security. From the very first opening of the true key, I begin to learn something of God; and to learn it certainly, and to feel an assurance and establishment in it. Here I begin to grow. I grow up in the true learning, and in the true settlement. I take none of the knowledge of the Scriptures from myself, from my own understanding, from my own study and invention, or from the studies of other expositors, but from the divine hand. How can he twist Scripture who is kept single, and has no desire to have anything to be the meaning of it, but only what is the true meaning? How can he fail to understand who waits to receive the true meaning, not to feed the lustful,

knowing part in himself, but to feed the life with it? And when the life has no use for it, he is content to have it shut up, and to be without it. I say, how is it possible for this man to twist Scriptures?

But a man that has already received or invented a meaning, this one goes to the Scripture and bends it, to make it conform to that. And where it speaks contrary, he invents a way to make it comply, and so wrests Scriptures forward and backward, to make them speak agreeable to what he has already received and believed. In this way every sort of person, Roman Catholics and Protestants, bend the Scriptures to make them speak according to their opinions and practices; not having known the true learning. These are misled and unstable, subject to be shaken by any wind of reason which is stronger than their own. And such a wresting of Scripture is to their own destruction.

Question: Is not prayer a means by which one may avoid what is false and lay hold of the true?

Answer: True; there is a prayer which is a means, and there is a prayer which is not a means. There is a prayer which is an ordinance, and there is a prayer which is an invention. There is a prayer which is the breath of the true child, and there is a prayer which is the breath of the fleshly part. There is a prayer of the first birth, and there is a prayer of the second birth; both of which cry and weep to God for the same thing. Now the one of these is the true means, the other not. One of them is Christ's ordinance, the other is antichrist's ordinance. Now the question is, which of these is your prayer? Is it your own breath, or God's breath? Does it come from the renewing of the Spirit of life, or from your own natural part painted? For accordingly, it is either the true

means, or the false means. If it be the true means, it will have the Spirit, the life, the kingdom it prays for. If it be the false means, it can never obtain it.

Catholics, they pray; Protestants, they pray; some in forms, some without forms; some meditating beforehand, some not meditating. Are all these the true means; or are any of them the true means? The birth of the true child is the only true prayer; and he prays only in the moving and in the leading of that Spirit that begat him. And this is a prayer according to the will, in the life, and from the power of God. But all men's prayers, according to times they set to themselves, or according to desires in their own minds, which they offer up to God with the nature and heart that sins against him, these are false means.

Can you pray? How did you learn to pray? Were you taught from above? Or did you gain the skill and ability by the exercise and improvement of your own natural part? Did you begin with sighs and groans, staying there till the same Spirit who taught you to groan, taught you also to speak? Were you ever able to distinguish the sighs and groans of the Spirit's begetting, from the sighs and groans of your own natural and affectionate part? And has that natural part, with all its sighings, groanings, desires, endeavors, been thrust aside? And has the seed immortal been raised by the Spirit of eternal life, which teaches to cry and mourn, and at length to speak, to the Father for the preservation and nourishment of his life? If it has been thus with you, then you have known that prayer which is the true means. But if otherwise, though you pray ever so long, and with ever so great affections, and strong desires, this is all but the false means, with its false warmth from the false fire. This is but the means which the harlot spirit (which is not in union with the life and power, but keeps the seed in bondage) has set

up instead of the true means. And this can never lead to truth, but keeps alive God's enemy under a pleasant covering. Neither is this the worship of the living God; but as it is from another spirit, so it is to another spirit.

Chapter V
The Scattered Sheep Sought After

Preface

"My people have committed two great evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that cannot hold water." —Jer. 2:13

This was the complaint of the Lord concerning Israel, from the beginning to the end. The Lord delighted to beget, nourish, and bring up that people for himself; but they were almost continually revolting from him and rebelling against him. He did mighty things for them, but they still forgot him. He redeemed them by his outstretched arm; he fed them, he defended them; but they knew him not. Isaiah 1:3. Instead, they adorned themselves with the ornaments he had given them, and then lifted up their heel against him. Ezek. 16:7 and Deut. 32:15. In plain terms, they took what knowledge they could from him into their own vessels, and then they set it up for themselves. They lived out from themselves, without the fresh flowing of life from the spring from whence their knowledge came.

The priests did not seek the Lord, but thought they could

handle the law and teach the knowledge of it without him; and the prophets could prophesy by another spirit. Jer. 2:8. And thus the Lord God of life lived not in them; but rather they lived upon those things which once came from the life. They, being separated from the spring, were dead, and nourished only the dead part in them, that which was estranged from God. Therefore, although they professed great things, and they multiplied prayers, sacrifices, and fasts, and drew nigh to God with their lips, yet their hearts were far from him. They had forsaken the fountain; they drank not of the waters of the spring, of the rock that followed them; but they drank of the waters of their own cisterns. They set up that knowledge of the law for their light which they had hewn out with the tools of their own understanding, without the Spirit that wrote it. This was Israel's error of old: they drank very zealously of the waters of the law; but they drank it not from the spring, but rather out of the cisterns which they had hewn.

And as it was then with Israel of old, so has it been with Israel since. The Christian Israel has been always backsliding, always forgetting the Lord. They still take what they can from him to live of themselves, but they refuse to live by him. They get what knowledge they can from the Scriptures without him; they get what they can from their exercises and experiences, but neglect the spring of their life. And so this Israel also withers and dies and becomes a scorn to the heathen. For though they speak great words about their God; yet they are in many ways like the heathen. They are uncircumcised like them, unacquainted with the virtue and power of life like them, always striving against sin with that which cannot conquer sin; and so they also are slaves to their lusts and corruptions. Like the heathen, they do not know the

truth which makes one free indeed.

Alas, alas! Babylon has prevailed; her king has reigned. Zion has been held in bonds; and that which has sprung up with her name has been the filthy offspring of Babylon. These have brought forth sour fruit, loathsome fruit. The fruit of Babylon is finely painted to the view of the natural eye, but it is loathsome in its nature. This has been the state of the apostasy since the days of the apostles, wherein that which has not been of God has reigned, and that which has been of God has suffered and been reproached.

The deep awareness of this has afflicted my soul from my youth, whenever the eternal witness awakened in me, and the eternal light manifested the darkness unto me. At this time I knew not that it was the light, but I went about seeking to measure its appearances in me by the words which the light itself had formerly spoken to others.¹ In this way, I set up my own understanding and comprehension as the measure, although I did not then perceive or think that I did so. Therefore, through ignorance, I continually slew the life, and settled for such an appearance of life as my intellect could judge most agreeable to Scriptures.

Then such a day, or rather a night of darkness and distress overtook me, as would make the hardest heart melt to hear the relation of. Yet the Lord was in that darkness and he preserved me, and was forming me to himself. And the taste I had then of him was far beyond whatever I had known in the purest strain of my religion formerly. The Lord powerfully shut up my intellect and preserved my life from the betrayer. Nevertheless, the thing upon which the tempter does his work was not perfectly destroyed in me, and the

¹ He means the words of Scripture, written by prophets and apostles. He formerly tried to measure and evaluate the appearance of God's light in his heart according to *his own understanding* of their words.

Lord allowed him to lay a snare. My feet were soon entangled unaware, my simplicity was betrayed, and the fleshly part grew wise by those exercises with which the Lord had tried me. This poisoned me and hurt me. This struck at the root of my life, and death insensibly grew upon me. The devil, the envious seedsman, deceived me, opening my intellectual part (by the subtlety of temptation and deceit) which the Lord had been destroying; and he let in what the Lord had shut out. Thus, the way of life was stopped up, and the way of death opened. This was my standing for some time, when at last the Lord drew his sword upon me and smote me in the very inmost of my soul; by which stroke my eyes came to be opened. Then I saw the blindness of that eye which I thought to see so far, and the narrowness of that heart and spirit which had seemed so large and vast in comprehending. And my soul bowed down to the Lord to slay this, to starve this, to make a fool of this. Indeed, my desire was as great after the death of this, as after the enjoyment of life in the Lord.

And now this has opened a fresh spring of sorrow in me, a mourning over the just One which has been slain by me. Oh how cruelly, how often have I murdered that which came to give me life! How often have I sought to have my own understanding, my own comprehension, my own will and affections in religion live, and the righteous, pure, and immortal one die! (Although I did not then call it my own, as other men do not now; but rather took it to be of God, and to be the thing that was meant to live.) For I too was deceived, and thought the first son was to inherit the promise; not knowing him to be the bastard, but thinking him to be the right heir. And my soul is exceedingly burdened in me towards those who at this day lie under the power of the

same deceit; who have slain the Lord of life as I did, and in whom the contrary nature lives under a covering. These cannot possibly see (until the true eye be opened) that the nature which now lives in them is not the heir.

The life that was stirring at the beginning of the trouble of this nation was very precious. It did unite to God; it did unite to one another. It kindled a universal sense of the captivity, of the bondage, of the great oppression of Israel, and a joint cry went up to God for deliverance. And God heard the cry, and arose to deliver, and did begin to break the yoke, both outwardly in the nation, and inwardly in people's spirits.

But the tempter also set himself again to entangle God's Israel. To this end he brought forth painted images and likenesses of that which Israel desired and was seeking after. He brought forth several forms of worship, with which to allure some; several sorts of notions, with which to allure others; several fresh appearances of love and liberty, to tempt the people of God aside from following that Spirit which rose up to deliver. Thus the enemy comes forth and prevails. He divides in Jacob and scatters in Israel, drawing one part to this form, another part toward that form; one to this notion, and another to that notion; one to this image, another to that spiritual idol; and all away from the life, away from the power, away from the Savior, and so the true work stops. It stops in the nation, and it stops in people's spirits.

And now where is the people whom the Lord was redeeming? Where is the praying people, the panting people, the mourning people, the people that would have traveled from sea to sea to have had the will of God revealed? Are they not run into the earth? Is not the spirit of the earth come over them? The inward Jew, the renewed nature is

sunk, lost, made a prey of. The heathenish spirit has risen up and seated itself in a form of worship, or in some high notions of knowledge, on which that spirit which knows not the tree of life loves to feed. Some are stark dead, with no sense at all in them, but their life is quite swallowed up by death. Others perhaps are still pressing toward the kingdom; but in the wrong nature, in that nature which shall never obtain it. These may meet with some enjoyments, but not true enjoyments from the true thing, but rather the likeness which the enemy has painted to deceive them with.

Now in true love my life offers this to you all, as the proper and only way of recovery and redemption: Come to that which can judge you. "Zion is to be redeemed with judgment and her converts with righteousness." If Zion is to be redeemed, if the Seed will again be raised, then that spirit which has got up above it and keeps it down must be judged and brought under by judgment. How was Israel of old to be recovered from her idolatries and harlotry except by acknowledging and coming to that light in the prophets which manifested and judged them? You also have worshiped idols. You also have played the harlot and run from the Lord, and have been inflamed with idols under every green tree. Every new thing, every fresh appearance, every lively idol, has tempted you to turn aside from the living God. When one way of worship has seemed dry and barren, you have left that. When some notions have appeared empty and shallow, you have grown weary of them. But the next new idol, under the next green tree, has drawn you aside into the bed of fornication, where you have lost true fellowship with the true God of life. You have betrayed the seed of life, which he began to quicken and raise from the dead.

Now come to that which judges the idol, the idol-maker,

the harlot spirit, and that which tempts aside from the true husband. Let these be cut down by the judgment, and then the true seed of life will spring and flourish again. There is no other way; be not deceived. Something must be awakened in you which can judge you, and it must bring forth its judgment in you unto victory if life will ever rise in you and get the dominion over death. And that spirit which now rules in you, and keeps the life down, knows this very well and therefore endeavors all it can to keep you from acknowledging the judgment. Indeed, it seeks to keep the light in others from judging you. "Do not judge," says he; "for all judgment is committed to the Son." True; but should not the light of the Son judge? Shall not the light of the candle, which the Lord has lighted in one heart, uncover and judge the darkness in another heart? Light makes manifest, and its manifestation is its judgment. As long as it is light, wherever it shines, it cannot help but discover and judge the darkness it meets with.

And now, you poor lost souls who feel your need of judgment, wait first for the rising of the Judge of Israel in your hearts; then wait for the joining of your hearts to him; both of which are to be done by his eternal light which manifests and gives his life. In the lowest shining of this light there is the judgment, and there is the King himself. Bow down to him, kiss his feet, know the nature of the thing, and be subject to it. Worship him here in his humiliation; receive him in his strokes, in his smitings. Observe and turn from that thing in yourselves which smites him, and you will one day see him in his majesty, in the power of his love, in his everlasting healing and embrace. These are words of tender love, and they will also be words of true life, wherever the Father's earth opens to drink them in.

**Some Propositions
Concerning the Only Way of Salvation**

1. That there is no way of being saved from sin and wrath eternal but by Christ alone who died at Jerusalem. There is no name, virtue, life, or power under heaven given by which lost man may be saved but his alone.

2. That there is no way of being saved by him, but through receiving him into the heart by a living faith, and having him formed in the heart. Christ saves not as he stands without at the door knocking, but as he is let in. And being let in, he brings in with him that life, power, and mercy, which break down the wall of partition, unite to God, and save. The Jews could not be saved formerly by the mere belief of a Messiah to come, with the observation of all the laws and ordinances of Moses, nor can anyone now be saved by the mere belief of a Christ already come, with observation of all that the apostles commanded or practiced. Rather, a man is saved by the receiving of him into the heart, who there works out the salvation.

3. That there is no way of receiving Christ into the heart, and of having him formed there, except by receiving the light of his Spirit, in which light he is and dwells. He who keeps out the light of his Spirit keeps out Christ. He who lets in the light of his Spirit, lets in Christ. For the Father and the Son are light, and are known and received only in the light; but never outside of it.

4. That the way of receiving the light of the Spirit into the heart (and thereby uniting with the Father and the Son) is by hearkening to and receiving its convictions of sin there. The

very first operation of the Spirit towards the man lying in sin is to convince him of that sin. The one who will not receive the convincing light of the Spirit, in this one the work is stopped at the very beginning and Christ can never come to be formed in him. Such a man may talk of Christ, practice duties (pray, read, and meditate often), gather comforts from Scripture promises, run into ordinances, be exceedingly zealous and affectionate in all of these, and yet perish in the end. Yes, the devil will let him alone (if not help him) in all of this, knowing that he has him the surer thereby.

Objection: But I may be deceived in hearkening to a light within; for while I think that I hearken to the light of the Spirit, it may prove to be the light of a natural conscience.

Answer 1. If it be only the light of a natural conscience, and yet still draws you from sin which separates from God, and thereby prepares you for the understanding, believing, and receiving of Christ; this is not a very bad deception. However, if it should prove to have been the light of the Spirit, and all your life you have taken it for the light of a natural conscience (and so have despised, or at least neglected it), you will then find this to be a far worse deception.

Answer 2. I can show you by express Scripture that it is the work of the Spirit to convince of sin. John 16:8. And again that the law, which is spiritual, manifests that which is corrupt and carnal. Rom. 7:14. But where can you show me from Scripture that a natural conscience can convince of sin?

Answer 3. If any man gives heed to the light in his heart, he will find it to uncover his most inward, most secret,

most spiritual evils, which a natural light cannot do. For that which is natural cannot discover that which is spiritual.

Answer 4. The apostle says that it is grace which has appeared to all men, which teaches not only godliness, but also sobriety and righteousness. Tit. 2:11-12. The light of the fallen nature is darkness, and can teach nothing of God. What any man learns now of the true knowledge of God, he learns by grace, which shines in the darkness of man's nature to leaven it with the true knowledge. Even so man, being darkness, can by no means comprehend it, and so cannot give it its true name. Therefore take heed, lest (through ignorance) you blaspheme the holy light of the pure Spirit; calling that natural (looking on it with the carnal eye) which, with the spiritual eye, is seen to be spiritual.

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. It is the seed of the woman which not only destroys, but also uncovers all the deeds of the serpent. Now this seed, this light, is one in all, though there have been various dispensations of it. One dispensation to the heathen, in whom it springs up in hidden manner. Rom. 2:14. Another to the Jews, in whom it was more rigorously stirred up by a written law given; who by types and shadows, and righteous exercises according to the law, were to be awakened to the living principle. Micah 6:8. Another to the Christians, in whom it was brought forth in light and life by a special dispensation of grace. But under all these dispensations, the great majority of men have fallen short of the glory of God and missed the substance. Therefore the Lord God is now bringing forth the substance itself,

but under such a veil as hides it from the eye of man's wisdom. To some it seems natural; to others legal; to some it seems from the power of Satan. Thus men guess at it in the wisdom of their own comprehensions, lacking the true plumb line to measure it by.

Do not shut your eyes now, O you wise ones! But open your hearts, and let in he who knocks there, who can and will save you. For it is not a notion of an external Christ (together with practices of self-denial and mortification) which can save; but Christ heard knocking, and let into the heart. Only this will open the Scriptures aright; yes, this is the true key which will truly open words, things, and spirits. But he that opens without this key is a thief and a robber, and will be made to restore all that he has stolen in the day of God's judgment. Woe to him who, when he is stripped of what he has stolen, is found naked.

The Scriptures were given forth to the people of God; part to the Jews, part to the Christians. He that is born of the life has a right to them, and can read and understand them in the Spirit which dwells in the life. But he that is not born of the Spirit is but an intruder, and only steals other men's light, and other men's conditions and experiences into his carnal understanding. The Scripture was not intended for this, but only to be read and seen in that light which wrote them. And all these carnal apprehensions of man (with all man's faith, hope, love, knowledge, exercises, prayers, tears, fasts, and other imitations), will become loss to him when God recovers his Scriptures from man's dark spirit (which has torn them, and exceedingly profaned them with his own conceivings, guessings, and imaginings), and restores them again to his people.

The prophets and apostles who wrote the Scriptures first had the life in them: and he who understands their words,

must first have the life in him. He that understands the words of life must first have life in himself. The life is the measurer and discerner of the words. The words do not measure and discern the life. And when the Scripture is interpreted by the life and Spirit which penned it, there is then no more quarreling and contending about it.

Now here is the true problem: the dead spirit of man reads Scripture, and from that wisdom which is in the death (not knowing the mind of the Spirit), supplies its own meanings. And then, from believing and practicing the things there spoken of, it gathers a hope that all shall be well at last. However, it does not feel and experience the purification, the cleansing, and the circumcision which cuts off the body of sin and death. Neither does it know the entrance into the everlasting kingdom, where the King of Righteousness is seen, known, and worshiped in spirit.

A Short Catechism For the Sake of the Simple-Hearted

Question: What is the estate and condition of all men by nature, as they are begotten of the seed of the evil-doer, and come out of the loins of the first Adam?

Answer: A state of sin and darkness; a state of death and misery; a state of enmity against God; a state accursed from God; exposed to his wrath and his most righteous judgments, both here and hereafter.

Question: What brought Adam to this estate? And what keeps the sons of Adam in it?

The Scattered Sheep Sought After

Answer: Feeding on the tree of knowledge, from which man continues to feed to this day, though he is excluded from the tree of life.

Question: How did Adam at first, and how do men still now, feed upon the tree of knowledge?

Answer: From a lustful appetite and desire after the forbidden wisdom, sown in their hearts by the envious enemy of their souls; who is continually coiling around this tree and tempting men and women to eat of it, persuading them that the fruit there is good for food. Indeed the fruit is very desirable to their eye, and promises to make them everlastingly wise, but fails to do so.

Question: What is the forbidden fruit?

Answer: It is knowledge without life. It is knowledge in the earthly part; knowledge acquired from below, not given from above. This promises to make men like God, and to give them the ability of discerning and distinguishing between good and evil, which is God's peculiar property. Eating of this fruit was the ruin of Adam, the ruin of the Gentiles, the ruin of the Jews, and the ruin of the Christians. All of these have fed on the tree of knowledge and departed from the life in their various dispensations.

Question: How is this fruit the ruin of man?

Answer: The wisdom and knowledge gathered here and fed upon perverts him. It makes him wise in the wrong part and exalts him against the life. It dulls the true appetite and increases the wrong appetite, leaving him with not so much as a desire after God in truth. By this means, whatsoever was

afterwards ordained to life, became death to man.

So it was that the Gentiles refused to retain God in their knowledge, but provoked God to cast them off and give them up to the vanity of their imaginations. Similarly the Jews, whom God had chosen, were given up to their own hearts' lust, and were rejected from being a people. And the Gentiles, whom God ingrafted into the true olive tree in the Jews' stead, they also, after the same manner, fell in their dispensation. Thus each of these fell by gathering wisdom from the letter, but missing of the life in each of these dispensations.

Question: What is the food which man should feed on?

Answer: The tree of life; the word which lives and abides forever, which is in the midst of the garden of God. This very word was made flesh for man's weakness' sake, on which flesh the living soul feeds, and whose blood the living spirit drinks, and so is nourished up to eternal life.

Question: But did Adam have this food to feed on? And was this to be the food of the Gentiles, Jews, and Christians, in their several dispensations?

Answer: God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul. Nothing less than life itself could satisfy his soul at first, nor can it to this day. Every word of God that comes fresh out of his mouth is man's food and life. God speaks often to man, showing him what is good. But man cannot relish or feed on this, but rather desires something else, through the error and alienation of his mind. The word is not far from any man, but men's ears are generally stopped against it by the subtlety of the serpent who at first deceived them.

Question: But did not the Jews seek for eternal life, in reading and studying the Scriptures under their dispensation? And do not the Christians now seek for life, and to feed on life?

Answer: Yes they did and do in their own way, but they refuse it in God's way. Thus Adam, after he had eaten of the tree of knowledge, would have fed on the tree of life also, but he was shut out then, and so are Christians now. And if ever they will feed on the tree of life, they must lose their knowledge; they must be made blind and be led to it by a way that they know not.

Question: This is too mysterious for me. Give me the plain, literal knowledge of the Scriptures.

Answer: Is not the spiritual substance always a mystery?² And is not the life in the substance? The letter of any dispensation kills; it is the Spirit alone that gives life. A man may read the letter of the Scriptures diligently, and gather a large knowledge from there, and feed greedily there; but it is only the dead spirit which feeds in this way, but the soul underneath remains lean, barren, hungry, and unsatisfied, which, when it awakes, it will feel.

Question: But may not the dead spirit also imagine mysteries in everything, and feed upon his imaginations?

Answer: Yes it may; and the error here is greater than the former. But in waiting in humility and fear to have the true eye opened and the true mystery revealed to the humble and

² Penington often uses the word *mystery* to refer to those things which cannot be known by natural faculties, but must be revealed by the Spirit of God.

honest heart, here there is safety. And in receiving from the demonstration of the Spirit, outside of the wisdom of the flesh, here there is no error, but rather the true knowledge, which springs from life, and brings life.

Question: How may I come to this mystery?

Answer: There is but one key that can open it, and but one hand that can turn that key. And there is but one vessel, one heart, one spirit, which can receive the knowledge.

Question: How may I come to that heart?

Answer: In the same way that you have been touched by the enemy, and did let him in, and did not turn him away with the power of that life which was stronger than he; even so now, when you are touched and drawn by your friend, and thereby find the beginning of his virtue entering into you, give up in and by that life and virtue, and wait for more. And as you experience it calling and growing upon you, follow on in it, and it will lead you in a wonderful way out of the land of death and darkness, where the soul has been a captive, into the land of life and perfect liberty.

Question: But can I do anything toward my own salvation?

Answer: Of yourself you cannot; but in the power of him that works in you both to will and to do, you may do a little at first. And as that power grows in you, you will be able to will more, and to do more, even until nothing becomes too hard for you. And when you have conquered all, suffered all, and performed all, you will see, and be able to say with understanding, that you have done nothing; but the eternal virtue,

life, and power, has wrought everything in you.

Question: I perceive, by what has been said, that there is a Savior; one who has virtue, life, and power in him to save. But how may I meet with him?

Answer: Yes, he that made man pities him, and is not willing that he should perish in the pit into which he fell, but has appointed one to draw him out, and save him.

Question: Who is this Savior?

Answer: He is the tree of life that I have spoken of all this while, whose leaves have virtue in them to heal the nations. He is the plant of righteousness, the plant of God's right hand. Have you ever known such a plant in you, planted there by the right hand of God? He is the resurrection and the life, who raises the dead soul, and causes it to live. He is the spiritual manna, upon which the living soul feeds. Yes, his flesh is food indeed, and his blood is drink indeed. And he that is raised up in the life feeds upon, and finds the living virtue in them, which satisfies and nourishes his immortal soul.

Question: But does not this Savior have a name? What is his name?

Answer: It would be better for you to learn his name by experiencing his virtue and power in your heart. Yet, if you can receive it, this is his name: the Light; the Light of the World. He is a light to enlighten the Gentiles, that he may convert and make them God's Israel, and become their glory. And according to his office, he has enlightened every man

that comes into the world. Men, however, have neither known the light that comes from him, nor known him from whom the light comes. And so, even though the light is so near them, they remain strangers to it, and unsaved by it.

Question: Why do you call him the light? Are there not other names every bit as proper whereby he may also be known?

Answer: Yes, but only by receiving him as the light do we come to know his other names. He is the life, the righteousness, the power, the wisdom, the peace, etc., but he is all of these in the light, and in the light we learn and receive them all. None of these can be known in spirit except in and by the light.

Question: How are the other names of Christ known in and by the light?

Answer: By letting in the light (which convinces of and wars against sin), the life stirs and is felt. And the life leads to the experience of the Word which was in the beginning. And in the Word, the righteousness, the peace, the wisdom, the power, the love are experienced; and he is made all of these unto those who are led into and kept in the light. And when the powers of darkness appear with mighty dread, and when there is no strength to withstand them, this lifts up a standard against them, and calms all the tempests, and cures all the wounds and diseases of the soul, anointing it with the everlasting oil. Thus I can now sensibly say, and with clear understanding call him my Savior, the Captain of my salvation, my Christ or Anointed, my Husband, my King, my Lord, and my God.

Question: Where does this light shine?

Answer: In the darkness at first, but when it has vanquished, expelled, and dispersed the darkness, it shines out of it.

Question: What is that darkness wherein the light shines?

Answer: The darkness is man, man's heart, man's conscience, man's spirit. This is the world of which Christ, the Sun of righteousness, is the light, in every part where he causes the rays of his light to shine. However, in no part can the darkness comprehend the least shining of his light.

Question: How then can the darkness ever be converted by the light?

Answer: The darkness is not to be converted. Every man in this state is reprobate, and the wrath abides on him. Therefore, the darkness must be rejected, along with the man in the darkness. But the soul that is touched by the light, and made sensible of it, follows it in the life and power which it begets, and is drawn out of the horrible pit, and saved.

Question: How may I find the light in the midst of the darkness of my heart, which is so great, and this seed so small?

Answer: By its uncovering and warring against the darkness. There is something which uncovers both the open and the secret iniquity of the corrupt heart, finding it under all its coverings of zeal, holiness, and all appearances of humility and self-righteousness. That which wars against the darkness to bring people off from all false foundations to the true and living foundation, this is the light; and thus you may find

it, at some time or other working in your heart.

Question: Having found the light, how may I come to experience the saving virtue and power of it?

Answer: By believing in it. For the virtue and power springs up in the heart that believes in it.

Question: But how can I believe in it? Am not I dead?

Answer: There is a creating, a quickening power in the light, which begets a little life, and this can answer the voice of the living power.

Question: If I could find such a thing begotten in me, then I might be able to believe. But surely my dead heart never can.

Answer: Have you never experienced a true, honest breathing towards God? Have you never found sin to be a real (not imaginary) burden? This was from life. There was something begotten of God in you which felt this. It was certainly not the flesh and blood in you, but something from above. And if you had known the spring of its life, you would have fed upon, and grown up in, the virtue and power of the spring from whence the life came.

Question: If this be true, then all men have power to believe.

Answer: In the light which shines in all, and visits all, there is the power to believe. This power strives with the creature, and seeks to work itself into the creature; and where there has been the least breathing after life, there has also been a taste of the power. But the great deceiver of souls lifts up

man's mind in imaginations to look for some greater appearance of power, and so man often slights and overlooks the day of small things, and neglects receiving the beginnings of God's power. Waiting in that which is low and little in the heart, the power enters, the seed grows, the kingdom is felt and is daily more and more revealed. This is the true door; beware of seeking to climb in another way.

Question: What is it to believe in the light?

Answer: It is to receive the light's testimony concerning good or evil, and so either to turn towards or away from it, in the will and power which the light begets in the heart.

Question: How will this save me?

Answer: By this means: that which destroys you, and separates you from the living God, will be daily wrought out, and the heart daily changed into the image of him who is light. And you will be brought into unity and fellowship with the light, possessing it, and being possessed by it. This is your salvation.

Question: We thought salvation was a thing to be bestowed upon us hereafter, after the death of the body. But if this be true, then salvation is experienced here.

Answer: So it is, even in all that are saved. For there is no working out of salvation hereafter, but here it is wrought out with fear and trembling. And the believer who is truly in unity with the life is daily changed from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Question: Demonstrate more particularly how faith, or believing in the light, works out the salvation.

Answer: 1. First it causes a fear and trembling to seize upon the sinner. The Lord God Almighty, by the rising of his light in the heart, causes the powers of darkness to shake, the earth to tremble, the hills and mountains to melt, and then the plant of the Lord springs up out of the dry and barren ground, which by the dews and showers from above, thrives, grows, and spreads till it fills God's earth.

2. In this fear and trembling the work of true repentance and conversion is begun and carried on. There is a turning of the soul from the darkness to the light; from the dark power to the light power; from the spirit of deceit to the spirit of truth; from all false appearance and imaginations about holiness, to that which the eternal light manifests to be truly so. This is a time of deep mourning, while the separation is working within; while the enemy's strength is not yet broken and subdued in the heart, and while the heart is now and then feeling itself still longing after its old lovers.

3. In the belief of the light, and in the fear placed in the heart, there springs up a hope, a living hope, in the living root, which has manifested itself and begun to work. For in the soul that is truly turning to the light, the everlasting arm, the living power is felt. And this becomes the anchor that stays the soul in all the troubles, storms, and tempests it meets with afterwards; which are many, yes, very many.

4. Faith, through the hope, works righteousness, and teaches the true wisdom. Now the benefit of all the former trouble, anguish, and misery begins to be felt, and the work goes on sweetly. All unrighteousness is in the darkness, in the unbelief, in the false hope. Faith in the light works out the unrighteousness, and works in the righteousness of God

in Christ. It makes one truly wise, wise in the living power, a wisdom which man cannot learn elsewhere.

5. In the righteousness, and in the true wisdom which is received in the light, there springs up a love, and a unity, and fellowship with God, the Father of lights, and with all who are children of the light. Being begotten by Christ, a unity is soon felt with God the Father, and with those who are born of the same womb, and partake of the same nature. And here, in this love, there is a willingness and power felt to lay down one's life even for the least truth of Christ's, or for the brethren.

6. Belief in the light works patience, meekness, gentleness, tenderness, and long-suffering. It will bear anything for God, anything for men's souls' sake. It will wait quietly and stilly for the carrying on of the work of God in its own soul, and for the manifestation of God's love and mercy to others. It will bear the reproach of sinners, seeking their good, even while they are plotting, contriving, and hatching mischief.

7. It brings peace, joy, and glory. Faith in the light breaks down the wall of darkness, the wall of partition, that which separates from the peace, that which causes anguish and trouble upon the soul, and so brings it into peace. Christ is the skillful Physician; he cures the disease by removing the cause. The unskillful physicians heal deceitfully; crying peace, peace, when there is no peace, while that which breaks the peace is still standing. But Christ does not do so, but rather slays the enmity in the heart by the blood of his cross, so making peace. This is true and certain peace.

Now finding the clods of earth removed, and the enemy, trodden down, the sin taken away and the life and power present, the soul is brought into peace. Here is joy, unspeakable joy! This is a joy which the world cannot see or touch, nor the powers of darkness come near to interrupt. Here is

now no more crying out, 'O wretched man!' and 'Who shall deliver! etc.', but a rejoicing in him who has given victory, and made the soul a conqueror; indeed, more than a conqueror. Wait to feel this, you who art now groaning and oppressed by the merciless powers of darkness.

This joy is full of glory, a glory that increases daily by the daily sight and feeling of the living virtue and power in Christ the light. Here the soul is continually transformed and changed, out of the corruptible into the incorruptible; out of the uncircumcision, the shame, the reproach, into the circumcision, the life, the glory.

Question: Does the light do all of this?

Answer: Yes, in them that turn towards it, give up to it, and abide in it. In these it cleanses out the darkness, and daily transforms them into the image, purity, and perfection of the light. And this nothing can do but the light alone.

Question: What makes men generally so hostile to the light?

Answer: Their unity with the darkness. The light is an enemy to all darkness, uncovering and disturbing it.

Question: But wise men, knowing men, men who are looked upon as having the most light, these also are enemies to this light and speak disparagingly of it.

Answer: Was it not always this way? Did any of the rulers or wise scribes and teachers of the law believe in him formerly? Is it any wonder if such do not believe in him now?

Question: What is the reason why the wise have not, and even now cannot, believe in the light?

Answer: There are two great reasons for it.

1. Because they cannot comprehend it. They can comprehend a kind of knowledge which is gathered out of books of nature, or out of the books of the law and prophets, or out of the books of the evangelists and apostles; but they cannot comprehend the light to which all these testify. There is a kind of knowledge that they can receive; but the light they cannot receive; for it is not comprehended by man; but rather gathers into itself, and comprehends all.

2. Because true light is an utter enemy to them. It will not wink at the smallest of their evils, nor speak peace to them while they remain in darkness. Their own gathered knowledge may speak peace to them; but the light will not. In this way the Jews could speak peace to themselves with their temple ordinances and sacrifices; though they walked in the stubbornness and uncircumcision of their hearts, always resisting the checks and motions of the Holy Spirit there. And thus the Christians can now speak peace to themselves from a belief in Christ's dying at Jerusalem, though they do not know him in them, nor receive his power in checks and reproofs for sin.

Question: But there are many professors, strict professors, who, without a doubt, have once tasted of the living virtue. What makes them now such enemies to the light?

Answer: 1. Because they are fallen from what they once had. For if they were in that living seed which once gave them a true taste of life through the Scriptures, they could not help but know and acknowledge the light. For the light was the thing which gave them the taste, and would have preserved the savor had they known how to turn to it and abide in it.

2. The light is a witness against all their knowledge, their religious practices, and the imitations they have gathered out from the Scripture. The light witnesses against what they believe and practice outside of the light, in their unrighteousness, even in that part of man which cannot know or be the worshiper. And can you blame them for turning against it, when the light is so great an enemy to them? How is it possible that, having slain and murdered the just one in themselves, they should acknowledge and give him his due honor in others?

Question: But have the strict professors, who claim great things in honor of Christ, murdered him in themselves?

Answer: Yes, truly, just as truly as the Scribes and Pharisees and Jewish people put him to death at Jerusalem. For what they do to the least appearance of his light in their hearts, they do it unto him. Indeed, our Lord Christ, at this very day, is as really crucified in their spiritual Egypt and Sodom as he was outside the gates of Jerusalem. And his righteous blood cries just as loud against the professors of this age as ever it did against the Jews. But men now are hardened against him by a conceited knowledge that they have gathered from the Scriptures by their imaginations. And their eyes can no more see it now than the eyes of the Jews could see it then.

Question: Surely if they knew the light to be the only living way, they would not be such enemies to it.

Answer: Yes, I believe concerning them (as was said concerning the Jews) that if they knew it, they would not crucify the Lord of glory. For I bear many of them record that they have a great zeal, though not according to knowl-

edge. But at present how very sad is their state; for the god of the world has blinded the eye in them which alone can see the truth.

Question: But is it not possible for men to obtain eternal life by reading the Scriptures, without knowing or acknowledging this principle of the light?

Answer: The true objective of reading the Scriptures is to turn men to the light. The Scriptures contain messages concerning God, concerning Christ, concerning the Spirit, the goal of which is to turn men to the power and life which alone can work for them and in them. 'The Word is nigh to you in your heart, and in your mouth' says Moses to the Jews, says Paul to the Christians. And to what end do they tell them it is there? But that there they should wait upon it, to hear its voice, and to obey it.

Now mark well, even if a man could practice and perform all things mentioned in the Scriptures, yet not being turned to this light, they are not in the way of salvation. For the way of salvation is not a peculiar path, or a course of ordinances and duties prescribed in the Scriptures; but it is a new way, a living way, a way that the wisest professors, by their wisdom, never knew ("I will lead them in paths they have not known"). So that while men do not know, nor are turned to, the light and power of which the Scriptures testify, all of their reading of the Scriptures, praying and practicing ordinances and duties are but in vain. In the end these will prove to be but a false covering, and not the covering of the Spirit.

Chapter VI

Babylon the Great

The City of Confusion Where Antichrist Reigns

BABYLON: this is the city which is built up and filled with images and likenesses of the ways and truths of God, but is without the life and power. On her outside there is the likeness of a church, the likeness of a ministry, the likeness of the ordinances, duties, and ways of holiness. On her inside there is the likeness of good knowledge, the likeness of repentance and conversion, the likeness of faith, and zeal, hope, innocence, sanctification, etc. But the actual substance, the truth, the virtue of all these things is lacking, and she is found persecuting the very thing that she claims to be.

This is the woman that has bewitched the whole earth for many generations, and is still changing her dresses and paints that she might continue to bewitch the people, and sit as a queen reigning over their consciences. But blessed be the light which is arisen to uncover her, and the power which is able to overthrow this mighty city and all that take part with her.

The Lord God Omnipotent reigns in Zion; and antichrist, with his city Babylon, falls. Sing praises, sing praises, O

inhabitant of Zion, to him who subjects Babylon with all her glory under your feet.

Preface

There has been in me a zeal for God from my childhood, and a most earnest search into the Scriptures (which my soul deeply relished and my heart honored and loved, and still does) for the revelation of the mind and will of God. Two things did I earnestly search and beg for: the one was for the discovery of the outward way of worship; the other for the inward life, virtue, and power. And I looked upon the outward as the proper means to lead me to the inward.

At the beginning of the troubles in these nations, there was a lively stirring in me, and a hope that God was bringing forth something. I felt this same stirring in many others, and so my heart rejoiced and my soul was refreshed. But the expectation I found to soon collapse and wither, and I was forced to retire and to separate myself from that where I found the life and power dying and decaying. In my separation the Lord was with me; my soul remembers it well. And he had regard to the simplicity, honesty, and integrity of my heart, which he himself had kindled in me. And though I fell too soon into a way of church-fellowship and ordinances, yet he regarded me and pitied me, and refreshed my life even there.

But at length the outward forms overgrew us, and the sweet and precious life in us began to die. Then the Lord found out another way to refresh us (namely, by a sensible relating of our conditions, and of God's dealings with us, and workings in us), which was very sweet and precious at first; but the enemy crept in there also. And here it was that the hand of the Lord fell upon me, striking at my very root,

breaking my life asunder, and trampling my crown in the dust. Then I became a man of sorrows (being stripped of all my life, faith, hope, joy, comfort, in one day) not knowing which way to look, nor what to desire. Sometimes there were breathings after God stirring in me, but they were quickly cut off. Sometimes a taste of refreshment from a scripture was presented to me; but then it was suddenly taken away, and my death and darkness thereby increased. Then I did wish, Oh that I might appear before his throne! For surely my conscience was clear in his sight, and I had not wickedly departed from my God, but was broken in pieces by his hand, even while my soul was earnestly seeking after him. Oh how my soul did mourn, seeing how I was fit to be made a prey to every ravenous spirit! Many did seek to devour me, but the hand of the Lord was with me, preserving me, though I knew it not. And though I was wholly broken and desolate of all that I had called, or could call knowledge (for then I could not call anything either good or evil), yet the Lord, by a secret instinct, preserved me exceedingly out of that which was evil, and kept my heart secretly panting after the fountain and wellspring of good.

At length I was captivated by the world (through deep despair of ever meeting with God any more in this life) and betrayed by the love of it (which at last rose up in me, and gained ground in me, by persuading me that my present estate and condition did require the free use of the world, and the enjoyment of all it could afford). Yet the Lord followed me, and I was often visited with secret loathings of the world, and turnings from it, and pantings after the spring of my life. But I came to dread these longings after God, for I feared the misery and unutterable anguish to which they had previously led me.

During this courting of the world and estrangement from

the life, the reasoning part in me (which the Lord had been long battering, and had laid very low) gathered strength. I began to grow wise again, or so I thought, and able to judge the things of God, and to hope and wait for some great appearance. But in this the enemy deeply deceived me, pleasing me with my sense of knowledge, and keeping me hereby from unity with that which alone was able to give me the sight of him, whenever he should appear. In this fleshly wisdom I judged and despised the true life in others as being weak, low, and not able to bring them to that which I stood in need of, and waited for. Yes, the more I considered and reasoned in my mind, and the more I conversed with them,¹ the further off still I was. Yet at length, the Lord powerfully touched and raised up the life in me (which by all these reasonings and consultations I had slain); and then by degrees (waiting upon it) I saw, I felt, I tasted, I handled, the living word.

Hereby my eyes have been opened, and I have seen the bonds whereby I had been held captive apart from the life all these days. Indeed, many of the streets and buildings of Babylon have my eyes beheld. Yes, I have heard the tongue of the false prophet, who speaks so much like the true prophet that no flesh can discern or distinguish between them. Yes, I have seen the dragon in the temple, being worshiped there by even the strictest professors, as though he were God. And now, in tenderness and in the true light of life, from the pure movings of the eternal Spirit, I come forth to visit my poor fellow creatures and captives in Babylon. What I have seen and known I testify of for the relief of others, that they may escape that misery with which my poor soul has been overwhelmed, and that they may come out of

¹ He is referring to the Society of Friends, who were in scorn called Quakers.

that filthy, abominable city which God is making desolate.

O Babylon, where the pure life, the conquering faith, the suffering love, the purifying hope, the putting off of the body of sin, the putting on the living garment, is not and cannot be known. In Babylon men are only dreaming of these things, and all the satisfaction they have is from the pleasure of their dream. But when they awake they will find leanness, destitution, and nakedness upon their souls.

A Description of Babylon

*For the Sake of the Daughters of Zion
Who Presently Dwell in Her Midst.*

Babylon is the spiritual fabric of iniquity; the mystical great city of the great king of darkness. It is built in imitation of Zion, painted just like Zion, so that it be mistaken for Zion, and be worshiped there, instead of the true, eternal God, and King of Zion.

This is the seat of the man of sin, wherever he finds a dwelling place framed in any heart, or in any society of men. Here he lodges, here he lives, here he sits as god, here he reigns, here he is worshiped, here he is exalted above all that can truly be called God in that heart, or in that society.

1. Babylon is called a city. This is a proper metaphor to uncover the mystery of iniquity. It is just like a city, for in a city there are several streets, and in the streets, houses, and in the houses, several rooms, to which families and persons belong. So it is here; there are many streets in this city of Babylon, many houses in every street, many rooms in every house; and the houses and rooms have their several families and persons belonging to them. These have their laws and governments, their knowledge of God and Christ, their order,

their worship, their discipline in which they walk and by which they order themselves in their several services, places, offices, and employments, under the king of Babylon.

2. It is a spiritual or mystical city. It is not an outward building of earthly materials, but an inward building of inward materials. Just the outward Zion, the outward Jerusalem, is passed away in its use and service, so too the outward Babylon is out of date too. (You need not look very far for it.) And even as God has built up an inward city, a spiritual building; so has the king of darkness likewise.

3. It is a great city, a city that overspreads the earth. As spiritual Zion was a vast city, a city that did overspread the nations (how did the faith of the gospel over-run the world in the apostles' days!) so this city has also over-run the world. Indeed it has taken up all the territories and dominions of the other city, and now Zion has been laid in the dust, and trodden under foot. Indeed, she has deceived the nations, having Zion's dress, Zion's shape, Zion's outward garment, but not Zion's spirit.

4. It is a city of iniquity, of hidden iniquity. That which is hidden in this city it is not the life, it is not the righteousness, the holiness of the saints; but iniquity, sin, transgression of the life. Look into any of the streets of Babylon, into any of the houses, any of the rooms, any of the chambers of darkness; there is sin there. And though it be washed and transformed in appearance ever so often outwardly, yet still it remains inwardly polluted.

In this there is a great difference between the vessels of Zion, and the vessels of Babylon. The vessels of Zion, they are weak, earthen, foolish, contemptible to the eye of man's wisdom; but the treasure, the liquor of life within them, is precious. The vessels of Babylon make a great show and appear very holy, very heavenly, very zealous for God and Christ, and for the setting up of his church and ordinances all

over the world. Thus they appear without; but they are sepulchers and there is rottenness within. Under all this there lodges an unclean, an un sanctified heart; a heart unsubdued to the spirit and power of the gospel, even while it makes such a great show of subjection and obedience to the letter.

5. It is the city of the king of darkness, the great king of darkness, the prince of the power of the air, who rules universally in the darkness, even in every heart. Wherever there is sin, there is Satan's throne; and there he has his laws, his government, his power, in every heart of his dominion. And where there is the least subjection to him, he is still a prince, and his building is not yet there wholly thrown down; there he is not yet dispossessed and cast out. As long as there is anything left wherein he may dwell, he knows his own, and keeps hold of it. It is his right, and he will not lose it. All sin, all darkness, is properly his; it is his seat, and he has the government there. *Man is the land where these two kings fight*; and whatever is good and holy belongs to the one king, and whatever is evil and unclean belongs to the other. There is no communion or peace between them; but each keeps his own, and gathers his own unto himself. And where the fight has once begun between these two kings, there is no quietness in that land till one of these be dispossessed. But then there is either the false peace of Babylon, most commonly under a form and guise of holiness; or there is the peace of Zion, in the spirit, life, and power.

6. This city was built (and is daily built) in imitation of Zion, painted to look just like Zion. The intent of its building was to diminish Zion, to suppress Zion, to withdraw from the truth by a false image, and to keep her inhabitants in peace and satisfaction, under a belief and hope that it is the true Zion.

7. The objective of all this, of Satan's building up this

city, this great city was, and is, that it might be taken for Zion, and that he be worshiped there as God, and this without provoking jealousy or suspicion.

The Sins of Babylon

The sins of Babylon are related to these two heads: fornication and abomination. She allures the spirit of man into a strange bed, and there he acts filthily and abominably with this strange spirit. Some of her acts are more open and manifest to all, while some are more hidden and secret, hard (indeed, utterly impossible) to be discerned, without the shining forth of the pure light of life. For the great masterpiece of the harlot was to paint herself like the Lamb's wife, and so to withdraw from the true church, and set up a false church.

Now the hidden sins of Babylon are the same nature as the more open and gross sins; the great difference is their secrecy, their not appearing like sins, their paint, their color, whereby they are accepted as holy and good. As for instance:

There is fornication (or adultery from the life) in the finest or purest way of worship that man can invent or imitate. Those that set up the harlot's church do not call it so, nor perhaps think it to be so. Those that set up the harlot's ministry, or ordinances, do not give them that name, but call them the ministry and ordinances of Christ: yet this is as really and truly fornication from the life as the grossest ways of heathenish worship.

If a man read the Scriptures and thrust himself into any practices he finds there mentioned, without the raising up of the living thing in him, he has done this by the harlot's advice. In this he is committing fornication, and erring from

the life. For the true worship lies in the spirit and in the truth, and it is the new birth that God seeks to worship him. But the spirit of man thrusts itself into these things, and this the Lord abhors and rejects. The spirit of man can never be cleansed in this way, nor fitted to enter into Christ's bed; but rather gets only a layer of paint from the Scriptures and enters into the painted bed and bosom of the harlot, where it remains unrenewed, unchanged, unmortified, even while it professes great spiritual things.

And thus the Scripture, the holy Scriptures of truth (which were given forth from the pure Spirit of life), the harlot uses to draw away from the life. And now every sort claims their own way and worship to be the way and worship according to the Scriptures. But the religion of the harlot, her worship, her profession, her practices, do not reach to the purifying of the conscience, but only to paint over the old sepulcher, where rottenness lodges within. The heart was never thoroughly circumcised or baptized; the old man was never put off, or the new man put on. The blood of purifying (which truly washes away the sin) was never felt in its virtue and power, but only an apprehension and talk that they are cleansed in Christ, from a notion they have stolen out of the Scriptures; but not from the sensible experience of the thing in life and power in their consciences. And so the evil nature still remains, the evil heart of unbelief is still to be found in them, and they lack the life, power, Spirit, love, humility, meekness, patience, innocence and simplicity of the lamb and dove.

Now there are several sins which the Spirit of the Lord has charged Babylon with, and for which he will reckon with her and with all that partake of her. Some of these I will mention, such as:

1. *Her deep fornications from the life, under a pretense*

of honoring and worshiping it. She speaks fair words; she calls to have the worship of God set up, and a godly ministry, and the ordinances of God in a nation; but it is not the true thing in the sight of God. This was, and this is, the very way of antichrist's rising. He gets into the outward form, he applauds the form; and by use of the form (which he acknowledges and commends), he eats away at the life and power. This is the wolf in sheep's clothing, which, by this fair appearance with the sheep's wool on his back, hides his ravenous nature from the eyes of the beholders.

2. *By inventing things which the Lord never commanded, or adding to that which the Lord did command.* The mind of man is very busy, and full of inventions. And whenever the heart is touched with devotion and zeal towards God, the inventing part exceedingly exercises itself this way, either in imagining and forming something that it thinks may be acceptable to God, or in adding to those things which it finds commanded in Scripture. In this kind of fornication the Catholic Church abounds, being filled with ceremonies of their own inventing, and additions to the things mentioned in the Scriptures. But the common Protestants have been guilty of this as well.

3. *By imitating those things which were commanded to others.* When a man finds in Scripture the things which some others did, or which others were commanded to do, he takes upon himself to do the same thing before he knows the leadings of that Spirit from whom such things proceeded. Now in this he errs from the life; he goes without his guide, he does that which was a good thing in others (who were led by the Spirit), but in him it is fornication. Such a man is a thief and an intruder. He steals the outward knowledge and practice without the inward life and power. He intrudes into where others have been led by the Spirit, but comes not in by

the right door. He should have waited for the true entrance, and not run ahead by himself.

Into this kind of fornication the strictest among the Protestants have often been ensnared. These run on further and further to search out the purest way of worship, the nearest pattern to the primitive times. But they have applied themselves diligently to this not knowing the true guide, nor waiting for him to give them entrance. And now, thinking themselves to be in the right, they have contracted a lofty spirit, holding forth their conceptions as the only way. They are grown high, they are grown wise, they are become confident, they know the way already, and can maintain it by undeniable arguments (as they think). So the Lord with his teachings remains at a great distance from them.

4. *By continuing in practices into which they were once led by the Spirit, without the immediate presence and life of the Spirit.* For all true worship, the whole religion of the gospel, consists in following the Spirit, in having the Spirit do all in us and for us. Therefore, whatsoever a man does for himself is outside of the life, and it is in the fornication. Now this way of fornication have men especially fallen into who, having been acquainted with true leadings and openings of the Spirit, have afterwards run to these for refreshment, and so by degrees forgotten the Spirit who formerly led them.

5. *By speaking well of the ways of their own invention, or the ways which they have imitated without the life.* To call these the ways of God, the true ways of life, is blasphemy. "I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but a synagogue of Satan." Rev. 2:9. There were, even in the apostles' days, persons who pretended to be Christians, and pretended still to be of the church, though they had lost the life; and this the Spirit of the Lord said was blasphemy.

6. *By committing either manifest or more refined idolatries.* "Little children," said John, "keep yourselves from idols." 1 John 5:21. John saw anti-christianism breaking in rapidly, many antichrists being already come; and now (says he) keep to the anointing, and keep from idols. Without watching carefully, without being mightily preserved by the anointing, he saw idolatry would even creep in upon them who had tasted of the true power and virtue of life. But how shall they keep from idols who know not the anointing, but rather think revelation has ceased?

Idolatry is the worshiping of God without his Spirit (this is the plain, naked truth of the thing). To invent things from the carnal mind, or to imitate things which others who had the Spirit did in the Spirit, by the command of the Spirit, this is idolatry. An invented or imitated church, ministry, or worship, without the life, without the Spirit, these are the work of men's hands and are idols, and all that is performed herein is idolatry. Rev. 9:20. This is a religion without life, a worship without life. For the living God, the Lord God of endless life and power, is alone worshiped by his Spirit, and in the truth of that life which he begets in the heart. All other worship, however spiritual it may seem, is idolatrous.

This is a standing truth: whatever is not of the Spirit of God in religion and worship is of the spirit of antichrist. Whatever the spirit of man has invented or imitated is not the thing itself, is not the true worship. For the true worship is only and continually in the Spirit and never out of the Spirit. The true praying is in the Spirit; the true singing, in the Spirit; the true preaching, in the Spirit: whatsoever is out of it is of antichrist in man. Now therefore give up all your religion, your knowledge, your worship, your practices, which are outside of the Spirit. Return unto the Lord, and wait for

his raising of that seed in you which once began to spring, but is now slain, and lies in death and captivity under all these.

Therefore, those who dwell in Babylon, put away all your images and likenesses of truth. Put away your false faith (which can never overcome the worldly nature and spirit in you), and your false hope (which can never purify your hearts), and your feigned humility, and self-willed fasts (which can never bring down the lofty, exalted nature in you), and your false love (wherewith you can never love the brethren in the truth) and your false zeal, meekness, holiness, etc. For all of this springs and grows up from the wrong seed. Put away all your praying, reading, and preaching which you have taken up and do practice in your own wills, which will should be crucified; and with which no service, worship, or performance can be pleasing to God. Wait for the raising of the true seed of life, in the true simplicity, whereby you may serve God acceptably here, and be saved hereafter. And be not mockers, lest your bonds be made strong; for the destruction is determined against you by that Spirit of life whose breath will waste you. All flesh is grass, and the glory thereof is as the flower of the field! Surely this people is grass, and their zeal and profession of God is like the fading flower.

Chapter VII

The Holy Scriptures **Whether They Be the True Rule of Faith and Life**

The greatest kind of knowledge is to know things by way of a unity with them, even by experiencing a measure of their life made manifest within. This we confess to be our way of understanding things, and likewise of understanding the Scriptures, which speak of spiritual things. Indeed, we have found this to be a far surer kind of knowledge; namely, to understand the Scriptures by experiencing that of which they speak, and not by guessing at things, or by considering and scanning the words of Scripture with the earthly mind.

Now, concerning the holy Scriptures being a perfect rule¹ of faith and life, the new covenant is the covenant of the gospel; which is a living covenant, a spiritual covenant, an inward covenant, and so the law or rule of it cannot be written outwardly. Read the tenor of the new covenant, Heb. 8:10. "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts." Notice: there is a manifest difference given between the new covenant and the old, namely, that the laws

¹ Again, the word *rule* is used here to refer to that which has true authority, that which rules, governs, and orders all things in the life of a believer.

of the one were written outwardly, in tables of stone; the laws of the other were to be written in the heart. The heart is the book wherein the laws of the new covenant were promised to be written, and there they must also be read. So then, he that will read and obey the laws of the covenant of life must look for them in that book wherein God has promised to write them. For though in other books a man may read some outward descriptions of the thing, yet here alone can he read the thing itself.

"Christ is the way, the truth, and the life." What is a Christian's rule? Is not the *way* of God his rule? Is not God's *truth* his rule? And is not the truth in Jesus, and only there to be taught and to be heard? Eph. 4:21. Is not he the king, the priest, the prophet, the sacrifice, the way to God, the life itself, the living path out of death; yes, all in all to the believer whose eye is opened to behold him? The Scriptures testify of Christ, but they are not Christ. They also testify of truth, and indeed are a true testimony, but the truth itself is in Jesus, who by his living Spirit writes it in the heart which he has made alive.

Therefore a Christian's life is in the Spirit: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Gal. 5:25. The whole life and course of a Christian is in the volume of that book, as the Lord opens the pages of it in him. "The gift of God, the measure of faith" given him by God, this is his rule; this is his rule of knowledge, of prophesying, of obedience. Heb. 12. Rom. 1:5. 12:6. If he keeps to this, if he walks according to the proportion of this, he does not err. But if he walk outside of the faith, then all that he knows, all that he believes, and all that he does, is in error.

The new creature, (that which God has newly created in the heart, which is taught by God, and in which life breathes and nothing but life breathes) this is the rule whereby man is

to walk. The apostle expressly says so, Gal. 6:15-16. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God."

That which is begotten by God is a son; and this son, as he is begotten by the breath of the Spirit, is also preserved and led by the same breath. Those who are led in this way are sons, and not any others. For it is not reading of Scriptures and gathering rules out from them that makes one a son, but rather the receiving of the Spirit and being led by the Spirit. Rom. 8:14-15. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God." And since the whole of worship in the gospel is in the Spirit, there is a necessity of receiving that Spirit in the first place, and then, in this Spirit, the soul learns to know and wait for its breathings and movings, and follows on towards the Lord in them. The Spirit will not stop breathing upon that which he has begotten; and this breath is man's guide, man's rule, and man's way.

Now all this is most clearly manifest even from the Scriptures themselves, for they expressly call Christ himself the way, the truth, the rule, the faith, the grace, etc., and also show the heart to be that tablet upon which God has chosen to write his laws. But where do the Scriptures call themselves a perfect rule of faith and obedience? "These are they (says Christ) which testify of me; and yet you will not come to me, that you might have life." John 5:39-40. Life cannot be received from the Scriptures, but only from Christ who is the fountain and source of them. In the same way, the Scriptures cannot give the true rule, but rather point to the fountain of life where alone the rule of life can be received. The Scriptures cannot ingraft the soul into Christ, nor give a living rule to him that is ingrafted. However, he that has heard the

testimony of the Scriptures concerning Christ and has come to him, this one can abide in him and wait on him for the writing of the law of the spirit of life in his heart. *This* will be his rule to bring him out from the law of sin and death and into the land of life.

Now consider meekly and humbly whether the Scriptures are the rule of the children of the new covenant. For if the Scripture was not intended by God for the rule, and you take it to be the rule, then you may easily mistake the way to eternal life, and err also in your understanding and use of the Scriptures, making such a use of them as they were never intended for, and so missing of the true use and intent of them.

Three Arguments

The Scripture was indeed not intended, nor given forth by God, to be the rule of the children of the new covenant. Consider at present these three arguments:

1. The Scripture is an outward rule or law; but the Scripture expressly says that the law of the new covenant will be an inward law. It is written in the prophets that all the children of the new covenant (or New Jerusalem) shall be taught of the Lord, Isa. 54:13. It is the Lord who teaches them inwardly by his Spirit, and writes his law in their hearts, Jer. 31:33-34. In this way the Lord took his people into covenant with himself, and also taught them in the apostles' days. 1 John 2:27. "But the anointing which you have received from him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in him." The covenant is inward, the teacher inward, the writing inward, the law inward: and there

it is to be read, learned, and known, where the Spirit teaches and writes it.

2. Scripture (or the writings of Moses and the prophets) was not the law of the children of the new covenant. The law of Moses was the rule of an outward state, it was the rule of the outward Israel, but not the rule of the inward Israel.

Now, in Deut. 29, Moses makes a covenant with Israel by express command from God, besides the former covenant which he made with them at Sinai. And he says the commandment of this covenant is not to be looked for where the other was written, but in another place, in a place nearer to them, even in their mouth and in their heart. There they were to read, hear, and receive the commandment of this covenant. "For this commandment which I command you this day, it is not hidden from you, neither is it far off," Deut. 30:11. "It is not in heaven," ver. 12. "neither is it beyond the sea," ver. 13. "but the word is very nigh unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it," ver. 14. "and this was the way of life then." ver. 15. "See (says Moses) I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil." Here your eternal happiness depends; obey this word, and live; disobey it, and die. And if they had kept to this word, they would also have walked in obedience to the written law; but neglecting this word, they could never keep the law, but rather came under the curse of it, and missed the blessings. Israel thought to please God with sacrifices, and oil, and incense, and observing new moons and sabbaths, but the Lord still rejected them for lack of their obedience to this word.

The prophets also guided them to this word, bidding them "circumcise their hearts." Even after much conflict between the Lord and them, when the people seemed very desirous to please the Lord with what he should require,

whether "burnt-offerings, calves, rams, or oil," the prophet puts aside all of this and points them to the obedience of this word as the way to please God, and as the only thing that he required of them. "He has showed you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God." Micah 6:8. All this is written in your heart, O man! Read there, obey that word, this is the thing that God requires.

So too, David's law was the word written in his heart. He saw through the sacrifices and burnt-offerings to the inward writing, and this made him wiser than all his teachers, who were busied about the outward law. The outward law was but a shadow of good things to come, and made nothing perfect. But David knew a perfect law, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Ps. 19:7.

3. The Scriptures of the New Testament never call themselves the rule, but they call another thing the rule; they call the writings of God's Spirit in the hearts of his people the law of the new covenant, Heb. 8:10. They call Christ "the Way, the Truth, the Life." John 14:6. (The way is the rule, the truth is the rule, the life is the rule). They call the new creature the rule; walking according to which the peace and mercy is received and enjoyed. Gal. 6:16. They refer to the Comforter as the guide into all truth, John 16:13, yes, as the compass of all truth wherein the believer is to have his whole life and course. Gal. 5:25. Live in the Spirit, walk in the Spirit, follow the Spirit; keep within that compass and you cannot err.

A man may err in understanding and interpreting Scripture, but he that has received the Spirit and knows the Spirit, follows the Spirit, and keeps to the Spirit, so far as he does so he cannot possibly err. So John, writing concerning seducers and warning against them, 1 John 2:27 says, "You have received an anointing, which teaches you all things." Keep to

the teachings of that in everything, and you are safe. But can we not be deceived? No, the anointing keeps from all the deceit in the heart, and from all the deceits of seducers. "It is truth, and no lie," ver. 27, and it leads into all truth and out of every lie; and this will teach you to abide in him. In whom? In the Word which was from the beginning, which is ingrafted into the heart of every believer, and into which the heart of every believer is ingrafted. The Word is truly in the vine, and the sap of the vine runs through unto the believer and makes him fruitful to God. He abides in the Word which he has heard from the beginning, and the Word which was from the beginning abides in him, ver. 24.

The Apostle Paul expressly says that the righteousness of faith comes by the hearing of this Word. He makes this same Word the rule for the children of the new covenant now, even as Moses said it was the commandment of God to them. Paul shows, Rom 10:6, that he indeed taught nothing but Moses and the prophets, pointing to the very same Word and commandment of eternal life, as Moses had done. "This is the Word of faith which we preach." The Word which Moses taught, which he said was close to you, in the heart and in the mouth (no man need ascend up to heaven, or go down to the deep, or seek anywhere else for it), this is the very thing we point you to. This is the Word of faith; this is the commandment of life. And with what zeal would Paul (if he were now alive in the body) cry out against those who should overlook or deny this Word, but instead set up his writings, together with the writings of the rest of the apostles, as the true rule!

Indeed, I could show yet further how the spirit of prophecy, or testimony of Jesus, or the living appearance of God in the heart, has been a rule to the witnesses against antichrist's deceit, all throughout the long night of apostasy, Rev. 11:3. 19:10.

Now, consider whether the Scripture truly be your rule or no. Do you, in singleness of heart, wait on the Lord to open the Scriptures by his Spirit, and to keep out your carnal reason (which cannot understand them, but will always be twisting them and making them speak according to its desires)? Or do you search into them with that natural part which has forever been shut out from the right knowledge of them? "The natural man understands not the things of the Spirit of God." The Spirit of the Lord alone understands the meaning of his own words, and he alone gives the understanding of them, which he gives not to the wise searcher and disputer (nor to the prudent professor, Mat. 11:25), but to the babe whom he begets. To these he gives the kingdom and opens the words of the Scripture concerning the kingdom. "The wisdom of the flesh is enmity against God," and if that fleshy wisdom searches into the Scriptures, it will gather only a knowledge that is suitable to this enmity. In this way the Jews were great enemies of Christ. They opposed the true word with a fleshy knowledge they had gathered out of the Scriptures that God had given to them. And this same spirit has also wound itself around the Scriptures written by the apostles. For just as this spirit fought against Christ and his apostles using the Old Testament Scriptures (which the Spirit of Christ had formerly written), so the same spirit now fights against the lambs of Christ using the New Testament Scriptures.

Truly the great stronghold of antichrist at this day is Scripture interpreted by the fleshy wisdom. For antichrist comes not in a direct denial of Christ or the Scriptures (he is too cunning to be found there), but he bends them aside by the fleshy wisdom to serve the fleshy will. In this way he undermines the Spirit, and exalts the flesh with a fleshy understanding and interpretation of those very Scriptures

which were written by the Spirit against the flesh. It is by this same error that some innocently praise those things practiced at the first springing up of truth, not seeing of what nature they were, and upon what account they were done, and what of them were cast off by the same Spirit, which before had led to the use of them, though Scripture expressly testifies thereof.

Many sorts of professors claim the Scriptures to be their rule, but which of them is taught by the Spirit to keep the carnal part out of the Scriptures? Which of them keeps out their own will and understanding, receiving their knowledge of Scriptures only from that Spirit who wrote them? Do not men instead gather a knowledge in the flesh, and then grow strong and wise and able to dispute, and confident in their own way, and become fierce despisers of those who cannot acknowledge their interpretation of these scriptures? Thus the mind of God, the true meaning of the Scriptures, is not their rule; but an image which they have formed out of it. They have a meaning which their wit has strongly imagined and fenced in with arguments, but the real mind and intent of the Spirit is hid from them. So by this means many both deceive their own souls, and help to deceive the souls of others, missing the plainness and simplicity of the Spirit, and gathering notions in the wisdom and subtlety of the fleshly part, where the serpentine wisdom lodges and winds around the tree of knowledge. Now what are these men really doing? Who do they really serve? And to where do they run themselves, and lead many other poor souls whom they pretend to save?

Chapter VIII

The Authority and Government which Christ Excluded from His Church

Matthew 20:25-28 But Jesus called them to himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Here Christ cuts off that kind of power and authority which grows up in the corrupt nature of man, which was at times springing up even in the disciples. Here he wholly excludes it out of the church, and says expressly he would have no such thing among them; no such kind of greatness, no such kind of authority. Among the Gentiles there are great ones, there are princes; and these great ones, these princes, they lord it over the inferior ones, exercising authority and dominion over them; "but it shall not be so among you."

The Gentile-state was a shadow, even as the Jews' state was a shadow. The one of death, the other of life; the one of darkness, the other of light. The one was the image of Satan, the prince of wickedness; the other of Christ, the prince of righteousness and peace. They were both veils, under which the two kingdoms were hid.

Now in the Gentile-state there were nations, princes, laws, governments, dominions, authorities, etc., but they were all in the fall, all in darkness, all in the transgression from the life of God. The whole state was corrupt, and there must be no imitation made of it, no likeness of any such thing in the kingdom of Christ. In Christ's kingdom there is no such kind of law, no such kind of government, no such kind of authority, no such kind of anger towards persons that transgress, no such kind of dealings with any. There is nothing to hurt in the mountain of God's holiness; but there is a righteous scepter, a sweet scepter, a spiritual scepter, which reaches the spirit of man in the power of life, but touches not the outward man.

Two things are here excluded by Christ, and from these two arise all kinds of mischief in the church (all the tyranny and oppression of men's consciences, and of their persons, estates, and liberties, for conscience' sake): first, personal greatness; secondly, the exercising of dominion and authority by those desiring to be great in this way.

Such a kind of greatness as is in the world is the destruction of the life of Christ. Such a kind of dominion and authority as is among the nations is the direct overturning of the kingdom of Christ. It sets up another power than Christ's, another greatness than Christ's, another kind of authority than Christ's; and so it eats out the virtue and life of his kingdom, making it just like one of the kingdoms of this world.

"It shall not be so among you." This spirit must be kept out from among you; this aspiring spirit, this lofty, ruling spirit, which loves to be great, which loves to have dominion. This spirit seeks to exalt itself because of the gift it has received, and desires to bring others into subjection. Thus it must be subdued among those who are Christ's disciples, or it will ruin all.

The Lord gives grace and knowledge, but it is never given with the intention that men take it upon themselves to be great, or rule over others because of it. And he that, because of his gift, thinks himself fit to rule over men's consciences, and to make them bow to what he knows or thinks to be truth, will in this way lose his own life. For it is not so much speaking true things that does good, but speaking them out from what is pure, and conveying them unto what is pure, for the life runs along from the vessel of life in one into the vessel of life in another. But the words, however true they may be, cannot convey life to another, but only as the living vessel opens in the one, and is opened in the other.

Question: But how shall this spirit be kept out, or kept down, that it may not hurt the disciple in whom it arises?

Answer: When this spirit begins to arise up in any, as soon as he perceives it, he is to fight against it in the light that discovered it. He is to lay himself so much the lower, to hearken to the cross, and so to come down and subject himself in serving and ministering to those who are little in his eyes. Instead of reigning over them, let him lie beneath them. Let him watch and know the seed of life in others, even in the smallest measure, and serve it; for that is his place. That which would rule is to serve; that which would be great is to be little; and the little seed is to become a nation.

The seed which is low is to rise; and you are not to rise with it further than you can serve it, both in yourself and others.

Therefore if ever you are aspiring, if ever you have a mind to rule, if ever you think yourself fit to teach because of what you have received, sink down, lie low, take up the cross to that proud spirit, make it bend and serve! Let the life in everyone rise over it, and trample upon it; and afterwards something in you may arise which is fit to teach, yes, and to rule in the Lord. And so long as this has the dominion, you may be serviceable to the Lord, and to his truth and people. But if ever the other rises up again, you must presently come down again.

In this way, if a man be faithful to Christ, this evil, aspiring spirit, may be dealt with at its first appearance, and kept down. But if this spirit is admired and given way to, then once it is let up it will be hard bringing it down afterwards. Therefore, the disciples, or the church of Christ, are to watch over every such spirit, to beat it down, to testify against it, to turn from it, to lay it flat, to put it in its proper place, which is beneath all, to serve all, and so not allow it to rise. He that would be great, he that would rule, let him serve.

Christ urges this upon his disciples from his own pattern, "even as the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve" ver. 28. If any had right to be great, surely Christ. If any had a right to exercise authority, surely Christ. If any was to be advanced because of a gift received, or because of the presence of the Spirit with him, surely Christ! Yet Christ would not take upon him this kind of greatness, nor did he exercise this kind of authority; but he was a servant. He made use of the gift of the Spirit and the power of life received from the Father, to minister and serve. He never did lord it over the consciences of any of his disciples, but bore with them,

pitying them in their weaknesses. ("What, can you not watch with me one hour? The Spirit" said he "is willing, but the flesh is weak.") He did not hold out to them whatever he knew to be truth and require them to believe it. Rather, he was content with them in their state, and waited till their capacities were enlarged, being satisfied with the honesty and integrity of their hearts in their present state of weakness. Nor did Christ strive to reign over the world, or call for fire from heaven when they would not receive him. He did not express indignation when they desired him to depart out of their city, or pray for twelve legions of angels when they came to betray him, seeking his life. On the contrary, the life he had received from his Father he gave up as a ransom for his disciples, yes, and for his enemies. Notice: Christ did not make use of what was given him to raise himself up above others, to make his word stand for a law. Rather, he waited till that was opened in his disciples, and in the people, which was able to receive his testimony. He made use of his power of life, and the fullness of the Spirit, to enable him the more abundantly to serve, and to wait in patience for the fulfilling of the will of the Father. And though Israel was not willing to be gathered by him, yet was he meek, and patient, and at rest in the will of him that sent him. Instead of seeking to reign over all, he served all, and gave that life (whose due it was to reign) "a ransom for many" ver. 28.

"His kingdom was not of this world," nor did he seek any greatness or authority according to this world, neither over the Jews, nor over the Gentiles, nor over his own disciples; but he served all, he sought the good of all. The life in him, which was to reign over all, yet here served all, suffered for all, and that was his way to his crown. And now having finished his course, fulfilled his service, perfected his sufferings, he has set down at the right hand of the majesty on

high, where now he reigns over all, and is made a king by God in righteousness. This is the pattern by which all his disciples are to walk. The more life they receive, the more they are to minister, the more they are to serve. They must not lift up themselves by their gifts. They must not lord them over others, or hold forth their knowledge or doctrines and think to make others bow to these. Rather, they are to wait in their service till the Lord makes way into men's hearts, and plants his truth there; and upon him they must also wait for the watering and growth of it.

The Authority and Subjection of the Spirit

Question: But is there to be no greatness, no authority among the disciples of Jesus, or in the church of Christ? Is everyone to do what he will, to be subject to his own fancies and imaginations, to the inventions of his own corrupt heart? What a confused building will this be! Surely this will not long remain a Zion, but soon become a Babylon, even a heap of disorder and confusion.

Answer: There is to be no greatness or authority of this *kind*; yet there is indeed both a greatness and authority suitable to the state of true disciples, and to the kind of kingdom to which they belong. There are laws, there are governments, there are governors, there is ruling, and there is subjection: but all in the Spirit, and not according to flesh. As Christ's kingdom is not of this world, so the government of his church and people is not according to this world. Just as that which gathers into his Spirit is spiritual, and that which is governed are the spirits of his people, so these are to be governed by his Spirit, and spiritually, and not after a fleshly manner.

Thus Christ himself, though he served his disciples, yet he also was their Lord and Master, and in the Spirit and life of the Father ruled over them. In the same way, the apostles and other ministers of Christ had, in the Spirit, the care of the churches and authority in the Lord. And by his Spirit they did govern the spirits of his people. These did not govern after a fleshly manner, by their own wills. They did not prescribe to others what they must believe or practice; but rather, in the light and in the power of the Spirit, they made their way into everyone's conscience in the sight of God. They ministered to everyone in the Spirit according to their capacity and growth, and waited patiently for God to convey the food and nourishment, and to build up their spirits in faith.

"The spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets." Here is the government, here is the law of rule and subjection in the life. Everyone, feeling a measure of the Spirit in himself, is thereby taught to acknowledge and be subject to a greater measure of the same Spirit in another. He that has no measure of the Spirit of God, he is not of God, he is none of Christ's. But he that has received a measure of the Spirit, in the same Spirit he can feel another's measure, and acknowledge it in its place and service, and know its moving, and will not quench it, but rather give way to it with joy and delight. When the Spirit moves in anyone to speak, the same Spirit moves in the other to be subject and give way. So as everyone keeps to his own measure in the Spirit, here there can be no disorder, but true subjection of every spirit. But wherever this is lacking, it cannot be supplied or set up in the church by any outward rule or order; for that is fleshly, and lets in the flesh, and destroys the true order, rule, and subjection of the Spirit.

The true apostles and ministers of Christ come from

Christ with a message of life and salvation, with a testimony concerning the good-will of God, and his love to mankind. These point out the way from death to life, from bondage to liberty, from wrath and destruction to peace and salvation. What they have seen, what they have felt, tasted, and handled, what they have found to redeem and deliver them, this they declare to others as they are moved, as they are sent, as they are guided and assisted.

Now that which they preach is to men's consciences in the sight of God. They open the truth which they know; they give their testimony in the moving, leading, and power of the Spirit, and leave it to the same Spirit to demonstrate it to men's consciences as he pleases. The ministers are nothing, they can do nothing, they cannot convert any man to God. Nevertheless, the power that speaks by them, that same power works in other men's consciences at its pleasure. And here is the beginning of the government of Christ in the heart: when his truth carries conviction with it to the conscience, and the conscience is drawn to yield itself up to him. Then Christ lays his yoke upon it, and takes upon himself the guiding of it. He cherishes it, he cleanses it, he comforts it, he orders it at his pleasure; and he alone preserves it pure, chaste, gentle, meek, and pliable to the impressions of his Spirit. And as the conscience is kept single and tender to Christ, so his government increases therein; but as it becomes hard, or subject to men's wills, so another spirit gets dominion over it.

Therefore, the great work of the minister of Christ is to keep the conscience open to Christ, and to preserve men from receiving from them any truths of Christ further than what the Spirit has opened. They must keep men from imitating any of their practices further than the Spirit leads, guides, and persuades them. For men are exceedingly prone to

receive things as truths from those of whom they have a high opinion, and to imitate their practices, and thereby hurt their own growth, and endanger their souls. For if I receive a truth before the Lord by his Spirit makes it manifest to me, I lose my guide, and follow only the counsel of the flesh, which is exceedingly greedy to receive truths and run into religious practices without the Spirit.

Therefore, the main thing in religion is to keep the conscience pure to the Lord, to know the guide, to follow the guide, to receive from him the light whereby I am to walk. I must never take things for truths because others see them to be truths, but rather wait till the Spirit makes them manifest to me. Nor should I run into worships, duties, performances, or practices because others are led there, but rather wait till the Spirit lead me there. The apostles were exceedingly tender in this point; for though they certainly and infallibly knew what was to be believed, yet they were not lords over men's faith, but waited till he who is Lord of the faith opened the way into men's consciences. They did not take it upon themselves to be able to turn the key and let truth and conviction into men's spirits, but rather directed men to him who alone has the true key.

"Let every man," says the apostle, "be fully persuaded in his own mind." Rom. 14:5. Take heed of receiving things too soon; take heed of running into practices too soon; take heed of doing what you see others do. Rather wait for your own particular guidance, and for a full persuasion from God. Though I know something to be true, yet you must not receive it till God make it manifest to you. Receive truth from his hand alone; stay till he gives it to you. Indeed, the main matter in religion is to prevent the wrong part, the forward part, the first birth, from running into duties and laying hold of promises; and also to experience the true heir born of the

immortal seed to whom everything belongs. Having known the true seed, let not the other birth afterwards get up above him, but rather be subdued and brought into subjection.

Again, says the apostle, take heed of doing anything "doubtingly." Be not forward or hasty, but wait for the leading, wait for the manifestation of the Spirit. Be sure you receive all that you receive in faith, and practice all that you practice in faith; for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin." To receive or act apart from faith is to err from the seed of life, to lose your guide and thereby lose ground, dishonor Christ, and come under condemnation.

And so the apostle warns believers to take heed of drawing one another on too fast, or of judging one another in such things as some of them might have light in, and others not. He that eats is not to judge him that does not eat; and he that does not eat is not to judge he that eats. In matters of worship, he that observed a day, and kept a sabbath, is not to judge him that did not observe a day, nor kept a sabbath. For in the days of the apostles, the Jews who were truly converted were slow to be drawn off from the observation of their sabbath, and could hardly bear with the believing Gentiles who were never taught to keep their sabbath, but were taught to esteem every day the same, and sanctify them to the Lord. Rom. 14:5. And those who esteemed every day the same, and dedicated them to the Lord, could hardly bear with those who observed a day. Now it is true that, Christ having come, we are not to set up a new type, but to enter by faith into the true rest, which is the substance of what the other days signified. But Christians are prone to strive after a wrong unity and uniformity in outward practices and observations, and to judge one another unrighteously in these things. Now mark; it is not the different practice that breaks the peace and unity, but the judging of one another because of different practices.

He that does not keep a particular day may unite in the same Spirit, in the same life, in the same love with him that keeps a day. And he who keeps a day, may unite in heart and soul with the same Spirit and life in him who does not keep a day. But the one that judges the other because of either of these errs from the Spirit, from the love, from the life, and so breaks the bond of unity. And he that draws another to any practice before the life leads him, this one does injure the soul of that person. Verse 15. This was the apostle's rule: that everyone perform singly unto the Lord what he did, and not for one to meddle with the light of conscience of another (undervaluing his brother, or judging him because his light and practices differed from his, chap. 14:10.) Everyone was to keep close to their own measure of light, even to that proportion of faith and knowledge which God in his mercy had bestowed on them. And here is the true unity in the Spirit, in the inward life, and not in an outward uniformity. Such an outward conformity was not necessary in the apostles' days, nor is it necessary now, and the eye that seeks it overlooks the one thing which is necessary.

If men will but keep close to God, the Lord will lead them on fast enough, and give them light fast enough; for he takes care of such things, and knows what light and what practices are most proper for them. But when men walk on faster than the Lord holds forth his light to them, this overturns them, and raises up a wrong thing in them. In this way the true birth comes to suffer, to shrink and be driven back. Oh how sweet and pleasant is it to the truly spiritual eye, to see several sorts of believers, several forms of Christians in the school of Christ! How great indeed when everyone learns their own lesson, performing their own peculiar service, and knowing, acknowledging, and loving one another in their several places and different performances to their Master, to

whom they are to give an account, and not quarreling with one another about their different practices! Rom. 14:4.

This is the true ground of love and unity: not that a man walks and does just as I do, but rather that I experience the same Spirit and life in him, and that he walks in this, according to his own measure, order, and in proper subjection to it. Indeed, this is far more pleasing to me than if he walked just as I walk. For I cannot desire that he should do so until he be particularly led there by the same Spirit which led me. And he that knows what it is to receive any truths from the Spirit, and to be led into practices by the Spirit, and how prone the fleshly part is to run ahead, he will not be quick to press his knowledge or practices upon others. Rather, he will wait patiently till the Lord fit them for receiving these, for fear lest they should receive and practice too soon, even in that part of man which cannot serve the Lord. And this I can truly say concerning myself, I have never found my spirit pressing to draw anyone either to what I believed to be true, or to any practice or way of worship I observed or walked in. Rather I have desired that the power and leadings of life might go before all men, and have been afraid lest men should receive things from my hand and not from the Lord's.

The True Government of the Church

Therefore, since the true church government is in the Spirit, and over the conscience of man as in the sight of God, great care must be taken that nothing else govern except the Spirit, and that the government be extended only unto that which should be governed.

First: Care must be given that nothing govern in the church of Christ except the Spirit of Christ. Nothing else

much teach; nothing else exhort; nothing else admonish and reprove; nothing else cut off and cast out. Every minister in the church is to watch over his own spirit that it does not intrude into the work of God, that it does not take upon itself to be the teacher, the exhorter, the reprover, etc. And every member is to wait in the measure of the Spirit which he has received, to experience the movements of the Spirit in him who teaches and governs. In this way each one is subject not to man, but to the Lord; each receives from the Lord and obeys the Lord. We are not to know any minister according to the flesh, but to receive and submit to what comes from the Spirit, in the Spirit. We are not to know Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, but the Spirit ministering in them. Paul may err, Apollos may err, Peter may err (and did err, when he compelled the Gentiles to live as the Jews, Gal. 2:14), and Barnabas also did err. ver. 13. But the Spirit cannot err. He that keeps to the measure of the Spirit in himself cannot let in error. For the least measure of the Spirit is true, and gives true judgment. Yet he that receives ever so great a measure of the Spirit, if he does not keep low and abide therein, but rather lifts himself up above his brethren, this one may easily err and draw aside others into his error.

Second: Care must be taken that the conscience be kept tender, that nothing be received but according to the light in the conscience. The conscience is the seat of faith; and if it be not kept close to the light which God shines there, faith is soon made shipwreck of. Christianity is begun in the Spirit, which keeps out the fleshly part with all its fleshly wisdom and reasonings about spiritual things. And even as the beginning is in the anointing, so must the progress be. As the Spirit begins in the conscience, by convincing there and persuading there, by setting up his light there and leading the soul by that light, so that light must be continually sought

and seen. Only as the light grows and manifests itself in the conscience does the soul either stand still or move on.

The great error of the ages of the apostasy has been to set up an outward order and uniformity, and to make men's consciences bend to it either by arguments of wisdom, or by force. But the property of the true church government is to leave the conscience to its full liberty in the Lord, to preserve it single and entire for the Lord to exercise, and to seek unity in the light and in the Spirit. He that has faith, and can see beyond another, can have it to himself, and not disturb his brother with it, but rather descend and walk with him according to his measure. Oh how sweet and lovely is it to see brethren dwell together in unity, to see the true image of God raised in persons, and they knowing and loving one another in that image. How lovely to bear with one another through love, helping one another under their temptations and distresses of spirit, which everyone must expect to meet with.

If you are a Christian in deed and in truth, preserve your conscience pure and tender towards God. Do not defile it with religious practices, duties, ordinances, etc., into which the Spirit is not leading you; for all such things are idols, and will exceedingly pollute you. And be tender also of your brother's conscience, and do not be an instrument to draw him into anything where the Lord does not lead him. Rather, rejoice if you find him in simplicity of heart being dealt with of the Lord in anything; for if he abide here faithfully, his guide will in due season appear to him and clear his way before him.

Oh how many have turned from the Lord and played the harlot! How many have first lost the guidance of his Spirit, and then drowned their life in religious performances! How many have drunk of the cup of fornication from the life at the

hands of the fleshly wisdom! How many have filled their spirit with New Testament idols and images! How many have even hardened their hearts and consciences by following the doctrines of men, their imaginary meaning of scriptures, and the imaginations and dreams of their own hearts! Is it not time for men to turn back towards the Lord, to wait for the visitation and light of his Spirit? And if ever anyone feel and enjoy the guidance of God's Spirit, their conscience must be kept tender to it, and ready to hear and follow his voice who speaks in Spirit to that which is born of him. "My sheep hear my voice," says Christ; they know it, and the voice of the strange spirit they do not know so as to follow it, but turn from it, both in themselves and others. Wait therefore for the birth of the Spirit, to which the Spirit is given for a guide, who infallibly guides it out of deceit.

Objection: But is not unity lovely; and does not the apostle exhort Christians to be of one mind? And would it not be a sweet thing if we were all of one heart and one way?

Answer: Yes, unity is very lovely; and to be desired and waited for as the Spirit of the Lord (which is one) leads and draws into one. But the fleshly part (the wise reasoning part in man), by fleshly ways and means, strives to bring about fleshly unity; this is not lovely, nor spiritual, nor Christian. And the apostle, who exhorts Christians to one mind, yet does not bid them force one another into one mind, but rather walk together sweetly so far as they had attained. And if in anything they were otherwise minded, God in his due time would reveal more to them. Phil. 3:15-16. He that has, to him more shall be given. And the intent and work of the ministry (with the several ministrations of it) is to bring into the unity, Eph. 4:13. according as persons are able to follow.

It is not to force all men into one practice or way. This is the way to destroy the faith and the true unity. This, at best, can introduce but a fleshly appearance of unity, in an outward form of worship and godliness that eats out the power.

Indeed, the way is one—Christ, the truth of God. He that is in the faith, and in the obedience to that light which shines from his Spirit into the heart of every believer, has a taste of the one heart and the one way. This one knows that no variety of practices (which are of God) can make a breach of the true unity. This is the one way: for everyone to be subject to the light of Christ's Spirit which he has received from Christ. And if the unity be kept in this way, it will also come into an outward unity at length, as the light grows in everyone, and as everyone grows into the light. But this must be patiently waited for from the hand of God (who has the right way of effecting it, and who alone can do it), and not harshly and cruelly attempted by the rough hand of man.

Chapter IX

The New Covenant of the Gospel Distinguished from the Old Covenant of the Law

Preface

There is no way to become an heir of the kingdom of God except by being begotten and born of his Spirit, which blows upon the spirit of man, breathes life into him, and forms him in the eternal image. John 3:8. Gal. 4:19.

There is no way of having this work of God preserved in man except by turning to the Spirit who begets, standing and keeping upright in that which is begotten, and taking heed of the fleshly wisdom. Man's wisdom stands near to corrupt and destroy the work of God, tempting and leading aside from the truth itself into some image and resemblance of it. And if this wisdom prevails, there is suddenly a departing from the living God, and a running after the inventions of the fleshly wisdom (which appear in the likeness of the true wisdom so that they might better deceive).

Now when man is first breathed upon and begotten towards God, there is but a little life, a little simplicity, a little light, a little power, a little of the wisdom of the true babe. But there is also a great body of death, deceit, darkness, power, and the wisdom of the flesh still standing. All of these

apply themselves to overturn and destroy the true work of God by raising up a false image of it, which is easily done. But to abide and preserve oneself in the truth is difficult, and is only maintained by that power which at first begat the life.

Now the power of God preserves the soul through keeping it out of the sensual and reasoning part of man (where the corrupt one has his lodging), and in that poor, low, little, child-like sensibility of the life, which the Father has begotten. Here is the entrance into the truth; here is the growth; here is the preservation and safety. And this is what makes it so hard for those that are wise and strong in the reasoning and comprehending part either to enter in, or to abide and grow in the nakedness, simplicity, and seeming folly of the truth of the gospel. Oh, what a great deal must be torn down before man can be truly reached and convinced by the foolish and weak things which God uses to accomplish his great works! 1 Cor.1:27,28. What a struggle God has with them to batter their wisdom and bring down their understanding; which the larger it is, the more it stands in the way of his light. 1 Cor. 1:19. And how easily are those who have been convinced drawn back into their own wisdom by some subtle device or other. How quickly they are lured away from the plainness and singleness of the truth into an attempt to hold it in the wisdom of the understanding part of man. 2 Cor. 11:3.

In the Spirit which begets, and in the truth which is begotten by it, there is true unity. Experiencing this in one another is that which unites us to one another. When anyone keeps to this in his own person, he is kept to that which unites, and that thing is kept alive in him which can be united. However, departing from that, there is a departing from the true unity into the error and ground of division. And then, that which has erred and departed from the true

unity always strives to set up a false image of unity, and also casts blame on that which abides in the truth because it cannot thus unite. For that which abides in the Spirit, and in that which the Spirit has begotten and formed, cannot unite according to the flesh. That which has played the harlot and run from the Spirit unto an image formed by the fleshly wisdom cannot unite according to the Spirit. Consider this, O you professors of this age! You blame us for departing from you; for withdrawing from unity with you. But we blame you for departing from the living seed, wherein alone our unity with you can stand.

Oh that you could hear the Lord's voice, who cries aloud to the professors of this age to cease from man! Cease from man in yourself, O you who have ever had any taste of the pure grace and power of God! Cease from your own understanding, your own affections, your own zeal, your own gathered knowledge and wisdom from the Scriptures, with all the sparks of your own kindling. Let God be all in you, and let his eternal habitation be raised up in you and perfected, and you swallowed up and comprehended in it forever. Oh, what a work it is for God to drive man's reason and wisdom out of his temple, out of his Scriptures, out of all his holy things! He that has an ear let him hear, for the sake of his soul's eternal peace. Alas! Alas! How many stumble at and blaspheme that which alone can save the soul!

The Jews owned the Messiah (according to the Scriptures, as they thought), but rejected him in the way he came to save them. Now if Christians have gathered a kind of knowledge from the Scriptures as the Jews did, how can they avoid the same error; namely, of owning Christ according to the Scriptures (as they think) but rejecting him as he comes to save them? How can they avoid rebelling against his living ministry, and the pure power and demonstration of his

Spirit? Will his power not appear weak and low, because it does not appear the same as they expect, according to their apprehensions of the Scriptures? Thus reading the Scriptures in another spirit and wisdom than that which wrote them, they will necessarily conclude and gather something other than what is written in them, and use the letter as a means of erring from the life.

The Sabbath of the Lord

In true love to your souls, and in the fear of the Lord, I have a few things to lay before you, so that the simplicity in you may not be deceived, and that you do not err from the way of life. For, if you are searching into Scripture with the wrong eye, you will of necessity misread, misunderstand, and mis-practice; and so you will be running still further and further from God, even while you think you are drawing closer to him. Be persuaded, therefore, to seriously consider (in the child-like simplicity of his begetting, where the true life springs) the following things.

1. That the whole law of Moses (the ten commandments, as well as the institutions about sacrifices and worship) was added because of transgression. Gal. 3:19.
2. That the whole law (the ten commandments, as well as the sacrifices) was representations, figures, or shadows, of something relating to Christ, the seed. It was something inferior to the promise, not making perfect, but pointing to, and making way for the bringing in of the better hope. Gal. 3:21. Heb. 7:19. The law of the commandments did no more make perfect than the other shadows or sacrifices did, but with

them a way was made for the better hope, towards which they were to lead the disciple as schoolmaster.

3. That the whole dispensation of the law was given to the Jews, and not to the Gentiles. Rom. 9:4.

4. That the duration of this dispensation of Moses' law in the letter was until Christ the seed should come and fulfill it. Gal. 3:19. and 24,25 . Moses' house, with all the laws thereof, was to prepare for Christ the seed, and to give way to him when he came. For when that dispensation which was described by types and figures is come, then the dispensation of figures is at an end. Heb. 3:5,6. Christ came to do the will, to keep and fulfill the whole law, and so to put an end to that dispensation of it. Psa. 40. Rom. 10:4. And so he takes away the first administration of the law, which was in the letter, that he might establish the second, which is in the Spirit. Heb. 10:9. 2 Cor. 3:7-11.

This then is the truth as it is in Jesus concerning this thing: That Christ coming in the flesh, and fulfilling all the righteousness (in the ten commandments and the sacrifices), puts an end to the former dispensation wholly; so that from now on, both Jews and Gentiles are to come to him, to hear his voice; "This is my beloved Son, hear him." Moses foretold that when that prophet came, he was to be heard in all things, Deut. 18:15. The whole ministration of Moses was but a figure and symbol of what the Son was afterwards to fulfill in Spirit, Heb. 3:5. Moses was faithful to give the entire shadow to his house, the nation of the Jews, but Christ would be faithful to give forth the entire law and substance of life to his house, Heb 3:6. So that now in the gospel, Christ being come, the new covenant and new law in the Spirit is in effect, and not the old covenant or law in the letter. And this new

law is more inward, more full, more close, more spiritual, and more lasting, than the ministration of Moses' law was to them of old time. Gal. 3:25. And it is the ministration of this law of the Spirit which is not to pass away from the disciples of Christ until all be fulfilled; but is to remain a sword against every lust and desire of the flesh in them until they all, with the very root of them, be thereby cut down. Mat. 3:12. Heb. 4:12. Mat. 5:17,18.

Question: But what were the ten commandments a figure or shadow of?

Answer: The tablets of stone were representations or figures of the fleshly tablets of the heart, wherein the new law of the covenant of life is written. The writing of the law of commandments in the tablets of stone was a figure of the writing of the new law by the finger of God's Spirit in the heart. The outward writing in the outward tablets was a figure of the inward writing in the inward tablets.

And when the new law is in this way received, in this way written, it is easily fulfilled. Whereas, the law in the letter, because of the weakness of the flesh, was very hard to be fulfilled, and generally proved a handwriting of ordinances against the Jews. For he that was guilty of one, was guilty of all, and so every transgression had the force and strength of the whole law against him. And now, whosoever runs back to the law of the letter, to take up any command as it was held forth in it, so makes himself a debtor to the whole law. And this one will be found a breaker of the law in spirit, even one that has more gods than the Lord, a maker of images, a taker of the name in vain, a profaner of the sabbath, etc. For he that has not received the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, knows not the Lord of life to be the only true God, but

makes images in his mind, and takes his name in vain, not experiencing its living power. Nor can such a one truly keep his sabbath (ceasing from sin, forbearing his own works, his own willing and running, and entering into the rest of the gospel). For there is but one day of rest holy to the Lord, and all the sabbaths of the law were but signs of it, having but a symbolic or representative holiness. The true day of redemption which the Lord has made, Psa. 118:24 (in which his redeemed rejoice and rest in him) has the true holiness. This was it which came by Christ, the other came by Moses. John 1:17. Moses' house or children were to keep that natural day (that was the day for the servants, who were to be exercised under the shadows), but the believers are to keep this day in the Spirit, to enter into this rest by the faith, Heb, 4. And they are to worship the Father in it, in the Spirit and in the truth, on the mountain of his holiness, John 4:23, of which the other mountain, temple, worship, and day were but a shadow.

Now the sum or substance of this law of the Spirit may outwardly be signified in various short words that comprehend the whole of it; such as love, or the fear of the Lord, or this, "You shalt not lust," (in this way it was administered to Paul, Rom. 7) or, "You shalt keep the sabbath," or, "Believe in the light, follow the light." The observing of any one of these in the Spirit is the keeping of the law, for every breach of the law is outside of the love, outside of the fear, a lust of the fleshly spirit, a transgression of the sabbath (or spiritual rest of God) outside of the light, and outside of the faith. But if you will read this in the Spirit, and come to the true righteousness of the faith (which is received in the obedience of faith to the law of the Spirit), you must come to the Word of faith, to which Paul directs us. Rom. 10:6. By the hearing of this word is the justification, and not by a bare believing that

Christ's blood was shed. For it is the *power* of the blood which saves; which power is in the living word, and it is felt and received in hearing, believing, and obeying that word, thereby bringing the soul into unity and conformity with him, both in his death, and in his resurrection and life. This is the only way to life. Be not deceived, there is not, nor ever was, any other. Oh, wait on the Lord in his fear that it may be opened to you!

A Spiritual Covenant

The apostle Paul says that God had made them "able ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:6. After the dispensation of the law, which was a shadow of good things to come; and after the dispensation of the prophets, who foretold of better days and a better state to come, it first pleased God to send the forerunner John the Baptist in the spirit and power of Elijah to prepare the way for the King and his kingdom. Then the King himself was sent, in the fullness of his Spirit, to gather disciples to himself, and to furnish them with a competent measure of the same Spirit. These were to raise up a spiritual seed unto him, in whom the King would set up his kingdom and dwelling. He would walk and reign there, causing his light to shine from there round about the earth, out from his holy city, founded upon his holy hill of Zion.

Now the disciples or ministers whom he chose to raise up this holy seed unto him were made fit and able to minister his new covenant. Indeed, he furnished them with such a power of his Spirit that they were able through him to minister, not in the letter, as the old covenant was ministered (which left the people still dead; or rather, because of the

transgressing nature, made the offense abound, and so increased death upon them), but in the quickening Spirit. This Spirit raises from death, and brings into the light of the living, to walk with the living God towards the land of eternal rest and peace. Therefore, that which they ministered was Spirit, and that which they ministered to was spiritual. By the power of the Spirit, in preaching the living Word of faith, they reached through the veil to that which lay in death. They stirred up a living seed, and ministered life to it through the Spirit. Gal. 3:5. And those who were born of this living seed, they taught to live in the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, to be made perfect by the Spirit, and not to run back to the ministration of the letter (as was common for the Jews in their day). They were taught not to run back to the manner of the former dispensation, but to abide in the living seed, to grow up in the seed, into the eternal life and immortality of the gospel.

Mark well (O you Christians who desire eternal life) the different way of ministration between the law and the gospel! The law was a ministration of the letter, in which they were to look for assistance from the Spirit by which they might be kept in the faith of the law, and made obedient to it. Neh. 9:20. The gospel is a ministration of the Spirit, wherein they are to begin with the Spirit, and to go on with the Spirit. They are not to gather outward rules from the letter, from what is written or spoken, but to keep to the living seed and experience refreshment in that, in reading or hearing what is written or spoken by the Spirit. And in this way, when the Scriptures are read, or when one speaking from God is heard, it is mingled with faith, and becomes profitable, feeding and refreshing the young, tender plant, the living seed, and causing it to grow up into him. However, whatever is understood, or received, or held to outside of the Spirit, feeds but

the earthly part, and only thickens the veil over the living seed.

"The kingdom of heaven is at hand," said John the Baptist. Mat. 3:2. "It is come unto you," said Christ, Mat. 12:28, speaking of that power of life which was made manifest in him to the Pharisees. Luke 17:21. The Pharisees demanded of him when the kingdom of God should come. It comes not, says he, with outward show or observation. It comes not the way you look for it, that is, by the manifestation of an outward glorious king to reign outwardly in the commonwealth of the outward Israel. The kingdom is within you. How was it within them? Christ explains to them in another place; it was in them like a grain of mustard seed; it was the least of all the seeds in their hearts. There were many great seeds of darkness there, but yet there was also one little seed of light. It was there along with the others (though smaller than them all), and did sometimes cast some glimmerings of light, though the darkness could not comprehend it. This seed was also compared to leaven, which being received by faith into the lump would leaven the whole lump, and bring it into the savor and domination of the kingdom. Now the ministry of the apostles was to turn men from Satan's kingdom to this kingdom; from his large compass of dominion in the heart, to this narrow seed; from his great territories of darkness, to this little seed of light; from his great power of death, to this little, weak thing of God wherein the eternal power and godhead is made manifest. And all of this comes to be opened and increased by the Spirit. Here light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart; where it is to grow up, and from where the harvest will be reaped after its growth to perfection.

Oh, how long have Christians (so called) lacked the Spirit! How have they wearied themselves in running to and

fro throughout the letter to find the mind of God, yet are still unsatisfied concerning it, even drowned in fleshly imaginations and arguments about it! They seek to have that part satisfied which is not to be satisfied. They seek to have that part know which is not to know. They offer to God the service, faith, and obedience of that which he will not accept, and they keep that from him which he calls for. They seek for the Spirit in the letter, according to the manner of the law, but they do not wait to experience it in the seed, the life-giving seed, dwelling in the seed, where Christ and his apostles directed us to wait for it. They look in written words for the knowledge, faith, life, and Spirit, which the apostle preached was to be sought from the Word in the heart. And by this means they raise up several buildings, and get various kinds of knowledge, each according to his own understanding and apprehension of the letter, and each man is very confident concerning his own apprehensions that they are right. In this way they wander from the city of the living God, and from the living knowledge, to build up images (some outwardly, some in their minds, some more gross, some more refined) lacking the true life and power of God.

Oh that you could read in the eternal light of life! O Christians, Christians! Oh that you could see how your understanding and knowledge from the letter stands as much in your way as ever the Jews' knowledge did in theirs. This must be broken down as flat as ever theirs was, before the foundation of the kingdom can be laid and the building of eternal life reared up in your hearts! Be not offended at my zeal for the Lord my God, and for your souls. It has cost me very dear what I testify to you in the simplicity and integrity of my heart. And this I know to be most certainly true, that that spirit of man which has nestled itself in the letter without the eternal light, and found a kind of wisdom and

knowledge there, will be shaken and driven out, even by that very Spirit which gave forth the letter. And when this is done, and God's Spirit at last opens the letter, oh how sweet and profitable it will be, being read in the light of the Spirit! Oh how clear and refreshing to read in the faith which is in Christ Jesus, which is begotten in the heart by the word of faith! From that light, from that spring (as the Lord is pleased to open, enlarge, and fill the vessel), all the words of the holy men of God came; and in that light alone they have their sweetness, freshness, virtue, and fullness. But we must read these words outwardly written while keeping to that light, and understanding them in that spring! And we must keep out the natural man, with his natural understanding, which knows not the things of the Spirit, nor can know or receive them! 1 Cor. 2:14. This is a mystery to those who have not been turned inward to this word, nor have known or heard his voice. But the Lord is recovering the mystery of life, and as that appears, the mystery of death, under all its paint (under all its painted faith, painted love, painted knowledge, painted obedience, painted duties, ordinances, and worship), will be made manifest. Happy is he whose inward building will stand, whose gold will abide the fire and everlasting burnings of the jealous God, and whose eye-salve was bought of the true Spirit. But how hard will it be for the man whom the Lord (when he comes to search him) does not find to be a true inward Jew, nor truly circumcised by the Lord's eternal Spirit and light.

This is the great misery of Christians: that the veil lies over their hearts, even the same veil which covered the letter of Moses from the Jews. And these are groping after the mind of God in the letter, but the life is hidden from them, even as it was from the Jews. And because they also say they can see, and that they have the life and the Spirit, therefore

the veil remains, and they remain yet in captivity and bondage to the enemy.

Some Questions and Answers

Question: Are not the ten commandments, expressed in Exo. 20, moral and therefore perpetual?

Answer: The covenant which God made with the Jews at Mount Horeb when they came out of the land of Egypt was not to be perpetual, but was to make way for that covenant, priesthood, lawgiver, and law, which were to be perpetual. The law given to Moses made nothing perfect, but was a continual handwriting of ordinances against the Jews.

Now this former covenant was not to abide, but to give place to the other (see Heb. 8, which speaks of the new covenant). For God's speaking of a new covenant implies that he himself has made the first old. 8:13. The first had a long continuance among that people of the Jews; but now, in view of the coming of Christ, who was to be Mediator of a better covenant, 8:6, even a new covenant, 8:8, that which had been long decaying and waxing old, was now ready to vanish away. 8:13.

Indeed it was necessary that it should pass away, for it was not faultless. How was it not faultless? Was there any sin in the holy law and ministration of God by Moses? Can any blame be found in anything that proceeded from the Lord? Indeed the ministration of Moses was holy and without blame, but it was weak because of the flesh. Rom. 8:3. Therefore, God desired to lay it aside, for it was weak and suited to the weakness of a fleshly people, and bring in instead a ministration of the law in the Spirit, which would be

living and powerful and effectual in the spirits of his people.

Now God's aim in a covenant was to keep himself and his people together. But this first covenant was weak on the people's part; they did not continue in it, and so, according to that covenant, God disregarded them. ver. 9. Finding this covenant not able to effect his purpose of love towards his people, God finds fault with it, bringing forth another, or second, to which the first gives way. ver. 7. And this other covenant, or new covenant, is not according to the old. In what sense was it not according to the old? Why in this: it was not written outwardly, as the first was. "Not according to that which I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt." ver. 9. "For I will put my laws in their mind, and write them in their hearts." ver. 10. And here they shall learn the knowledge of God, everyone from the least to the greatest, ver. 11. "So that all the children of this covenant shall be taught of the Lord," and learn the law from his mouth. This is not according to how the law was given at Mount Sinai (which ministration was to the children of the old covenant), but as the law goes forth out of Zion, and from the "Jerusalem which is above," which is the mother of all the children of the new covenant.

Observe therefore diligently the following few things in the fear of the Lord:

First: The ten commandments given by Moses from Mount Horeb were the covenant which God made with the Jews when he took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.

Secondly: That covenant God found fault with because it was not able (through the weakness of the flesh on their parts) to keep them to God.

Thirdly: In Christ's coming God provides a new covenant, a better covenant, of which Christ is the mediator. This covenant was not outward, like the former, but inward, put in the mind, written in the heart. As the people are inward, the sanctuary inward, the ark inward, the tables of the covenant inward, so the covenant itself, and the writing of it, were inward also. And this covenant, as it is only written in the Spirit, and in that which is spiritual, so it cannot be read in the letter.

Fourthly: That wherever this new covenant comes, the other waxes old, whether to a person or to a people. Wherever the law of the Spirit of life is made manifest, the law of the letter is swallowed up in it, and is known no more except as it is comprehended and is brought forth in it. And he that is in the Spirit, and has received the law of life from the Spirit, knows not Christ after the flesh, and much less Moses. But the whole ministration of Moses in the Spirit (not only the ten commandments but all the sacrifices and other types also) is here acknowledged and received even in Christ the substance. But the ten commandments, so far as they were a shadow, pass away before the Sun of righteousness, as well as the other types and shadows of the law.

Objection: But was there anything in the ten commandments that was a shadow? Do they not all command abiding things?

Answer: Moses' ministration (as it stood in the letter without) was but a shadow of the fullness and perfection of that ministry of the Spirit which was to come and be set up by the Son in his house. Heb. 3:5,6. Moses' people were but a

shadow of the spiritual people. Moses' priests and sacrifices were but a shadow of the spiritual priests and sacrifices. Moses' law in the letter ministered from Mount Sinai was but a shadow of Christ's law in the Spirit to be ministered from Mount Zion. 2 Cor. 3:10,11. The law itself which was given by Moses was but a shadow of the grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ. John 1:17. Now, look particularly on the ten commandments, and see if there will not appear something of a shadow in them.

The first commandment to that people is, "That they should have no other gods (like the heathen) but him only whose powerful arm had brought them out of Egypt." This is a shadow of an inward subjection of spiritual Israel to the Lord of spirits, who by his mighty arm redeemed them out of spiritual Egypt.

The second commandment, "That they should not make any images or likenesses of things in heaven or earth, or bow down to them," is this not a shadow of what God requires of spiritual Israel in the inward man? The carved images and outward idols speak of all likenesses, inventions, imitations, imaginations, and resemblances of what man has seen in the Spirit above, or observed beneath in the earthly nature. These they must not make for themselves, nor bow to those that others have made.

And that they must not "take the name of the Lord in vain," was this not a shadow of man's claims to the living power of God when God is not himself manifest in them? Does man not now pretend to meet in the living name, and to worship in the Spirit, when they in fact have played the harlot and run from it, and are now strangers to it? Should I mention any more? It is easy to observe how the other commandments were outward shadows of the inward innocence and purity which the believer receives inwardly, into

his heart, from the powerful operation of the law of the Spirit of life in him.

Objection: But are we now permitted to break these laws? If they may not be broken, then they are perpetual.

Answer: The reason why they may not be broken is not because the dispensation of them is still in force, but because the dispensation of the law of the Spirit comprehends and fulfills all the righteousness of Moses' law. Christ's dissolving that covenant was not so that anyone might have liberty to do the things shown to be unrighteous, but rather that the righteousness described in the law might be fulfilled in them who receive the law of the Spirit of life. Rom. 8:4. And mark this diligently: the law of sin is nearer to us than any law of the letter can come. The covenant of death and hell is written within by the finger of Satan. Therefore, that which blots this out must be just as near, even an inward covenant, an inward writing from the eternal Word in the heart, by the law of his eternal Spirit of life.

This then is my answer: Moses' law in substance remains as it is taken in by Christ, and administered by him in Spirit. But it does not remain as it was given in the letter to the Jews; for in that form it was a shadow, making nothing perfect. The covenant of the letter made way for the better hope, for the covenant established upon better promises, for the inward law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This indeed affects the spirits of God's people, which Moses' law could by no means do.

Question: But what is the substance of the law which abides?

Answer: The substance of the law is love: to love God above

all (above all without, above all within), and to love one's neighbor as one's self. To receive this love from God, and to bring it forth in his Spirit, this is the substance of the law; this is the thing which the law pointed at in a shadow. The law is fulfilled in this one word love; but that love must be received from God who fulfills the law. A man may strive to love abundantly, and strive to obey in love, and yet fall short of the covenant, because the Lord must first circumcise the heart before that love can spring up which fulfills the law. Deut. 30:6.

Question: Is not the purpose of the fourth commandment, "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy," to persuade us to lay aside the work of our employment one day out of seven, that we may on that day be wholly given up to wait upon the Lord?

Answer: The scope and purpose of the fourth commandment was to enjoin the Jews to keep the sabbath strictly as a sign, by forbearing all works, and sanctifying it as a day of rest to the Lord according to the law. Ezek. 20:12. But the substance being come (Christ, who is the body, Col. 2:17), and the day and rest of the Spirit being known, the sign comes to an end, and the substance takes its place. So that the rest is now in Christ, through faith, by his Spirit, where the worship is also. And this in the gospel comprehends the time of worship, the place of worship, and the worship itself (which are spiritual). Here, in Christ the substance, all is known, enjoyed, and celebrated, which was only testified to in shadows under the law. The sanctification being come, the rest being come, the Lord of the sabbath being come, shall not the sign of the sanctification, the sign of the rest pass away? Exod. 31:13.

Question: Our Lord says, (Mat. 5:18) "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle should in no way pass from the law." If he here means not the law of the ten commandments, then what law did he mean?

Answer: By the law is meant the whole ministration of Moses; and by the prophets (ver. 17) is meant the whole ministration of the prophets. So that Christ does not only include the ten commandments, but also the fullness of Moses' ministry, and says that not one jot or tittle was to pass till it be all fulfilled; that is, it was to stand firm in the letter to the Jews till full season.

"The law and the prophets were until John," and from that time the kingdom of God began to be preached. Luke 16:16. Then both the law, prophets, and John himself were to decrease, and Christ and his kingdom were to increase. Christ, in this fifth chapter of Matthew, had been preaching the kingdom and declaring to whom it belonged. Now this manner of preaching might have seemed to deviate from the law of Moses and from the prophets, whose doctrine and dispensation hereby Christ might seem to destroy. But he removes the occasion of such a misapprehension by bidding them not to think he came to destroy the law or the prophets; for he had not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Therefore, we find that Christ does these two things:

First, He establishes that ministration of the law and prophets for its season, till it should be fulfilled by him the substance, who was to fulfill all the righteousness of it. It should last out its whole day, and should not fail in the least tittle of it (as he himself explains, Luke 16:17); till the heaven and earth of the Jews passed away. Heb. 12:27,28.

Second, He takes the substance of it into his own minis-

tration, and lays it more inwardly, and closely, and largely, upon the spirits of his disciples, than Moses had done in the letter upon his disciples. Here in Matthew he does not explain it fully, but gives a taste to his disciples how directly he would minister it to them by his Spirit as they came under his yoke, Mat. 11:29, which yoke is the Spirit of the law thereof, as Moses' yoke was the law of the letter.

Now mark even further: Christ does not give out a letter for his law, as it was delivered by Moses, but requires something of his disciples which comprehends the letter. For instance, when he administers the law against revenge, from whence murder proceeds, he does not say, "You shalt not kill," as Moses had said to them of old time. Rather he says, You shalt not be angry without a cause, nor give your brother any provoking language. ver. 22. Nor does he say, "You shalt not commit adultery;" but, You shalt not look with lust, nor let in a lustful thought. ver. 28.

And had Christ spoken here about the sabbath, would he have administered it in the letter? Or would he have commanded the observation of the true sabbath, where no work is done, no fire kindled, nor any burden borne; but rather every creature rests in the seed? "The Son of man is Lord of the sabbath." It is true he subjected himself under the law; but yet he was still Lord; and he makes all to be his, kings and priests to God, who being once baptized into his death, know also his resurrection and reign.

Question: If the coming of Christ in the flesh, and his fulfilling all the righteousness of the law, put an end to the law in the letter and gave forth another law to Christ's house, what then is this new law? And is it contrary to the written law?

Answer: It is the law of the Spirit, or the light of the Spirit in

the heart, which discovers sin (not only in the outward acts, but in its source, rise, first motions, and inward nature), giving forth his living commands against it. This now is the law in which the believer is to begin, Gal. 3:3, and according to which he is to go on to perfection. For as the believer is begotten of the Spirit, and born of the Spirit, so he is to receive the ministration of his law from the Spirit, and in the Spirit. He receives a gift of faith, a measure of faith from the eternal spring of life, and that is his law. His law is the law of faith. The light of life, which he receives in the faith, opens the mind and will of Christ to him in the Spirit, showing him both sin, and also the things of God more fully than the law of Moses could. This is a fuller, deeper kind of ministration, and so it opens the things which it ministers more fully than the ministration of an inferior nature could. Yet it is not contrary to Moses' law, but gathers into itself all the substance, righteousness and equity of it (as I said before), which the law, as a shadow, represented, and was commanded to that outward or shadowy people, the Jews.

Question: Why then does the apostle James speak of transgressing the royal law, and admonish to “So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty?”

Answer: What is the royal law? What is the law of liberty? Was the law administered by Moses the royal law? Or is the royal law that which is administered by the Son, who is the King of saints, and who writes his law in their hearts, as their King? Again, was the law which Moses administered to the Jews a law of liberty or a law of bondage? Did not the ministration on Mount Sinai lead to bondage? Gal. 4:24. But in the ministration of the law by the Spirit there is life and liberty, ver. 26. and 2 Cor. 3:17. And this very law, "You shalt

love your neighbor as thyself," is royal, and is a law of pure liberty, and there is no bondage when it is administered by the Spirit. But let any man read this law in the letter and strive to obey it to the utmost he can, he shall find it weak because of the flesh, and also accusing and enslaving him.

And this is the reason that Christians so mourn in their prayers, even as persons in bonds: because they do not know the royal law of liberty. They do not feel the love which the Spirit begets, but rather they strive to get the written letter into their hearts, seeking to answer the commands of the letter with whatever love and obedience they can muster. And this (through not seeing the true covenant and ministry of Christ) they call obeying in the Spirit. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. Rev 19:10. His commandments come fresh from that Spirit of prophecy, and we are to take heed of them until the day dawns and the daystar arises. Then we will know a fuller ministration than that of prophecy, even the shining and appearing of that which was prophesied of.

Question: Is not the fourth command, to keep the Sabbath, to be kept by all believers?

Answer: All the commands of Christ's covenant are to be kept by believers, according as he dispenses them under his administration in the new covenant. But the laws of the old covenant are not the laws of the new covenant, except in that they are gathered up and comprehended in the righteousness which is taught and required by the Spirit, which is fuller, stricter, and more exact than that which the law of Moses required.

I do not hereby go about to teach any to break the least of Christ's commands, but rather the way to fulfill them, which

is this: to know and obey them under the ministry of his own covenant, wherein he writes them in the heart and mind by his Spirit. In this way the keeping of all Christ's commands is possible. Yes, this is the *only* way to have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us. For he that keeps the eye which the Spirit has opened fixed upon the Spirit, this one shall not be able to break any law of righteousness, but rather the righteousness even of Moses' law shall be fulfilled in him.

Christ is the true rest of the gospel (as he is also the holy land), and by believing we enter into this rest. This is the true sabbath, and the way to keep it. Keeping in the faith, the gospel rest is kept. Parting with every lust that he makes manifest, observing everything that this King calls for by his Spirit, and waiting for the further manifestation or shining of the light of his Spirit in the heart, this is the true obedience of the faith. This is the holy and spiritual life and subjection of the living soul to its living King. This is the beginning of a true Christian, his growth, and his perfection. But as for times, places, persons, etc., these are of another nature and belong to another part, even to that part in man which is to be done away as he comes into the faith and into the rest.

With faith I do not make void the law, but rather establish it in its ministration in the Spirit to the disciples of Christ. Those keeping to the Spirit cannot transgress the righteousness of the law, though they may learn by the Spirit not to esteem one day above another, but rather to esteem every day the same, (no days ever having had any real holiness in them one above another; but only in a figurative or representative sense, which the substance, Christ, swallows up). For as Christ's day dawns, those things which were the shadows of it fly away.

Objection: Is it not dangerous to hold forth a spiritual

sabbath, and to deny the weekly sabbath wherein our Lord Jesus Christ rested, which also the Lord blessed and sanctified to Adam and his posterity?

Answer: The gospel is a state of substance, a state of fulfilling the types and shadows of the law by bringing believers into the possession of that which was signified. Canaan was a type of Christ, who is the land of the living, in whom every believer has a present habitation according to the proportion of his faith. Now the sabbath is the day of rest which every believer is to celebrate to Christ in this holy land, which he does by believing and obeying his Spirit in the faith, which keeps him out of sin, unbelief, and unrest. But the idea that the sabbath of the law, and the rest thereof which pointed to the faith, is still to be held up in the time of the gospel, I know no scripture which teaches this. And I know something which teaches me otherwise. The day is dawned, blessed be the Lord God Almighty; the everlasting day is dawned, and the shadows of the law are flown away.

Objection: Does not Heb. 4 speak of three rests: the seventh day, Israel's rest in Canaan, and a remaining rest, of which David speaks? Psa. 95.

Answer: I grant it; there were two rests under the law, which were signs of the one rest under the gospel. The two under the law were outward and natural, the one under the gospel inward and spiritual, consistent with the state of the gospel. David was not only acquainted with the state of the law, but with the Spirit and the eternal law in the Spirit. He knew the new creation, the creating of a new spirit, and also the new rest. He knew the circumcision of the heart, the spiritual sacrifices of a broken heart and of praise. He could take the

cup of salvation, and sing the song of praise to the Lord, which none can do in the strange land, nor on any other day but the day of rest. And he invites Israel to this rest, that they might not harden their hearts against it; but in the day of their visitation enter into it, by hearkening to the Word which was nigh them, which gives the entrance through the faith. "Today, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts," etc.

There is a rest you are now called to enter into, as your fathers were called to enter into the land of Canaan. Therefore, harden not your hearts as they did; but hear the voice, hear the word which calls to this rest, believe and enter. This rest remains, says the apostle; the others were types of it under the state of the law, which was to pass away.

Now, the entrance into the fullness of rest is not immediate; but he has a long journey to take from Egypt, the dark land; from Sodom, the filthy land; from Babylon, where all the vessels and holy things of God have been defiled, through the wilderness unto Canaan. Many battles are to be fought with enemies by the way, and also with the enemies which possess the holy land. Many hardships are to be undergone in following the Captain, who also leads his Israel by a pillar of cloud by day and by a pillar of fire by night. And there must be a circumcision and baptism in the cloud and in the sea, and the falling of all those carcasses in the wilderness which are not to enter, nor so much as see the good land, before the entrance be ministered to the seed and to that which passes through the water and fire with the seed. In plain terms, there must be a taking up of the yoke and a learning of Christ under the yoke, until the proud, stiff, stubborn, wise, willful, and selfish spirit, and the hard, stony heart, be wasted and worn out by the cross. Nothing must be left except what becomes one with the seed, and so is fit to be

married to it, and to enter with it into the everlasting kingdom.

Now this bearing the yoke, this taking up of the cross, this following of Christ in the wilderness, through the corrections of the Father, through the buffetings and temptations of the enemy, in the midst of all the weaknesses and frailties of the flesh, going when he bids go, standing still where he stops, fighting when he prepares for the warfare, bearing the reproach when he suffers the enemy to prevail, and hoping, even beyond hope, for his relief and victory in due season: *this* is the labor, the travail, the working under the life, with the measure of grace and power received from the life. So that first, the dayspring from on high visits, and from that visitation there is light entered into the heart, and by agreeing with that light there is grace received. And making use of this grace received there is work to be done for God; for his talent is to be improved all the six days by those who will rest with him on the seventh, and by all who desire to cease from their labors in the fruition of the faith, life, power (his power living, becoming, and performing all things in them). And he that does not improve the talent, or follow on in the pure light, but either sits down by the way, or is deceived with an image of what once was true in him, this one can never arrive at the land of rest. And when the eternal witness awakes in him, he will find the lack of it, and will bitterly bewail his grievous mistake.

Question: What does the new covenant, or covenant of the gospel, contain?

Answer: God putting his fear in the heart, writing his laws in the mind, pouring out pure, clear water upon them to wash away the pollutions of their inward parts, circumcising the

filth of the heart, healing the backsliding nature by creating of a right spirit within, and keeping the created spirit right by the presence of that Spirit which created it. (See Jer. 31:31-32, Ezek. 36:25, and Hosea 14:4.) This is God's covenant, this is the new covenant which is to be made with the house of Israel and Judah when God redeems them; and they can never be redeemed except by this covenant. Israel was to remain desolate until the Spirit be poured out from on high upon them, Isa. 32:15, until their hearts be circumcised to love the Lord their God, until his fear be placed there, and they thereby made to walk in his ways. But when they receive the Spirit, and are brought into the fear, and have the law written on their hearts and become subject to it, so they will taste of this covenant, be brought to redemption by it, and become a glory inwardly and outwardly upon the earth.

Now consider: Whether that people the Jews, as they stood related to God in their covenant (given by Moses at Mount Horeb), together with the covenant itself, and all things pertaining to it, were not a shadow of inward and spiritual things afterwards to appear and be made manifest in its season. Whether they themselves were not a shadow of a more inward and spiritual people, to be gathered to God by the inward and spiritual covenant. Whether their outward covenant was not a shadow or visible representation of that covenant, and the laws of it a shadow or representation of the inward laws, which were to be written in the hearts of that spiritual people? Was not their tabernacle, or temple, a shadow of the true tabernacle, or temple; seeing God dwells not in temples made with hands, but in a poor, humble, contrite spirit, and in the heart that trembles at his word? Isa. 57:15 and 66:1,2. Was not their circumcision a shadow of the circumcision which is to pass upon the hearts of God's chosen? Were not their sacrifices types, or representations, of

the sacrifices of praise and of a broken heart? Psa. 51:17 and 50:14. Was not their Canaan, or holy land, a type of the true, holy, spiritual rest, into which faith gives entrance? Was not their city Jerusalem a type of the Jehovah-shamma?¹ Were not their priests and Levites types of the spiritual priesthood, which was to offer the pure offering and spiritual sacrifices among the Gentiles? Malachi 1:11. And does their Scripture not plainly foretell the casting off the Jews, with the rejecting of their offerings, priests, and Levites, and God's raising up a seed among the Gentiles, where he would have a more acceptable people and worship, even a pure, spiritual people, and a pure, spiritual offering?

Secondly consider: If they were indeed types, representations, or shadows of something spiritual to come, then were they not to give way to that which is spiritual when it came, and so to be swallowed up in it? Is not the spiritual glory the true glory? Is not the inward Jew the true Jew? The circumcision of the heart the choice circumcision? The offering up of praise and of a broken heart the acceptable sacrifice? The land of life and righteousness the true land of rest to the living by faith? Is not the spiritual city, house, or temple which God builds, the Jerusalem or temple of the new covenant? Is this not the chosen house to God? And was not this spiritual glory to be expected in the days of the Messiah, and all the types and shadows of Moses, which pointed at him, to end in him, when once he came to set up his true, inward, invisible, substantial glory among his inward and spiritual people? When the day of Messiah dawns, shall not Moses' shadows fly away? Oh that your eyes were opened to behold the inward glory of life, the good things of the new covenant, the great treasure and riches which are revealed and possessed in the Spirit by the spirits that are redeemed

¹ Meaning, "The Lord is there." Ezekiel 48:35

unto God! Then your eye would not be so much on that which is outward; which, if you possessed even to the utmost of your desire, would not be comparable to the inward!

Lastly consider: When Moses gave the law, the veil was over his face, and the fathers were not able to bear the light wherein the law was given, nor the light wherein the prophecies of the prophets were given. Therefore they erred from the law, were offended at the prophets while they were alive, and misunderstood their words after their death. Now are you not also searching into Moses and the prophets in the same spirit of error as your fathers did, being shut out from the light of them, even as they were? If this is true, if the veil remains over your hearts, if you are ignorant of the true light, of the true eternal power wherein the Scriptures were given forth, how can you not misunderstand them, misunderstand Moses, misunderstand the prophets, misunderstand the things spoken concerning the Messiah? Without this light you cannot see the end of those things ministered by Moses, that ministration which was to pass away; nor can you see the beginning of the ministration of the Messiah, which was to succeed it. Oh, turn within to the word nigh in the heart, that the true Jew may be begotten and formed in you, and his light may arise and overspread you! In that light you will see the light of Moses, and the light of the prophets, and not gather false meanings from their words, but understand them aright in the same holy Spirit. In that light you will enjoy the blessedness they spoke of and directed to, which lies in the inward raising up of an inward seed, and not in an outward conformity of the outward man, while the heart and mind remains unchanged and unrenewed.

Chapter X

The Prayer, Ministry, Wisdom and Kingdom which are Spiritual

Prayer in the Spirit

True prayer is the breathing of the child to the Father which begat it, from the true sense of its needs, for the supply of those needs.

"The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from or where it is going; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. God, by the breath of his Spirit, begets a man out of the spirit and likeness of this world into his own image and likeness. He that is begotten in this way needs nourishment, needs the divine warmth, the breasts of consolation, the clothing of the Spirit, the garment of salvation. He needs the bread of life to feed on and the water of life to drink. He needs strength against the enemy's assaults and wisdom against his snares and temptations. He needs the arm of the Deliverer to preserve and carry on the work of redemption daily. He needs faith to deny the fleshly wisdom that he may trust and feel the virtue of the arm of the Deliverer. He needs hope, patience, meekness, a clear guidance, and an upright heart to

follow after the Lord. Indeed, very many are the daily needs of that child which is begotten by the breath of God, in its state of weakness, until it is drawn up into the unity of the body, where the full communion with the life is felt, the heart satisfied, and the deficiencies drowned.

Now the breathing of this child to the Father from the true sense of these needs for his supply—that is prayer. Even if it be but a groan or sigh which cannot be uttered or expressed, yet this is prayer, true prayer, which has an acceptance with the Lord and receives a gracious answer from him. And he that begets the child is the one who teaches him to pray, even by the same Spirit which begat him. In watching daily to the Spirit, the child is kept sensible of the will of the Father, and in his light he sees the way wherein he is to walk. He sees also the enemy when he is coming, and the snares he is secretly laying, and he feels his own weakness to withstand or escape. And in the sense of this his heart cries to the Father of spirits for preservation, for him to step in in the needful time, even in the season of distress. And thus watching to the Spirit, the life of a Christian is a continual course of prayer; he prays continually. This is the living prayer of the living child, which consists not in a form of words, either read out of a book or conceived in the mind, but in experiencing the breath of its nature issuing out from the seed of life within to the living spring, which is the Father of it. And the Father, by causing his virtues to spring up in it, nourishes the soul to everlasting life.

But many are those who are not born of the Spirit, but (by conceiving some of the truths of God in the wisdom from below) have attained to some change of opinion and conduct. These pretend to be of this birth from above, though indeed they are born but "of blood," or "of the will of the flesh," or "of the will of man," John 1:13. And though they will be

imitating the things which God begets in and gives to the true child, they are outside of the nature and spirit where the true child is begotten, and where the true gift of the Father is received by him. These will be believing, though they have not received a portion of the living faith from the hand of the Father. They will be forming repentance and sorrow for sin, though their heart is not turned from it. They will be hoping in God's mercy, although they are off the foundation and out from under the shadow of the mercy seat. And they will be praying, though they have neither received the Spirit, nor been taught by the Spirit to pray. And so being out from that which should guide them and teach them the truth and way of worship as it is in Jesus, they run out into inventions and imaginations, setting up a way of their own choosing. And having given much thought to their way, and formed it by reasonings, and fenced it about with arguments, these grows wise in their own eyes, and now verily believe it to be the way of God and that they can maintain it against all opposers.

So it is that one man is for a particular form of prayer or worship, and another man is against that form, and instead is for another; and each thinks himself able to maintain his own view, and to overthrow the other. But oh, that the ear were open which can hear the truth! If only there were a true, honest, upright desire after God, from the simplicity of the heart, then man would not be so easily betrayed by the subtlety of the fleshly wisdom, which lies lurking in the wise and reasoning part of man, to betray the poor, weak babe. The natural man, the reasoning man, the understanding man, the wise man according to the natural wisdom, cannot understand the things of God. In the wisdom and understanding of man there is no learning to pray aright, to believe aright, to hope aright, to mourn aright, to rejoice aright, etc., but such wisdom must be brought to nothing, 1 Cor. 1:19, and

a man must become a child to all knowledge for him to know God's way. But the one that becomes such a child is taught to pray, to believe, to wait, to hope, and all that is necessary to eternal life.

Now as the Father teaches to pray, so he gives desires or words (if he please) according to the present need. Sometimes he gives but the ability to sigh or groan (and if he give no more, he accepts that). Sometimes he gives strong breathings and plenty of words to pour out the soul before the Lord. But if a man should hear and remember those words, and lay them up for another time, and offer them up to God in his own will, this would be but will-worship and abomination. This I have known experientially, and have felt the wrath of God for it. Prayer is that which comes fresh from the Spirit, and the true desire is that which the Spirit begets. But the affections and sparks of man's own kindling do not please the Lord, nor do they conduce to the soul's rest, but will end in the bed of sorrow. Isa. 50:11.

Now concerning the use of the Book of Common Prayer, or concerning prayers conceived in the mind without the immediate breathings of the Spirit, I will speak my own experience faithfully, which is this: I have felt both of these draw out from me the wrong part, and keep that alive in me which the true prayer kills. And he that utters a word beyond the sense which God begets in his spirit takes God's name in vain, and provokes him to jealousy against his own soul. "God is in heaven, you are on earth, therefore let your words be few." The few words which the Spirit speaks, or the few still, soft, gentle breathings which the Spirit begets, are pleasing to God, and profitable to the soul. But the many words which man's wisdom conceives hurt the precious life, and thicken the veil of death over the soul, keeping that thing alive which separates from God, that which must die so that

the soul can live.

True prayer comes by that which God begets in the virtue of his Spirit, ("praying always in the Spirit," Eph. 6:18. Jude 20) in the time he chooses. For the Spirit breathes when he wishes and where he wishes, and man cannot limit when he will breathe, or when he will not breathe. But man is to wait the season of the Spirit's breathing, and so to "watch unto prayer."

Now if the prayer be in words (for there is a praying without words), then it must be in those words which the Spirit pleases to give, from the sense which he kindles, and not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, or would choose to use. And indeed, in the true religion, and in every exercise of it, man's wisdom is kept out, and nailed to the cross, by which means the immortal life is raised and increases in the true disciple. This one believes, he hopes, he waits, he prays, he mourns, he rejoices, he obeys, etc., abiding in the cross to the mortal part. He does these things not as man's wisdom teaches, for his sacrifice unto the Lord is still an abomination, even to the wise Egyptian part in himself. Ex 8:26. But let him do all as the life teaches, as the wisdom from above teaches, which breaks down, shuts up, confounds and destroys man's wisdom, while God is teaching his babe.

Ministry in the Spirit

It is not preaching true things which makes a true minister, but receiving a ministry from the Lord. The gospel is the Lord's, which is to be preached, and is to be preached in his power; and the ministers which preach it are to be endued with his power, and to be sent by him. The apostles

had received instructions concerning the kingdom from Christ's own lips, both in his lifetime and after his resurrection, Acts 1:3, and had received a commission from him to teach all nations. Matt. 28:18. Yet this alone was not sufficient to make them able ministers of the New Testament. For before the apostles went abroad to preach, they were instructed to wait for the power. Acts 1:4,8. And having received power, they were to minister in it, that men might be converted to the power, and by the power, so that the faith of men might not stand in the wisdom of their words (which Paul might have abounded in, as well as others), but in the power of God. 1 Cor. 2:5. Knowing this, Paul ministered in fear and trembling, lest the wrong part in him should minister; lest the earthly understanding part should be holding forth the truths of God outside of the life, outside of the power, and thus converting men to the wisdom of the words he spoke and not to the power of God. Ver. 2-3. Paul was sent by the Lord to turn men "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God," Acts 26:18, from the spirit of enmity and death to the Spirit of love and life; and so he took great care in his ministry that men might not run away with his words and miss the substance. This also was the way whereby he discovered true and false ministers: "I will come, and know (says he) not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power; for the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." 1 Cor. 4:19. Many men might catch the apostles' words and run away with them and preach them; but they could not minister in the power.

Now the kingdom, which gospel ministers preach, consists not in words but in power. "God has made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter, but of the Spirit." 2 Cor. 3:6. The ministry of the New Testament is a ministry of the Spirit, and it cannot be without the Spirit. It

is a reaching to men's consciences "in the demonstration of the Spirit and power," 1 Cor. 2:4 and 2 Cor. 4:1-2, which, being felt in the heart and turned to, converts them to God.

The ministry of the gospel does not consist in a bare opening of the letter (or raising of doctrines and uses from the letter which the wisdom of man may easily perform) as the ministry of the law did. Rather, it consists in bringing men to the experience of the Spirit, even of the eternal power of God which redeems, in turning men from the darkness to the light, in setting their faces towards the power. The gospel is the substance of what was shadowed out in the law, and he that ministers it must minister substance. He must have the heavenly treasure (that is the substance) in his earthly vessel; 2 Cor. 4:7 and he must give out of this treasure into the vessel which God prepares.

Now in order to do this, he must minister in the Spirit and in the power. His words must not be such as man's wisdom would teach, or as man's comprehension would gather, but such words as God's wisdom prepares for him and puts into his mouth. He that will be a true minister must receive both his gift, his ministry, and the exercise of both from the Lord, and he must be careful in his ministering to keep in the power, or he will never win others to the power. But in keeping in the power, he is to minister standing in the cross to his own understanding and wisdom, giving forth the truths which the Lord chooses to have him speak in the words which God chooses, even in the words which are ministered to him by the power. Ministering in this way he shall save his own soul, and the souls that hear him, even all who in fear and meekness receive the ingrafted word which is able to save the soul.

For alas, many have received words of truth and apprehensions of knowledge whereby they hope to be saved, but

how few are acquainted with that knowledge which stands in the power of God, which alone converts and keeps alive unto God! Oh, how many souls are to be answered for by those who take upon themselves to be pastors from God, who have fed the flock with words, with discourses which they have made, and have ruled over them with force and cruelty, but have lacked the love, the tenderness, the light and power of the true Shepherd! Oh, what will these do when God requires his sheep at their hands? Oh, that there were in you a heart to consider, you shepherds of England!

Christ, by his ministry, calls his disciples out of the world up to the Father, out of the honor, riches, and whatever else is of the world. "How can you believe, when you receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?" John 5:44. And the rich man, he bids him "sell all and follow him." And the Apostle John says, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:15-16. He that will be a disciple of Christ must travel out of the earthly into the heavenly, leaving all that is of this world behind him, possessing nothing as his portion except for him who has called him out of this country, from among his kindred, and from his father's house, to another land, kindred, and habitation. So that here they are pilgrims and strangers, sojourners and passengers, unknown to the world, and of a strange dress, behavior, and appearance in it. They are not enjoying anything as the world enjoys it, nor using anything as the world uses it. They are not honoring men or receiving honor from men as the world gives or receives honor, but rather are honoring men in the Lord, and receiving honor from the Lord. And whatever they

seem to retain of earthly things, they hold as stewards under the Lord, not using or disposing of them as they think good, but waiting for the discovery of the Master's pleasure, who orders all in his counsel and wisdom to his own glory. The law required a tenth part to be given up to the Lord; the gospel requires all—soul, body, spirit, good name, etc., even that the whole possession be sold and laid at the Master's feet. And he that keeps anything back cannot be a disciple, cannot be a soldier of Christ, but must of necessity entangle himself with the affairs of this life.

The Lord circumcises the heart of believers under the new covenant, to love the Lord their God with all their heart that they may live. He causes the plant to spring up out of the dry and barren ground, which he waters with his blessing, and he lays his axe to the root of the old tree, hewing at it, even till he has cut it up. He engrafts the Eternal Word into the heart, and by it daily purifies and carries on the work of faith with power. And the ministry which he gave was for the "perfecting the saints," Eph. 4:12-13, which ministry exhorted and encouraged believers (from God's promises of his presence and powerful operation of his Spirit in the hearts of his sons and daughters) to "cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Cor. 7:1.

Spiritual Wisdom

To know Christ as the light eternal (as he was yesterday, is today, and will be forever), to trust this light in its convictions, calls, and openings of love, to experience its living virtue, and in that virtue to give up all that is of the earthly nature and spirit, and sell all for the everlasting inheritance,

this is indeed the way to life. But it is not the doing of things which is of value, for man may imitate and strive to do much, and may go a great way in forsaking all and in taking off his affections from things (inasmuch as he may give all his goods to the poor, and his body to be burned, and yet it profit him nothing). But the doing of things in the virtue, in the life, in the power which comes from Christ, *this* has acceptance with God and is of advantage to the soul. Every motion and operation of true life springs from the root of life, and has the virtue of the root in it. And that which distinguishes this from all of men's imitations, and from all the likenesses which the earthly spirit can put forth, this is the nature and virtue of the root being manifest. Therefore, he that will be a true Christian must fix his eye on Christ, the spring of his life, and keep in the feeling and experience of his living virtue, and in that offer up all his sacrifices of faith, love, and obedience to God. And he that will be a true minister must wait upon the power himself, to be an instrument (in the hand of power) to direct men to this, and to preserve and build them up therein.

But alas, this is the stone which the wise builders have always refused! The builders before the coming of Christ got a knowledge concerning the Messiah to come, but being unacquainted with the thing itself, rejected both its coming and the vessel in which it appeared. And the builders all throughout the apostasy got a knowledge of Christ having come, and preached believing in him crucified as the way to life; but the living stone, the living thing itself, which is both the foundation, the corner stone, and the top stone of the building, they have been ignorant of and ready to persecute at every appearance of it. Christ can no more now appear in Spirit than formerly he could in that prepared body of flesh without the wise builders showing themselves ready to cry

out against him as a blasphemer, a profaner of God's ordinances, a deceiver of the people, or one that has a devil. "But wisdom" in all ages "is justified by her children," and by no one else. He that is born of the wisdom can discern the womb and acknowledge the fruit and branches, even under the dark veil whereby it hides itself from all the fleshly-wise of every age. "The kingdom of God comes not by observation." The wisest Scribes and Pharisees could not know it by all the observations which they could gather out of Moses' and the prophets' writings. And none can know it now by any observations which they gather out of the apostles' writings, but rather by being born of that Spirit whereof the apostles were born, and by being formed in that womb wherein they were formed. By this means alone does one come to know the thing that they knew. He that receives the same eye, sees the same thing, according to his measure. And coming to the life wherein the apostles received the truth, the words which they spoke concerning the truth are easy to discern. As they were written in the Spirit, so they must be read in the Spirit; and they are exceedingly profitable when read in this way. But man, guessing and imagining and reasoning in his carnal wisdom concerning the things of God, and so gathering senses and meanings about the words and expressions of Scripture, does but build up a Tower of Babel, which the eternal life and power will throw down (whenever he appears), together with him who built it.

Oh that men were wise to wait for the discovery of the true rock, and of the true builder upon that rock! Oh that that city and building might be raised in them which God alone can erect. Then they would not be left desolate and miserable in that stormy day which will shake all buildings and foundations and rocks, except our Rock. For in that day all professors and preachers and high notionists and what-

ever sort else can be named who have stumbled at God's living truth, shall confess with tears, sorrow, anguish, and shame, that their rock is not as our rock. For though all sorts of professors generally acknowledge Christ as the rock in their words, yet most miss the thing itself. For the subtle enemy has made use of a notion or apprehension of the thing in the carnal mind to deceive and lure away from the thing itself. Thus he keeps them from feeling the eternal virtue, the living power of life in the heart, which is the arm of God's salvation, whereby Christ draws man's lost soul and spirit out of the grave of sin and corruption up to the Father. But oh, how are poor hearts deceived who think they will be presented without spot or wrinkle to God having a mere belief regarding what Christ did while he was here on earth! How deceived are they who boast in Christ's making satisfaction for them even while they carry the body of sin around with them to the very last of their time here in the body, and have not felt the arm of God's power breaking down their spiritual enemies, their lusts, their corruptions, and redeeming them from them! Christ had the name Jesus given him because he was to save his people from their sins, and no man can truly and livingly know the name Jesus further than he experiences the saving virtue of it. But the one that effectually experiences the virtue, he indeed knows the name, and can bow at the name, feeling his lusts and enemies bowed under by the power of it, and feeling something else raised up in him which can worship the Father in Spirit and truth. Oh that the sons of men knew! Oh that the teachers and professors of this age understood what they have so long reviled and trampled upon! Surely they would mourn bitterly, kiss the Son, and escape the wrath.

Now, if the Lord is pleased to smite anyone's earthly wisdom and comprehension (which is the main thing that

stands in the way of the pure openings and revelations of the life), and give him a true sense of anything here written, let him in fear acknowledge the Lord. Let him wait upon the Lord to be kept in this feeling, not magnifying or reviling any of his messengers, but in meekness and humility embracing the instructions of the Almighty from whatever hand he has used to give to them. As for me, I am but a shell. And if this party knew me¹ (who sets me up so high, preferring me above many whom the Lord has preferred far above me), he would soon acknowledge me to be a poor, weak, contemptible one. Yet I must by no means deny that indeed the pure liquor of the eternal life, at its pleasure, springs up and issues out through me. Though I can also say, in true understanding, that it issues out far oftener, and much more abundantly through others. Let it have its honor, wherever it appears! And may the Lord bring down that thing in people's hearts which hinders the acknowledging and receiving of its virtue.

The Spiritual Kingdom

Christ's kingdom, God's kingdom, the kingdom of heaven (for they are all one and the same), is that seed of eternal life which God has hid in the hearts of the sons of men, whereby he gathers them back unto himself, brings them under the yoke of his government, rules over them, and reigns in them.

This kingdom is likened to a grain of mustard seed for its smallness; to a pearl for its riches, value, and worth; and to leaven for its spreading nature. And many other parables did Christ make use of to describe it: such as a piece of silver, which the woman that lost it, lighting the candle, sweeping

¹ The text of this chapter is taken from Penington's response to a paper in which he felt he was being unduly praised or preferred by its authors.

the house, and searching it diligently, at length found it, even there where she had lost it.

Man, fallen from God, is become lost as to the Lord. And as to his own happiness in the Lord, he has been driven from God's blessed presence and divine image, life, and Spirit, into the earthly spirit, image, and life, which he chose. Yet, in this earth, in this field of the world, God has hid something, even the everlasting pearl, which, when man is awakened to seek and find by the eternal light of life, is able to redeem him. The pearl is able to overspread and leaven him (he becoming subject to the laws, leadings, teachings, and power of it) into the likeness and image of the pure life and spirit.

Oh that men knew the gift of God! Oh that men knew the purchase of the blood of Christ! Oh that men knew that spiritual good thing by which Christ (who died for them) can redeem them! Oh that in this gift they might be united to Christ and so by him be renewed and restored to God. For as the Father receives none but through the Son, so the Son receives none but in that gift of grace which he bestows from the Father. He acknowledges no faith, no love, no hope, no repentance, no obedience, but that which springs from that, and stands in that.

Now, as man is born of this and leavened by it (as he becomes a fool in his own earthly wisdom and excellency of the fallen spirit, and becomes a babe, a child, etc.) so he enters into the kingdom, being ingrafted into the root, and so grows up in this, and this in him. And here is the new nature, the new life, the new heart, the new spirit, in which the unity and fellowship with God is again known. And here also is the disunion with the world, the wisdom, the interests, the fashions, the customs, the fears, the hopes, the delights, the joys of this world, and whatever else is of it. For Christ, as he is not of the world, so he calls men out of the world. And those

who follow him and become his disciples must go out of the world after him; that is, they must travel in spirit and conduct out from what is of the earth, out from whatever is not of the Father. They are not of the world, as I am not of the world (says Christ concerning his disciples, John 17), therefore the world hates them.

The laws of this kingdom are given forth in the kingdom, from the covenant of life which is made there in Christ. They are written in the heart, in the mind, as far as it is renewed. There the fear is put, there the eternal wisdom is opened, there is Zion known, and the Jerusalem which is from above, and the laws of eternal life issue fresh from it, and are revealed by the life in the heart which is turned towards the life. There sin is reprov'd and everlasting righteousness manifested in the light which cannot deceive. And as the heart is made subject under the yoke, so sin is wrought out, and righteousness brought in. And under the cross (or yoke of life) the blood of the everlasting covenant runs through the vessel to keep it pure, sweet, clean, and fresh in the life.

This then is the government of Christ: to be subject to his Spirit, which appears and opens his will in the gift of grace which comes from him. It is to experience his living breath, by which the heart is begotten to God, out of the region of darkness. It is to know the movings, the stirrings, the leadings, the steps of the Lamb, who is "the Captain of our salvation." It is to follow him wherever he goes, doing all things that he commands, forbearing all things that he forbids, "without murmuring, without disputing."

Whoever will be of the inward Israel, the spiritual Israel, which Christ redeems out of the spiritual Egypt, and leads through the spiritual wilderness into the land of rest, must know his leader, must receive his Spirit, and follow it faithfully. "If any man has not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of

his;" he is none of the spiritual Israel. And if any man follow not the spirit of Christ through all the travels in the wilderness, (but instead sits down along the way, or lies down before any kind of enemy, and comes not to the end of his journey, finishing the warfare and fight of faith) he falls short of the rest. Oh that men were awakened to consider things as they truly are! For true religion is not an outward form of doctrine or worship of any sort, as men generally (whose poor souls are deceived through the subtlety of the powers of darkness) are too apt and willing to apprehend. But true religion consists in Spirit, in power, in virtue, in life; not in the oldness of any form that passes away, but in the newness of the Spirit, which abides forever. It consists in being born of the Spirit, in abiding in the Spirit, in living, walking, and worshiping in the Spirit; yes, in becoming and growing into Spirit, and into eternal life, for "that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Oh that the sons of men would hearken, that they might taste of the sweetness and riches of the goodness which the Father in his free love has opened in the spirits of many! Oh that men would allow the wearing out of their earthly spirit and wisdom, that they might become like God, to be formed into and live in his image! How long shall the destroyer in every age prejudice men against those who seek their good? Surely the spirit of this world will strive to the very last against the Spirit of God! For indeed the spirit of this world is not subject to the Spirit of God, nor indeed can it be, and so it cannot endure the government of Christ's kingdom (which is not of this world) to be set up in its sight.

Yet the government of Christ and his kingdom is not contrary to any just government of any nation or people. Christ's government is a righteous government of the heart, or inner man, which does not oppose a righteous government of the outward man. Indeed, those who are Christ's subjects,

and are singly obedient to his law of righteousness in their spirits, are more faithful to men, and more subject to any just law of government, than any others can be, for their fidelity and subjection is out of love, and for conscience' sake. But that which offends the world is just this: that men many times make laws in their own will, and according to their own wisdom, which are wrought with selfish ends and corrupt interests. And that which is of God cannot bow to anything which is corrupt in man. It can lie down and suffer, and bear the lash upon its back, but it cannot do anything which is against its life. It cannot be disloyal to its King to gratify the spirit of this world; but whatever practice or testimony its King calls for against the evil and corruption of this world, it must obey singly and faithfully.

Oh that men would fear before the Lord, and be sure to govern in that which is of God. Then the rulers on earth should harm none of his, nor hazard the shaking of their government! But whatever is not of God, both within and without, must fall in the day of God's power. Oh, happy is he who is now made willing to part with that which God is determined to rend from man, in order that his standing may be in that which cannot be shaken! For there has been a great earthquake in this nation, both of things without and of things within; and there yet remains more to be shaken, both without and within, that the glory of God may have room to appear. O England! "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry!" Let all such laws and customs as are not of him fall before him; and whatever is of him, let it bow unto him (both within and without) that his wrath not break forth like a fire, which none can quench.

Chapter XI

Some Directions to the Panting Soul

"COME unto me, all you that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Mat. 11:28-30.

Some sweet meditations sprang in my heart concerning this portion of Scripture, with breathings of spirit and tender affections towards those "that labor and are heavy laden," which I find myself drawn to communicate.

1. The soul's true rest is in the gospel (which is "the power of God unto salvation.") Here is the truth with regard to the kingdom, wherein is life, joy, peace, and everlasting rest to the soul in God. The law had the shadow of the good things to come, but under the law there was not the possession of the good things themselves, but only a laboring after them, and a mourning and burden because of the lack of them. But in the gospel is the substance and enjoyment, where life and immortality are brought to light and an entrance into the everlasting kingdom is experienced, possessed, and enjoyed. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand," says the forerunner; it is

come, says the Messiah; and in it there is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the pure Spirit of life.

2. It is the will of the King of saints that his people should enjoy the rest and peace of his gospel. He does not desire them to be always laboring and heavy laden as under the law, but he would have their souls experience and enjoy the ease, the liberty, the sweetness, the pure power and eternal rest of his life. The Spirit of the Lord was upon him to preach glad tidings to the meek, liberty to the captives, life to the dead, the opening of the prison door, the binding-up of the broken-hearted, the pouring in of oil upon the wounded. The Lord desires to have the souls of his people enjoy that which he came to bring them.

3. Christ has plainly marked out the path of his rest to every weary, panting soul, which he that walks in cannot miss. He has made the way plain in the gospel, so plain, that the traveling man, though a fool, yet keeping to the light of the gospel, cannot err therein, or miss its blessed rest. What is the way? Why, "Come unto me; take my yoke upon you and learn of me." He that walks in this path cannot miss it. The rest is at the end of it. No, rather, the rest is *in* it—"He that believes enters into the rest." The true faith, the faith which stands in the power of God and which is given to the one born from above, this faith is the substance of the rest hoped for, and there is a true taste and some real enjoyment of it given to him that truly believes.

4. The rest was once felt and enjoyed when the gospel was known in power. Believers, in the first days of the gospel (before the night overtook that glorious dispensation) found "peace and joy in believing;" indeed, they could rejoice in the

Lord always. They felt the power and the life which stood over all the powers of darkness, and brought good to them out of every affliction, temptation, and distress. They stood in the life and in the power which had quickened them and was present with them, and so they could "count it all joy when they fell into manifold temptations," knowing the advantage which would accrue to them thereby, and possessing their souls in the pure patience till God wrought it out for them. They had an entrance ministered to them into the everlasting kingdom. They received the kingdom which could not be shaken, and in it had fellowship with the Father and with the Son, and in the eternal light the blood ran in their vessels, which cleansed them and kept them pure. They sat down with Christ in the heavenly places, even everyone in the particular mansion which God had built in them by his Spirit. The fear of the living God was put in their hearts. The Spirit of the Lord was within them, and there his law was written and read in the Spirit, and the treasures of his kingdom were opened by the key of David in the hand of the Spirit. Thus their souls had true satisfaction and rest in measure, and were traveling on towards the fullness.

5. There is no rest to be enjoyed in the gospel for the soul that is out from under the yoke. The true rest is found in that thing which yokes down all that is at ease and at liberty outside of the life. Only when that which is yoked down is consumed and destroyed is the liberty known; and then it is no longer felt to be a yoke, but rather perfect freedom. But the same thing which is the liberty is also the yoke; and under the yoke, the sweetness, the ease, the safe possession of the life is enjoyed. Mark this therefore diligently: the yoke is not one thing and the liberty another; but they are one and the same. The power of God, the life everlasting, the pure light,

the divine nature, is a yoke to the transgressing nature; but it is the ease, the pleasure, the rest, the peace, the joy, of that which is born of God.

Now to the soul that has felt breathings towards the Lord formerly, and in whom there are yet any true breathings left after his living presence and the experience of his eternal virtue in the heart, I have this to say: Where are you? Are you in your soul's rest? Do you experience the virtue and power of the gospel? Is your laboring for life in a good degree at an end? And do you experience the life and power flowing in upon you from the free fountain? Is the load really taken off from your back? Do you find the captive redeemed and set free from the power of sin, and the captivity broken? Is he who led you captive away from the eternal life and power now led captive by the life and by the eternal redeeming power? Have you found this, or have you missed it? Let your heart answer. Oh, do not imagine and talk away the rest and salvation of your soul!

The gospel state is a state of substance, a state of enjoying the life, a state of experiencing the presence and power of the Lord in his pure, holy Spirit. It is a state of binding up, a state of healing, a state of knowing the Lord and walking with him in the light of his own Spirit. It begins in a sweet, powerful touch of life, and there is a growth in the life (in the power, in the divine virtue, in the rest, peace, and satisfaction of the soul in God) to be administered and waited for daily. Are you now here, in the living power, in the divine life, joined to the spring of life, drawing water of life out of the well of life with joy? Or are you dry, dead, barren, sapless, or at best unsatisfied and mourning after what you lack? You then that are dry, dead and barren, as it were without the living God (who do not know the shining of his

sun, nor the descending of his dews from on high upon his tender plants), oh wait for the life-giving virtue, for the visitations of the dayspring from on high! Wait for him that you may be made alive again to God, that you may find his life visiting you, his Spirit breathing upon you. Turn and wait that the seed of Jacob may be raised in you to travel out of this barren state, even out of this land of darkness, and from under the shadow of death, to the land where life lives and flourishes. Know the land that daily distributes plentiful nourishment and refreshment to all its offspring who are taught to wait for it, and to feed on it in the holy place, out of the sight of the eye of the fleshly wisdom.

And you who are still gasping after the living God, upon whom the breathings of life still abide, who remain unsatisfied inwardly for lack of the presence of the Lord, and whose hearts still mourn and lament deeply after him, oh consider what is the matter! Consider why it is you have mourned so long, and sought so long, and yet to this day are at a distance from the thing you have mourned for and sought after!

"Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it." The way of unbelief is broad, indeed, but the way of belief is broad also. It is easy for a man to believe concerning Christ, or in Christ (as his heart may call it), so as to miss the nature of the true faith and all the sweet and blessed effects which accompany it. It is easy likewise to miss the yoke, or to take up a wrong yoke, in the self-will, self-wisdom, self-interpretation of Scriptures. It is easy to turn aside from the true yoke, but it is hard coming under the yoke of the life, and hard abiding under it. Again, it is easy to learn wrongly. A man may read and hear in such a way that he may be always learning and never come to the knowledge of the truth, that is, never come to the truth as it is received and held in Jesus. And if a man so misses the

way, how can he attain the goal? If one does not begin in the true faith, in the living faith, how can he attain the rest to which the true faith alone leads? If a man misses the yoke, or abides not constantly under the yoke, how can he meet with the true ease and rest which is in it, and which it alone can administer? If a man does not learn the truth aright from the true teacher, how can he ever reap the effects of the true knowledge? Ah, poor hearts! It is not enough to have breathings after God, nor to be very diligent and industrious either in outward ordinances or inward exercises of spirit. The way of the gospel must be cast open by God, and the soul led into it by him, and daily preserved by him. A soul must walk in the path which is proper for it to walk in, otherwise it may mourn and cry all its days, and yet never meet with that enjoyment of God, and satisfaction in God, which it waits for and cries after. It is one thing to mourn after a gospel-state, but another thing to be brought into it by the power. With my heart I acknowledge those that mourn after and feel their lack of God, wherever they are. But this I know certainly, that they can never come to the enjoyment of him except in that living path which the Scriptures testify of to be in him who is the life.

Question: But how can my poor soul that has long mourned and groaned and been sick of love after my beloved, come to walk in his path, so that I may meet with, and lie down in, the power of life and salvation which the gospel holds forth to the true believer?

Answer: You who desire to enjoy your beloved, and to experience the rest of his gospel, and to walk in that path which leads to him, wait to learn of the Spirit these following things:

1. Know what it is that can walk in the path of life, and indeed is alone capable of walking therein. It is that which groans and mourns, that which is begotten of God in you. The path of life is for the seed of life. The true knowledge of the way, with the walking in the way, is reserved for God's child, for God's traveler. Therefore, keep in the regeneration, keep in the birth; be no more than God has made you. Give over your own willing; give over your own running; give over your own desiring to know or to be anything. Sink down to the seed which God sows in the heart, and let that grow in you, and be in you, and breathe in you, and act in you, and you will find by sweet experience that the Lord knows, loves, and acknowledges that seed, and will lead it to the inheritance of life, which is his portion. And as you take up the cross to yourself, and allow that seed to overspread and become a yoke over you, you will become renewed, and enjoy life, and the everlasting inheritance in the seed.

2. Know the light of the Spirit in which you must walk. There the child is begotten (not in Satan's darkness, nor in the light of man's wisdom, searching knowledge, or comprehension), and there it walks. In that light the child finds every step and motion towards the land of life. Therefore, hold no knowledge out of the Spirit. If any knowledge concerning the things of God be held out of the freshness of the Spirit, it presently proves dead and unprofitable. The spiritual Israel cannot travel without a spiritual light, which light is eternal and incomprehensible, and cannot be held by man's spirit. This light shines fresh in the renewed spirit every day, and so is daily gathering it more and more inward into itself, comprehending it in itself, and preserving it in its own purity, clearness, and brightness.

Now this has been the downfall of many: even catching

some light from the Spirit, and then transplanting the image of divine things into the earthly nature, and there holding it in the earthly part. In this way man seeks to grow wise, and to make use of spiritual things as he sees good, and does not see the necessity of depending on the Spirit for fresh light and life every day for every spiritual motion. Thus the traveler soon comes to lose the true path, and instead travels on in a road of his own wisdom's forming. And such a man seems to himself to make a large progress, yet he makes no true progress at all, but has gone exceedingly far in the wrong direction, which ground he must traverse back again before he can come to the truth of his former state, or proceed on in the true way.

3. Know and keep to the power, which alone began any true work in the heart, which alone can preserve it, and which alone can carry it on. Christ was made a priest, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. And every priest under him (which every true believer is) is also made so by the same power. The powers of darkness are continually at hand, against which nothing can stand without being in that power which is above them.

Now, the soul's first coming to Christ must be in the power of the Father's drawing; and no believing afterwards is of the right nature except what abides in and goes forth in the same power. So the taking up the yoke, and the soul's travel and progress in it, must be by the power of the new life, and so must be all of the disciple's learning. As the master teaches in the power of the Spirit the things which alone can be seen with the new eye, heard with the new ear, and received into the new heart, so the student must learn and receive his lessons of life in the same power. If any disciple of Christ be out from under the shadow of the power, believing

without the power, walking without the power, acting without the power, he is out from that wherein his life stands, and from wherein alone he finds preservation. And oh, how liable is such a one to the pits, bruises, snares, and temptations of the enemy!

4. Watch against the selfish wisdom in every step of your growth, that it does not come between you and your life. Be watchful that you are not deceived with a likeness, a shadow, making it appear more pleasing to the eye than the substance. In every step of your way it will be laying snares for you; and it is easy for deceit to enter you at any time, and for fleshly wisdom to rise up in you under an appearance of spiritual wisdom, unless the Lord tenderly and powerfully preserve you. If the wrong wisdom prevails, it will lead you from the path of the true wisdom; it will deceive you with a false faith, instead of the true faith, with false praying, instead of the breathings of the true child, with diligence and zeal in the false way, instead of the true zeal and diligence. Indeed, it will hurry you along in the path of error, shutting that eye in you which can see, and hardening your heart against your truest friend. And being thus deceived, you may become as zealous in your age and generation against the truth as the Jews were in theirs.

5. Let nothing judge in you (concerning your own heart, or concerning others, or concerning any way or truth of God) except that which is begotten of God in the heart. Let the light in which you are begotten to God, and which shines upon his begotten, be the only judge in you, and then you cannot err in judgment. Be not hasty, be not forward in judgment; keep back to the life, still waiting for the appearance and openings of the life. A few steps gained in the life and

power of God are much safer and sweeter than a hasty progress in the hasty, forward spirit.

Indeed this is the true religion—the experience of God's Spirit beginning something in the heart, the heart's waiting on him for more of his Spirit, and walking on with him in his Spirit, as he pleases to make alive, lead, draw, and strengthen. Indeed there is no duty or ordinance of the gospel outside of the Spirit. It is easy, however, to commend and practice the likeness of these things without the Spirit, and then that which was of God in the heart soon withers, and a contrary building is raised, and the state of the heart changed. Oh wait on the Lord that he may give you to understand these things!

Question: But how may I know and keep to the begotten of God, and to the light and power of the Lord, and keep down the fleshly wisdom and comprehension concerning the things of God?

Answer: When God begets life in the heart, there is a savor of it in your vessel, and a secret, living warmth and virtue which the heart in some measure feels, whereby life is known. Lie low in the fear of the Most High that this leaven may grow and increase in you. This is the leaven of the kingdom. This is it which must change your heart and nature, and make your vessel (which perhaps has been long and much corrupted) fit to receive the treasure of the kingdom.

Now while the savor is upon you, while the virtue of the life is fresh in you, you will find some strength towards God, with some little taste and discerning of the things of his kingdom. Know your weakness, and do not go beyond the measure; but in what you have received bow before the full-

ness, worship God in that, and be patient however he deals with you, waiting for more from him. And when the night comes upon you, and you are perhaps at a loss, missing the savor and presence of the life, and not knowing how to come by it again, be patient and still, and you will find breathings after a fresh visitation, and a meek, humble, broken spirit before the Lord. You will see that you can do nothing to recover his presence again; no, you cannot so much as wait for him, or breathe after him, without his help. But he is close to the poor, close to the broken, close to the distressed, close to the helpless. Oh do not, with your fleshly cries and roarings, think to awaken your beloved before his season! But in the night of distress, feel after that which may quiet and stay your heart till the next springing of the day. The sun will arise, which will scatter the clouds, and he is near who will give you hope that you will yet see God, and find again the quickenings and leadings of his Spirit. And in the day of his power you will find strength to walk with him; yes, in the day of your weakness his grace will be sufficient for you. He will nurture you up in his life by his pure Spirit, causing you to grow under his shadow. He will be teaching you to live, and to speak, and to move and act from the seed, and within the compass of his light and life eternal. Only be not wise to catch the notion of things into the earthly part, where the moth can corrupt, and where the thief can break through and steal. But come to know the divine treasury, where all the things of life are treasured up by the Spirit, and handed forth to the living child with fresh life, according to its need of them.

In this way your heart will be kept close to God, and your spiritual senses continually exercised about the things of God. It will be easy for you to know the shepherd's voice, and to distinguish the sound of the Spirit in your own heart. And

he who tries spirits and motions in your own heart, will also give you the discerning of truth and error elsewhere, even between the Spirit of God and the spirit of Satan in others. You will be able to try not only words, but spirits, becoming acquainted with the anointing which tastes all things, and will allow you to judge, not by the words, but by the power. For to you, being in the power, in the anointing, in the savor, it will become natural to feel, to taste, to know and unite with what is one with your life, what comes from the same spirit in others, and also to turn from the contrary. And thus your life, your growth, your path will be sweet, safe, clear, certain, demonstrative in the Spirit, and past all reasonings of flesh and blood, either in yourself or in others. Even the beginnings of life eternal are of a higher nature than man can come at. Man's wisdom and knowledge concerning the things of God is but brutish before it. But as you come into that life, and abide and grow in that life, you are beyond man's judgment, and are able to judge man, and discern his whole course.

On Worshiping the Living God

I have had deep experience concerning the worship of God from a child, having travailed in spirit with my God for the right knowledge thereof, and in singleness of heart I have given up unto him according as he has taught and led my poor, needy, depending soul. Now the worship of God is a weighty thing, and there have been (and still are) so many errors about it. These errors are of such dangerous consequence, both in relation to men's eternal estate hereafter, and to their right constitution, peace, and welfare in this world. Therefore is it on my heart to answer a few questions

concerning the worship of God, for the service of such as both desire and need instruction therein.

Question 1: Who is the acceptable worshiper in the sight of God? Or to whom has God held forth his worship in the sight of the world, since he rejected the Jews with their worship?

It is not every man that would thrust himself upon the Lord whom the Lord will accept; but "the true worshipers will worship in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such to worship him." John 4:23. There is a capacity to be found in man to make him a worshiper, even such a capacity as may enable him to perform that worship which God requires of him. Now this is the thing to be inquired into: What is this capacity? And who are the persons that are found in this capacity?

Answer: The worshiper in the times of the gospel, the worshiper under the new covenant, is "he that is born of God," he that is drawn out of the dark spirit of this world, and formed anew in the light of God's Spirit. The worshiper whom "the Father seeks to worship him" is the inward Jew, he that has the uncircumcision of his heart cut off by the power of God. This is the sort of worshipers God chose when he cast off the outward Jews. God did not choose any one nation, or many nations, instead of the one which he cast off. Rather, he sent his apostles and ministers among all nations to gather a spiritual seed instead of the natural. And this spiritual seed alone is capable of setting up and holding forth his spiritual worship unto the world, and to provoke them to wait for and press towards the capacity of coming into the same spiritual worship with them.

Question 2: Which is the place of worship?

Answer: The only place of worship in the new covenant is where the spiritual worshipers meet together. This place is spiritual. Even as the worship is spiritual, so is the place where it is to be offered. It has a spiritual constitution; it is not outward, as under the law. It is to be offered in the Spirit; that is the place. Where does my soul offer its private worship to God? Does it have relation to any outward place? Or is it in the building which God has reared up in my heart by his Spirit? This building stands in, and is comprehended in, his Spirit, and I can offer his public worship in no other place except in a building of the same nature, in a house built of more of the same stones.

This then is the way of worshiping in the true Light: various living stones meeting together, every one retiring in spirit into the living name, into the power which begat them, meeting in one and the same place, in one and the same power, in one and the same fountain of Life. Here they bow down to the Father of life, offering up living sacrifices to him, and receiving the bread and water of life from him, and feeding in the rich pastures of his infinite fullness. In the holy city, in the living temple which is built by God of the stone which all other builders refuse, is the place of the worship of the living God, where the true Jews meet to offer up their spirits, souls, and bodies a living sacrifice to the Father of life. Here they meet with such a glorious presence and power of the Father as none but the true Jews were ever acquainted with.

Question 3: What is the worship, or what are the sacrifices, which the true worshipers offer up to God in this holy place?

Answer: The gifts that come from his Spirit. These are

offered up and nothing else. The breathings which the Father gives into the heart of the child, they are breathed back unto him in the same spirit of life, in the living sense, in the quickening power. Nothing of man's wisdom, nothing of man's invention, nothing according to man's will, nothing that would please the flesh, or seem glorious in its eye, is offered up here. But the exhortations, directions, or reproofs that spring up in God's light, in God's wisdom, these are given forth in the leadings and by the guidance of his Spirit, and they reach to the hearts of those to whom he pleases to direct them. And this is the ground of such meltings, breakings, and convictions of soul as are frequently found in such assemblies. For the living God is there and the dread of his power overspreads the hearts of such as are gathered into and assembled in his name. The life springs up in the earthen vessels, and the savor is precious to all that have their spiritual senses.

Question 4: What is the season of offering up these gifts?

Answer: The seasons of the true worship stand in the will of God. They are his gifts, and the time of them stands in the will of the Giver. Prayer is a gift. A man cannot pray whenever he desires; but he is to watch and to wait when the Father will kindle in him living breathings towards himself. So the word of God (whether of exhortation or instruction) is a gift, which is to be waited for, and then to be given forth in the life and strength of that Spirit which caused it to spring. Indeed it is a hard matter either to speak the word of the Lord, or to hear the word of the Lord. A man may easily speak what he invents, and another may easily hear and judge of such words; but to speak the word of life requires the tongue of the learned in the language of God's Spirit. And to

hear the word of life requires a quickened ear. And to know the times and seasons of the Spirit requires both being begotten of the Spirit, and being acquainted with it.

Question 5: Was this the worship of the former Christians in the apostles' days?

Answer: Search the Scriptures. Were they not come to the New Jerusalem? And where did they offer their sacrifices? Did they offer them in the Old Jerusalem, or at Samaria, or the mountain where the fathers worshiped? Or did they not rather offer them at the Mount Zion, to which they had come, where the male of the flock (even the Lamb without spot) is known, and the blood of sprinkling experienced? Heb. 12:22-24 and 1 Pet. 2:5. Oh read! Read in the life of God, the nature of the things themselves, and do not feed upon your own imaginations, or the imaginations of any other men concerning them. Sweet is our God; his living presence is exceedingly nourishing to the soul. Precious is his power felt in the heart; it is no less than life eternal to worship him in his Spirit. Oh let not the enemy of the soul cheat your souls any longer of the precious things of his kingdom with husky and dry food which only gratifies the earthly part, but nourishes not the immortal life!

Question 6: How did the worship of God come to be transformed and changed so greatly from the living power, into such dead, formal ways as generally worshipers in the world are found in?

Answer: The enemy has done this, by God's permission. The Lord was pleased to allow him thus far to prevail against the truth; even to get into the outward form of it, and there to

beget men into the form, and then deny and turn against the power. And this is the way of antichrist in kingdoms and nations, even to set up a formal way of worship, and by it to fight against the true power.

Some Questions and Answers Relating to Conversion, and to Tenderness of Conscience

Question: What is the way of conversion?

Answer: To turn men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

Question: When is a man converted?

Answer: When he is gathered into the light and power, out of the darkness of sin and dominions of Satan.

Question: How is man converted?

Answer: By the operation of the light and power of God upon his conscience.¹

Question: In what condition is the conscience before God works upon it?

¹ As mentioned previously, Penington and his contemporaries understood the conscience to be the deeper faculty of knowledge in the soul that can either agree with or disagree with the mind. It is important to note that both the mind and the conscience of the unbeliever are naturally defiled. Paul writes, Titus 1:15 “To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.” Therefore it is not the conscience *itself* that is or that possesses divine light (as many falsely assume). Rather, it is Christ the Light *in the conscience* that brings man to the knowledge of the truth and, when obeyed, to the transformation of the soul.

Answer: Hard and corrupt; hardened by selfish reasonings and dark imaginations against the convictions of the light and operations of the power of God. It is corrupted with the sin and iniquity that dwell in it.

Question: What does God make it by his working upon it?

Answer: Gentle and tender, fit to receive the impressions of his Spirit. By the influence and power of his Spirit on the conscience, he opens the ear to hearken to his voice, and prepares the heart to follow him in his leadings.

Question: How does God carry on his work in the converted soul?

Answer: By keeping it low and tender, out of the self-wisdom and hardening reasonings of the human understanding. By this means he keeps the soul pliable to the light and power of his Spirit.

Question: Is it only a tender conscience that is fit to be worked upon by God?

Answer: Yes, indeed, that alone. The heart that is hard is inconsiderate of the voice of God and is stiff and stubborn against it. It always has close at hand some wisdom or will of the flesh with which to withstand the voice and leadings of God.

Question: Who is it that preserves the conscience tender?

Answer: The Lord of the conscience. He who made it knows the proper temper of it; and his light and power are alone able to preserve it in that tenderness in which he formed it.

Question: What is it that hardens the conscience?

Answer: The wisdom of the flesh. Man, having gained a wisdom outside of the light of God by the imaginations, reasonings, and strength thereof, hardens himself against God.

Question: In what must a man be vigilant if he desires to have the work of conversion continue in his heart?

Answer: He must be careful to turn from and avoid the reasonings of man's wisdom, and to have his eye and ear open to the light and voice of God's Spirit, so that his conscience may be kept upright and clear before the Lord.

Question: What stains the conscience?

Answer: Any disobedience to God's Spirit, any hearkening to or following the voice of a strange spirit. This lets in the darkness which defiles, even as the light cleanses.

Question: Is a man then to expect such a thing as the leadings of God's Spirit in his conscience?

Answer: A man cannot inherit the kingdom of God except he be born again, even "born of the Spirit." So says the Scripture, and so says the experience of everyone who experiences the new birth. And when he is born of the Spirit, he is to abide with the Spirit, and from him learn the law of the new life, and receive power from him daily. If he does not, the spirit of darkness will soon get ground in him, and by degrees recover him back again into his dominion.

Question: Surely if this be true, then hard is the way of true religion, and there are but few who are found in the truth of it.

Answer: The way of true religion is hard indeed, and wholly contrary both to man's wisdom and will. Indeed, man cannot enter into it, nor walk therein, except as his wisdom and will are cut down. He that will be a disciple of Christ and follow the leadings of his Spirit must deny himself wholly, and become another's, and be content to stand or fall to his own Master. He cannot please men, no not in his worshipping of God; but he must turn from that which is glorious in men's eyes, and sacrifice to the Lord that which is to them an abomination. Exo 8:26. So that he who will be approved in the sight of God must expect to be condemned by men.

Question: Why has God put his people upon such hardship as still (in all ages and generations) to walk in a way contrary to the world, and to be the objects of its hatred, scorn, and persecution?

Answer: How can it be otherwise, since his people are begotten in a Spirit that is contrary to the world, and which testifies against the world, showing that its deeds are evil? How can the spirit of the world not turn against such as these, and hate and persecute them?

Question: How long shall it be this way?

Answer: Until truth is raised by the power of God into dominion over the spirit and power of darkness. The Spirit of life now suffers under the burden of man's corruptions, in

love to them, striving to save them. There is something in every sinner that at seasons groans under the weight of his sins, and in some proportion strives against the burden thereof. This shall not always lie underneath; but in the day of the Lord it shall rise over the transgressor. In that day Israel shall be glorious with his God, and receive praise of him, and be eased of all that have oppressed him.

Question: Will there be such a day?

Answer: The Scriptures testify of such a day, wherein the Lord "alone shall be exalted," and "wherein he will take away the rebuke of his people from off all the earth," and bring down "all that is high and lifted up" above the fear and Spirit of the Lord. And in this our age the Lord has chosen many messengers to run up and down and proclaim this day. And as sure as the Lord lives, what he has spoken shall come to pass, and not a tittle of it fall to the ground.

God did not make man for him to serve his own lusts, nor his creation to serve the lusts of man. Rather he made man to fear before and serve his Creator; and he made the creatures to be ordered by man in the fear and wisdom of God to the glory of God. The spirit of God now groans under man's iniquity; the spirits of his people mourn and sigh also. Indeed, the very creatures groan under the bondage of corruption; and the God of compassion hears their cry. A day, even a mighty day of redemption and deliverance is determined, wherein the spirit of the world shall be sunk down with all its weight of wickedness, and the Spirit of life and righteousness shall rise in its glory.

Chapter XII

Some Questions and Answers For the Opening of the Eyes

Question: How came man to fall from his original condition?

Answer: Not willingly, nor of an inclination of his own; but he was deceived to entertain a desire of enlarging his blessedness outside of the limits of the will of his Creator.

Question: How could such a temptation enter man when he was pure and holy, inclined towards good and against evil, after the image of his Creator?

Answer: Man was not created to enjoy a perfection in himself separate from his Creator, or to live of himself, but rather to live by dependence. And though he had no inclination in himself to seek a life in himself outside of the fountain, yet there was in him the capacity to do so. It was before this capacity that the tempter laid his bait of advancing man to a greater wisdom, glory, and excellency than what his Creator had placed him in. Then man, considering the offer without dependence upon his Creator, fell from that alone which was able to uphold him in the pure state wherein he was made. In this way he was taken in the

snare of misery and brought to that loss which all the sons of Adam lie groveling under to this day.

Question: What is the state of man in and since the fall?

Answer: It is a state of darkness, a state of death, a state of deep captivity, wherein his soul, body, and spirit have become dark as to the light of God, dead as to the life of righteousness, and captive unto that spirit which has entered them by their hearkening to it. This spirit now dwells and rules in them in the darkness as God did before in the light.

Question: How is man dark? How is man dead? Is his soul or body dead as to their being? Or how is it?

Answer: Man is not dead as to his being, either in soul or body, but as to the right, pure, and sanctified state of each. The vessels still remain the same in being, but they are emptied of their proper liquor, and filled with other wine. The understanding is the same, the reason the same, the will the same, the memory the same, and the bodily members the same as to their being or matter; but they are all entirely leavened, and another king now dwells in them and reigns over them.

Question: Is there no need then for the destruction of man's reason, or bringing it to nothing, but only a need for a change of the leaven?

Answer: Man has become another thing by degeneration from the life. He is so poisoned by sin and corruption that he is to be wholly broken down and brought to nothing, even in the natural capacities, so that he may be new-made and built

up in the newness of the Spirit. Thus he is to become as a fool, as a little child, and to be formed and born of the Spirit. And as he springs up in the life he is to forget his own country, for he now lives in the Spirit and walks in the Spirit. While he keeps watch to the Spirit and against his own reason in the pure child-likeness, he shall at length find his reason new-formed and springing up in him. But if the eye of reason opens too fast, and is not kept fixed upon the light of life, the betrayer will enter again at that door and bring the soul into death, even after it has had sweet and precious tastes of the redeeming virtue and power.

Question: Can man in the fall see his fallen estate, and so seek after a recovery out of it?

Answer: It is not possible for him to do so without some light shining upon him from the Redeemer. How can darkness discover darkness? That which makes the darkness manifest is the light. When the vessel is dark, and the prince of darkness fills it and dwells in it, what can that eye see except what is according to the darkness, judging evil to be good, and good to be evil, bitter to be sweet, and sweet to be bitter.

Question: But does not every man have at least some light, at some time or other, whereby they can see good or evil in some measure?

Answer: This arises not from the light of man's nature as it now stands in the fall (which being wholly in the enemy's hands, and being itself become darkness, cannot at all give man notice of the darkness), but from a fresh visitation of the life, which gives all men a day of visitation by the shining of

its light. The living Spirit also strives with man, attracting him from the one to the other, according to the Lord's good pleasure.

Question: But does not man have a kind of natural light in the fallen condition which discovers to him good and evil?

Answer: No, not a true light, not a true discovery, but only something which the enemy sets up in man to keep him in the entanglements of deceit and free from the suspicion of it. For the enemy, entering into him by his subtlety, blinds and deceives his eye (that he may the better hold him captive in the deceit), insomuch as man cannot discern the false image which the enemy has stamped upon him. For though the enemy brings man into a state of real darkness, death, and captivity, yet these things do not appear to man as what they are, but are discolored, or painted, to appear what they are not, and so serve better to deceive, bewitch, and entangle man therein. The enemy did not represent darkness, death, and captivity in a dreadful appearance to Adam, but rather portrayed them as wisdom, as light, as a better life, as a greater freedom. And in this way he still enters man, and after this same manner he still dwells in man, until the true light pursues him, opening and discovering his deceit. The light then draws man back from this false paradise of pleasure in human wisdom and in liberty outside of the life, and into a sense of his lack of, and longings after, the true garden of the living God.

Question: Is man then mistaken in his judgment of good and evil since the fall?

Answer: Yes, altogether mistaken. And by this mistake man

situates himself and takes up his habitation in the kingdom of darkness, wherein are strongholds and wise reasonings against the true God and for the false appearances of good. So it is that in particular persons, and also in societies, evil is pursued and affirmed as good; and the true good is suppressed as evil through the working of the mystery of darkness in men's hearts.

Question: What then is the true estate and condition of man in the fall?

Answer: A state of false light, of false life, of false liberty. He seems to himself to be advanced in wisdom above the low, empty, naked condition of innocency (which is nothing, and has nothing, except by a continual dependence on the goodness of the Creator). He seems also to be advanced in life, advanced in liberty. He can speak his own words, think his own thoughts, do his own will, seek himself, please himself, satisfy himself. The life of righteousness seems to him a yoke, a kind of bondage; he is free from the restraint of it, for he has life in himself, and is exceeding wise in his view.

Question: What then is the work of redemption?

Answer: To purge the old leaven out of the vessel, to purify the vessel from all the false appearances of light, to batter down all the strongholds of the enemy in the mind, all the reasonings, thoughts, imaginations, and consultations; and so to newly-create and newly-form the vessel in the image of the wisdom and purity wherein it was first formed.

Question: Who does this work, or who is man's redeemer out of the fall?

Answer: The Eternal Word or Son of the Father, even the wisdom and power which went forth from the fountain to create all things. The same Word goes forth from the bosom of the Father to purify the creature, and so bring the creature back (being purified and cleansed) into his bosom again.

Question: With what does this Word, or Redeemer, redeem?

Answer: With his own life, with his own blood, with his own eternal virtue and purity. He descends into the lower parts of the earth, becomes flesh there, sows his own seed in his prepared earth, begets of his flesh and of his bone, in his own likeness, and nourishes with his own flesh and blood unto life everlasting.

To Those Who Claim to Lack Power from God

Question: What is God?

Answer: He is the fountain of beings and natures, the inward substance of all that appears outwardly, the one who creates, upholds, consumes, and brings to nothing, as he pleases.

Question: What are his commandments?

Answer: They are very many, but they all may be referred to these two heads: To love God above all, and to love one's neighbor as one's self, in every respect doing unto him as one would like to be done to by him in the like case.

Question: How may man perform these?

Answer: Only by receiving a seed of life from God, and keeping close to it.

Question: How may a man receive a seed of life from God?

Answer: God is near to every man with the breath of his life, breathing upon him at times according to his pleasure. Whenever man's spirit opens unto this life, and drinks it in, it becomes a seed of life in him, overspreading and leavening him up to eternal life.

Question: What hinders man from receiving this seed of life, and from keeping close to it?

Answer: A fleshly seed, which is contrary to the knowledge, fear, and obedience of the Lord, and to all that springs from the power of his life.

Question: How came this fleshly seed to be found in man?

Answer: It was sown there by the enemy of man's soul; man giving him entrance into his spirit, by hearkening to his suggestions and allurements.

Question: What help does man have against this fleshly seed?

Answer: None of himself; but being freely touched by the seed of life, and tasting thereof, he is to wait on God's mercy and grace for the manifestation of his light and power, to discover to him the evil nature and course of his own heart, and to cut down his corrupt desires, reasonings, and imaginations.

Question: How may a man come to believe in this seed of life?

Answer: In experiencing its nature, in waiting to experience something begotten by it. In this its light springs, its life springs, its love springs, its hidden power appears, and its preserving wisdom and goodness are made manifest to the soul that clings to it.

Question: How may a man come to obey this seed?

Answer: In the faith, in the seeing of it, in the clinging to it, the strength issues forth from the seed into the creature which makes him able to perform all that it calls for.

Question: Why do persons who come to a true beginning of life, and to earnest breathings after God, feel so weak and complain so much for lack of power?

Answer: From the enemy's interposing of reasonings between them and their faith. The darkness, the principle of unbelief, lies near, and is raising mud (as much as possible) between the seed of life and the soul. And so far as it can come between these, it disturbs both the motions of the soul towards its spring of life, and also the spring's clear bubbling up in and running through the soul.

Question: What does God require of man?

Answer: He requires of man repentance, faith, and obedience. That he should turn at his call, from the darkness to the light; that he should trust in and cleave to the light, and

believe the spirit of darkness no more; and lastly, that he should obey the light, follow the light, walk in the footsteps of the living towards the land of light.

Question: How can man do this?

Answer: Of himself he cannot; but being touched, being quickened by the eternal power, being turned by a secret virtue and stirring of the life in his heart, then he can turn towards the one who turns him. Being drawn by the life, by the power, he can follow after the life and after the power. Finding the sweetness of the living vine, and his soul made alive by the sap of the vine, his heart can now cleave to and abide in the vine and bring forth the fruit of the living faith and obedience to the vinedresser.

Now mark this: Is it possible for any man to come to eternal rest if he travels not in the true path? Is there any path besides the repentance, faith, and obedience in the living Spirit? Is there another way for the child begotten by the eternal power other than to be taught by the Father to abide and walk in the life and in the power?

God puts forth his hand all the day long to fetch home lost man. He has given him a talent, a living talent, which is able to bring man into life, and to bring forth the fruits of life in man. Man overlooks this talent and does not join his heart to it, nor bring forth the fruits of life to the giver, but rather cries out that he lacks power. He cries, "What am I?" "What can I do?" "Can I cleanse my own heart?" "Can I kill my own corruptions?" "Can I make myself alive?" etc.

Now mark this too: There have been several dispensations of God to mankind; in all of which, man (of himself) falls short of the life, of the power, of the glory, and comes under condemnation. God lays the blame on man for not

hearkening, for not believing, for not walking with him. Man lays the blame on God, and says he lacks power. Now consider those who are not obedient to the light (which light they cannot but confess to shine in their heart, and often to reprove them), and ask them why they do not obey it? Is not this their plea, that they lack power? But let men consider, will this stand before the throne of God? This is the condemnation, that men do not believe the light of life, do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, do not trust and follow the light which would lead them to life. Rather they trust and follow the darkness, which leads into death, and into everlasting condemnation. Man's plea is that he lacks power to do so. Is this true?

I confess that the power does not flow forth to man in the way that he expects it. The power of life works man out of death in a secret way, and it begins in him as weakness. At first there is all the strength and power of the enemy against the work of God in the heart. And there is but a little thing (like a grain of mustard seed), a weak thing, a foolish thing, there to overcome all this; and yet in this little thing is the power. And here is the great deceit of man: he looks for a great, manifest power in or upon him to begin with, and does not see how the power is in the little weak stirrings of life in the heart. The power is in the rising up of something against the mighty strength of corruption in him, which he must turn towards, cleave to, and wait upon. The strength of the Lord will be made manifest in its season, and he will be drawn nearer and nearer to the Lord, and his enemies will be overcome and fall in a way he knows not. But he that waits for such a mighty appearance of power at first, looking to begin in this way and thus be preserved and carried on, this one cannot walk in the eternal path. For God's power springs up as weakness, and leads on and overcomes enemies in a

mysterious way of working, and not in such a manifest and direct way of conquest, as man's wisdom expects.

The seed of the kingdom is sown and grows up in a way that man does not understand, and the power appears and works in it in a way that he is not aware of. Man looks for the kingdom, the power, and the life in a way of his observation, answerable to the thoughts and expectations of his heart. But it never comes this way, but rather in the way of its own eternal motion. It springs in the hearts of many, and they overlook the thing, and turn from it daily, not knowing its true way of appearance, but expecting it some other way. And thus the enemy holds them in the bonds of death, and they are captives in the strange land, refusing the Prince of life in his daily offers of life, because they do not look for him this way, but after another way and manner. And until this eye of observation be put out in them, they can never clearly see the appearance of the Savior to them, nor feel the efficacy of his saving of them from that from which none but he can deliver.

The Right Knowledge of the Things of God

There are yet some things that lie weighty upon my heart to lay before you which may be serviceable and helpful to you in your present condition. They are four propositions, relating to the right knowledge of the things of God, which are these following:

First, that the knowledge of the things of God comes from the Spirit. As the Scriptures themselves came from the Spirit, so the true knowledge of them is alone given to any man which receives it by the same Spirit. And no man living can know

the meaning of the words which the Spirit spoke, except as the same Spirit which spoke them gives the meaning of them.

Secondly, that the knowledge of God (the living knowledge, the serviceable knowledge) is alone held in the Spirit, and in the birth which is of the Spirit. Man's natural part is not the true treasury, nor is man's reason to be master of any of the things of God's Spirit. Rather, that which holds the knowledge of the kingdom, the grace of the kingdom, the living experiences, is that which is born of the seed of the kingdom; and man's reason is forever to be shut out of the things of God except where it bows, is limited, and subjected to them.

Thirdly, that the knowledge received from the Spirit is still to be tried by the Spirit. The Spirit alone can keep it living, and the Spirit alone can tell whether the life and virtue is still in it, or whether death has caught it. Only the Spirit can discern whether it be the manna fit for the soul's food, or the manna once given but now corrupted. Oh my dear friends, wait to understand my experience concerning this thing, which is this: That which I had certainly received from God, and which the true birth at first fed upon, the earthly birth then sought to catch, lay hold of, and treasure up to feed upon at another time. Likewise in my reading of the Scriptures, I often fell into the great snare of reading in my own will and gathering things in my own understanding, and thereby growing wise concerning the things of God after the flesh. For though at that time I was not without living knowledge and experiences of God, yet I knew not how to turn from the death, nor to keep to the life. And so the bad, the lean, the earthly, the ill-favored, overgrew the good and well-pleasing to God, and brought it into bitter misery and death. Oh that you knew being begotten of the will of the Father, and

keeping to the will of the Father, and receiving the bread daily from his hand! That which man conceives concerning the Scriptures is not the pure milk of the Word, for only that which the breasts give out has the immediate life, virtue, and true nourishment in it. And this must be returned back into the divine treasury, and not held in the earthly part, in the earthly will and understanding, but received from the life again when it is again needed. Yes, this I have often known, that when I have been in great distress, I have received fresh comfort from the Lord; but running to it afterwards, it never was able to comfort me, but rather more deeply wounded me. In this way the Lord has been teaching me to live upon himself, and not upon anything received from him, but upon the life itself, the mercy, the good pleasure, which comes directly from the living bread daily.

Fourthly, it is easy receiving a knowledge in the earthly part, in the earthly wisdom, apart from the Spirit and living virtue. When one reads a scripture, it is easy conceiving and apprehending a meaning one's self, or taking in another man's meaning; but it is hard abstaining from all conceivings and reasonings of the mind, and waiting for the pure will and opening of the Spirit. Also it is easy retaining knowledge and making use of it in the will and wisdom of the earthly mind, for both these are natural; but it is hard denying the reason, the thoughts and imaginations, and watching to the Spirit.

O professors, wait for the living appearance of God! Wait for the freshness of his Spirit in your spirits, so that in that which comes from the Spirit you may know the Spirit, and may also know how to turn to him and abide with him. Watch against that wisdom in yourselves which in all ages and generations is eternally shut out of the things of the

kingdom, although it may gather and hold a vast knowledge of the things of the kingdom in the earthly treasury. The fleshly Israel has the wisdom of the letter, but spiritual Israel the wisdom, virtue, and life of the Spirit in all ages and generations. And though he that is born after the flesh despises him who is born after the Spirit, yet this one is God's heir; and the bond-woman, the earthly wisdom, with all her children (even the greatest giants in knowledge, profession of religion, and Scripture observations), must be cast out, and not inherit the land of life. This is written that the seed might be raised in you by the power, which is to inherit the life eternal, and that you not find your souls deceived when the light of that day fully opens, which has already dawned.

I was in a poor, low condition, when the Lord formerly visited me. I was as lost, as undone, as miserable as any. Whatever knowledge, whatever life, whatever precious virtue I then received was from God's grace; but it was still his own, and I found that he could call for it at his pleasure. And surely, he who has received from the fountain ought to trust and to give back again to the fountain when he calls for it, and then to remain empty, naked, desolate, until he be again freely visited. This is a hard lesson, who can learn it? Who can trust his life to the fountain and lie open to whatever follows? Yet this did the Lord require of me. And since my heart was not willing to part with my life, but rather strove to retain it and to grow in this first experience of grace unto perfection, he broke it after an unutterable manner, and brought such misery and desolation upon me as I could not possibly have suspected. And now he is teaching me to live more fully upon his grace, or rather upon the spring, where I am nothing, where I can be nothing forever, but he is and will be what he will be, and when he will be. And now nothing in me can be satisfied with him, except what is of him, and lives

in him. And here all that I have known, or formerly tasted of him, springs up again at his pleasure; and I drink of the old wine, and also of the new, but I have nothing at my own disposal. And when I cling to anything, or seek to be anything, I lose the spring, and am corrected for my back-sliding and adultery of spirit. But then I am again visited with fresh love, and the springing up of fresh power and life, and fresh visitations of the rich mercy and grace which the everlasting fountain naturally opens in its own.

The pearl is exceedingly rich, the treasure of life unutterable. He that will possess it must sell all for it, even all his lusts and corruptions, indeed all the riches of his nature (the best of his will, the best of his wisdom most refined). Not only this, but all the riches of his spirit, all that he has held or can hold outside of the life. Then, when he is poor in spirit, and has nothing in himself but emptiness, nothing so much as to receive or retain the life except what is formed, grows up in, and is preserved in the life, according to its own mere will and good pleasure, then only is he fit to be comprehended and brought forth in the eternal spring. Perfectly happy is he who is perfectly possessed by the spring; yet he is not without a proportion of blessedness also who is mourning after it and traveling towards it. This can never be attained by the natural part retaining the letter of any spiritual revelation or knowledge; but only by beginning in the eternal virtue, abiding in it, and traveling from death to death, and from life to life, until all be slain which is to die and perish in the way, and all be raised and perfected which is to receive and live in the kingdom and crown of life forever. This crown the Lord lays before all to run after, but none but the spiritual seed (begotten of and abiding in the Spirit) can obtain it. Mind then this brief sum:

The lost creature, the undone creature, is graciously

sought after and visited by the fountain of its life and being.

Being visited with the mercy and grace, and impressed, it receives something of the grace and living virtue from the fountain.

Having received something, the creature is apt to retain it in the creaturely vessel (even in his own will, and seek to enlarge his own wisdom thereby, and so to become something again in himself), forgetting the spring.

As the creature retains anything in the natural part, outside of the immediate experience of the living virtue, it corrupts, it adulterates from the living spring.

And that with which any one has thus adulterated, must be taken from him, and he be made dead to it, and it to him, before he can be recovered into a living state, fit to enjoy what he formerly received, or further to receive of and grow up in the fresh, living virtue.

Chapter XIII

The Sum and Substance of True Religion

Inquiry 1: What is true religion? Is it a gift from God bestowed on those whom he begets by the power of his life? Or is it a profession of worship in the nature of this world which a man may attain to by natural means and efforts?

Inquiry 2: What is the sum and substance of the true religion? Is it not love from a seed of life? Is it not a travel out of the enmity of the creature into the love of God? Does not the light of life spring in the love, and gather into the love? Does not Christ, revealed in the heart, and leavening the heart with the savor of life, teach love towards enemies, to bear with them in love, to seek them in love, to forgive them in love, to pray for them in love, to wish good to them and wrestle with God for mercy towards them, even while they are hating and persecuting?

Inquiry 3: Are the Catholics or Protestants or any other sort of religious persons found in this love? Do they manifest it by their discipleship to Christ and the power of Christ in them? Or rather, do they set up their several outward forms and maintain them in wrath and enmity against each other?

Indeed, would they not destroy each other if they could? Surely this spirit is in too many of them! And does this not give a strong evidence against their religion, that it has but an outward form and not the true power in it? Does it not show that in heart they are not the disciples of Christ? For if they were his disciples, they would by him learn to love.

Inquiry 4: Whether any form of religion (if not held in the power of life, and subjected to the power) does not fight against the power, keeping up an outside show without the substance, and thereby crushing the substance? What form of religion at this day in the world allows the love to grow, and the life to lead and rule in the love, and the Lord of life to exercise his authority in the hearts and consciences of men? This is for lack of power within, and because of outward forms forcibly set up; for the religion of the gospel began in Spirit and in power, and it never can be restored and preserved but by the same Spirit and power. The splitting of the Protestants from the Catholics was no further good than it was held in the power of the life; and the splitting of others from the Protestants was no further good than it was begun and held in the same power. Even though a party begin uprightly by a true and clear leading of the Spirit of God, yet just as soon as it starts to invent and turn aside to a form of its own choosing, it is immediately corrupted, being upheld by the reasonings and understandings of men.

Inquiry 5: Whether the power of true religion (and true love) if it were raised up and restored again, would make the world happier, and set everything in its proper place, both inwardly and outwardly? Is not sense an excellent thing in man if it be guided by reason? And is not reason a much more excellent thing if it be guided by the inward seed of life? But sense left

to itself, without the guidance of reason, how brutish it is! And reason left to itself, without the guidance of the life, falls below sense. How cruel, how blind, how selfish, how unrighteous is the man that follows the dictates of his own corrupt reason, without knowing and becoming subject to that which should enlighten it and give him the right use of it!

Inquiry 6: When God restores true religion and raises it up in power, whether then the forms and ways of worship without the power must of necessity wither and decay? When the power first appeared in the dispensation of the gospel, did not all the shadows of Moses' ceremonies fly away and vanish before it? And when it appears again, shall not all the shadows and inventions of man which have sprung up since then (in the time of the night) vanish before the brightness of the light of the day? Where the power arises in any heart, what becomes of man and all that springs from him? Where is his wisdom? Where is his former worship? What becomes of all his forms of religion? Do they not all dissolve and come to nothing? And does not he become as a little child to be formed again in the power of life, and born of the Spirit of life, that he may enter into God's kingdom? Do not all the old things pass away and new things spring up from the seed of life, which God sows and preserves in the heart by his power?

Now who is wise to understand these things? Who has the key to open the mysteries of life? Who knows the times and seasons (the times and seasons of forms, and the times and seasons of life and power)? Who sees what God is about to do in the world, and prepares his heart for his administrations on the earth? Who is a friend to God, and to mankind, and willing to travel in spirit out of this dark, corrupt, earthly

state of things, into the heavenly nature and being? This he cannot do by his own strength and reason, but only by the power and leadings of God revealed in him, an inward principle of life. And he that will follow this must feel it in his heart, and then turn his back upon the earthly nature and wisdom, and war against his own corrupt reasonings in and with the light of life as it arises and is further and further made manifest in his heart, through the grace and mercy of God. In this way God offers help to miserable, lost man, to redeem him out of his misery and undone estate.

Man has a time here allotted him by God; and when the time is over, it is determined concerning him. He is a seedsman in this world, and what he sows here he must reap hereafter. He sows either to the flesh or to the Spirit; either to his own will or to God's will. He follows either the ways of his own heart or of God's Spirit. He experiences either the power of true religion and is thereby renewed and fitted for God, or he contents himself with a form of godliness without the power, and in effect remains what he was.

He that is renewed, he that is changed in heart and life, he that sows to the will and nature of God, shall inherit life with God. He that lives in a form of religion without the power, and follows the vanities of his own mind, shall be cut off from God, and lie down in sorrow and anguish of soul. Such a one will bitterly bewail his mis-spent time and the losing of his soul's life and happiness for a few days of enjoying the earthly nature and spirit in its corrupt and degenerated estate.

O Man, whoever you are that are drowned in the lusts and pleasures of this world, which answer only to the sensual and corrupt part! Oh remember that you have also a precious soul, which needs redemption by the power of God to make you happy! And one day this soul will be awakened

in you, and when it is awakened, it will feel its lack of God. Now is the day of God's stretching out his arm to you! Oh, do not let it slip away! For if you do, terrible will the day of your awakening be; and your misery will be unavoidable and intolerable. And if now the pains of your body are so dreadful to you, what will the tearing of your soul be by the wrath of the Almighty? Lay it to heart, and retire inwardly, seeking to feel something of God gathering and guiding your soul out of your own worldly nature and spirit and into the nature and life of his Spirit. For the spirit of man returns to God that gave it, as well as the body to the earth. And then the Lord appoints it to its proper place, which is according to the nature it is found in. If it be wheat, if it be of the renewed nature, if it has taken up the cross and followed Christ in the regeneration, then he gathers it into his barn. If it be of the chaffy nature, of the earthly spirit, the mind remaining unrenewed and unreconciled to the nature of God, then to the unquenchable fire (even the fire which will burn and scorch unquenchably) and to the worm which dies not, but gnaws perpetually and brings to mind all the former vanity and mispent time to increase the heat and flames of the fire. Oh, what soul, if it were not bewitched and lulled into a dead sleep by the stupefying spirit of this world, would run so great a hazard for the enjoying of a few momentary pleasures in the sensual part? And who would knowingly lose the inward enjoyment of peace and reconciliation with God here, and the pleasures of his kingdom of true glory afterwards?

The Persuasions of Reason and Faith

There is the natural man, and the spiritual man; and there are the persuasions of each in and about matters of religion. There is the persuasion of reason and the persuasion of

faith. The persuasion of reason is that belief which man receives into his mind or heart from the exercise of the reasoning faculty; and this persuasion in matters of religion is but man's opinion or judgment. Now, no matter how certain or infallible this persuasion appears to him, yet it may be shaken by a demonstration or evidence of a higher kind and nature.

The persuasion of faith is that belief which the new creature receives in the renewed mind from the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit. This persuasion opens and manifests the things of the Spirit unto the mind that is begotten and renewed by it.

Now the lowest persuasion of faith is higher, and of a more noble nature, than the highest persuasion of reason. True faith is of a higher principle and of a deeper nature and ground than man's reason is. But because such faith does not appear within man's sphere, but rather out of it, and it is contrary to the line and reach of his wisdom, it is accounted by him foolishness and madness. So it is that the wisdom of God (and the children thereof) are judged and condemned by man in this day.

And how can it be otherwise? How can the wisdom of man not judge as foolishness something whose beauty and excellency are hid from its eye? But this is because the wisdom of man operates out of its place, and is not subjected to the wisdom of God, but rather exalted above it. Therefore man's wisdom is permitted for a time to lift itself up in its conceit and persecute the pure wisdom of God and her children. But it will at last fall and be broken, and its day deservedly come to an end and be shut up in the shadows and chambers of eternal darkness.

But what ear of man can hear this! Surely none that is strong in the way of man's wisdom, reason, and under-

standing; but only that which is bruised, broken, and in some measure dashed in pieces by the inroads of the divine life and nature. Happy is he who knows and hearkens to the persuasions of God's Spirit, who is born of God and taught to wait upon him and worship him in Spirit. And happy is the one who receives his religion from the light of faith into the renewed nature and mind, and not from the reason of man into the natural understanding, which is easily corrupted and cannot be kept pure.

Some Mysteries of God's Kingdom Glanced At

CONCERNING CHRIST

Question: What is Christ?

Answer: He is the immediate offspring of eternal life in himself, and the fountain or spring of life unto the creation. "Even as the Father has life in himself, so has he given to the Son to have life in himself;" and in and through his Son he communicates his life unto his creatures.

Question: How does Christ convey life?

Answer: As the living word; as the promised seed. He sows the seed of the kingdom (in which is the life) into the heart. And as he makes way for this to spread and grow up in and leaven the vessel, so he quickens and gathers into his life. Again, he is the enlightening word, the life-giving word, the word of wisdom, the word of power, the word of love and reconciliation, whose voice works mightily towards the

destroying of sin and the saving of the soul from it.

Question: Where is this word or seed to be waited for?

Answer: Its appearance is in the hearts of the sons of men, and there it is to be waited for. There God sows this seed, and there it is nigh to them whom God visits with his loving-kindness and mercy.

Question: How is this word received?

Answer: By faith in the virtue which flows from it. The nature of the word is to turn against sin, and to draw towards the Father. Its light shines to discover sin, and its life stirs to quicken against it. Now, as the heart believes and is persuaded against that which the light discovers to be evil, and as it is won over to that which the light shows to be good, the word is thus far received, and a foundation of union between it and the soul is laid. But as the heart rejects or turns from anything that comes from the word, Christ is thereby rejected and turned from.

Question: How does this Word work in or upon the heart?

Answer: According to the entrance it gets into the heart, or according as it is rejected or refused. As it gets entrance, it works life there, and works the creature into its life. It brings in its nature, its righteousness, its holiness, its sweetness, its peace, its love, its joy, its meekness, its patience, etc., as it makes room in the heart by working out the contrary. But where it is rejected, it works death and condemnation, and increases the captivity and misery of the soul, so that it were better never to hear any sound of Christ in the heart than to

not hearken and become subject to it.

Question: What hinders union with Christ?

Answer: The strong man armed, whom Christ comes to dispossess, does what he can to blind the eye from seeing the lovely nature of Christ, and to harden the heart against his appearances.

Question: How may the soul be helped against the strong man?

Answer: Receiving the truth in the love, and giving up the heart to the virtue that flows from Christ in his visits and appearances, allows into the soul that strength which conquers him. The strong man is not able to stand before the power of Christ, which power works within as it is let in by the soul. It is the unbelief of the heart, and the earthly thoughts and imaginations, which give the enemy strength. But before true faith, even in the smallest measure, the strong man is weak, and his strength falls.

CONCERNING THE WAY OF KNOWING CHRIST

Christ is the minister of the true sanctuary which God has pitched, and not man. There is a city, "whose builder and maker is God." The foundation stone, the cornerstone, the top stone of this city or building is Christ. The one therefore that desires to know Christ, and to be built upon Christ, must find a holy thing revealed in his heart, and his soul built up upon it by him who alone can raise this building. Only one can rear up the tabernacle that has long been fallen down,

who can build up the old waste places and restore the paths for the ransomed and redeemed of the Lord to walk and travel upon.

Now he who can find anything of God built up in his heart (yes, if he can find even the beginnings of the true sanctuary), he may also find Christ ministering there. In the heart the true high priest offers up sacrifices, intercedes with the Father, and also gives the soul the food of the holy things to eat. Now this is the way of knowing Christ, namely, in his begetting life in the heart, in his presence there, in his ministrations there between the soul and the Father. And he that thus knows him, watching in singleness of heart with the true eye, cannot be deceived concerning him, but knows the voice of his Spirit, and readily embraces it. But a stranger or deceiver he knows not, and will not hear, but by the instinct of life turns from it. Thus the knowledge and preservation of the sheep is not by the wise reasonings of the mind concerning the shepherd's voice and the stranger's voice, but by an instinct of the new hidden nature, which teaches the simple-hearted to avoid the snares in which the earthly wisdom is easily entangled. The meek, the humble, the broken-hearted, the weak, the poor, the babes, the little children, these are they whom the Father teaches. These have that preservation and instruction which the wise, knowing, judicious minds (in man's account) miss. Thus the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God stronger than man. And God has chosen in every man that which is not, to bring to naught all that is in him, so that no flesh might glory in his presence, nor any man be able to boast before the Lord of the salvation of his soul.

CONCERNING REPENTANCE

Question: What is repentance?

Answer: It is Christ's turning of the heart from the dead nature, and from the dead works, towards the living seed and the living works thereof.

Question: Cannot a man turn from sin and turn to God when he chooses?

Answer: No; man is a captive, his understanding is captive, his will is captive. All of man's affections and nature are in captivity, and nothing can turn him towards God except for that which is stronger than the power which keeps him captive.

Question: How is repentance wrought?

Answer: It is Christ's gift, whom God has appointed a prince and Savior to give repentance and remission of sins. He gives repentance in its enlightening and drawing virtue, by which sin's nature is discovered, and the bent of the soul is secretly turned against it.

Question: What is the heart turned from, and what is it turned towards?

Answer: It is turned from one nature to another, from one seed to another, from one spirit to another, from one course to another, from one end to another.

Question: Is repentance given in fullness all at once?

Answer: No; but it increases and is given daily more and more to the heart that waits on the Lord. Sin, the nature of it, the course of the mind and body in it, is uncovered daily more and more, and the loathing and detesting of it increases as the new nature gathers strength in the mind and increases in the light and power of life.

Question: What if there be a committing of sin after one has turned from it?

Answer: Here the repentance is not yet perfected; the enemy is not wholly cast out, nor his strength quite broken; the law is not there fulfilled, the covenant of grace is not there fully witnessed; but the soul is still in a degree of captivity under the power of the enemy. Yet if the bent of the heart is against the sin committed, God charges it upon the enemy and not upon the soul. "Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwells in me." Rom. 7:20.

CONCERNING FAITH

Question: What is faith?

Answer: It is a belief in the appearances of the Lord to the soul, and a cleaving to and drinking in of their virtue. There are diverse appearances of the Lord, even as a life-giving Spirit, quickening and enlivening the soul; also as a discoverer, reprover, and condemner of sin, and justifier of righteousness; likewise as a strengthener and comforter of that which lacks his strength and comfort; and as a fountain of perfect love, sweetness, and of all good, etc. Now, however the Lord pleases to appear, that which sees, knows, owns,

and falls in with his appearances, drinking in the virtue thereof, that is faith.

Question: By what means is faith wrought?

Answer: By the living word in the heart; by the word from which the soul came, and which is nigh to the soul. This was the word of faith, or the word which wrought faith under the law. Deut. 30. This was the word of faith which the apostles preached, and which wrought faith under the gospel. Rom. 10. This is the word which we feel working faith in us now. Indeed, this is the seed of life from which every spiritual thing springs and grows in the heart.

Question: How is faith received?

Answer: In the life-giving power. The seed of life shoots forth its light, its life, its nature, its virtue into the heart. The heart being touched with this is in some measure quickened towards God, and in and from this life-giving virtue faith flows into the soul. For in the death of sin, in the dead state, there is nothing but unbelief. Faith therefore must necessarily flow from the quickenings of life.

Question: What does faith do in the heart?

Answer: It unites to God and separates from sin. It begins and carries on the work of redemption in the soul. It receives that which is of God, and beats back the contrary. It keeps the mind chaste, pure, living, and fresh before the Lord. It draws out the virtue and sucks in the sweetness of every appearance of God in the heart. It keeps in the love of God, and expels the love of sin, love of the creature, love of self, or

anything that stands outside of God. Indeed faith is that which sucks in the breath of life, and that which purges out the breath and power of death.

Question: In what does faith stand?

Answer: True faith stands in that by which it is received, even in the quickening power. Faith must be continually kept alive by the seed of life, or it cannot live. It springs in the power, it dwells in the power, it acts in the power, and is never found out of it. Man cannot believe when he will; it is a continual gift, depending upon the continual quickening and nourishment of that life from whence it sprang.

Question: Why does the enemy so assault with unbelief, and fight so strongly against the faith of the soul?

Answer: Because all depends upon it. Stop faith, and he has stopped all; overcome that, and he overcomes all. If faith stands and abides in strength, the enemy gains nothing, but rather loses by every temptation and seeming victory.

CONCERNING LOVE

Question: What is love?

Answer: What shall I say of it, or how shall I in words express its nature? It is the sweetness of life; it is the sweet, tender, melting nature of God, flowing up through his seed of life into the creature, and of all things making the creature most like unto himself, both in nature and operation. It fulfills the law, it fulfills the gospel; it wraps up all into one

and brings forth all in the oneness. It excludes all evil out of the heart, it perfects all good in the heart. A touch of love does this in measure; perfect love does this in fullness.

But how can I proceed to speak of it? Oh that the souls of all that fear and wait on the Lord might experience its nature fully! Then they would not fail to know its sweet, overcoming operations both towards one another and towards enemies. And this my soul waits and cries after, even the full springing up of eternal love in my heart, and the swallowing of me wholly into it, and the bringing of my soul wholly forth in it, that the life of God in its own perfect sweetness may fully run forth through this vessel, and not be at all tintured by the vessel, but rather perfectly tincture and change the vessel into its own nature. Then shall no fault be found in my soul before the Lord, but the spotless life be fully enjoyed by me, and become a perfectly pleasant sacrifice to my God.

Oh how sweet is love! How pleasant is its nature! How beautifully does it behave itself in every condition, upon every occasion, to every person, and about everything! How tenderly, how readily, does it help and serve the lowest! How patiently, how meekly, does it bear all things, either from God or man, however unexpectedly they come, or however hard they seem! How it does believe, how it does hope, how it does forgive, how it does cover even that which seems not to be excusable, and not fit to be covered! How kind is it even in its interpretations and charges concerning wrongs! It never grates upon the spirit of him whom it reprehends; it never hardens, it never provokes; but it carries a meltingness and power of conviction with it. This is the nature of God. And in the vessels made able to receive love and bring forth its glory, the power of enmity is not able to stand.

CONCERNING OBEDIENCE

Question: What is obedience?

Answer: It is the subjection of the soul to the law of the Spirit, which subjection flows from, and is strengthened by, love. To wait to know the mind of God, and perform his will in everything, through the virtue of the seed of life revealed within, this is the obedience of faith. This is the obedience of the seed conveyed into the creature by the seed. The obedient son is he who naturally does the will; yes, and he is the choice servant also.

Mark how everything in the kingdom, every spiritual thing, refers to Christ, and centers in him. His nature, his virtue, his presence, his power, makes up all. Indeed he is all in all to a believer, only variously manifested and opened in the heart by the Spirit. He is the volume of the whole book, every page and line speaks of him and describes him in some or other of his sweet and beautiful characteristics. So that if I should yet speak further of other things, such as meekness, tenderness, humility, mercy, gentleness, patience, long-suffering, contentedness, etc. (all of which I would much rather be read in his living book of the eternal Word than in my writings), I am only speaking further of his nature brought up, manifested, and displaying itself in and through the creatures by his turning the wheel of his life in their hearts. But my spirit hastens away from words, and I feel I must cut short and pass over these openings in me, so that neither my own soul nor others may fix upon the words concerning the thing, but will rather sink in spirit into the feeling of the life itself. Oh that we may learn what it is to enjoy the substance there, and to be comprehended of it, and

cease striving to know or comprehend concerning it. For he that has a taste of this living knowledge, which is laid up in that treasury into which the thief and corrupter can by no means touch, cannot help but be willing to sell all the knowledge that can be held in the creaturely vessel. And yet I cannot help but add something further concerning peace, joy, liberty, prayer, as also concerning regeneration, justification, sanctification, reconciliation, and redemption; because my heart believes that it may prove serviceable to some in the guidance and mercy of the good Spirit of the Lord.

CONCERNING PEACE OR REST

True peace is the stillness, the quietness, the satisfaction of the heart in God, which flows from and with the Spirit of life in the soul that is subjected to Christ. There is indeed another kind of peace, that is, a false peace or rest in sin and unrighteousness. But this is not truly natural to the soul while it lasts, and it is also suddenly disturbed when the true light shines in the heart and when God's witness awakens it. Then "there is no peace to the wicked." Oh, the trouble and perplexity of the sinner when the light of God's Spirit makes his heart and ways manifest to him! And oh what a bitter war, noise, and tumult does the enemy raise within! How he seeks to disturb every step of the way, and strives to darken every drawing, motion, and leading of the soul out of his dominion! But as the redemption is experienced, the snares are broken, the life is manifested, and the soul feels itself entering into the nature of life and the obedience to it. And so the peace springs, and the rest in God is tasted of and enjoyed.

CONCERNING JOY

Joy is the gladness of the heart in God chiefly springing from the refreshings and presence of his life, which carries through and over all, even the greatest trials and tribulations. When the poor, panting, weary soul, which has longed after God, and has long felt the bitterness and misery of its separation, begins to feel its union with him, and his love, goodness, righteousness, power, wisdom, and salvation, oh how the soul is filled with joy and delight in the earnest of its portion! Now it can say in the strength of life, “My soul rejoices in God my Savior; for he has regarded my low estate! His heart has moved towards me, his dayspring from on high has visited me. And I, who long have been desolate and forsaken, have now found favor in the eyes of my beloved, and my heart feels (in measure) that I am his, and he mine. He has touched me, won my heart, and what can separate? He has tied the knot himself, and what can break it? And how can my heart not rejoice in his name over all my fears, false reasonings, doubts, and misgivings, which long held me captive and kept my eye from reading his love, the which was written both in his heart and in his dealings towards me?”

CONCERNING LIBERTY

Liberty is the enlarging of the heart in the Spirit of the Lord, wherein it has freedom in all that is good, and is shut out of all that is evil. The Spirit of the Lord is free, and makes free. The earthly spirit is in bondage with her children; but they which are begotten of the Lord, and wrapped up in his Spirit, find in him the power and freedom of the new life, and are thereby perfectly out of the reach of that which has power

to captivate and enthrall. Therefore the true liberty does not consist of a freedom in all manner of scope and latitude, but rather in the scope and latitude proper to its nature. Thus the infinite and unlimited One is limited (if it be proper so to express it), within the limits and bounds of his own nature and Spirit, which he cannot transgress, or in any way consent to do what is contrary to it.

CONCERNING PRAYER

Prayer is the breath of the living child to the Father of life in that Spirit which makes the child alive and grants a right sense of its wants and suitable cries proportionable to its state and season. So mark: prayer is wholly outside of the will of the creature, wholly outside of the time of the creature, wholly outside of the power of the creature, in the Spirit of the Father, who is the fountain of life, and gives forth breathings of life to his child at his pleasure.

CONCERNING REGENERATION

Question: What is regeneration?

Answer: It is the new birth of the creature, or its being born again of the immortal seed of the word of eternal life.

Question: How is this birth obtained?

Answer: By the springing up of the seed of eternal life in the heart, and the heart being changed into it, and brought forth in it.

Question: How is the heart changed into and brought forth in the seed?

Answer: By being leavened with the power and virtue of its nature by a new sap received from it, which spreads by degrees, and at length becomes all in it.

Question: How is this virtue received from the seed?

Answer: In giving up to it in the faith which flows from it. This lets in the new sap and nature of life, which purges out the old.

Question: How does the seed appear and manifest itself, and how is it given up to in the faith?

Answer: The seed appears in its own light and quickening virtue, which uncovers the darkness and death of sin, and draws the heart (which it makes willing) out of it. Now as this drawing is felt, it is clearly known, and the thing required by it is made manifest. Here there is a faith begotten in the heart, and then the soul is to give up in the obedience of the faith, without consulting with the reasonings and wisdom of the fleshly mind, where the enemy lies ready to dampen this light of faith and bring into unbelief.

CONCERNING JUSTIFICATION

Question: What is justification?

Answer: It is the owning or clearing of a person in his obedience to the Lord; or the pardoning, passing by, and so clearing him from his disobedience.

Question: Who is it that justifies?

Answer: It is the Lord, who gives the law to mankind according to his pleasure. He it is that is also the judge of man's obedience or disobedience to it, and the proper justifier or condemner of him in it.

Question: But is not man in a fallen state? And can he obey God in anything so as to be justified by him?

Answer: Man is indeed fallen, and has no strength or will of himself to serve or obey the Lord. But there is a visitation of life and love issuing forth towards mankind in general, in which the quickening life goes forth, and a secret, hidden power which gives an ability to every willing heart to follow his drawings. And this visitation is so managed by the Lord that no man perishes for lack of power, but only from the stubbornness and choice of his own will. So that man's destruction is indeed of himself, and not of God, whose delight is to save, and not to destroy his creature.

Question: How is this justification wrought?

Answer: By faith in the virtue which flows from Christ. God lets the nature of his Son into the heart, and begets there something of his own likeness, by which he draws and gives the ability to believe. This faith is imputed by God for righteousness in every heart wherever it is found. And wherever this faith in the living virtue is found, there God blots out the iniquities for his name's sake; yes, and remission of sin is felt in that which is made living.

Question: May a man be justified who never heard outwardly of Christ?

Answer: If a man experiences the seed of life, is overcome by its nature, gives up to its law as it is made manifest in his heart, abhors the nature and law of sin and death, and thus in his soul cleaves unto the Lord and follows him, then the Spirit and life of the Lord cannot but herein justify him. The grace and mercy of the Lord cannot withhold giving him pardon for his sins past (and also pass by his future frailties), although he does not distinctly know how to plead for it. The redemption and pardon of sin is through the unlimited grace of God, which is not restricted to the outward knowledge of the creature, but issues forth according to the capacity that God gives to receive it. Life, mercy, grace, pardon, etc., issue forth from God into the vessels of every kind, and the inward sense of life is the thing that God aims at in all his dispensations, and not the outward ability or knowledge.

Question: How is justification by grace?

Answer: No man in his fallen state can deserve anything of God. It is of grace that God visits him by any outpouring of his love and mercy. It is of grace that he gives him any ability to turn unto him. Indeed such is the weakness of man, that no man can be justified by works of obedience that he can perform under any dispensation, but only by the remission and ability which he receives from grace.

Question: What is the righteousness that justifies in the sight of God?

Answer: The righteousness of Christ alone. This righteous-

ness conveyed to the creature in and through the seed, and brought forth in the creature by the seed, and the creature united to Christ in the seed; here is the justification of the life.

CONCERNING SANCTIFICATION

Question: What is sanctification?

Answer: It is the cleansing of the vessel by the Spirit of the Lord from the pollution of both flesh and spirit.

Question: And by what does the Spirit of the Lord cleanse the vessel from its pollution?

Answer: By the living truth, which has power in it to wash away the deceit, enmity, impurity, and whatever evil has formerly defiled, or may yet again at any time defile the vessel.

Question: How does the soul receive this cleansing or purifying from the Spirit of the Lord?

Answer: In its obedience to his truth made manifest in the heart; for by this the power of the word enters into the soul and sheds abroad its living virtue in the soul.

Question: What then is chiefly to be minded by the soul that desires to be cleansed from its filthiness?

Answer: The obedience of faith, or the obedience which springs from faith. For as all the benefits and blessings of the law depended upon obedience to the law, so all the benefits

and blessings of the gospel depend upon obedience to the gospel. Yes, and this is the glory and excellency of the gospel: that the principle of faith now does that which the principle of the law could never do.

CONCERNING RECONCILIATION

Question: What is reconciliation?

Answer: It is a bringing together the minds and hearts of God and man into one.

Question: How is this wrought?

Answer: By taking away the enmity of man's nature, which is against God, and by planting him into, and causing him to grow up in, that nature and life which God loves. In this way, that which God hates, and which is the cause of the separation, is removed from man, and man is brought into, and brought up in, that which is the love and delight of God's heart.

Question: By what is this reconciliation wrought?

Answer: By the Word of God's power. This Word comes forth from the love of God unto man, and man being gathered out of himself into that, the evil seed is thereby destroyed, and the good seed of the kingdom is thereby cherished.

CONCERNING REDEMPTION

Question: What is redemption?

Answer: It is the purchasing of the vessel out of the captivity and misery of death, into the liberty and blessedness of the divine life, which is sown, revealed, grown, and perfected in the heart.

Question: Who is the redeemer?

Answer: The Son of God, the child of God's begetting, the divine image, who naturally believes and fulfills the will of the Father in every vessel which he has prepared.

Question: By what does he redeem?

Answer: By his blood; by his life; by his power; by his nature sown in the vessel and transforming the vessel into its own likeness. Yes, this is indeed redemption, when the creature is changed into and brought forth in the image, power, nature, virtue, and divine life of him that redeems. And the old contrary image is perfectly blotted out by the presence and indwelling of the new. This is perfect redemption, the least measure of which is redemption in a degree.

After this springs up the glory of the life in the vessel, even the glory which it had with the Father before the world was. In the nature of the life the glory is hid. It is sown in the seed; it dies with the seed; it is raised with the seed. When Zion in any heart is built up, it is natural to the Lord to appear there in his glory; and the pure eye sees him, and the pure heart enjoys and is one with him. So that even as there is a true entrance into, fellowship in, and enjoyment of the

death of Christ, so there is also the resurrection and glory of the redeemed life. This is the portion and inheritance which God has prepared for Zion, after her long desolation and sore widowhood. And this portion he will give unto her in the sight of all the world, whereby she will become the beauty, joy, and praise of the whole earth.

A Last Word of Warning

This I am assured of, that it would be an easy matter with the Lord to give forth a literal description of all the things of his kingdom, so exact, full and plain, so as to answer and satisfy every inquiring mind. But this would not effect the work which God is now about. This would not raise his seed, which would lie dead and buried under all these descriptions unless quickened and raised by the immediate power and life of the Father. And would not the earthly spirit easily build with such clear words an earthly fabric, such as would not be according to the measure of the true temple?

May I speak freely? I would not deny anything of God among you, nor be an instrument to quench the least good in any of you. But indeed I have seen, felt, and known some of your snares, and would rather spend the strength of my spirit in crying to God for you that he would break them and disentangle your souls, rather than in attempts to demonstrate and manifest them unto you. And I am now touching upon one of these snares, which is not the smallest, namely: a getting the knowledge of things into the mind and comprehension, striving to grow rich there, and wise to understand and dispute about them. And if the Lord did not teach my soul continually to give up the outward knowledge of everything, and press after the inward life, I might soon grow wise after

the flesh, but I would lose the fresh oil which softens and nourishes me. My spirit bows and presses within me in great earnestness to the God of mercies that you may not be left behind the flock whose path is living, and who follow the living footsteps of the Lamb, who leads by his living Spirit from life to life into his kingdom.

Chapter XIV
The Two Seeds

This is the substance of our religion: *first*, to experience and discern the two seeds, that is, the seed of enmity and the seed of love, the seed of the flesh and the seed of the Spirit, the seed of Hagar and the seed of Sarah, the seed of the Egyptian womb and the holy seed of Israel; and *second*, to experience the judgments of God administered to one of these seeds, till it be brought into bondage and death; and to experience the other raised up in the love and mercy of the Lord to live in us, and our souls gathered into it, to live unto God in it.

Now when the light of God's Holy Spirit breaks in upon man and his quickening virtue is felt, then life enters into that which was slain, and there is a desire begotten in the heart to travel out of the Egyptian state into the good land. And the soul, which was created by God, yearns to return back to him, out of the sinful, wandering, miserable, lost estate, that it might live and walk with him in the purity, virtue, and power of his own life and Spirit.

But then the fleshly birth fights for its life, and Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, takes part with his Egyptians against Israel. In this there is no help to the poor soul, except as God

pours out his judgments upon that hard nature and spirit in man which is of the birth of the flesh, and which receives the influences and strength of its father that harden it against the true seed. And now what a condition is this poor soul in? The light of God's Spirit gives it the awareness of its state, and the quickenings of life make it sensible of its bondage. There are also some desires and longings after deliverance, but this only provokes the enemy, for the soul is yet in his territory and under his power, and he deals more harshly with it, increasing its burdens and oppressions daily. And oh, the outcries of the soul in this state! How is its spirit pained, anguished, and vexed within it, so that it could almost choose to remain in Egypt rather than undergo the heavy burdens, oppressions, fears, and dangers that it daily meets with in this state!

Yet there is a secret hope springing up in the heart from the true seed, which often encourages it to trust him, and to wait upon him who has visited with his pure ministration of judgment. For this is felt many times (as the soul is made truly sensible by the Lord), that the judgment is not to the seed, not to Israel, but to Pharaoh and his Egyptians. And by every stroke of God's wrath upon them, the seed is further eased, and its deliverance is worked out.

So at last, when the judgment is finished in the land of Egypt, and the strength of Pharaoh and his Egyptians broken, and their first-born slain, then out comes Israel, out of the dark land, out of the house of bondage, to travel towards its resting place. Then the paschal Lamb is known and fed upon. Indeed, it is because of the blood of the lamb sprinkled upon the door-posts that Israel is passed over and saved in the day of Egypt's visitation.

But now, when the seed is come out of Egypt, this is not the end, but rather the beginning of its travels. Pharaoh and

his Egyptians, with their horses and chariots, may pursue again and even overtake. And there may seem no way of escape or help to the soul, but only to stand still, hope in the Lord, and wait to see his salvation. Then shall the sea be divided, which stopped Israel's course, and Pharaoh with his Egyptians (the enemies of the soul in this appearance of dreadful oppressing power) be destroyed and seen no more.

Yet in the wilderness, in the passage through the entanglements to the holy land, there are many straits, trials, and sore enemies to be met with. Some enemies will strive by open force, and others, with their enchantments, will seek to betray Israel. For there is still a part of Israel not yet brought down, not yet wrought out, where the enemies will be striving to enter the mind. And as Israel forgets his God and walks out of his counsel, hearkening to that which his ear should not hear, and so joining to the contrary seed, then the plagues, the judgments, the indignation and woe will be felt by him, and many may fall there. And here there may be a great outcry in the heart, "Who can stand before this holy Lord God? Shall we all utterly die?" Yes, there is something that must utterly die. For even if a man came so far as to witness dominion and victory over his soul's enemies, and the evil seed brought into death in him, yet if that part is not kept in death, then the enemy will again be sowing to the flesh. He will again sow some of his corrupt seeds into the heart (if the soul sleeps and becomes negligent), and so corruption will take root again, and the contrary birth will grow up again, and the foxes break into the vineyard and spoil the tender grapes.

So then, this is our religion: to witness the two seeds, with the power of the Lord bringing down the one, and bringing up the other. And it is to daily witness and experience the same power, keeping the one in death, and the other

in life, by the holy ministration of God's pure living covenant. In this way we must know God in this covenant, in this covenant which lives, gives life, and keeps in life. And so we must walk with God, and worship and serve him in his Son, in the light of his Son, in the life of his Son, in the virtue and ability which flows from his Son into our spirits. This then is our religion, which the Lord our God, in his tender mercy, has bestowed upon us. And indeed we find this to be a pure, living, and undefiled religion before God, daily witnessing his acceptance of it in and through his Son, whose name is here known and confessed, worshipped and honored, according to the very heart of the Father.

This may be further illustrated, and perhaps made more manifest to some, by a scripture or two.

The flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other. Gal. 5:17.

Here are the two seeds (the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman) whose striving and fighting is in man, once God awakens the soul. The one has a nature, a desire, or lust contrary to the other. Now as one of these prevails in any heart, so the other goes down. As the one gains life and power, so the other is brought into death and captivity. Therefore, this is what everyone is to wait for after they come to the sensible knowledge and experience of these two: to know the flesh brought down, the lusts of it denied, the judgments of the Lord administered to it; and to know the other seed come up to live, thrive, and prevail in the soul, and so the soul witnesses salvation and redemption under its shadow. "Thus Zion is redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." Isaiah 1:27.

What is Zion? Is it not the holy hill of God where his Son

is set as King to reign, and where the holy city is to be built, and God to be worshipped in spirit? What condition is Zion in when God visits her to redeem her? Is she not laid waste, desolate, lying in the dust? Ps. 102:13-14. Well, how will God redeem her? "Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness." By bringing judgment upon that which keeps her under, upon her enemies, the contrary seed, God redeems her. And by bringing forth righteousness (the righteous life and Spirit of his own Son) in those whose minds are turned to her, whose faces are set toward Zion, in this way God redeems her converts. Yes, it is truly felt and witnessed; the living righteousness of Christ revealed in the heart, and having power there, he sets free from all the unrighteousness which was there before. And then, when the unrighteous one is cast out, and the righteous one revealed, and the soul united to him (receiving all virtue and power from him), then the soul becomes a servant of righteousness, and does not commit sin, but does righteousness; "and he that does righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." 1 John 3:7. For how could it be otherwise, if the righteous life is revealed and brought up into dominion in him? How could the same righteous Spirit and life (now revealed in the members as it was in the head) not but live and act after the same manner in the members as it did in the head? (Oh that men were turned to that which would give them the certain knowledge and sensible experience of this!) Now this is exceedingly precious to those who are truly traveling towards it, and even more so to those that enjoy it.

These three then are the sum of all: 1) to know and experience what is to be brought down and kept in death; 2) to know what is to be brought up out of the grave and live to God and reign in his dominion; and 3) to know what must be kept in subjection and obedience to him who is to reign. Now

to experience this done in the heart (the flesh brought down, the seed of life raised, and the soul subject to the pure heavenly power), this is a blessed state indeed! For here the work is done; here the throne of God is exalted, and his King reigns in righteousness and peace, and all his enemies are under his feet.

For in the outward state of outward Israel, they were to keep to God in the outward covenant. And it is to be the inward state of the inward Israel to keep to God in the inward covenant, which is a pure covenant of life and peace. It is a covenant of all inward and spiritual blessings and mercies in Christ, in which souls are blessed who are obedient unto their God, and walk humbly with him in this covenant. Now who is the Israel that is to inherit these promises? All the promises are “yes and amen in Christ” to the Israel of God. Then why should not the Israel of God hope to enjoy these things? Should they not be acquainted with God's Holy Spirit, and wait upon him, that they may witness it granted to them? And should they not be delivered out of the hands of their enemies to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him (whose eyes are piercing, and can behold no iniquity) all the days of their lives? And truly the children of the new covenant can never come thoroughly to live unto God until they witness the inward circumcision of the heart, so as to love the Lord with all the heart and soul. Deut. 30:6. Oh that people had experience of God's power, and did believe in it! What can stand in the way of it? Was not Israel's sin of old when they looked at their enemies and saw their strength in the land which God had promised to Abraham's seed for an inheritance? They could not believe that such enemies could be overcome. Oh take heed of the same unbelief now!

Concerning Coming to the Father by Christ

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes unto the Father but by me. John 14:6.

Man, in the corrupt and degenerate state, is fallen from God, and has lost his image (the holy, heavenly image of the Father of spirits). He is driven out from God's presence, and dwells in the land of darkness and confusion under the government of the prince of the power of the air, who rules in, and has power over, all the children of disobedience. Now this should be man's aim, even to return to the Father, to come out of the prodigal's lost state unto the Father's house, where there is sufficiency and fullness of true bread and water of life to satisfy every hungry and thirsty soul.

Now, the way whereby a man must come, the truth wherein he must be renewed, and the life wherein a man must be made alive, is Christ, the Son of the living God. Man must know him as the Son of the living God, and experience him to be received and revealed within, and so walk in him as the way, the truth, the life, if ever he will come to the Father. He must not rest in a mere description of these things, but rather experience and know, receive and walk in the thing itself which the Spirit of the Lord has so often described in words. It will not do simply to receive all the reports of him that were formerly given forth, or all the reports that are now proclaimed. Indeed, the soul that will live by him must receive him, and experience an ingrafting into him as the holy root, the living word of God's eternal power. He must know this word ingrafted into his heart so that there become a real oneness in nature and spirit with him. Only then is a soul truly living in the vine, in the olive tree, partaking of its virtue and sap, and walking in its spirit, life, and power.

A man cannot walk here in the oldness of the letter, but only in the newness of the Spirit. Paul, despite all his knowledge of the Scriptures, walked but in the oldness of the letter before Christ was revealed in him. And those in the apostles' days who had a form of godliness but had turned from and denied the power, these walked but in the oldness of the letter. Even the church of Sardis, for the most part, and the church of Laodicea, who had received the right order and ordinances and the true descriptions of things, and thought they were full and rich and lacked nothing, they walked but according to the oldness of the letter, and not in the newness and power of the Spirit of life. But alas, how many are there in this day who claim to know Christ but never came so far as even to walk in the oldness of the letter from a true understanding! Can such men possibly understand truth, or know its inward, spiritual, and precious appearances, either in their own hearts, or the hearts of others? Surely no. Why not? This is the reason: because they measure the appearances of truth in themselves and in others by their own apprehensions and conceivings of the Scripture, which are not at all the proper measure of it. Now all such men are but blind leaders of the blind, and by continuing on in this way they shall most certainly fall into the ditch of perdition.

None can know Christ rightly but by the inward revelation that comes from the Father. The mystery must be opened within or there is no true knowing. The mystery of deceit is discovered within, and the mystery of life is discovered within also. And whoever witnesses Christ revealed within shall find him revealed for this very end, to destroy the works of the devil there. He is a powerful Savior of the soul from sin, and a powerful destroyer of the works of the devil within.

Now concerning reading the Scriptures, keep this in

mind: it is said of the Jews that when they read the Old Testament the veil was upon their heart, which veil is done away in Christ. 2 Cor. 3:14-15. Oh consider seriously! Is the veil done away from you? Do you read the Scriptures with the unveiled eye? Do you read in the anointing, in Christ's Spirit, in the pure heavenly wisdom of the divine birth? It was promised of old that God would take away the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil spread over all nations. Isa 25:7. Do you witness this promise fulfilled? Do you know the difference between reading the Scriptures with the veil on and with the veil off? Are the Scriptures opened and unlocked to you by the key of David, so that you read and understand them in the light and demonstration of God's Holy Spirit? Or is your own understanding and will at work in searching into the Scriptures? If the wrong birth, the wrong wisdom, or the wrong understanding is at work, it can gather only that which will feed and strengthen itself. And if you are not in Christ, and do not read in Christ, then the veil is not taken away from you, for the veil is only done away in him. If you read and walk in the oldness of your apprehensions of the letter, and not in the newness of the Spirit, then you know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God, whatever you may profess to men or dream concerning yourself. For your own knowledge, your own apprehensions, your own faith, hope, peace, and joy (being outside of the compass of the pure, living truth) are nothing more than dreams.

The Scriptures are words, whose chief end, significance, and service, is to bring men to the Word from which the Scriptures came. And when men are there, abiding in this Word, then they are in the life of the Scriptures, and witness the fulfilling of the Scriptures. Here they find the righteous judgments of God executed upon that spirit, mind, and nature in them which is contrary to his image. Here they

know the fulfilling of the promises and the sure mercies which belong to Christ the seed, and to those who are gathered into, and abide in, Christ the seed. Here is the covenant, the new covenant.

Now, all that has been said in the Scriptures concerning the covenant is but a description in words of this new covenant; but Christ within, the hope of glory, the Spirit within, the fear within, the power of life within, breaking down and reigning over the power of sin and death, this is the covenant indeed. And the strength and virtue of the covenant is witnessed in the soul, as it feels the power of life revealed in it. And the soul is made subject to the power of Christ who reigns in righteousness, love, mercy, and peace in the hearts of those whom he redeems out of the earthly nature and spirit, up to the mind and Spirit of his Father. And here the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, the pure songs (the song of Moses, the song of the Lamb) are sung to the Father of spirits, to the Redeemer of Israel. These are songs which were never sung, nor can be sung, in any part of Babylon.

Concerning Christ Manifested Without and Within

It is objected against us that we deny Christ (and look not to be saved by him) as he was manifested outwardly, but that we look only to be saved by a Christ within us. It is upon my heart to answer those who, with regard to this objection, truly desire satisfaction.

We do indeed expect to be saved (yes, and not only expect, but do already, in our several measures, witness salvation) by the revelation and operation of the life of Christ within us. Yet this is not without relation to what he did

outwardly. For all that he did in that body of flesh was of the Father, and had its place and service in the will, and according to the counsel, of the Father. But the knowledge and belief of this, since the days of the apostles, has been very much held in unrighteousness and in a separation from the inward work of the power and life of Christ in the heart; and when it is so held, it cannot save any. But the one who experiences the light and life of Christ revealed in him, and comes into union with God thereby, this one experiences the work of regeneration, of sanctification, justification, life, and redemption; and in this way comes to reap the inward benefit and blessed fruits of all that Christ did outwardly. Indeed, he that is one with Christ in the Spirit, cannot exclude himself (nor is excluded by God) from the advantage of anything and everything that Christ did in his body of flesh.

This indeed is the main thing: to witness salvation wrought out in the heart; to witness the eternal power and arm of the Lord laying hold on the soul to save it, and not only to save it, but to work out and effect salvation as truly in substance, as Israel of old experienced it in shadow. For as they witnessed Moses and Joshua outwardly, so the true Israelite, the inward Israelite, the spiritual Israelite, is to witness that which is the substance of these, even the Son of God revealed inwardly. Now they were not saved outwardly by a bare outward believing that Moses and Joshua were sent of God to save them; but by following them in faith and obedience in what was required by God. In the same way, Christ is given to the inward Israel for a leader and commander, who appears to the distressed enslaved soul in Egypt, brings out of Egypt, and leads on towards and into the good land.

Now as the soul follows and believes in Christ's appearances, and obeys his voice in the holy, pure, covenant of life,

so the redemption of the soul is worked out. But as unbelief and disobedience rise up, and the heart is hardened at any time against his voice and counsel, and the ear opens to the temptations of the enemy, the redemption thereby goes backward, and the distress and captivity return again. This is witnessed, known, and experienced by every true traveler towards Zion. Therefore, the main thing required is to abide in the sense of the Redeemer's power, waiting for his motions and appearances, in the faith and obedience thereof. For sin gathers strength, and is brought forth, by letting in and giving way to the motions thereof. So also holiness and righteousness are brought forth and gain ground in the heart by hearkening and giving up to the stirrings and movings of God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, it is of great necessity to every true traveler to come to a right understanding and distinguishing of these things, and that the heart be kept with all diligence, for out of the heart are the issuings of both life and death. Most happy is the one who knows the issues of death stopped, and the issues of life opened, and whose spirit is naked and open before the Lord, looking for life to spring up and issue forth at his pleasure.

Oh, it is a precious state to witness captivity led captive by life, and the power of life reigning over it! And truly there is as real a deliverance witnessed inwardly by those that wait upon the Lord and are faithful to the leadings of his Holy Spirit, as ever there was experienced by the Jews outwardly in their faithful following of Moses and Joshua. And Christ is as truly a healer of his people in this ministration of life to them by his Holy Spirit, as ever he was a healer of persons outwardly in the days of the flesh. Such healings, together with the other miracles that he wrought then, were but a shadow of what he would work and perform inwardly in the day of his Spirit and holy power. And now shall he, or can he

(to those that faithfully wait upon him) fall short of in the substance what he testified of in the shadow? Surely no! It is the intent of his heart (and he will not fail to perform it) to save to the very utmost all who come to God by him, and who abide in his holy, pure, righteous, living covenant. Here is the skill of Christianity: to abide in him. Only here is the living virtue and pure power felt which overcomes all, and which nothing can overcome.

A Few Words Concerning the Seed of Truth

Question: What is the seed of truth?

Answer: It is the light, which reproveth and makes sin manifest. "Whatsoever makes manifest is light." Wherefore he says, "Awake you who sleep, arise from the dead." Eph. 5:13-14. There is no other way of awaking out of sleep and arising from the dead except by the light which makes sin manifest. And oh, how precious is that light!

Question: How may the seed of truth be discerned?

Answer: By its piercing, life-giving nature, which unveils itself in its appearances and operations. For it appears and works, not like man's reason, nor like the motions of his mind which he gathers into his understanding part; but it appears and works livingly, powerfully, and effectually in the heart.

Since the fall, man's reason is corrupt, dark, impure, and in the hand and under the power of the wicked one. Its nature is to hide and cover sin, not to uncover it. Now the light of the law, which uncovers sin, does not arise in man's

reason. Who can bring the clean, pure light of the law out of the unclean, impure reason of man? The light indeed may shine in the darkness, but it is no part of it, but rather of another nature and descent. It is from God's Spirit, and given to man in his love unto him, to lead him out of his dark ways and spirit into the pure Spirit and way of holiness. For the light which uncovers sin is all holy and pure, like the fountain from whence it comes. Now a man that is acquainted both with reason and with this light can distinguish the nature and operations of both. But there is a great difference between truth held in the reasoning part of man, and truth held in its own seed. It is very powerful in the one; it effects little in the other. In the pure quickenings of life, the distinction is clearly perceived, and also held. Therefore, our advice to all men is to turn from all mortality and come to experience the spring of life working within them, springing out into them to give them life. Men should wait to have their understanding opened and kept open by this life, so that they may receive, retain, and not lose the capacity of understanding the things of God's kingdom.

Question: How may this seed or pearl be purchased and possessed?

Answer: By dying to a man's own wisdom and will. There is not another way. For the light is wholly contrary to man as he stands in the alienation from God. It runs contrary to his spirit, his thoughts, his desires, his knowledge, his reason, his understanding, even all that is of himself. He must therefore consult with none of these, but prefer the little, pure demonstration of the light of Christ's Spirit above all these, and be made willing to part with them all forever. Oh this is a hard saying, who can bear it? Surely none but those that are

taught and learn of the Father can come to give up to and follow the light of the Son.

And this I dare positively hold forth as a standing truth, which has been sealed unto me by constant experience: No man can agree with and obey the light unless he deny himself and take up a cross to his own wisdom and will. This cross is the cross of Christ, which is the power of God to the salvation of the soul. And he that takes it up daily, and waits upon the Lord therein, shall witness the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to the redemption of his soul. Indeed, he shall be able in true understanding to say, “This is light indeed, life indeed, power indeed. That powerful arm which has saved me from sin, and breaks the snares, devices, and strength of the enemy before me (delivering me daily when none else can, and when my own strength and wisdom is as nothing), I know it to be Christ, the living power and wisdom of God revealed in me, who will not give his glory to another. For he is the Lord God of pure power and life forevermore, and beside him there is no such Savior.”

How the Seed Begets and Maintains Life in the Heart

The Lord God (who is full of everlasting compassion towards mankind in general, but more especially towards those in whom he has begotten a sense of longing after himself) has chosen a seed, or inward spring of life, to appear in man for the breaking of the bonds of their captivity, and the bringing out from under the power and misery of death.

Many are they who have been overwhelmed with misery, and whose spirits have melted and failed with the lack of the sense of their God. Many have felt the sense of life which was formerly built up in them broken down and laid waste, and

their communion with God swallowed up in its ruins, and their souls ready to utterly perish and be devoured by the enemy every moment. Many have felt all hopes cut off, and their eyes shut up to all ways of relief. And then, I say, after all this, in the tender mercy of the Lord, these have felt the seed of life revealed in their hearts, and, by degrees, have found their hearts gathered into this seed, where the life reigns, and where the strength and dominion of death is broken in all those who are led on by the drawing and guiding of the Spirit of the Lord.

Now after the revealing of this seed, and gaining a sense and experience of it, and the turning of the mind towards it, the main thing necessary towards the redemption of the soul is to wait to be made more and more acquainted with it, so that in its stirrings, movings, and leadings, the soul is made ready to be gathered into it, and to be guided by it. For though this gift be all life, yet at first it is but as a seed, and the appearance of the Lord in it is but as in a seed—very little, low, weak, hard to be discerned, easy to be overlooked and despised. A far greater and more undeniable appearance is usually expected, but that is not the way. No, the soul must first become subject unto, and bowed under, this little appearance. And as the seed gets advantage, and grows bigger and larger in the heart, the appearance of the Lord will be greater and fuller there. But to look for the greater appearance before the seed is known and received in its lesser appearance (and the vessel thereby fitted for the greater appearance) is not the way of God, but rather the deceit of the enemy. For the enemy desires to destroy the soul, and to cut it off from the Lord forever, which he will certainly do if he can keep the seed from growing there, and the soul from joining with and growing into it.

Therefore, watch to feel the savor of life in your heart day

by day, and to feel the leadings and drawings from the life that are suitable to your state. For in this savor, and in these drawings, rises the true light, which leads into the way of life. And then watch against the reasonings and arguments which the enemy will raise in your mind, who will strive to make you a judge over these things. For the light, which arises in the savor and in the drawings, is your King (though in this low appearance), and he is not to be judged by the mind, thoughts, and reasonings of man, but rather to judge them all down. And consider, are you (in your darkness, and with your earthly mind) fit to be a judge concerning the light which arises in you? Or rather, is not the light, in its lowest and weakest appearance, appointed and fitted by the Lord to judge you, and make you bow down in fear and trembling before it? And your crown (in your highest exaltation) is fit to be cast at the lowest footstep of him.

Therefore, consider where you are, and breathe unto the Lord to reveal that unto you which is proper for you at present. Bow your spirit under his present will and his present manifestation to you, and be content to be little and low, and to receive little and low instructions from God, and to walk in the path of brokenness and humility before the Lord. For this is his way of fitting you for, and advancing you into, the high and glorious power of his life. And this my soul is assured of, that none shall enter into, or abide in, his kingdom, except as they become little, poor, and naked, and as they are led by the little child of God's begetting. For the Lord will not at all answer the wisdom of man and his expectations, but will rather confound them, and lead the soul on in such a path as the eye of man's wisdom cannot see. But the one who disputes not, but believes, at seasons will feel a progress, and will understand the growth of life advanced in the heart by those very things which formerly seemed to give

death the advantage.

Therefore, watch against your own understanding and all of its workings, if ever you desire life. For your understanding will still betray you, and either keep you from the way or turn you out of the way, whenever you hearken to it. And mark this: that which God sows and brings up in you is a tender plant, not a knowing mind. True and right judgment is only in the apprehension of that plant, and not in the understanding or comprehension of your mind. Yes, that sensitive plant (which your wisdom will be very apt to despise and overlook) must batter down and bring to nothing your understanding, and grow up in place of it, if ever your soul will be made a habitation for the life.

Therefore, sink into the feeling, dwell in the experience, and wait for the savor of the seed of life, and the touches and drawings of the savor. Walk along in this towards the land of life, parting with all, leaving behind you whatever the savor of life opposes, and entering into whatever the savor of life relishes. And as you are led into this, and become subject to it, so you will taste the Lord and feel the sweetness of his ointment, and the peace of his nature, and the joy of the beginnings of his kingdom in your heart, and the blotting out of your iniquities for his own name's sake. For though the enemy may lay a load upon you, and fill you as much as he can with his filth, and then lay it all to your charge, yet the Lord considers the seed he has sown in you, and the desire which he has wrought in your heart to be joined to it. And he knows how weak you are in this hour of your darkness and captivity; and the intent of his heart is to deliver you from all this, and not to condemn you for it.

But oh take heed of limiting the Lord to give you the kind of clarity or light that the natural understanding judges necessary! Rather, be content with the light which arises in

his savor, and shines inwardly to your spirit in his drawing. Be subject and bowed under the light of this drawing, though it be ever so much against the light of natural understanding and reasonings. True clearness of light is a state into which you must grow up; but before you come to this, your own understanding must be darkened, confounded, and brought to nothing. Therefore, mark carefully this which follows:

The first work of the Lord is often to confound the knowledge and understanding of the creature, especially in those who have been steeped in natural wisdom and experience. For if the Lord did not closely pursue these with darkness and confusion, they would quickly begin to accumulate knowledge into the old storehouse again, and so grow wise after the flesh, never learning the life of the Spirit. And here it is not the Lord's desire that the leadings of his Spirit be manifest and clear according to the flesh, and to the fleshly understanding. Indeed, if they were manifest after this manner, would not the fleshly part just drink them in? And so the man would live again, but the seed would not live. For the seed gains its life (and its form and perfection) in the man by the death of the man; even by the natural man being hunted, and battered, and broken out of his wisdom, and knowledge, and reasoning, and comprehension. And so man becomes a fool or a child, being able to know nothing, retain nothing, perform nothing, nor keep his standing, except as he is newly created, led, taught, and preserved in the power, and by the presence of the life.

Concerning Spiritual Unity

Question: What is spiritual unity?

Answer: The meeting of two or more in the same spiritual

nature, coming together in one and the same spiritual center or stream of life. When the spirits or souls of creatures are begotten by one power into one life, and meet there in the heart, insofar as they meet in this way, there is true unity among them.

Question: In what does this unity consist?

Answer: In the life, in the nature, in the Spirit wherein they are all begotten, and of which they are formed, and where their meeting is. The unity consists not in any outward thing, or in any inward thing of an inferior nature, but is found only within the limits and bounds of the same Spirit. The doing of the same thing, thinking the same thing, speaking the same thing, these do not unite; but only the doing, thinking, or speaking in the same life. Yes, and even though the doings, or thoughts, or words be diverse; yet if they proceed from the same seed and nature, there is a true unity felt therein.

Question: How is the unity preserved?

Answer: Only by abiding in the one life; only by keeping to the power, and in the seed, from whence the unity springs, and in which it stands. Here is a knitting together and a fellowship in the same spiritual center. Here the diverse and different motions of several members of the body (coming from the life and Spirit of the body) are known and acknowledged by the same life. It is not keeping up an outward knowledge (or belief concerning things) that unites, nor keeping up an outward conformity in actions, for these may be held and done by another part in man, and in another nature. But it is by abiding in and acting in that which did at first unite. In this there is neither cause nor room for divi-

sion; and he that remains within these limits cannot help but be found in the oneness.

Question: How is the unity interrupted?

Answer: By the interposition of anything of a different nature or spirit from the life. When anything of the earthly or sensual part comes between the soul and the life, this interrupts the soul's unity with the life itself, and also interrupts the soul's unity with the life as it is working in others. Anything of man's spirit, of man's wisdom, of man's will, not bowed down and brought into subjection, and so not coming forth in and under the authority and guidance of life, in this there is always something of the nature of division. Indeed, the very knowledge of truth held forth by man's wisdom, and in his own will, outside of the movings and power of the life, this brings a damper upon the life, and interrupts the unity. For the life in others cannot unite with this in spirit, though it may acknowledge the words to be true.

Question: How may the unity be recovered, if at any time it is lost?

Answer: In the Lord alone is the recovery of Israel, from any degree of loss in any kind and at any time. He alone can teach to retire into, and to be found in, that wherein the unity is and stands, and into which division cannot enter. This is the way of restoring unity to Israel when any lack thereof is experienced: everyone, through the Lord's help, must return (in his own particular) to the seed of life, so that there they may experience a washing from whatever has corrupted, and a new begetting into the power of life. From this the true and lasting unity will spring quickly, to the gladdening of all

hearts that know the sweetness of it, and who cannot but naturally and most earnestly desire it.

Therefore, the way is not by striving to gather many into the same apprehension concerning things, nor by endeavoring to bring all into the same practices. Rather, it is by being drawn into that Spirit wherein the unity consists, which will bring it forth in the vessels that are filled and ordered by it. In this Spirit let all wait for the daily new and living knowledge, and for the ordering of their lives and practices in the light. And in this way, the life will be felt, and the name of the Lord praised in all the tents of Jacob, and there will be but one heart, and one soul, and one spirit, and one mind, and one way and power of life. And the Lord will be acknowledged in what he has already wrought in every heart, and hearts will contentedly wait for his filling up of whatever is lacking in any.

So may the living God (the God of everlasting tender compassions to Israel) fill the vessels of his heritage with his life, and cause the peace and love of his holy nature and Spirit to descend upon their dwellings. And may his life spring up powerfully in them towards his living truth, and towards one another.

And let all strive to excel in tenderness, and in long-suffering, and to be kept out of hard and evil thoughts one of another, and from harsh interpretations concerning anything relating to one another. Oh this is unworthy to be found in an Israelite towards an Egyptian; but it is exceeding shameful and inexcusable to be found in one brother towards another! How many weaknesses does the Lord pass by in us! How ready is he to interpret everything well concerning his disciples that may bear a good interpretation! "The spirit," saith he, "is willing, but the flesh is weak." When they had been all scattered from him upon his death, he did not afterwards

upbraid them, but sweetly gathered them again. Oh dear friends, have we received the same life of sweetness? Let us bring forth the same sweet fruits, being ready to excuse, and to receive what may tend towards the excusing of another in any doubtful case. And where there is any evil manifest, wait, oh wait, to overcome it with good! Oh let us not spend the strength of our spirits in complaining of one another because of evil, but rather watch and look to where the mercy and the healing virtue will arise.

Chapter XV

How to Discern the Teachings of Christ

I have been afflicted from my childhood, mourning and seeking after the Lord, and feeling very much grief and pain of spirit through my sense of the lack of him. I was not contented with the way of religion in which I was educated, but (through something from God which then stirred in me) I found great defects in it, and was drawn and led by his Spirit to travel through it, and seek further. That which I sought after was the resting place, the true life of my soul, the power and presence of the Lord, the same demonstration of his Spirit (with regard to the truth and the way of God) which was witnessed in the days of the apostles. Yet, breathing after this and not meeting with it caused unutterable anguish, misery, and distress in my heart, so that my condition could not be hid within my own breast, but my sorrow also broke forth in the sight of others.

But at length, the eternal mercy of God pitied me, and showed me the place of the soul's rest, and I have felt the eternal arm gathering me into, and giving me some possession of what I had long sought after. So that now my heart is satisfied about religion and the things of God's kingdom,

being taught of God how to know the Pearl, and the way also how to come to inherit and enjoy it. In this way I have had great experience of the love, mercy, wisdom, goodness, power, and righteousness of the Lord. And notwithstanding all my soul's enemies, I still feel his presence, life, and power, to his praise, which does the work in me, and which gives me ability to hope in him, and wait upon him. And now, in love and tenderness of heart to others, it is in my heart to answer a question or two about the ground of the assurance and satisfaction that God has given my soul. It is not my desire to grieve or trouble any, but only to be helpful in holding forth what the Lord has demonstrated to and written in my heart.

Question: It may be inquired by some, how I came to know the Spirit of God, and his church, and the Scriptures of the holy men to be written by the inspiration and leading of his Holy Spirit. Also, it may be inquired how it is that I discern the motions and drawings of his Spirit in me from the motions, suggestions, and temptations of the evil spirit; and how I am satisfied that I am in the eternal way of truth and life, and do not wander out of it, or err from it.

Answer: This is the way that I know: by receiving, joining to, abiding and growing up in, that holy seed which the Father of spirits has sown in me. There is an elect seed which cannot possibly be deceived, which seed the Father sows, and causes to grow in the hearts of those who receive it (whose ground is by him tilled and prepared for it). Now, I have felt this seed from God, this holy and pure thing, which there is nothing like for virtue and excellency. Nothing has its nature besides it; nothing manifests the Father but it. And the heart is changed, renewed, restored into the holy image by this seed alone.

In this seed there is no deceit. No deceit ever came from it; no deceit ever entered into it, nor can enter it. And from the day that I have known it, I have always felt preservation by it, as long as my heart has been kept to it. My eye never mis-saw in it, my ear never misheard in it, my heart never misunderstood in it. But in this seed I have felt given to me, and maintained in me by God, the eye which sees, the ear which hears, and the heart which understands the things of his kingdom. And here the entrance has been ministered into the everlasting kingdom, where God reveals by his Spirit the mysteries of his kingdom (from which all are shut out except the seed, and those born of it). And when the enemy has at any time in my travels, by any temptation or device, got in any degree between my soul and this seed, then a darkness, a loss, doubts, fears, troubles, etc., have in equal measure come over my soul.

Question: But how do I know this seed?

Answer: By its nature, by its properties, by its manifesting of itself in my heart. It has that light, that life, that power in it, which I never met with anywhere else. It bruises the head of the serpent at its pleasure, whereby I know it to be the seed of the woman. It dashes in pieces (through subjection to it) whatever is contrary to God, and brings up his holy nature in me. It so brings me into the very image of his Son, that what I read in the Scriptures concerning the nature, righteousness, and work of salvation by Christ, I also find formed and springing up in my own heart, as I am gathered into, and brought forth in this seed.

Here in this seed, I feel, know, understand, and am acquainted with, the substance of that which all the types and figures of the law put forth in shadow. Here I meet with the

circumcision which is without outward hands, the baptism which is without outward water, the supper of the Lord which is without outward bread or wine. Here I know the true Jew, whose nature, spirit, works, and ways are all of God, in and through his Son, Jesus Christ. And here I must profess that I cannot doubt concerning the things of God. For in the light and anointing of this seed I see both the mystery of iniquity and the mystery of godliness, and the ways and workings of each spirit, both inwardly and outwardly. And I see my unity with the one (through the tender mercy, goodness, love, and power of the Lord, all which are herein revealed), and my separation from the other.

Now this is the true way of certainty and satisfaction which is of God, and it will stand when all the several ways of men's inventions fail in what they promise to men, and fall in the sight of men. For this seed and birth of God are to be acknowledged, and reign in the day of his power, and not another. And it is now the day of his power in some, and shall soon be the day of his power in others. For darkness or death shall not prevail to bring the life of the risen Son into the grave again; but he shall ride on conquering and to conquer, subduing and to subdue, reigning and to reign, until he has brought all things under the dominion of the Father's power.

The Way of Knowing the Motions, Doctrines, and Teachings of Christ's Spirit

Question: How may a man know the motions, doctrines, and teachings of Christ's Spirit inwardly, from the deceitful movings, appearings, and workings of a contrary spirit? And how may a man know concerning the doctrines that others

teach, whether they speak from Christ, or whether they speak from themselves?

Answer: This is a great matter indeed, and he that is able to discern in this matter must first receive something from God. He must be born of the wisdom that is from above, he must receive a spirit of discerning from God, he must receive something of the sheep's ear, the holy understanding, whereby he may distinguish spiritual things, between the pure and the impure, between the pretender to the things of God and him who is indeed of God. There is a balance of the sanctuary appointed to weigh spiritual things and appearances. By this balance alone are all things truly and rightly discerned and distinguished; and this balance is in the sanctuary, in the holy, heavenly place in Christ Jesus, where the true weight of spiritual things is given and discerned. But he that weighs without this, he that weighs by his own judgment and understanding, by his own comprehension and conceivings, this one weighs by that which is uncertain, changeable, and fallible.

Oh that men were humble, tender, meek and sensible of their inability to judge as of themselves! Then they might see the need of this gift of God, and wait upon him for it, being in the meantime as a weaned child, not meddling with things too high for them, but keeping and abiding low, in fear and subjection to that which the Lord has already made manifest to them. For what man is there to whom the Lord has not already, in his tender mercy and goodness, made something of himself manifest? Who is there who, by the light of the Spirit of God in his conscience, knows not some evil which he ought to leave undone, and some good which he ought to do? Now this is the way of God, and the work which man should be exercised in: to experience his mind gathered into that

which teaches this, that he might receive power from the Lord to cease to do the evil and learn to do good. For in this way the Spirit of the Lord teaches and requires of men, even inwardly in their secret parts, secretly quickening and enlivening them in some measure, and also giving them a sense of their sin, death, and separation from him. For where there is any sight of sin, and any sense of its burden, there is also some life, some light, some little stirrings of the life, without which this sense could not be.

Now mark: are not here the drawings of the Father? Are not here the teachings of the Father, though but in a little measure, yet true and living? Is not here some little discerning given between the precious and the vile, between that which is of God and that which is against him? Well then, here is the gift of discerning, though in a poor, low, little, weak measure. And the man who receives this, receives the beginnings of the gift whereby he may be able to discern and distinguish about spiritual things, so far as the light and ability of the gift in him extends.

Now, this is man's work (and in this lies his safety), to come here, abide here, and grow here. He is not to judge outside of this, nor judge further concerning the things of God than this light judges in him. He must keep to the judgment he has from the Lord, not hearkening to the subtle devices of the enemy, which will strive afterward to cloud his mind, delude and deceive him with a false appearance of wise reasonings and disputings of his own, or from other men, to make him believe otherwise. And so keeping what ground he has gained, he is to wait for more of this light, more of this life, more of this virtue, that his soul may grow up and increase therein, that his eye may be strengthened to see further, and his ear to hear further, and his heart to embrace more of the instructions and directions of the Spirit of the

Lord, unto and in the way of the kingdom.

Therefore, the man that desires to meet with and receive from God the gift of discerning, let him mind the present manifestation of God's light from his Spirit in his heart. Let him embrace that, fall in with that, take heed of the reasonings of the mind against the convictions and demonstrations of God's Spirit. Receive the truth in the love of it, even the lowest appearance of truth, about the least and most despicable things, and give up faithfully to the Lord therein without murmuring, disputing, or consulting with flesh and blood. And he that is faithful to the light of the Spirit (and to the discerning that comes by it) in the little, he shall receive more, he shall have his light and discerning thereby increased according as his need requires. But he that stands disputing, and desires to have all his way made clear to him before he takes one step in it, this one is far from becoming that child that the Father can teach.

This, in effect, was the very answer which Christ gave to this thing in the days of his flesh, when there were great disputes concerning his doctrine, how to know whether or not it was of God. What was the way he resolved this question? "If anyone is willing to do his will" says Christ, "he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself." John 7:17. Do you desire to know of the Son's doctrine? Do you desire to know whether it be the doctrine of the Son indeed, the doctrine of him who comes from the Father? "Yes," the upright heart will eagerly say, "oh that I might know concerning what rises and opens in my heart, whether it be from the Spirit of God, or from the root of deceit in me!" This then is the way: do the Father's will.

Objection: Do the Father's will? Why, what kind of an answer is this? The entire dispute is about the Father's will!

How can I do the Father's will (which the Son is supposed to teach me) until I first know of the Son's doctrine?

Answer: It is true, the Son's doctrine is the Father's will, and you cannot do the Father's will except as you receive the Son's doctrine. But mark well: there are disputes in your mind about something of the Son's doctrine, whether it be his doctrine or not. There are disputes within you concerning the inward motions, workings, and stirrings, the origin of which you eagerly desire to know. Now, the question at hand is concerning the way that you may attain to this, that is, how you may come to a certain and satisfactory knowledge of these things. The way is not by entering into reasonings and disputes about the things wherein you have doubts, but by coming into that light wherein and whereby these things are made manifest. And this is by coming into obedience to the Father in that which he has already made manifest. For in that light (to them that believe in it), and in obedience to it (be it ever so little, or the manifestation ever so small), the Father will reveal even more. And he will make that heart and mind to be sensible of what is of him, and what is of the enemy, so far as it is needful in that moment for it to know. For wise and absolute judgment in all things is not necessary for a baby, but only enough sense to know the breast, and to receive from it the milk by which it is to be fed that it may grow. This is enough in its present state. Yet if there be need of strength at any time to stay the enemy, the Lord will reveal it in the heart, and bring it forth out of the mouths of the babes to the perfecting of his praise.

So mind and learn the way, you who are simple-hearted and truly desire after the Lord, and the purity and power of his kingdom. Take heed of the wrong way; take heed of man's way, which is by consulting with his own wisdom, and

weighing things in the balance of his own reason and understanding. In this way man may weigh the scriptures written in former ages, and the appearances of God in this age, and err in heart, mind, and judgment concerning them both all his days. But he that waits on the Lord in fear, and in obedience to that which is already made manifest, not desiring knowledge from God in his own will, time, or way, but in the Lord's, who perfectly knows everyone's state, and what is fit for him—this one shall know concerning every doctrine his heart desires to be instructed in, in the Lord's season. And in the meantime, the Lord will feed him with necessary food and clothe him with necessary clothing. Indeed, there shall be no lack to him who bows before the Lord in what is already made manifest, and who waits for the Lord's further manifestations and appearances. But the wise hunter after knowledge, going out before the Lord leads, and further than he leads and teaches—this is of the first birth, which is excluded from the kingdom and its mysteries. This comes from the despised one, who would still kill the heir, so that the inheritance might be his. But the inheritance is appointed for and given to another, even to the Lamb's nature, the Lamb's Spirit, the Lamb's innocence, the birth of heavenly wisdom, which birth is a foolish and weak thing in man's eye, and not at all worthy of the inheritance. But it is the Father's pleasure to give the kingdom and inheritance of life everlasting to such as these.

Allow me to speak yet a little more plainly, and to bring it yet a little closer to the heart, if I may. It has pleased the Father, in this day of his love and power, to gather a little flock out of the world (and out of all worldly professions of worship and religion) unto himself. This flock he has gathered by a poor, little, low thing in their hearts, exercising them thereby in poor, menial, and contemptible ways to the

eye of the world, and to all the professions of man's wisdom. And by this little and low seed, and concerning it, the Lord testifies to others through those whom he has gathered. And the testimony does evidence itself, through the power of the Spirit, to all that wait upon God for an ear to hear.

Now, when we tell men of a divine seed, given of God, wherein their religion is to begin, and from which it is to grow, and of which they are to be born, many will assent and be drawn so far as to wait inwardly for and upon this. But when this seed begins to stir and move in them, it is often in such a way, and having to do with such low, menial, contemptible things in their eyes, that they are very apt to despise it, enter into disputes against it, and so miss the entrance. Instead, they are filled with doubts about the leader and his motions, and puzzled and entangled in their minds, and stopped at the very beginning. And so, though they desire much, and hope much, yet all of this comes to little because the enemy has possessed their minds with a device of his subtlety, as if the things made manifest by the seed were small and of little importance. That which they lack (so they believe) is the powerful manifestation of life, the clear light, etc., and so their minds are taken up with expectations for these great things, and desires after lofty things, and they overlook the way whereby these are to be witnessed and obtained.

For the Lord God, in his infinite wisdom, selected these contemptible things by which to exercise and lead his flock. Now friend, you who desire life from God, oh take heed that you do not beat back the beginnings of his life and the redemption of your soul by despising and overlooking the day of small things! Why may not God choose to lead you in the way that he has led the rest of his flock? Why should you not also come to deny the customs and vanities of this world (and

come into that which is simple and plain), and stand in the will and life of God out of them? Are not the ways, customs, and vanities of the world from the spirit of the world and not from the Father? Do they not come from the corrupt part? Are they not of the corrupt part? Do they not please the corrupt part? Must they not be left behind by him that travels into the seed, is one with the seed, and lives in the seed? Why get stuck on these things? Why would you dispute about these things? Oh feel the Father's drawings, first out of the world, first out of that which is not of the Father but of the world, so that he may draw you further and further, even into the kingdom and power everlasting, which is many days' journey beyond the place where you now are stuck.

So mind and remember this which follows: In the days of Christ and his apostles, God chose the foolish and the weak things, and things that were not, to hide the path of life and the mysteries of his kingdom from the wise, searching eye of man in those days. Why may he not choose similar things now? Why may he not now reveal things to the babes, and not to the wise of this age and generation? Why may it not be to his glory to have it now said also: "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe (where is the learned man)? Where is the disputer of this world?" Can any of them find out, or any of them discern, that which God reveals to his little ones? No, no! They have gotten up too high above that little, low, tender, meek, sensible seed, in the faith of which, and in obedience whereto, the teachings of God are received, and his life and power witnessed. And because of the riches, wisdom, and knowledge already gained outside of this seed, the entrance into the pure, living truth (which cleanses the mind, and keeps it clean, which quickens it, and keeps it living) seems to them so exceedingly difficult.

And as the seed of the kingdom is little (like a grain of mustard seed), the least of all seeds, why may not its appearance also be little, even in low, weak things, despicable to man's eye and wisdom? And yet, the power of the cross (which brings down and slays the corruptible), and the resurrection of the life may be witnessed and felt in them. "The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." And the Lord knows what he does in leading his children in this contemptible path, and by these contemptible exercises, which all the wise, high, lofty, and aspiring, according to the flesh, may easily overlook and slight, and can hardly stoop down and subject themselves to.

God is the same that ever he was; and he still appears in the way of his own wisdom, and outside of man's. He that will partake of God's wisdom must deny and keep out of his own. The Lord's touches, drawings, teachings, blessings, love, peace, joy, sweetness, etc., are poured forth upon, felt, and enjoyed by the soul in the new creation, in the new sense, in the denial and passing out of the old.

Chapter XVI

Letters of Isaac Penington

Written Between 1658 – 1671

* * *

To His Father, Sir Isaac Penington Sr.¹

Ah, dear Father!

Why do you so often give me occasion of mourning before the Lord on account of your hard and unrighteous charges? How often have I solemnly professed that there was never any desire in me, or endeavor used by me, to draw you to this way [of religious profession]. All that is in my soul is this, that you might have the true knowledge of Christ, that you might indeed hear his sayings, and do them, and not set up your own or other men's imaginations and invented reasonings instead of the sayings of Christ.

Now, I am not for ways or opinions, but only for Christ the substance, the living power of God in the heart. Yet,

¹ Isaac Penington's Father (Sir Isaac Penington Sr. 1584–1661) was a well-known English politician and Puritan Congregationalist who sat on the House of Commons from 1640 to 1653 and was Lord Mayor of London in 1642 and 1643. He was a member of the tribunal that convicted Charles I of treason and executed him, and afterwards became a prominent member of Oliver Cromwell's government. With the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, Penington Sr. was tried for high treason and imprisoned in the Tower of London, where he died awaiting execution on December 16, 1661.

because you stumble at these things, and through prejudice refuse the living testimony of God concerning Christ the Rock (building instead upon that which you have imagined concerning the Savior), in love and pity to your soul, I cannot but say some things to you. For who knows whether God may, at length, give you repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth, and to the disclaiming of the way of error.

You lay down three reasons why you cannot believe this way to be of God.

1. God's way is a way of love, peace, and unity.

Answer: If you had that eye which can see the things of God, and did apply yourself to see with it, you might see the peace, love, and unity among this people which other men do only talk of. But if you take things by the report of the enemies both to God and to them, you shall be sure to hear and believe bad enough. For this people [the Quakers, so-called] have no war with anything but unrighteousness, and with that they cannot have peace, no, not even in their dearest relations. They love the souls of their enemies, and think no pains or hazard too great for the saving of them. Being persecuted, they bless; being reviled, they entreat, and pray for their persecutors. They are at unity with whatever is of God; but with the seed of the serpent, they cannot be at unity. They know the "generation of vipers" in this present age and can witness against them under their several painted coverings, as freely as ever Christ and his apostles did against the Scribes and Pharisees. For the spirit of the Scribes and Pharisees is now in the world; and the Spirit of Christ and his apostles is also in the world. And these cannot help but fight, each with their proper weapons: the one with their stocks,

whips, fines, prisons, etc., the other with the spiritual armor of Christ. Thus the one wrestles with flesh and blood, fights with the creature, and hurts the body; the other loves the creature, seeks the saving of it, and fights only with the power of darkness which rules the creature. Now which of these are the ministers of Christ? Those who stir up the magistrate to afflict the body, or those who use the sword of the Spirit to strike the conscience?

And this peace, love, and unity are attained, not by their own strivings after it, but by receiving it from above. Indeed, all our religion lies in receiving a gift, without which we are nothing and can do nothing, and in which nothing is too hard for us. Yes, being kept in that gift of God we can do all things, we can believe all things, we can suffer all things. Never was there a generation brought forth weaker in themselves, more foolish, more ridiculous to the fleshly wisdom, more exposed to sufferings from the world and worldly professors. Yet, being kept faithful to him that has called us, we sometimes feel strength and wisdom, even such as the most zealous in the worldly ways of religion have not an ear to hear the relation of.

2. God's way is a way of humility.

Answer: If they had not been broken and humbled by God, they could never have entered into this way, which is a way that the lofty, fleshly part of man abhors. Nor is this a voluntary humility, but a humility which crosses and breaks man's will all the day long. You judge at a distance, and with that which should not judge, but should rather be judged.

3. That God is a God of order, not of confusion.

Answer: Blessed be the Lord, who has recovered some of the true church's order for us, and delivered us out of the confusion of antichrist. We know an order in the light, an order in the Spirit, an order in Christ the truth. But that which man in his wisdom calls order is but antichrist's order, which, to God, is confusion. To have man's spirit speak and God's Spirit stopped, this is the order of all the anti-christian congregations and churches. But to have man's spirit stopped and God's Spirit speak, this is the order of Christ's church. And this order we know and rejoice in, finding that raised in us which teaches us to "cease from man," and man's voice is not at all "accounted of." But the voice of the living God is heard, known, loved, and obeyed, by that which he has quickened in us, and made to live to himself.

The last part of your letter consists of very harsh and unrighteous charges, mixed with bitter expressions, which I shall pass over—only I confess it is somewhat hard to one part of me, that my own father should so deal with me.

About finding no comfort in me, and wishing me more comfort in my son, I must say this. There is a part in me which God has struck at, and is destroying, and I myself have no comfort here, nor is it much able to yield comfort to anyone else. If I were in any formal way of religion, I might be a comfort to my father (for you could be gratified with that, or at least bear with that). But because the Lord has seized upon my heart by the power of his Truth, and I can bow to none but him (no, not even to my most dear father), now I am no comfort. I am sure I have had little comfort all my days in seeing my father's course of religion, which I ever could testify of as not being of God (yes, my late dear mother would often bewail it to me). And many times have I poured out my soul before the Lord. Yet hear my words, Oh my father, hear my words. Oh, pierce into the nature of things!

Set not up shadows instead of the truth. Wait for the gift. Receive the true love, the true peace, the true unity, the true humility, (which lies not in the will of the creature, but rather destroys it), and we shall soon know one another, and have true comfort in one another.

I.P.

14th of 12th Month, 1658

To Thomas Ellwood

Dear Thomas,

Great has been the Lord's goodness to you, in calling you out of that path of vanity and death (wherein you were running toward destruction), to give you a living name and an inheritance of life among his people, which certainly will be the end of your faith in him and obedience to him. And let it not be a light thing in your eyes that he now accounts you worthy to suffer among his choice lambs, that he might make your crown weightier, and your inheritance the fuller. Oh that that eye and heart may be kept open in you which knows the value of these things! And oh that you be kept close to the experience of the life, and be fresh in your spirit in the midst of your sufferings, so you may reap the benefit of them. This is a brief salutation of my dear love to you, which desires your strength and settlement in the power of God, and the utter weakening of you, as to yourself. My love is to you, with dear Thomas Goodyare, and the rest of the imprisoned Friends.²

² Whenever the word 'Friends' is capitalized in these letters, Penington is referring to members of the Society of Friends, those who were called Quakers.

I remain yours in the Truth, to which the Lord my God preserve me single and faithful.

I. P.

From Aylesbury Jail, 14th of 12th month, 1660

To an Unknown Parent

Dear Friend,

I have not much freedom to write at present, being retired in spirit, and mourning to my God for the powerful bringing forth of his pure life yet more perfectly, both in myself and others. Nevertheless, the spirit of your letter does so strongly draw me, that I cannot be wholly silent.

This, therefore, in the uprightness, fear, and tenderness of my heart, I say to you.

There is a pure seed of life in the heart, from whence all good springs. This you are to mind in yourself, and also to wait on the Lord to be taught and enabled by him to reach to this seed in your children. In this way you may be an instrument in the Lord's hand to bring them into that fear of him which is both acceptable to him and profitable to them. Therefore, mind its leadings in your heart, and wait to be acquainted with its voice there. And, when your children ask you any questions of this nature—what God is, where he dwells, or whether he can see them in the dark—do not reject it, but wait to feel something of God raised in you which is able to judge whether the question is put forth in sensibility or in vanity. And this can give you an advantage of stirring up the good, and reaching to that which is to be raised both in young and old to live to the praise of him who raises it.

Take heed of a judgment after the flesh, but wait to feel that seed raised in you which judges with righteous judgment in every particular case. Be still and silent except when you manifestly know that the seed (and not you) is judging.

And, as to your children, daily feel the need of instruction from the Almighty to govern and direct them, and wait daily to receive it from him. And what you receive from him, give it forth in fear, waiting for him to work it upon their hearts. For he is a Father, and has tenderness, and gives true wisdom to every condition of his people that wait upon him.

Perhaps you expect from me an outward rule, but I have no rule except the inward life. And this life is known not in the way of outward knowledge, but is daily made known as my Father pleases. I cannot direct you to any other rule, except to wait that life may be revealed in you daily, according to your daily need in every particular. And this I say to you in the love of my heart: wait, oh wait, for the true discerning which is given to the true seed (which you will experience according as it is raised and gains dominion), that the wrong thing does not judge in you, having an outward appearance of wisdom and reason.

Breathe unto the Lord that your heart may be single and your judgment set straight by his seed of life within you, and that your children also be guided to and brought up in the sense of the same seed. And as for praying, they will not need to be taught that outwardly. But if a true sense of the seed is kindled in them (though ever so young), from that sense will arise breathings to him that begat it, suitable to their current state. This will cause growth and increase of that sense and life in them.

Thus, in the plainness of my heart have I answered you, according to the drawings and freedom which I found there,

which I dare not exceed. I who am your unfeigned friend,
though outwardly unknown,

I. P.

20th of Third Month, 1665

**To One Who Sent Him a Paper
of Richard Baxter's**

Dear Friend,

Whom I often remember with love and meltings of heart, desiring of God that you may enjoy in this world whatever of his presence and pure life he judges fit for you, and that your soul may, after this life, sit down in rest and peace with him forever.

I received from you a paper of Richard Baxter's, sent to me, I believe, in love. And in love I am pressed to return unto you my sense thereof. It seems to me very useful and weighty as far as it goes. But indeed, there is a great defect in it, in not directing sinners to that seed of life and power wherein and whereby they may do that which he exhorts them to do. For how can they come to a true awareness or to repentance, or join in covenant with God through Christ, until they know and receive something from God wherein this may be done? Oh my dear friend, I wish that he, and you, and all who in any measure turn from this world and desire life eternal, might know the instruction of life, and feel that gift from God wherein he is known, loved, and joined with in covenant. In this way you can know a pure beginning, a pure growth and going on unto perfection, and not mere notions concerning things set up in the earthly understanding, which easily

putrefy and defile.

And whatever men may say or think of me, I have no other religion now than I had from the beginning; only now I have a clearer leading into, and guidance by, that seed of life in and through which it then pleased the Lord to give me life. And this I know (and do daily experience in my heart): that this is no less than the light of the everlasting day in which the renewed man is to walk, and no less than the life of the Son (whom God gave a ransom for sinners), which can quicken man so to do. And none but Christ, by his life revealed in the soul, and his blood shed there to wash it, can save the poor sinner from sin, wrath, and misery. My hope is not in what I have done, do, or can do; but in what he has done without me, and also does in me.

This is the account of my love unto you, drawn forth at this time by the outward expression of yours in sending that paper, who remains, and, from my first acquaintance, have ever been, a friend and lover of you.

I. P.

Peter's Chalfonte, 19th of Sixth Month, 1665

To His Wife

(Written on Occasion of His Fourth Imprisonment)

My dear true love,

I have hardly freedom to take notice of what has happened, even in my own thoughts; but I am satisfied in my very heart that the Lord, who is good, has ordered things this way, and he will bring about what he pleases thereby. Why

should the fleshly-wise, reasoning part murmur, or find fault?

Oh be silent before the Lord all flesh within me! And disturb not my soul in waiting on my God to know what he is working in me and for me, and what these cruel occurrences can lead to.

One thing have I desired of the Lord, even that I may be his, perfectly disposed of by him, knowing nothing but him, enjoying nothing apart from his life and leadings. Thus must I give up and part with even you, my most dear and worthy love, or I cannot be happy in my own soul or enjoy you as I desire.

I find my heart deeply desiring and breathing after the pure power of the Lord to reign in me; yet I dare not choose for myself, but rather beg to be taught to wait, and to be made willing to drink the residue of the cup of suffering, both inward and outward, until the Lord sees good to take it from my lips.

Oh, my dear, say little concerning me. Plead not my cause, but be still in your own spirit, and await what the Lord will do for me. Thus all my prayers (which in the tenderness of my soul I have often put up for you) may have their full effect upon you. My dear, be my true yoke-fellow, helpful to draw my heart toward the Lord, and away from everything except what is sanctified by the presence and leadings of his life.

I feel, and you know that I am, very dearly yours.

I. P.

1st of Seventh Month 1665

To a Friend in London

(Written on Occasion of the Plague, 1665)

Ah Friend!

Dreadful is the Lord, and it is now known and felt beyond what can be spoken. Does your heart fear before him? Are you willing to be subject to him? Do you long for his strength in order to trust him with yourself and your family? Oh that you may be helped daily to cry unto him, that he who is tender-hearted and able to preserve may have mercy upon you when his arrows fly round about!

Retire, deeply retire, and wait to feel his life, so that your soul may be gathered out of the reasonings and thoughts of your mind, into that which keeps from them and fixes beneath them. Here the Lord is known and worshipped in that which is of himself, of his own begetting, of his own forming, of his own preserving, of his own shutting and opening at his pleasure. And so, living in the sense and pure fear of the Lord (not meddling to judge others or justify yourself, but waiting for his appearance in you, who is the justifier and justification), you will be enabled by the Lord, in his seasons, to lead your children and family into the same sense, so that you and they together may enjoy the same preservation from him.

And if your heart be right before the Lord, and your soul awakened and preserved in his fear, you will find something to travel out of, and something to travel into, and the Lord drawing and leading you. And this stroke, which is so dreadful to others (and not altogether without dread to you) will prove of great advantage on your behalf, in drawing you more into a sense and acquaintance of the infinite One, and

in drawing you from your earthly thoughts and knowledge,
which will not now support you. Your Friend,

I. P.

8th of Seventh Month, 1665

To Elizabeth Walmsley

Dear Friend,

My heart was exceedingly melted within me at the reading of your precious and tender lines. Indeed, I was quite overcome, and was inclined several times to break off reading, for the freshness and strength of life in your words did so flow in upon me. And I said again and again in my heart, “It is the very voice of my Father's child,” whose sound did deeply reach to and refresh my very soul. And this my heart says, “Blessed be my God, for his tender mercies to you, in visiting, leading, and preserving you to this day, and for teaching his seed thus to speak in you.” Oh let his praise live and abound in your breast forever! And in the flowings and streamings of this life, remember me at the throne of my Father's mercy, by which alone I live and have hope before him.

May the mercies, blessing, and pure presence of my God fill your soul, and rest upon you forever! Amen! Amen!

Mind my dear love to your sister, whose inward welfare and prosperity I desire, even that she may be one with you in the seed and life of God.

I am your unfeigned Friend, and dear lover of the pure seed of life in you,

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 19th of Eighth Month, 1665

To Friends at Horton

To My Friends at Horton and Thereabouts,

There has been a cloudy and dark day, wherein God's church and building has been laid waste, and his holy city (according to his decree and purpose) trodden under foot by the Gentiles. All of this time, his church has been as a desolate widow, mourning in the wilderness. Nevertheless, during this season, God has not left his people, for there have always been breathings and stirrings of life in and from the precious seed. Yet though there were true desires and longings after the true church, in the midst of these desires, the enemy struck and put men upon pressing further ahead than they were truly led. And so reading in the Scriptures about a church state and church orders, etc., they thought it was their duty to keep on building. In this way they have thrust themselves into many things into which they have not been accepted of the Lord (although, in their breathings and true desires, they were accepted). And what has been the result of man's buildings? Oh, the pure seed has been buried in them, and they have been as a grave to it; and their own imaginations, carnal knowledge, and way of worship have been of high esteem.

Oh Lord my God, raise again, I beseech you, the pure life, and those pure breathings which have been drowned, lost, and buried in these buildings!

Now, dear friends, the Lord alone built his church at the first. The Lord also laid the buildings waste, and carried his living temple, out of the shell of it into a wilderness. And the Lord alone can lead his church out of the wilderness (leaning upon her Beloved), into her built state again. Ah dear

friends, all must be scattered, all the gatherings, all the buildings which are not of the Lord must be scattered, so that his gathering, his building, may be known and exalted in the earth. So then, I desire that you not hold up anything in this day of the Lord (it is so indeed) against the light and power of the Lord. The Lord is able, and will maintain his building, however weak and of low esteem it is in the eye of man. But man shall not be able to maintain his buildings, however high and strong they are in his own eye.

And since my spirit is at this time unexpectedly opened in love and in life towards you, I shall mention one or two great snares which I see professors entangled in, so that you may wait on the Lord to escape the evil and danger of them. One is this: they look too much at outward time and outward things, and their expectations are too much that way. Oh let it not be so with you, but wait for the inward day, wherein the things of God are wrought in the heart!

Woe unto him that has stumbled at the living appearance of God's precious truth in this our day, and in his own wisdom has been exalted above that which he should have fallen down before! Oh that none of you (whom I have dearly loved, and still love, and whom I have truly sought in the Lord, and still seek) ever prove sad examples and spectacles of what I now write in a living sense! Oh that that seed which has mourned and is oppressed among you might live, and rise up in the power of life, over that which has grieved and oppressed it! For, of a truth, I feel among you a wisdom and knowledge which is not of the seed, but rather oppresses it. Oh what plainness of speech does the Lord give me towards you! Indeed, I am melted in concern for you! And in the strength of that love which searches into your bosoms, I desire that the abominable thing among you might be discovered and purged out, so that that which is indeed of God

might spring up, live, and flourish among you.

A second thing, wherein professors grievously mistake, is about praying in the name of Christ, in which name, he that asks receives, and out of which name, there is no right asking of the Father. They think that praying in the name of Christ consists in using some outward words, such as, "Do this for your Son's sake," or "We beg of you in Christ's name." But there are many who know not the Father, and yet use such words! And there are others who are taught of the Father to pray, and who pray in the Son, who are not led to use such words. The name, wherein the asking and acceptance is, is living, and he that prays in the motion of the Spirit, and in the power and virtue of the Son's life, this one prays in the name. Only this voice is acknowledged by the Father, and not the other, who has learned in his own will, time, and spirit, to use words relating to the Son.

Ah friends, that you might travel into truth, and meet with the unerring substance of things, so that you might live and not die! Then you will see how man has erred, and errs, yes, even the man in you. And you will see that the seed only, and they that are born of the seed, know the living truth, and walk in the living path, where there is no error, no deceit, but rather a perfect preservation out of them. There, in the seed, I desire to meet and embrace you, where we may unite and know one another, in the spiritual birth and life, inseparably, forever.

I remain your imprisoned friend, according to the wisdom of God, and in his pure content and fear, though the wisdom of man might easily have avoided these bonds.

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 22d of Eighth Month, 1665

**To Friends of Truth
In and About the Two Chalfonts**

Dear Friends,

I am separated as to bodily presence from you, but I cannot forget you, because you are written on my heart, and I cannot but desire your peace and welfare, as of my own soul.

And this is my present cry for you: Oh that you might experience the breath of life, that life which at first quickened you, and which still quickens! This breath of life has power over death, and being felt by you, it will bow down death in you, and you will feel the seed lifting up its head over that which oppresses it. Why should the royal birth be a captive in any of you? Why should any of you travail, and not bring forth? Why should sin have dominion in any of you, and not rather grace reign in its life and power in you all? Oh that you may receive quickenings! Oh that you may receive help! Oh that you may be led into the true subjection, which brings forth the true dominion! Indeed, I cry for my own soul, and I cry for yours also, that in one virtue and power of life, we may be knit together and serve the Lord our God in perfect unity of spirit.

Oh Father, blow upon flesh in us all, dry it up at the roots, let all that is born of it die in us, and let its womb become barren, so that no more fruit may be brought forth unto death and unrighteousness. And let your pure seed live in us, and the womb that has been too long barren, let it abound with fruit unto you, so that we may be a vineyard of your own planting, watering, and dressing, bringing forth pure holy fruits, pleasant to your taste. Oh Father, that you may never repent of the special love, favor, and mercy you

have shown to us, in gathering us out of the world and from the midst of the many professions.

My friends, what shall I say unto you? Oh, the Lord keep you living and sensible, and let your walking and living be with him, both in private and in your assemblies. Be serious in your spirits, that you may feel the weight of his seed springing up in you and resting upon you, to poise your hearts towards him. And let the earthly thoughts, desires, and concerns, which eat like a canker, be kept out by the power of that life which is yours, as you abide in covenant with him that has gathered you by his pure light shining within you. Oh that you may all dwell there, and not draw back into the earthly nature, where the enemy lies lurking to entangle and catch your minds, and bring you to a loss.

Feel my heart of love and tender care for you in the quickening life of God. And may the Lord God watch over you for good, to perfect his work in you, and draw your hearts nearer and nearer to himself, until they be quite swallowed up by him, and you find your hearts fitted for, and welcomed into, the bosom of your Beloved. There you may sit down in the rest and joy of his fullness forevermore. This is the blessed end of the Lord's love to you, and all the faithful travails which have been for you.

Even when you were sitting together and waiting on the Lord did these things spring up in my heart towards you. And if you taste any sweetness or refreshment in them, bow to the Fountain, and be sensible of his praise springing in the midst of you. Your Friend and brother in the Truth,

I. P.

*From my place of confinement in Aylesbury
20th of Fourth Month, 1666*

To Elizabeth Walmsley, of Giles Chalfont

Dear Friend,

The thoughts of you are pleasant to me. Indeed, I am melted with the sense of the Lord's love to you, as to my own soul.

What were we that the Lord should stretch forth his arm to us and gather us? And what are we, that the Lord should daily remember us, in the issuing forth of his lovingkindness and mercies? Oh his pity, his compassion! And can you not also say the same? Dear friend, my desire for you is that the power and blessings of life may descend upon you, and that you may feel your God near, and your heart still ready to let him in, and shut against all that is of a contrary nature to his. Oh and that you may know that death passing upon you, and perfected in you, which prepares for, and lets into, the fullness of his pure and unspotted life.

You may commend my dear love to your sister, and to all Friends as you have opportunity, who breathe after the Lord, and desire in uprightness of heart to walk with him. I am your friend, in the affection which is of the Truth.

I. P.

Aylesbury, 20th of Fourth Month, 1666

To the Earl of Bridgewater³

Friend,

It is the desire of my heart to walk with God in the true fear of his name and in true love and good will to all men, all my days here upon the earth. For this end I wait upon God night and day to know his will, and to receive certain instruction from him concerning what is acceptable in his sight. After he has in anything made manifest his pleasure, I wait upon him for strength to perform it. And when he has wrought it by me, my soul blesses him for it. If this be a right course, I am not to be condemned herein. But if it be not, and you know better, show me in love, meekness, and tenderness, as I would be willing to make anything known to you, for your good, which the Lord has shown me. But this I am fully assured of, that God is higher than man, and that his will and laws are to be set up and obeyed in the first place, and man's only in the second, and in their due subordination to the will and laws of God.

Now friend, apply yourself to do that which is right and noble, and that which is truly justifiable in God's sight, that you may give a comfortable account to him when he shall call you to it. That which you have done to me has not made me your enemy, but rather in the midst of it I desire your welfare, and that you may so carry yourself in your position and your actions in such a way that you may neither provoke

³ The Earl of Bridgewater was the man principally responsible for several of Isaac Penington's long imprisonments. Because Penington would not bow to him, address him as "My Lord," and refer to himself as "your humble servant," the Earl of Bridgewater procured military orders to have Penington arrested and jailed on several occasions. In total, Isaac Penington spent close to five years in jail, usually at Aylesbury, but once at Reading.

God against you in this world, nor in the world to come.

Have you not yet afflicted me enough without cause? Would you have me bow to you even when the Lord has not given me liberty to do so? If I should give you outward titles and honors, might I not do you hurt? Oh come down, be low in your spirit before the Lord! Honor him in your heart and ways, and wait for the true nobility and honor that is from him. You have but a short time to be in the world, and then eternity begins. What you have sown here, you must then reap. Oh that you might sow, not to your own will and wisdom, but to God's Spirit, and know his guidance who alone is able to lead man aright. Indeed, you should be subject in your own heart to that seed which you are offended at in others, even that which testifies for God, and against the thoughts, ways, and works of corrupt man. Oh that you might feel the seed of life from God, and know good fruit brought forth from it! And that the evil nature, with the evil works thereof, might be cut down in you, so that your soul may escape the wrath and misery which attend the works and workers of iniquity.

I have sent you the enclosed booklet in love. Read it in fear and humility, lifting up your heart to the Lord, who gives understanding, that it may be a blessing to you. For it was written in true love, and is of a healing and guiding nature. I have formerly written to you, but my way has been so barred up that I have not found access easy, and how or whether this will come to your hand, I know not. But this I truly say to you—I have felt the Lamb's nature under my sufferings from you, for which I have given you no provocation, neither for the beginning nor continuance of them. And if you can bring this to the trial of the witness of God in your heart, then that will deal truly with you, blaming what God blames, and justi-

fyng what he justifies. And though the Lord beholds, and will plead the cause of his innocent ones, yet I do not desire that you should suffer, either from God or man, on my account. But I desire that you might be guided to, and preserved in, that which will be sweet rest, peace, and safety, to all that are sheltered by it.

This is the sum of what I have at present to say, who have written this not for any end except (in the stirrings of true love towards you) that you might experience the power of God forming in your heart aright, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness in you. My desire is that you be made by him of the seed of the blessed, and inherit the blessing, and find the earthly nature consumed, and brought to nothing in you. For to this nature belongs the curse, and it must feel the curse, as God brings forth his righteous judgments in the hearts and upon the heads of the transgressors. And, knowing there to be a certain day of God's calling transgressors to account, I warn you in tenderness to consider your ways, and make your peace with him, so that you may not be irrecoverably and eternally miserable, but rather may be transformed by his life and nature.

And friend, know this for certain: it is not a religion of man's making or choosing (neither the Pope's, nor any other man's), which is acceptable to God, but only that which is of him. Now what will become of that man whose very religion and worship are loathsome to God? Where will he stand, or what account will he be able to give when he appears before him?

You have not often met with such a plain dealing as this. These things very nearly concern you. Oh wait upon God for his true light, that you may not be deceived about them, for your loss thereby will be so great and irreparable.

I am your friend in these things, and have written as a true lover and desirer of the welfare of your soul.

I. P.

From Aylesbury Jail, 24th of Sixth Month, 1666

To an Unknown Recipient

Friend,

The vessel, or created nature, poisoned by sin and death, can be redeemed by nothing except the life and power of God revealed in the vessel. This life, this peace, this power, this righteousness, this salvation, is the Lord Jesus Christ. And he that experiences anything of this, experiences something of Christ; and being joined to, and partaking of this, he partakes of something of his redemption. For it is not by an outward knowledge, but by an inward virtue and spiritual life received from Christ and held in Christ, that those who are saved, are saved. This is the thing of value with me, for which I have been made willing to part with all, and into this purchased possession am I daily traveling. And in my travels, the Father of life and tender mercy is pleased to help me.

Now, to have you gathered into this light, this life, this power, which is of Christ, and in which he is and appears, this is the desire of my soul. And if he please, I am willing to be instrumental in his hand towards the bringing forth of this in you. It is not my desire to bring forth new notions in you, but rather that you might wait on the Lord for him to bring up his living, powerful truth in you, wherein the knowledge of the new and living way is alone revealed.

I am a worm, I am poor, I am nothing, less than nothing as in myself. I am weaker than I can express, or than you can imagine. Yet, in the midst of all this, the life, power, righteousness, and presence of Christ is my refreshment, peace, joy and crown. And that to which I invite you is substance, everlasting substance, which you will know and acknowledge in spirit to be so when that which can see in truth is created and raised up in you. Oh wait on the Lord, fear before him, pray for his fear in the upright breathings (which are not of your own forming, but of his pure begetting). Pray that you may be led by him out of that wisdom which entangles, and into that innocency, simplicity, and precious childlikeness in which the Father appears to the soul, to break the bonds and snares of iniquity.

Your truly loving friend, desiring the right guidance and happiness of your soul, by the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is the skillful Shepherd and Guide, even as of my own soul.

I. P.

Aylesbury Prison, 20th of Tenth Month, 1666

**To the Friends in Truth
In and About the Two Chalfonts**

Dear Friends,

As a father watches over his children, so do I desire to feel the Lord watching over my soul continually. And in his love, care, wise and tender counsel, is my safety, life, and peace. And I have never yet repented of either waiting for him or hearkening to him. But if I have hearkened at any time to anything else, and mistook his voice, and entertained

the enemy's deceitful appearance instead of his pure truth (which it is very easy to do), that grievous mistake has proved a matter of loss and sorrow to my soul.

Now my friends, my heart's desire is that you might know and hear the voice of the Preserver. So shall you be preserved, and kept from the voice of the stranger, which draws aside from the pure seed of life. For there is something near you that watches to betray you. Oh may the God of my life, joy, peace, and hope, watch over your souls, and deliver you from the advantages which, at any time, the enemy has against you. The seed which God has sown in you is pure and precious. Oh that it may be found living in you, and you abiding in it! And may no other seed, at any time, usurp authority over it; but may you know the authority and pure truth which is of God, and stand therein, in the pure dominion over all that is against him. For in the seed of life (which you have known and received in measure) is dominion, and when you are preserved therein, there is dominion over the impure and deceitful one.

Oh my dear friends, my desire is that that part in you may be kept down which runs forward to judge, to approve or disapprove, and that the weighty judgment of the seed be waited for. Do not judge, oh do not judge, before the light of the day shine in you and give forth the judgment! Rather stand and walk in fear and humility, in tenderness of spirit and silence of flesh, that the Lord not give you up to a wrong sense and judgment, to the hurt of your souls. And mind your own states, and the experience of life in your own vessels, which will keep you pure, precious, and chaste in the eye of the Lord. And oh do not meddle with talking about others, which eats out the inward life, and may exalt your spirits out of your place, and above your proper growth. Be as the weaned child, simple, naked, meek, humble, tender,

easily led by and subjected to the Father. In this way you will grow in that which is of God, and be preserved out of that which hunts after the pure life to betray and destroy it. I have an interest in you; my cries are to the Lord for you, and I exceedingly thirst after your preservation and growth in that which is pure.

The Lord God of my mercies, hope, and life, watch over you for good, and keep your hearts in the pure and single watch, so that the enemy (by any subtle device of his) cannot break in upon you. And may you not, by any temptation, be allured or drawn from the Lord, but rather know the pure, eternal, everlasting habitation, and may dwell and abide therein, to the joy of your own souls, and the rejoicings of the hearts of all that have travailed for you in the Spirit of the Lord.

From your brother and companion in the faith, patience, and afflictions of the seed,

I. P.

Aylesbury Prison, 25th of Eleventh Month, 1666

**To the Faithful Friends of Truth,
In and About the Two Chalfonts**

Dear Friends,

Have you in any measure drunk in the sense of what the Lord has done for you? Have you felt meltings of spirit, and bowings before him, with praises to his name? Indeed, my request is to the Lord for you, that he would be pleased to keep you truly sensible of what he already is to you, and of what he has already done for you. And I also pray that he

would visit you yet further, increase life in you, cause faith to abound, granting you to dwell in his power, and always abide in his seed. Oh may you experience that seed to be your hope, peace, joy, life, and strength continually, so that you may more and more give thanks unto him as you feel his pure life arising in you, and death and the grave thereby swallowed up.

Ah my friends, can we ever forget the lost and miserable state wherein the mercy of the Lord and his power from on high visited us? Oh, the blackness of that day, the misery, the deep distress of that day, which some of your souls felt! Did you not know what it was to be without God, and to lie open to the furious assaults of the enemy? Was there not a day when you felt your weakness, and you knew not where to retreat in order to keep out of hurt, temptation, vain thoughts, and imagination? Did you not mourn? Did you not cry out and pine away in your iniquities day and night? Are there not some among you who have known this state, and felt something of that which I now relate? I am sure that there are some upon the earth who can witness it to the fullest, yet whose mouths and hearts are now filled with a sense of the Lord's goodness, and of his great salvation, and with deep and high praises to his name.

But, my dear friends, are there any of you (I know to whom I speak, even to the sensible, to the diligent, to the faithful among you), who cannot witness (in the presence of God) concerning the arm and power of his salvation, which you have often felt? Indeed, do you not daily feel the Lord ministering his salvation to you? Are not your enemies daily overcome by the faith which he has given you in his power? May I not say to you, "Where now is the strength of the tempter?" Have you not felt the seed of the woman bruise

the head of the serpent? Can you not say (though in the fear of the Lord), "Where are those temptations, those lusts, vain thoughts, and imaginations, which once I was overcome by and overrun with?" Surely I may speak in this way, for I know assuredly that the power of the Lord God, as it is lifted up in any of you, scatters these things and gives dominion over them. For the life and its power are given as a bulwark and a weapon of war against iniquity and its power. And where this life is received, and its power is known, it opposes, wars, and strives, until it overcomes.

And, this is what gives the victory and the overcoming: faith in the seed. The seed is felt, the soul is joined to it, and faith in it and from it is given to the soul. Then faith becomes the leader, the mighty undertaker for the soul, and overcomes its snares and its enemies for it. And when it has overcome them, they are overcome indeed. Then the soul lies down in peace, dwells in peace, feeds on the living nourishment in the green pastures of life. Then Jerusalem, the building or life in the heart, becomes a quiet habitation where God and the soul dwell sweetly together, and there is nothing that has power in it to disturb, annoy, or make afraid. Why so? Because the Lord God of power is present there; he stretches out his wings there, and is a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night! He has raised up his glorious life in that heart, and has also spread a defense over his glory, with which the soul is so encompassed and defended that it feels the walls of this city to be salvation, and its gates praise.

Oh my soul, travel on! Oh dear friends, you also travel on, into the fullness of the glory of this state! There is no other thing to be desired and waited for. This is your portion, both here in this world, and forever. Therefore, wait in the seed of this life; wait to know a further gathering into it, and

a growing up in it. Give yourselves up to it, that it may overspread and cover you. And may the Lord God of life daily reveal it, and manifest it more and more in you and to you!

Therefore, come to feel (in spirit) the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Be daily looking up to him who keeps you alive and fresh, so that none of you grow slothful, drowsy, negligent, or unfaithful in relation to the great talent which God has put into your hands. Let not a veil come over your hearts again, nor let the air thicken, and the earthly nature cover the seed, so that he who has power in that earth, and over that air, captivate, oppress, entangle, and lead you back from God again. Oh cry to the Lord to keep the eye open, and the heart single, and the soul in the true sense and experience, so that the heavenly voice, which drew you out of the earth, may be daily heard, instructing and gathering you more and more up into him who is your life. Therefore, you that fear the Lord and love his name, and have tasted of his goodness and powerful salvation, oh hate evil! All that his light has made manifest and drawn you from, oh take heed never to dabble with it again! Oh never hearken to the tempter, but pray to the Father that you may discern his enticements. Never consult or reason with your enemy, but in everything wait to experience the motion, guidance, quickening, and sweet, pure, heavenly leading of the Spirit of your Father!

Therefore, this little thing, this light of God in you, to which you were at first directed and turned, which discovers all the darkness of the enemy, and all his deceits and devices, and keeps the minds of those that are staid by it—in this light wait. To this light let your minds be turned, and in it continue to abide. And the power and glory of eternal life will daily, more and more, appear in you. Yes, it will flow and

break in upon you, to the filling of your vessels with its virtue, and the causing of your hearts to abound with joy before the Lord, and with thanksgivings to him.

May the God of tender mercies and everlasting compassions cause his love to be daily yearning towards you, that you may be nursed up with the living food, and that that which would overturn and destroy his work may be opposed. May you feel the work daily go on and be mightily preserved by him, even till it is finished, and the top stone is laid. Then your souls, in the true and full sense of life, will cry out, "Grace, grace, to him that laid the foundation, raised up, defended, and carried on the building, and now, at length, has perfected it." And in this way, whatsoever you have now witnessed in measure, you shall then witness in fullness. And you will see that all the promises of God are of a precious nature, and they are "yes and amen" from God to the seed.

May the life, presence, and power of the Lord be with you in this seed, in your breathing after it, in your joining to it, in your abiding and waiting upon him in it. May the Lord God give you to long after it, to join to it, to abide always and wait upon him in it, and never to hearken to, and go out after, a contrary spirit and wisdom. May he keep you in the simplicity, lowliness, humility, and tender spirit which is in Christ Jesus, to the praise of his own name, and the preservation and joy of your hearts before him forever, amen!

Written in the tender affection and motion of the pure life, from the place of my confinement in Aylesbury.

I. P.

1st of Third Month, 1667

To My Dear Children J.J. and M.P.

My Dear Children,

Two things I especially desire in reference to your learning—one is, that you may learn to know and hearken to the voice of God's witness in you. There is something in you that will teach you how to do well, and how to avoid evil, if your minds are turned to it. And the same thing will witness to you when you do well, and will witness against you when you do evil. Now to learn to know this, to hear this, to fear this, to obey this, that is the chief object of learning that I desire to find you in. And when your master, or anyone of the family, turns you to this witness, or reminds you of this witness, or reproves you for not hearkening to or obeying this witness, oh love them, and bless God for them in that respect! And remember this, that he that hearkens to reproof is wise, but he that hates or slights reproof is brutish. That is the dark spirit, which desires to please itself in its dark ways, and therefore loves not the light which makes his ways manifest and reproves them. It is the brutish spirit which hates the reproof of the light, and would continue its vain foolish ways and delights, which the light testifies against. Therefore, mind the witness of God in your hearts which discovers these things to you, and leads you out of them as you hearken to it, and come to know, fear, and love the Lord God by his instruction and testimony.

The way of youth is vain and foolish, and it defiles the mind. Oh my children, wait for the cleansing. Watch for that which cleanses the foolish way of children, which is the light that uncovers and witnesses against your foolishness and vain tempers, and the temptations of your minds, and leads out of them. Learn to bear the yoke in your tender years.

There is a vain mind in you, and there is something which desires to feed and please that vain mind. But there is something near you and appointed by God to yoke it down. Oh give no place to vanity, for it will be an occasion of woe and misery to you hereafter. But the yoke which keeps down the vain mind, oh take that yoke upon you. For then you shall become not only my children, but the disciples of Christ, and children of the Most High. This is the first thing which I mainly and chiefly desire you should apply yourselves to learn.

The next thing (which will also flow from the first), is that you learn how to behave yourselves as good children, both in the family and to persons abroad, in a meek, modest, humble, gentle, loving, tender, respectful way. Avoid all rude, rough, bold, unbecoming carriage towards all. Honor your mother and me as God teaches and requires, and dearly cleave to one another in the natural relation, which is of God, wherein you are loved, having a great proportion of natural affection and kindness one to another.

With the servants, carry yourselves very lovingly, sweetly, meekly, and gently, so that none may have any cause of complaint against you, but that all may see your lowliness and be drawn to love you. And to strangers, carry yourselves warily, respectfully, in a sober, submissive, humble manner of demeanor. Do not be disputing and talking much, which is not fitting for your age and place. Rather, watch what you may observe of good in others, and what you may learn of those that are good. And watch also to see how you may avoid any such evil as you observe in any that are evil. In this way your time will be spent in profit, and you will feel the blessing of God and of your parents, and you will be kept out of those evils which your age and natural tempers are subject to, and which other children (who are not careful nor

watchful) are commonly entangled in. Mind these things, my children, as you will give an account to God, who through me thus instructs you—who am your imprisoned father. I am much grieved when I hear of any ill concerning you. For this is more a matter of trouble and sorrow to me than my imprisonment, or anything else I suffer, or can suffer from man.

And remember this one thing, which as a father I admonish you of, and charge you to take notice of and observe, which is this—that you do not fly out upon one another, or complain of one another, because of the evils you observe in one another. But rather, first take notice of the evil in yourselves. If by the true light you find your own hearts cleansed from it, bless God who has done it, and keep to his light and witness in you whereby he did it, and watch that you are not overtaken by it in the future. But if you be guilty of the same evil, or have lately done the same thing, or are liable suddenly to do it—then oh, forbear accusing or blaming another! In the fear of God wait on him, and pray unto him that you may be delivered from it, and kept out of it. And then, in tender pity, love, and meekness, admonish your brother or sister of his or her evil, and watch to be helpful to preserve or restore them. And pray to God to direct you how to be helpful to them. But it is the bad spirit and nature which is ready to accuse others. And even when it has never been so bad and guilty, yet it will be excusing itself, and laying the fault upon others, or remembering some other fault of another, when it should be sensible of and ashamed of its own.

Dear children, if you bend your minds to learn these things, the Lord will help you therein, and he will become your teacher, guide and preserver, and pour down his blessings upon you. And in this you will be a comfort to me and your mother, and an honor to his Truth. And may he also

give me wise fatherly instructions to teach you further. But if you be careless, foolish, vain, following your own minds, and what rises up there from the wicked one, you will grieve my heart and provoke God against you, to bring evil upon you, both in this world and forever.

Therefore, children, mind that which is near you—the light of God, which discovers the evil and the good. His witness (which observes all you do) is near you. Yes, he himself is in that light, and with that witness. Therefore, know that you are in the presence at all times of a holy and just God, who hates that which is vain and evil, and loves that which is good and right before him. And he has appointed a day and set a time wherein he will either reward you with peace, joy, and eternal happiness if you have been good and done that which is good; or with misery, destruction, and insufferable pain both of soul and body, if you have been evil and done that which is evil. God knows well how many instructions you have heard from friends in Truth, and from your parents, and how many meetings you have been at wherein you have been taught and warned of these things. So if you turn your back upon his light, and will not hear its reproofs, but will rather be vain, idle, foolish, rash, quarreling, and doing that which is wrong and then covering it with lies, (and so be as bad, if not worse, than children who were never thus taught and instructed)—then, in his just judgment and sore displeasure, God may separate you from his light and give you up to the black, dark spirit, (from whom all this wickedness is) to sow in sin here, and to suffer the flames of eternal fire hereafter. For this is the reward of the dark spirit, and also the reward of all who are persuaded by him to be of his nature, and who hearken to him, and let him work through them.

Oh my children, mind the Truth of God in you! He will

let you see and understand the truth of what I now write, and in what fatherly love and tender care of you I write these things. Oh, be warned of the great danger of neglecting the time of your visitation by God's light and witness in you! And do not go on in the evil ways of the dark, crooked spirit, who will be tempting you to evil and hindering you from God as long as you hearken to him. Therefore, be not fools to be led by him to destruction in the evil way and evil works which lead thereto; but be wise to hearken to the light, and follow it out of that which is evil, into everything that is good, to the salvation of your souls.

I desire that Friends in the family⁴ watch over them in these respects; and when they find just occasion, to put them in mind of any of these things, in the fear and wisdom of God, with tenderness and gentleness. But take heed of upbraiding or aggravating them, lest they be thereby hardened, and evil is raised and strengthened in them. And, my dear G. [doubtless his daughter in-law, Gulielma, afterwards the wife of William Penn] and Friends, watch over your hearts and ways, that you may be as examples to them, so that they may not only read these things from my writing, but also in your carriage towards them and towards one another. So the Lord bless your watchfulness, care, and endeavors therein, that I may hear good concerning them, and be comforted in the mercy and kindness of the Lord towards them.

Your father, who desires your good, and that it may go well with you, both here and hereafter.

I. P.

10th of Third month, 1667

⁴ The remainder of this letter is not directed to his children, but to other Friends who lived in his house, and to Gulielma, his step-daughter, and afterwards the wife of William Penn.

**To the Friends at Chalfont
in Buckinghamshire**

Oh Friends!

Feed on the tree of life! Feed on the measure of life, and its pure power which God has revealed and manifests in you. Do you know your food? Do you remember the taste and relish of it? Then keep to it, and do not meddle with that which seems very desirable to the other eye, and very able to make wise. Oh abide in the simplicity that is in Christ, in the naked truth that you have felt there! And there you will be able to know and distinguish your food, which has several names in Scripture, but is all one and the same thing: it is the bread, the milk, the water, the wine, the flesh and blood of him that came down from heaven, John 6:51. It is the same, only it is given forth weaker and stronger according to the capacity of him that receives it, and so has different names given to it accordingly.

Oh keep out of that wisdom which knows not the substance, for it is this wisdom which also stumbles over names. But keep to the seed of life, keep to the seed of the kingdom, feed on that which was from the beginning. Is not this food indeed, and drink indeed, flesh indeed, and blood indeed? The Lord has brought you to that ministration of life and power wherein things are known above and beyond mere names, wherein the life is revealed and felt beyond what words can utter. Oh dwell in your habitations and feed on the food which God brings into your habitations, which is pure, living, spiritual, and will cause your souls and spirits more and more to live in and to God! Be not shaken or disquieted by the wisdom of the flesh, but feel that which settles and establishes in the pure power.

And may the Lord God preserve you, and give you power to watch against, and to experience victory and dominion over all that is contrary to him in any of you.

This sprang unto you in the good will of your Father, from the life and love of your brother in the Truth,

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 8th of Fifth Month, 1667

To George Fox

Dear G. F.,

I feel the tender mercy of the Lord, and some portion of that brokenness, fear, and humility which I have long waited for, and breathed after. I feel unity with, and strength from, the body. Oh blessed be the Lord, who has fitted and restored me, and brought up my life from the grave. I feel a high esteem and dear love to you, whom the Lord has chosen, anointed, and honored, and for your brethren and fellow-laborers in the work of the Lord.

And, dear George Fox, I beg your love, I entreat your prayers, in faith and assurance that the Lord hears you, that I may be yet more broken, that I may be yet more filled with the fear of the Lord, that I may be yet poorer and humbler before the Lord, and may walk in perfect humility and tenderness of spirit before him, all of my days.

Dear George Fox, you may feel my desires and wants more fully than my own heart. Be helpful to me in tender love, that I may feel settlement and stability in the truth; and know a perfect separation from, and dominion in the Lord over, all that is contrary to him.

I entreat your prayers for my family, that the name of the Lord may be exalted and his truth flourish therein. Dear G. F., indeed my soul longs for the pure, full, and undisturbed reign of the Life in me.

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 15th of Fifth Month, 1667

To Friends of Both the Chalfonts

Dear Friends,

Oh the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, the riches of love, mercy, life, power, and grace of our God, which are treasured up for the soul in the Lord Jesus! These are freely dispensed and given out by him to them that come unto him, wait upon him, abide in him, and give up faithfully to the law of his life, to those whose delight it is to be found in subjection and obedience to the light and requirings of his Spirit.

Feel, my friends, oh feel your portion, and abide in that wherein the inheritance is known, received, and enjoyed! For there is no knowing Christ truly and sensibly except by a measure of his life felt in the heart, whereby the heart is made capable of understanding the things of the kingdom. The soul without him is dead, but by the quickenings of his Spirit it comes to a sense and capacity of understanding the things of God. Life gives it a feeling, a sight, a tasting, a hearing, a smelling, of the heavenly things, by which senses it is able to discern and distinguish them from the earthly things. And from this measure of life, the capacity increases, the senses grow stronger; they see more, feel more, taste more, hear more, smell more. Now when the senses are

grown up to strength, then comes settlement and stability, assurance and satisfaction. Then the soul is assured and established concerning the things of God in the faith, and the faith gives assurance to the understanding. In this way, the doubts and disputes in the mind fly away, and the soul lives in the certain demonstration and fresh sense and power of life. It daily experiences (in the heart and soul) the eternal Word and power of life to be what is testified of it in the Scripture. It knows the flesh and blood of the Lamb, the water and wine of the kingdom, the bread which comes down from heaven into the vessel, from all other things, by its daily feeding upon it in spirit. What heart can conceive the righteousness, the holiness, the peace, the joy, the strength of life that is felt here!

Friends, there are no clogs in the Fountain. God is fullness, and it is his delight to empty himself into the hearts of his children, and he does this according as he makes way in them, and as they are able to drink in his living virtue. Therefore, where the soul is enlarged, where the senses are grown strong, where the mouth is opened wide (and the Lord God standing ready to pour out his riches), what should hinder the soul from being filled? And being filled, how natural is it to run over, and break forth inwardly in admiration and deep spiritual sense concerning what it cannot utter! It cries out saying, “Oh the fullness, oh the depth, height, breadth, and length of the love! Oh the compassion, the mercy, the tenderness, of our Father!” How has he pitied, how has he pardoned beyond what the heart could believe! How has he helped in the hour of distress! How has he conquered and scattered the enemies which, in unbelief, the heart was often ready to say were unconquerable, thinking it should one day die by the hand of one of its mighty enemies, lusts, and corruptions. How has he put an end to doubts,

fears, disputes, and troubles, with which the mind was overwhelmed and tossed! And now he extends peace like a river; now he brings the soul out of the pit, into the green pastures; now it feeds on the freshness of life, and is satisfied, and drinks of the river of God's pleasure and is delighted! And it sings praise to the Lamb, and him that sits on the throne, saying, "Glory, glory! Life, power, dominion, and majesty, over all the powers of darkness, over all the enemies of the soul, be to your name forevermore!"

Now, my dear friends, you know something of this, and you know the way to it. Oh be faithful, be faithful! Travel on, travel on! Let nothing stop you, but wait for, and daily follow, the sensible leadings of that measure of life which God has placed in you. For the measure is one with the fullness, and the fullness runs daily into it and fills it, that it may run into you and fill you. Oh that you were enlarged in your own hearts even as the heart of the Lord is enlarged towards you! It is the day of love, of mercy, of kindness, of the working of his tender hand! It is the day of the wisdom, power, and goodness of our God, manifested richly in Jesus Christ! Oh, why should there be any stop of the flow in any of us? May the Lord remove that which stands in the way. And in faithful waiting upon the power which is arisen, the Lord will remove, yes, the Lord does remove; and growth in his truth and power is experienced by those that wait upon him.

Friends, be not discouraged because of your souls' enemies. Are you troubled with thoughts, fears, doubts, imaginations, reasonings, etc.? Do you still see much in you that is unsubdued to the power of life? Oh do not fear it! Do not look at it, so as to be discouraged by it; rather look to him! Look up to the power which is over all their strength. Wait for the descending of the power upon you. Abide in faith of the Lord's help, waiting in patience till the Lord arise,

and you will see if his arm does not scatter what yours could not. So be still before him, and in stillness believe in his name. Enter not into the stirrings of the enemy, though they fill the soul; for there is something into which they cannot enter, and from which patience, faith, and hope will spring up in you, even in the midst of all that they can do.

Sink into this, therefore, and lie hidden in the evil hour till the temptations pass away, and the tempter's strength be broken, and the arm of the Lord which broke him be revealed. Then you shall see that the enemy raised but a sea of trouble to your souls only to sink himself in it. And the Lord will throw the horse and his rider, which trampled upon the Just One within you, into that sea. And you shall stand upon the bank and sing the song of Moses to him that drowned him and delivered you from him! And in due season, you will sing the song of the Lamb also, when his life springs up in you in his pure dominion, triumphing over death, and all that is contrary to God, both within and without.

Now, friends, in an attentive waiting and giving up to the Lord, and in the daily exercise of the cross putting to death in you that which is not of the life, this work will daily go on. And you will feel from the Lord that which will help, relieve, refresh, and satisfy you, something which neither tongue nor words can utter. And may the Lord God breathe upon you, preserve and fill you with his life and Holy Spirit, to the growth and rejoicing of your souls in him, who is our blessed Father, and merciful Redeemer.

And then, as to what may befall us outwardly in this confused state of things, shall we not trust our tender Father and rest satisfied in his will? Are we not engraved in his heart, and on the palms of his hands? Can he forget us in anything he does? Shall anything hurt us? Shall anything

come between us and our life, between us and his love and tender care over us? Though the fig-tree should not blossom, neither there be any fruit on the vine; though the labor of the olive should fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls; yet should we not rejoice in the Lord, and rejoice in the God of our salvation? And even though the earth be removed, and the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; even though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, and the mountains shake with the swelling thereof, is there not a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God? Is not the joy, the virtue, the life, the sweet refreshment of this river felt in the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High? And he that provides inward food for the inward man, inward clothing, inward refreshment, shall he not also provide what is sufficient for the outward? Yes, shall he not bear up our mind, and be our strength, portion, armor, rock, peace, joy, and full satisfaction in every condition? For it is not the condition that makes one miserable, but the lack of him in the condition. He is the substance of all, the virtue of all, the life of all, the power of all. He nourishes, he preserves, he upholds, (making use of the creation or without the creation) as it pleases him. And he that has him, he that is with him, he that is in him, cannot be in want. Now consider, does the spirit of this world have contentment in all that it enjoys? No, it is restless, it is unsatisfied. But can tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword come between the love of the Father to the child, or the child's rest, contentment, and delight in his love? And does not the love, the peace, the joy, the true rest, swallow up all the bitterness and sorrow of the outward condition?

The seed, the true nature and birth, has not only the promise of eternal life, but also whatever is necessary for the

vessel (wherein it dwells) in this life too. So dwell in that to which is the promise, and live upon the promise. Yes, live upon that which cannot miss of the promise, but feels the presence and power of the Father in all and over all. The just One lives by his faith, and he that is in union with the just One, lives by the faith of the just One, and takes no more care than the lilies, but leaves the care of all to him to whom it properly belongs. He is the one that nourishes, clothes, preserves, and causes the lilies of the field to grow and flourish in beauty and glory. And will he not much more clothe, nourish, and take care of his own lilies, the heavenly lilies, the lilies of his own garden?

Let us then not look out like the world, or judge, or fear according to the appearance of things, after the manner of the world. Rather, let us sanctify the Lord of hosts in our hearts, and let him be our fear and dread. And he shall be a hiding place unto us in the storms and tempests which are coming thick upon the earth.

Thus, my dear friends, let us retire, and dwell in the peace which God breathes, and lie down in the Lamb's patience and stillness, night and day, which nothing can wear out or disturb. And may the Lord God, in his tender mercy, and because of his deep and free love unto us, guide our hearts daily more and more in the travel, and into the possession. For every soul may inherit and possess (notwithstanding all its enemies) whatever it has traveled into, and it may also daily, further and further, travel into what yet lies ahead.

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 2nd & 3rd of Sixth Month, 1667

To an Unknown Recipient

Dear Friend,

You have had the path of salvation faithfully testified of to you, and have come to a sense of the substance, even to the experience of that whereby the Father begets life, and manifests his love and peace in and to the soul. Now, what remains? Look up to the Lord to guide your feet in this path, and to preserve you from that which darkens and leads out of the way. In this way you may continue on your journey safely, and come to the inheritance and enjoyment of that which your soul longs after.

There is life, there is peace, there is joy, there is righteousness, there is health, there is salvation, there is a power of redemption, in the seed. And yet your soul lacks, and does not enjoy these things. Well, how may you come to enjoy them? There is no other way but by union with the seed, by knowing the seed, hearing the voice of the seed, learning of and becoming subject to the seed. "Learn of me, take my yoke upon you," says Christ, "and you shall find rest to your souls." Do you desire to experience your soul's rest in Christ? You must know the seed's voice, hear it, learn daily of him, become his disciple. You must take up, from his nature, what is contrary to your nature. And then, as your nature is worn out, and his nature comes up in you, you will find all easy. You will find all that is of life easy, and transgression will be hard, unbelief will be hard. Indeed, when the nature of the seed is grown up in you, you will find it very hard and unnatural either to distrust the Lord or hearken to his enemy. And then that dwelling place (into which Satan brings dark thoughts, suggestions, and reasonings) will be changed for the dwelling place which is from above, wherein there is light,

life, peace, satisfaction, health, salvation, and rejoicing of soul, from and before the Lord.

Now, do not say, "Who shall do thus for me?" But know that the arm of the Lord is mighty and brings mighty things to pass, and this arm has been revealed in you, and is at work for you. Oh that you could trust it! (Why can you not? Has it not sown a seed of faith in you?) Oh that you could come into and abide in the path wherein its mighty, powerful operations are felt and made manifest! And, oh that you may find the ability to watch against that which wounds and distresses your soul! For the enemy's dark suggestions work according to their nature, and if you let them lie upon you, how can they not darken, afflict, and perplex you?

Therefore, in the evil hour, fly from all things that thus arise in you. Lie still and feel your anchor, till his light which "makes manifest" arises in you, and clears up all things to you. And think not the time of darkness long, but keep watch that your heart may be clear of your own thoughts and beliefs until he bring in something which you may safely receive. Therefore, say to your thoughts and to your beliefs (according to the suggestion of the dark power, in the time of your darkness), "Go from me!" And if that will not do, look to the Lord to speak to them and to keep them out, if they be not already entered. And if he does not do so immediately, or for a long time, yet do not murmur or think much, but wait until he does. Yes, though these thoughts violently thrust themselves upon you, and seem to have entered your mind, yet let them be as strangers to you. Receive them not, believe them not, know them not, acknowledge them not! And your heart will, notwithstanding, remain chaste in the eye of the Lord, though they may seem to you to have defiled you.

Look up to the Father, that you may learn these things from him. And as you become faithful to him therein, you

will find your darkness abate, and its strength will be more and more broken in you. And you will not only feel and taste a little of the Lord now and then, but also come to possess and inherit, and rejoice before the Lord in your portion.

I am your friend in the truth which changes not, but is pure, and preserves us pure forever.

I. P.

From Aylesbury Jail, 28th of Seventh Month, 1667

To His Brother

Dear Brother,

This morning, as I was going out to walk, something sprang up in my heart freshly and livingly to you, whereupon I consulted not, but immediately turned back to write you. Now, if the Lord makes it useful to you, you will have cause to bless his name. And I too shall bless his name, for I heartily desire the life and welfare of your soul in the living God, and that you avoid all snares that the enemy lays to betray and keep your soul in death and bondage. The thing that rose up in me was this:

God gave some apostles, some prophets, etc., for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body, for the perfecting of the saints. This was God's gift (in mercy and love) to them in that day, and they were to walk worthily of this gift and be thankful for it.

Now, in these days, the Lord has given gifts to some for this same work, which the body has need of, and the body is to wait on the Lord in the use of his gift, in fear and humility. And mark, brother, that in every age God's ministers have

been despised. Moses and all the prophets were despised in their day. “What?” they said “Has God spoken only by Moses? Has he not spoken also by us?” The apostles were despised in their days by those that kept not to the anointing which teaches all things. “He that despises you,” said Christ, “despises me.” He that despises them in their gathering, or in their building up, despises him that sent them. They were earthen vessels, in presence contemptible, and very liable to be despised. It is still easy to despise God’s messengers and servants, but he that will truly and rightly esteem them, must lie low, must dwell in the pure fear, and in the sense of life, that he may be taught of God to do so. It is an easy matter to have objections against them; but to see through all prejudices and objections to the pure and precious life in them, and to the gift and Spirit and power of the Lord—this requires a true eye, and a heart opened by the Lord.

Ah brother! This is a snare in which many have been caught in former ages, and in this age also. For it is easy to fall into, but the preservation out of this snare is not easy, but is only by the power and mercy of the Lord. Dear brother, when I am in the pure sense before the Lord, and my spirit is opened by him and you are presented before me, I can beg most earnestly of the Lord that he open your eye, and give you a true sight of your state. I beseech that he might cause your spirit to bow before him, and to know and honor what is of him, and not (by any device of the enemy) be hindered from receiving what he, in tender love and mercy, holds out to you.

And so, dear brother, mind this advice which just springs in my heart: pick out some of the faithful ones of the Lord’s servants, and open your heart to them! Indeed, brother, I have had, for a long time, a deep sense of danger towards you. May the Lord prevent it, that your soul may live to him,

and not die from him! There is a wisdom and a will near to you which will destroy you, unless the Lord destroy it in you.

Oh that you might come to wait aright for the motion of his Spirit, and learn to be kept by him in that which knows his drawing! Then you will hunger and thirst after the righteousness of his kingdom, and long after times of meeting and assembling with his people; and you will find your sense of them living, and your life refreshed therein. For God is with his people, and they meet not without him, but his presence is in the midst of them, causing his life to flow into every vessel that stands open to him, and to grow more and more in dominion in them. Oh brother, I am satisfied in my heart that not only my love, but my life speaks to you now. Oh that you could hear, and feel, and fear, and bow down before the Lord! Then he would, in his due season, raise you up in his life and power among his people, purifying you, and preserving you pure and alive to him forever.

The desire of my heart to the Lord for you is that he would open and keep open the eye in you which sees, and the ear which hears, and the heart which understands his truth, and that he would prevent the enemy from raising up another thing in you instead of the seed of life.

Great has been the subtlety, and deep has been the error from the truth. Many who seem to be true Jews are not, but have erred from the Spirit, life, and power, by which they were at first convinced and first led. And in these, the enemy has raised up a seat of prejudices and strongholds against the ministry and power of the living God. But those who are of the true seed bless the Lord, beholding his true work even while others scorn in their expectations for something else.

Oh brother, there is a high-mindedness in some which takes upon itself to judge beyond its growth and capacity! But there is a fear in the hearts of others, lest anything in

them should rise up, or judge, or be anything beyond or beside the pure Truth. This fear teaches the soul to honor and prefer those whom the Lord has preferred, while the high-mindedness has only accusations and pleas against them. One of these will experience preservation from God; the other is left by God to fall.

Dear brother, it is my desire that you may not perish, but rather experience the carrying on of the work of salvation in you. Oh that you would travel on in the pure, holy, living, powerful path, and receive the crown of fidelity to the truth! Ah brother, mourn to the Lord! Fear before him. Converse and consult with those that abide faithful, and they may help you to see (through the guidance, presence, and power of the Spirit of the Lord with them) what you are not able to see. Remember this counsel; for you have need of the help which the Lord, in his tender mercy, has provided. And you cannot be safe without it.

I am your dear brother according to a natural unity, but longing after a unity with you in the pure life.

I. P.

Aylesbury Jail, 7th of Eighth Month, 1667

To an Unknown Recipient

My Dear Friend,

This is the way of redemption: to wait to experience the appearance of the light of the Spirit in the heart, and, at its least or lowest appearance, to be turned from the darkness towards it. Oh feel the redeeming arm in your own heart, and know the love which stretches it forth! Take heed of being prejudiced against his inward visitations to you, for

there is something near you which would darken you and keep the seed of life in bondage. I know there is that in you which pants after God and is not satisfied, something that thirsts after the living waters. The Spirit of the Lord says, "Come, come to the fountain of eternal life; drink, and live."

Oh Lord my God, unveil to the thirsty souls what it is that withholds them from the living waters, so that they may not labor and spend their strength in vain, in duties and ordinances invented by man. For these may perhaps lull one asleep for the present, but they can never quiet the cry of the living seed, nor ever satisfy the soul.

My friend, I know your snare. There is a building in your earthly wisdom, a knowledge which you hold in your comprehension, which is not of the light from which the true knowledge springs, and in which alone it is held. You must come to know the tearing down of this building, the confounding and scattering of this knowledge, so that the true heir may spring up in you. You must feel the babe raised, to whom God reveals the mysteries of his kingdom, which he hides from the wise professors and teachers in this age, as he has done in all ages. You are very wise, but you must sell all that and become a fool if you desire the riches and everlasting treasures of the kingdom.

And, if you desire to draw near and find access to God in prayer, you must wait to feel the true birth pray, and take heed of putting up requests in your own wisdom, and according to your own will. For such are the prayers of the false child, or the counterfeit birth, the wrong seed, which the Father does not know or regard. But this is our religion: to experience that which God begets and keeps alive in our hearts, and to be taught by him to know him, to worship, and to live to him by the leadings and power of his Spirit. And in this religion we have the comfort and the appearances of his

Spirit, which are beyond all the disputes and questions of man's wisdom. Indeed, they are beyond the disputes of our own hearts also, being demonstrated and made manifest to our spirits in a higher principle.

I found my heart in great love drawn to write these things to you; and my soul offers breathings to the Lord my God that you may be drawn into true unity and fellowship with the spring of eternal life, and that you not be led astray from the precious enjoyment of God here, or of the salvation of your soul forever. The path of life is living, and your feet must be guided into it and walk faithfully in it to the end, if you desire to sit down in God's eternal rest and peace.

I have been long desolate, and a great mourner after my God, and know how to pity and weep over wandering souls, though I cannot but rejoice at this great day of salvation and powerful visitation of God's Spirit, wherein he has sought out and gathered many into the fold of his pure rest. The Lord has become a living Shepherd to many, and daily ministers his life unto them. And he is seeking out many more. Happy are they who know and return at the sound of the Shepherd's voice when he calls after them.

I remain your true, entire, faithful, loving friend, in the love and goodwill of the Lord, wishing to your soul as to my own.

I. P.

To an Unknown Recipient

Dear Friend,

Let me speak a few words to you, not only from what I have felt in my heart, but have also read in the Scriptures of truth.

After the apostasy, the gospel is to be preached in this way: "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come; and worship him that made heaven, and earth." Rev. 14:7. If you know the Preacher that preached this, if you have heard this preached in your own heart, if you have met with the fear that the Spirit teaches and gives, if you have known the hour of God's judgment and had the axe laid to the root of the tree, and if you have been taught by the Son to worship the Father in Spirit and truth, then you have, without doubt, met with the everlasting gospel. And if God requires of you, and assists you by his Spirit and power to preach this to others, then you are a preacher of the everlasting gospel, and an able minister of the New Covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit. But I beseech you, beware of preaching your own conclusions and conceivings upon the letter, as too many do in this day. For this falls short of true preaching. Oh let these things be weighty with you! You must learn the right way to search and understand the Scriptures. And you must know how the Father has revealed the Son in this day, and how to come to him to receive life from him. For many, through ignorance, have erred in this matter, and have run ahead in their own wills, wisdom, and comprehension of things.

Friend, the God who caused light to shine in this outward world has judged it necessary to cause the light of his Spirit to shine inwardly in the heart. Only this gives the knowledge of the Scriptures, and the true sense and discerning of inward and spiritual things. Yes, by this light the Son is known, and his cleansing blood felt. Without this light, the Scriptures do not make manifest spiritual things; but in the light, the Scriptures are a clear and faithful record and testimony of them.

Oh take heed how you read and how you understand the

Scriptures! In what light and in what spirit are you reading? For it is easy to err, and without the presence and guidance of God's Spirit you cannot walk safely. Truly it is great presumption in any man to read the Scriptures boldly and without fear and reverence towards him who penned them, or to put any of his own meanings and conceivings upon God's words. But this is hard to avoid in the man who reads in the liberty of his own spirit, without the light of God's Spirit, which is the limit and yoke of the true readers, and of those who understand the Scriptures.

I. P.

4th of Fourth Month, 1668

To a Couple About to Marry.

Dear Friends,

It is a great and weighty thing that you are undertaking, and you have need of the Lord's leading and counsel therein, that it may be done in the unity of his life, and so Friends in Truth may feel it to be of God, and find satisfaction therein.

Friends, the affectionate part will run ahead in things of this nature, unless it is yoked down. It can easily persuade the mind to judge such things to be right and of the Lord, when indeed they are not so. Now, if it be not of the Lord, but only the affectionate part, Friends cannot have unity with it, nor will it prove a blessing to you, but you will find it a hurt to your conditions and a load upon your spirits afterwards, and the fruits and effects of it will not be good, but evil. And then, perhaps, you will wish that you had waited more singly and earnestly upon the Lord, and that you had

taken more time, and consulted more with Friends.

The Lord, by his providence, has given you a little time of respite. Oh, retire unto him, and abase yourselves before him, and pray him to counsel you by his good Spirit for your good! Pray that, if it be not of the Lord, his power (being waited upon by you) may loosen your affections in this respect. But if it be of the Lord, and is brought before Friends, and their counsel and advice is sought in the fear of the Lord, then they will have unity with it, and with gladness express their unity. This will be a strength unto you against the tempter afterwards.

This is in true love to you, and in singleness of heart.
From your friend in the truth,

I. P.

4th of Third Month, 1668.

To an Unknown Recipient

Oh Friend!

Shall the Lord appear mightily on the earth and Israel not know him? Shall the professors of this age understand no more of Christ's appearance in Spirit than the Jews understood of his appearance in flesh? Shall they stumble at the very same stumbling stone? Yes, the same stumbling stone is laid for man's wisdom to stumble at, as in all generations. And there is no avoiding stumbling except by coming out of that wisdom into babe-like simplicity which gives entrance into the pure, heavenly wisdom. And this I dare affirm as in God's presence and in his pure fear (having received the sense of it from him)—that there are none today who oppose

Christ's present appearance in Spirit (through their great knowledge and wisdom from the letter), but would also have opposed and denied his appearance in that body of flesh, had they lived in that day. For the wisdom which the Jews gathered from the letter did not reveal Christ in their day, but rather the Father; and the same must reveal him in this day.

Oh that you could experience the pure revelation from the Father to your heart! Oh wait for a new heart, a new ear, a new eye! Wait to experience the pure One in you, and to have your mind changed by him, that all things may become new to you. The Scriptures must be new (they are so indeed when God opens them), duties new, ordinances new, graces new, experiences new; there must be a new church of the Spirit's building, wherein God and your soul may dwell together. And you will be able to say in the presence of the Lord, "This is a city of God's own building, the foundation whereof was laid with sapphires, whose walls are salvation, and its gates praise!"

I. P.

12th of Third Month, 1669.

To Catherine Pordage.

Friend,

Your state and condition have been pretty much with me since I last saw you. I am sensible how hard it is for you to give up to be reached by the seed and power of life, and how readily and easily your ear and heart is opened to another. This word of advice has been much in my heart to you this morning: Sit down and count the cost of plowing up your

field, and of searching after the hidden treasure of pure and true wisdom, and consider seriously whether you can sell all for it, both inward and outward riches. Then, if you do set your hand to the plow, you will not look back after anything else, within or without, but will be content and satisfied with the pearl of true wisdom and life alone.

Now if you are truly willing in God's sight to do this, you must singly give up to follow the Lord in the leadings of his Spirit, out of all the ways of your own wisdom and knowledge, out of all things wherein you have a life and delight outside of him. You must not try to determine what you have a life in, but the Lord must search your heart. And he will soon show you (if your heart is naked and open before him, willing to hear and learn of him) something in your heart, something in your ways, something in your words, thoughts, etc., which is contrary to his pure life and Spirit; then that must be denied and given up immediately. And afterwards, perhaps the Lord will soon discover to you another lover, which has had more of your heart than you have been aware of. And so you must part with one after another until you have parted with all. But if you be not singly given up to the Lord, though you should put your hand to the plow, you will be looking back some time or other. And soon the wisdom which draws aside from the Lord will blind your eye, and deceive your mind, and draw you from the simplicity and nakedness of truth into an image, so that instead of the pure truth itself, you will believe and embrace a lie.

The Lord has reached to you, and the Lord is willing to search your heart, to find out the deceiver and enemy in his most secret lurking places. But when the Lord has found him out, you must give him up to God's stroke, and not allow him to find a shelter in your mind to save him. For he is very subtle, and will twist and weave all manner of ways to deceive

you and save himself, and you are not yet acquainted with, or able to discern, his devices.

You must come out of the spirit of this world, if you will abide in God's Spirit. And you must come out of the love of the things of this world, if you will come out of the spirit of this world. For in the love of the things of this world, the spirit of this world lodges and dwells, and you cannot touch the unclean things without also touching something of the unclean spirit. Therefore, John said from a true and deep understanding, "Love not the world, neither the things of the world," (if you love the things of the world, you love the world), for "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

I. P.

11th of First Month 1670.

To Thomas Walmsley

Dear Friend,

There is something on my heart this morning to write to you, in the same love wherein I have written before, which I feel to be pure, of God, and unfeigned towards you and all men. It is as follows: All true religion has a true root; but that religion, profession, worship, faith, hope, peace, assurance, etc., which does not grow from the true root, is not true.

Now this true root is near, and must be experienced near, bearing the branch and causing it to bring forth fruit. It is not enough to hear of Christ, or read of Christ, but rather I must experience him as my root, my life, my foundation. I must experience my soul ingrafted into him by the one who

has power to ingraft. I must feel repentance given to me by him, faith given to me by him, the Father revealed and made known to me by him, by the pure shining of his light in my heart. God, who caused the light to shine out of darkness, causes it to shine in my heart, so that in and through him I come to know, not the Son only, but the Father also. And so I must come out of the darkness, out of the sin, out of the pollutions of the spirit of this world, into the pure, holy fellowship of the living, by his holy guidance and conduct. And I must feel all my prayers, all my comforts, all my willingness, all my ability to do and suffer for God and the testimony of his truth, to arise from this holy, pure root of life. This root gives daily strength against sin and death to all who wait in true humility and pure subjection of soul and spirit upon him. In this there is unspeakable comfort and satisfaction given by him to the soul, which all the reasonings of men and devices of Satan cannot dampen. For he who gave it preserves and maintains it over all the strength that can assault it.

Oh friend, I beseech you to come, oh come to the true root! Come to Christ indeed! Rest not in an outward knowledge, but come to the inward life, the hidden life, and receive life from him who is the life. And then learn to abide in and live to God in the life of his Son. For death and destruction, corruption and vanity, may talk of the fame of Christ who is the wisdom of God, but they cannot know or find out the place where this wisdom is revealed. They cannot approach the true, pure fear, which God puts into the hearts of his own. This is the beginning of the true wisdom which cleanses darkness and impurity out of the hearts of those to whom it is given. For light expels darkness; life expels death; purity expels impurity; Christ, where he is received, binds and casts out the strong man, taking possession of the heart. And if

any man be truly and really in Christ, he comes to witness a new creation, even the passing away of old things, and all things becoming new.

Christ is faithful in all his house ("whose house we are," says the apostle, "if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end." Heb. 3:6). He is faithful as a Son, who comes in the name and authority of the Father, to do whatsoever is to be done in the heart. He is faithful in discovering whatever is contrary to God there, and faithful in engaging his power against it. And will not his power prevail? And where it does prevail, and the good pleasure of God's goodness is fulfilled, and the work of faith with power, is not the name of the Lord Jesus Christ glorified there? Read 2 Thess. 1:11-12. and consider. Did Christ overcome the devil in that body of his flesh, and shall he not overcome him in the hearts of his children by the power of his Spirit? Therefore, wait to feel the Spirit and power of Christ saving you from that which nothing else can save you, and bringing down in you under his feet that which nothing else can bring down.

This is from the true desire which my soul has, after the eternal salvation and satisfaction of yours.

I. P.

28th of First Month, 1670

To Widow Hemmings.

My Dear Friend,

Whom I truly love, and whose prosperity in the truth I earnestly desire. Because I find your mind much engaged about one thing, that is, receiving bread and wine in remem-

brance of Christ's death, it is on my heart at this time to say something to you. Perhaps the Lord may open your mind, and let you into a true sense of the thing.

There is a supper, or a supping with Christ, beyond outward bread and wine, which he promised to those that heard his voice, opened the door, and let him in. Rev. 3:20. Now it is that supper that my heart desires you to be acquainted with and partake of. And as you come to be acquainted with it, and partake of it, you will call it the feast of fat things and of wines well refined. Christ said, "I will drink no more of this fruit of the vine till I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." What wine, what fruit of the vine is it which Christ drinks anew with his disciples in his Father's kingdom? Is it not that wine which he and they drink now together when he sups with them? Oh, the Lord give you an understanding, that you may come to the substance, feel the substance, and inherit the substance forever!

"Flee from idolatry, my dearly beloved," said the apostle. 1 Cor. 10:14. What idolatry did he mean? "I speak as to wise men," said he "you judge what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" v. 15-16. With regard to the outward cup and bread, might they not easily run into idolatry? But they that knew, discerned, and minded the body and blood indeed, they did not run into idolatry. "For we being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." v. 17. Oh, deep, deep, indeed! The bread which comes down from heaven, that is the bread which gives life to the soul. And unless we eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, we have no life in us. But if we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we become one flesh with him, bone of

his bone. Indeed, we become of the same bread with him, and so of the one body of the living bread.

My dear friend, the Lord give you an understanding, and open your heart, and cause you to grow into union and experience of his truth, so that by growing up in the truth, you may come more and more to understand it, and be acquainted with it.

I am your unfeigned friend in the truth which is pure,

I. P.

Reading Jail, 3rd of Sixth Month, 1670

To an Unknown Recipient

Friend,

The Lord God of heaven and earth, who searches the heart and tries the thoughts, knows that we who are called Quakers have no secret things or hidden principles among us to win people to. We ourselves have been won over to the simplicity and plainness of truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and we walk therein, so it is the single desire of our hearts to bring men here, where they may have the demonstration of God's Spirit, and hear the true witness speaking truth in their own consciences.

Indeed, it was a great matter of satisfaction to our hearts when the Lord turned us to his truth, that we found it to be no new thing, but rather that which we had witnessed and experienced in the days of our former profession. For all the prayers, and knowledge, and understanding of the Scriptures, faith, love, zeal, meekness, patience, humility, and whatever we then had in those days which was dear unto us and

precious in the eye of God, came from this Spirit of life, this seed of life, which God has now manifested to us more clearly, and turned our minds unto. And oh that they, who yet speak against it, knew it, as the Lord has given us to know it! Surely they could not then either think or speak so harshly of it as they do. But Christ was indeed the Son of God in his appearance in flesh, whatever the wise men and professors of that age judged and spoke of him. And now we have the appearance and manifestation of the same Christ inwardly, even the same virtue, life, and power, which appeared in that body of flesh, whatever the professors of this age think or speak concerning it. Indeed, they are not guiltless before the Lord, but deeply guilty for rising up against it.

There was a precious appearance of God among that sort that were called Puritans, before there was a rent among them by falling into several ways of worship. There was among them great sincerity, and love, and tenderness, and unity in that which was true. They minded the work of God in themselves, and were sensible of grace and truth in one another's hearts. Now to desire to know the true worship, this was good; but everyone that had this desire was not acquainted with the Spirit of the Lord, nor did they wait aright on him to be led by him into the true worship, but rather followed the apprehensions and conceivings of their own minds upon the Scriptures. Now, had these known the true Leader, they would never have wandered away, nor have been so scattered from the Puritan state. For is it possible, if the Spirit of God had been the Leader of these, that they could have wandered away from the truth, life, love, into a barren, dead state in comparison of that? It is true there was a sincerity and simplicity in many of them, but that sincerity and simplicity was betrayed and drawn out to seek the living among the dead, among dead forms, ways, and worships.

For though they carried some life with them into their outward forms, yet by degrees the forms grew, and the life and power decreased, and they were swallowed up in high esteem for, and contentions about, their various forms. But they themselves lost what they were inwardly to God, and had inwardly received from God in the days of their former zeal and tenderness. Oh that they could see this! Oh that they could return to their Puritan state, to the sense they then had, the love and tenderness that was then in them, to the experience of the seed of life which they then felt, and which then worked in them! Though they did not distinctly know it, yet they loved that which gathered their minds to God, and which gave them an ability to pray, and opened the Scriptures and the things of God, and warmed their hearts in some measure. Oh that they were but there again! They might soon come further. Oh that they knew their state, as it is known in the light of the Lord, and by the Spirit of the Lord! The Lord open the true eye in them, and give them to see therewith.

I. P.

Reading Jail, 19th of Seventh Month, 1670

To Nathaniel Stonar.

Dear Friend,

There is a great dispute between us and professors concerning the rule,⁵ which they hold forth to be the Scriptures. Now truly I could wish, from the depth of love in my

⁵ As mentioned previously, the word *rule* is used throughout to refer to that which governs, rules, or has true authority in the life of the believer.

heart to them, and from my desire of their good, that the Scriptures (rightly understood by them) were their rule, and not their own reasonings, conceivings, and apprehendings upon the Scriptures. But yet, if this were so, they would need to admit that the Spirit of life—who is truth that lives in the heart, and law written by the finger of God in the inward parts—is nearer and more powerful than the words or outward descriptions concerning these things in the Scriptures. Indeed, there is a measure of life to be received, there is the Spirit of life to be received, there is a well of life, from which pure life springs up, to be received and enjoyed by them that truly and rightly believe.

The Lord, in the gospel state, has promised to be present with his people, not as a wayfaring man for a night, but rather to dwell in them and walk in them. Yes, if they are tempted and in danger of erring, they shall hear a voice behind them saying, "This is the way, walk in it." Isa. 30:21. Will they not grant this to be a rule as well as the Scriptures? Indeed, is this not a more full direction to the heart than what a man can pick for himself out of the Scriptures? Truly, this testimony is true, which now springs up in my heart unto you, which is this: The Lord has poured out his Spirit upon his sons and daughters, in and by this precious dispensation of truth, and of the pure seed which is so despised. And the Spirit which gave forth the words is greater than the words. Therefore, we cannot help but prize him himself, and set him higher in our hearts and thoughts than the words which testify of him, though the words are also very sweet and precious to our taste.

There was a measure and rule unto which the true ministers of Christ and the believing Gentiles had attained, and by which they were to walk. See 2 Cor. 10:13,15. "According to

the measure of the rule which God has distributed to us" and "according to our rule," etc., and Phil. 3:16, "Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing," as also in Gal. 6:15-16, "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy." Now consider what that rule was. Oh that you may know it and walk by it even as they that had received God's Spirit did! For I am assured in my heart that if you receive God's Spirit, and live and walk therein, you cannot fulfill the desires of the flesh, but you will find your heart opened thereby into a true sense, understanding, and right use of the Scriptures. For the Scriptures of the New Testament were written to the saints of old, and so cannot be truly or rightly understood or made use of, except as men come into their spirit and state.

These things are of great weight and concernment. May the Lord open and guide your heart into true satisfaction in this and other things also, from the demonstration of his own Spirit. Then you will truly be able to say as in his sight, "Now I believe and understand things, not because this or that man has said so, but because the Lord, who is the Teacher indeed, has taught and assured my heart concerning the truth itself, as it is in Jesus, which I feel to be true by its living virtue and powerful operation in and upon my heart."

This is my desire for you, who am your soul's true and sincere friend, who would by no means have you deceived about anything.

I. P.

Reading Jail, 24th of Seventh Month, 1670

To Widow Hemmings

Dear Friend,

Since I last saw you there have been many deep and serious thoughts on my heart concerning you, and a sense of your state as before the Lord, and breathings of heart for you. I am sensible that the Spirit of the Lord is striving with you, and in some measure opening your heart towards him and his truth. And I am sensible that there is much striving against him, and many strong-holds of wisdom and reasonings in you, which must be broken down before truth can spring up in your heart and exercise its power in you, and have full command in you.

Now this morning when I awoke, there were three things that sprang up in me, which my heart did singly and earnestly desire for you. One was that you might be led by God's Holy Spirit into the new and living covenant, where Christ is revealed, and the soul is united to him as its Lord and King in a bond of indissoluble union. Another was that you might daily be taught of God, and learn of him in this holy, new, pure, and everlasting covenant. The third was, that you might be true and faithful to God, to obey and follow him in whatever he teaches and requires of you.

If you were in this state, you would find sweetness and rest, peace and power, the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ and life eternal revealed in your own heart. And with joy you would draw water out of the wells of salvation.

Now, if you come to witness Christ's appearance in spirit, and are willing to become a disciple unto him, there are three things you must apply your heart to learn of him. These three are indeed the sum of the gospel, or of what is taught in and by the gospel.

The first is to fear God. This is the beginning of true,

heavenly wisdom, and this is the perfection and the end of wisdom also. For true wisdom not only brings into the fear of the Lord, but it builds up in the fear, and even perfects in the fear also, according as the apostle says, "Perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." Now this is not such a fear as man can attain by all he can do, but rather is the fear of the new covenant, which God puts into the hearts of his children as he quickens them and brings them up in the new covenant. This is such a fear that those in whom it is placed cannot depart from the Lord, nor can those abiding in it err from the way of life and holiness. For all sin and transgression, all rebellion against the Lord and grieving and quenching his Spirit, is outside of this fear. Oh that you might receive this fear from the Lord, and grow up unto him daily in it!

The second, which depends upon and flows from the former, is to give glory to God by discerning his life and power, and experiencing the virtue of his Spirit and his grace working all things in you. In this way, all glory is ascribed to him in all that you are, do, or can do. For in the day of the gospel, no flesh can glory in the presence of our God, but the Lord alone is exalted in the spirits of his children in that day. And indeed, as every one comes into the fear of the new covenant, the presence of the Lord is there, dwelling in the midst of the heart. And God is found working there in all things, and bringing forth the seed of life, and working down sin, and death, and corruption. Those who are here feel their own poverty and nothingness as in themselves, and see that the way to become strong in Christ is first to become weak in themselves. And so when they are strong in him, he who is their strength is glorified and admired, and self is of no reputation or value forever and ever.

The third is, that you learn to worship God in spirit and truth. Oh this worship is precious indeed! This is the only

sort of worship which God seeks and regards among the many various kinds of worshippers which appear at this day. This worship was declared by Christ and taught his disciples, but it has been in great measure departed from. And though many have sought after it, yet none could ever find it except as they have learned of the Father to return to the anointing, and so to be gathered into his Spirit where Christ's name is known. And of a truth, no one knows or can worship in Christ's name besides these.

There have been great mistakes about worship and gatherings. They have not been in the name and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, but only in an outward profession of his name, and in an imitation of things without the true life and power. But what is such worship and religion in the sight of the Lord?

Now, in order that you may come into this state and learn all these lessons of the Lord in the new covenant, there is one thing indispensably necessary for you, which is this: to know the hour of God's judgment in your own heart, and to lie under the judgment of the Lord. Friend, mind the words which now spring in my heart to you (for now my heart is open to you in the true love and pure sense which is of God). If you come to know God's Spirit, and to receive it, and feel it work in you, and its pure light shines from the fountain of life, you will have a quicker sense and discerning than can arise from either words written or from thoughts. The Lord will show you the way quicker than a thought can arise in you; and the Lord will show you evil, in a pure sense of the new nature, quicker than you can think of or consider anything. And indeed this is needful. For sin lodges in the evil nature inwardly, and works, not so much by a known law set up in the mind, as by a secret nature. And if this nature is not resisted and withstood by another nature, it can never be

overcome. Now it is by his judgment set up in the heart that God does overcome and keep down sin forever; for the judgment of God is stronger than sin, and will bring it down when his judgment is received. And it being kept down, life and righteousness, even the righteous life, Spirit, and power of the Lord Jesus inwardly revealed, will be uppermost and will reign over it. And then you will know what it is to be a king and priest to God, and to come to the laver at which God's priests wash, and to the blood with which their right ear, and thumb, and toe, is sprinkled, according to the type and shadow under the law.

Perhaps these words at present may be hard for you. But if you come to wait on God's Holy Spirit, and experience his appearance in your heart, and learn of him to know what is good and what is evil in your words, ways, worship, yes, and in your very heart and thoughts, and learn also to choose the good and refuse the evil, they will daily grow easier and easier, and plainer and plainer. And you will find Christ (inwardly revealed in spirit) to be very properly called the word of God, even the ingrafted word which is able to save the soul. For he is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, able to cut down all that shall appear or rise up in the heart to resist or oppose his work.

This is from one who wandered long in the vast howling wilderness, adrift from the Shepherd and Bishop of the soul. I was sorely afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. But at length it pleased the Lord in tender mercy to visit me, and by his own outstretched arm to gather me into his own fold. And here I have met with the holy mount of God, and his city the heavenly Jerusalem, and the spirits of the just men, and God the judge of all that ever arises in the heart. And I have found Christ the mediator, and the new covenant, wherein and whereby he mediates, and the blood

of sprinkling which speaks good things to the souls that are sprinkled with it. Yes indeed, here are all the good things met with and enjoyed, which were given in shadow under the law. And here are the precious promises fulfilled, which make us partakers of the divine nature.

What shall I say? The Lord knows that I do not speak these things boastingly, or to lift up myself above others in my thoughts, but rather in tenderness and humility of heart, as before the Lord, for your sake. And now this is my desire and prayer to the Lord, and the travail of my soul in his life and spirit: that those who are yet scattered from the fold of rest, that is, the rest of the sheep of the house of Israel that are as yet lost and scattered up and down in their own apprehensions, conceivings, and various gatherings, ways of worship, likenesses and imitations of things without the true life and power, that these may be gathered out of all of this, and into the same life, power, and rest, into which God has been pleased in his great mercy to gather us.

The Lord give you the sense and savor of these things, that you may thereby be kindled to wait upon the Lord, and be led into the light of the living. And may you live and walk with him who is, and dwells, and walks with his own, in the light. Oh house of Jacob, come now, let us walk in the light of the Lord, and let us come up to Zion, the holy hill of God, and to the new Jerusalem, that there he may teach us of his ways, and we may there learn of him to walk in his paths! For indeed, here is the place of wisdom and true understanding which none know but those that are taught of God.

This is in true friendship and tender love to your soul, from its friend in truth and sincerity,

I. P.

26th of Eighth Month, 1670

To an Unknown Recipient

Friend,

Professors of Christianity have long known the name of Christ, and what the Scripture relates concerning him, but oh that they could know Christ himself, and receive him into their vessels, and feel life flowing from him into them! Then would they indeed know Christ according to the Spirit, which knowledge makes alive, but the literal knowledge kills. For he that has the Son, he that is in true union with him and really changed by him so as to become one nature and spirit with him, this one has life. But he that has not the Son has not the life of the Son, nor the liberty of the Son, but is in the death of sin, and in service unto sin.

The directions from God's Holy Spirit in the Scriptures are exceedingly weighty and precious in themselves, and blessed is he who is found in the practice and observation of them. And it has been the desire of my heart from my childhood, and still is, that I might be found walking with the Lord according to what is there taught and prescribed to the children of God, in the several foregoing ages and generations. These things were written, and are useful, for our instruction also, being read by us, and heeded, in that light which gives the true understanding of them.

But though this was my desire, yet the way to attain this I missed. For I thought that by getting the directions of Scripture into my mind, and applying myself to the strict observation of them, and praying for God's Spirit and help, I might obtain what I desired. And truly the Lord was merciful to me, and did help me in a great measure, but I still often felt the temptations and darkness of the enemy nearer to me than my rule, and in many cases I knew not what to do, nor

how to resolve this with the Scriptures.

At length the Lord greatly distressed me, and brought me to a fuller sense of my lack of his Spirit and power. He dashed all my religion in pieces so that I was just like Babylon, for in one hour judgment and desolation came upon me. Rev. 18:10. I knew not what to do without the Lord, nor which way to draw nigh to him. But the Lord was preparing for me that day of mercy, which since, in his tender goodness, has broken in upon me.

And now the eye which he has opened in me sees that the gospel is a ministration of the Spirit and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I see that he who desires to be his disciple must be turned to his Spirit, and receive the immediate light and shining of his Spirit into his vessel. He must experience the law of life, the holy law of the new covenant, not comprehended outwardly in the mind, but written inwardly in his heart by the finger of God's Spirit. And being written in his heart, this law has power over the heart, and causes him to obey. And here he cannot help but fulfill the holy directions of the Scriptures, for he is abiding in that from which they came, and that which reveals the substance of them unto him, and makes them living and powerful in him. For indeed the law of sin and death has power over a man so long as he lives, but when he meets with that which kills sin and death in him, and makes him alive to God, he receives life in abundance in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Then the fruits of life become easy and natural to him, and the fruits and ways of sin, unbelief, and disobedience become unnatural. Here the yoke is easy and the burden light, and none of the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ are grievous. But when they are taken merely out of the letter, without experiencing the Spirit leading and making alive and enabling the performance of them, oh how heavy, how hard are they!

How impossible to believe aright, hope aright, pray aright, walk aright, watch aright over the heart, fight against the enemies, lusts, and corruptions aright! On the other hand, how pleasant is the way of life in the covenant of life, in the power and virtue of life, when ministered from the Spirit of our God! Here is God praised, and victory over his enemies is witnessed, and peace with him is enjoyed in the pure seed of life. Blessed be the name of our God forever! For the letter, or the description of things, is not the way. But the life is the way, the Spirit the way, the power the way, the truth as it is in Jesus the way, which none can truly and rightly know except as they are ingrafted into and formed in him, and he formed in them. And this is only obtained, witnessed, and preserved, in the soul's union and communion with, and obedience to, God's Spirit and power inwardly revealed and made manifest.

This is in the nakedness of my heart, as in the Lord's sight, and in the truth of friendship towards you.

I. P.

27th of Ninth Month, 1670

To Widow Hemmings

Friend,

As one comes to any sense or touch of truth from God's Holy Spirit, doubts and scruples may very well arise in the mind concerning prayer, since this duty has been performed and practiced so long from the fleshly mind and nature, and not in the leading, will, and compass of God's Holy Spirit and power. And those who doubt in this matter cannot be satis-

fied till the Lord open their spirits and make the thing manifest to them. Yet this is most certain: that all prayer, all true prayer to God, is in and from his Holy Spirit, and whatsoever is otherwise is not accepted of the Father. The promise, indeed, is to the prayer in faith, and to the prayer in the Holy Spirit, but not to the prayer of the fleshly birth, will, or wisdom. Therefore, the great concern in prayer should be that that which is of God pray unto the Father, in the quickenings and motions of his own Spirit. For the dead cannot praise God, nor can the dead truly pray unto him.

Now, by abstaining from prayer there can be no peace, for we are meant to pray continually. Nor will peace be found by praying in a formal way without life, that is, without God's Spirit (who gives ability to pray, and who makes intercession). But it is manifest that prayer is not in the time, will, or power of the creature, for it is a gift of God, and the ability lodges in his Spirit. Prayer is not in us, except as it is given by his Spirit, which, therefore, is to be waited upon, when it will move and breathe in us, and so give us the ability of calling upon the Father in the name, and through the life, of the Son.

Now as to your questions, I shall answer in plainness, as the Lord is pleased to open my heart.

As to the first: Whenever the creature finds breathings to the Father from a true sense of its wants, these are not to be stopped, but are to be offered up in that from which the breathings come. For there is no true sense of one's condition, or of one's needs, except from the Spirit of the Lord. And it is the Lord who gives this sense, so that the soul might feel its need of him, and cry to him. And every sigh and groan that is in this way offered up to him is accepted of him, and prevails with him for good towards that soul.

Now in particular, the soul ought to pray for the appear-

ance of God's Spirit and power. And if it already tastes something of it, it ought to pray for more of the Spirit, and that it may distinguish the requests that rise up in the heart, whether they come from God's Holy Spirit and will, or from the fleshly nature and will. For the wrong birth also desires the kingdom, and would possess the kingdom, and prays for the kingdom, and strives for the kingdom; but it prays amiss, and it strives amiss, and so it will never obtain, for the kingdom is appointed for, and given to, another.

As to the second: Those that do not know, nor are sensible partakers of the Spirit, yet feeling their lack thereof, and true desires after it, ought to offer up those desires to God. And if they keep to that which begets those desires, they shall not long be ignorant of God's Spirit, but will find that God is more willing to give it than a parent to give necessary things to his children. But as for those who have prayed long for the Spirit, and yet have not received it, these have just cause to question the nature and ground of their prayers, since God is so ready to give the Spirit to his children. For does a child ask bread of his father for many years, and not receive it? Oh, consider this thing! If the child ask the Spirit aright, it is impossible that he not receive some proportion of it from the Father, as much as is necessary to his present state. God requires his children to perform everything unto him in and with his Spirit, knowing they can do nothing right without it. And surely he will not require duties of them while withholding the Spirit, without which they cannot acceptably perform these duties.

As to the third: A mere notion that all the soul's supplies are from the Father is not a sufficient ground of prayer; for the wrong birth may, and often does, pray with such a notion. Rather, a true feeling of the thing is a sufficient ground, if the heart and mind keep within the limits of the feeling, and offer

up no more than what arises there. Oh that everyone who has any true sense of God might wait on him to savor this little thing which arises from God, from amidst the multitude of his own thoughts, words, and desires, which are from another root, even from the flesh, which is of no value, and cannot avail with the Lord. But the birth of life, the sensible breathings of his own life, in the poorest and weakest babe, are always of esteem, and prevail with the Father.

As to the fourth: It is true that prayer is of God and is a duty. Though not all prayer is such, but only that which is within the limits of the true Spirit and power—"praying always in the Holy Ghost." The pure prayer, the pure breathings of God's child, from the true birth, is always within the limit which God has prescribed. Therefore "watch unto prayer," watch unto God's preparing the heart by the motion and virtue of his good Spirit, and offer up the breathings that then arise. Wait to distinguish between the desires which arise from the fleshly part, and the desires which arise from the spiritual and heavenly part. For the first nature is earthly; but the second nature (the nature which is from the second Adam, the life-giving Spirit) is pure and heavenly, and so are all the desires and breathings that spring from that nature in the vessel. And as you come into that nature, and into that Spirit from which the nature proceeds, you will truly distinguish concerning prayer, concerning faith, concerning love, and all other spiritual things. And you will know him who is truth and no lie, and who preserves out of all error and deceit.

You seem also to be disturbed about some other duties as well as prayer. Indeed, all flesh should be silent before him. Alas, what room is there for his Spirit and power when there is such a multitude of thoughts, workings, and reasonings, and such a noise of flesh in many hearts and spirits? Happy

is he who feels his flesh to be silent, who comes to an end of his own willing and running!

The Lord raise up in you that which is of him, and so guide and order your heart, that it may breathe and cry after him, and be heard and satisfied by him.

I. P.

28th of Ninth Month, 1670

To Elizabeth Stonar

Dear Friend,

I am sensible that the Lord has visited you with his power, reaching to your heart in the demonstration of his own Spirit, and that your heart has answered and said, “It is God’s truth indeed.” Now, in as much as God has reached to you, so it behooves you to confess him, his truth, and his people before men, and to give up in obedience and subjection of Spirit to the Lord.

May the Lord guide you, and pity you, and help you in your difficulties, doubts, and fears, both in reference to yourself and your mother. God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that I have not sought myself, but your good, and that not of myself either, but in the leadings and drawings of his Holy Spirit. And I gave your husband a warning, in true and tender love, though I knew well enough how hard it would be to his spirit in its present state, and what a bitter enemy he might become to me for telling him the truth. I did it not unadvisedly, but in heaviness of spirit before the Lord. And I heartily wish that he were not deceived in his heart concerning his own state, but truly knew it as it is.

There is a light, which enlightens the soul, or else it remains in darkness. "You were darkness," said the apostle, "but now are you light in the Lord." Now, no man can become light in the Lord unless his nature and spirit be renewed and changed out of darkness into light. Now the question is, what is this light, and where it is to be met with? Are the Scriptures this light? Or do they testify of this light? If they only testify of this light, then the light itself is to be come to, and the soul is to be enlightened by it. And he that comes to this light, and is enlightened by it, and walks in its pure shining, this one becomes a child of light. But he that is not enlightened and changed by it, this one is still a child of darkness, regardless of what he learns, professes, or practices by imitation from the Scriptures. This is a weighty matter.

Oh come, be not wedded to your own ways, nor prejudiced against what God has taught others! But let things be fairly examined that all things may be proved, and that which is good held fast. For truth will never lose ground by being tried. But darkness is afraid of the light, for it has a secret awareness that it cannot stand before it.

I am your soul's true and sincere-hearted friend,

I. P.

16th of Twelfth Month, 1670

To an Unknown Recipient

Friend,

The enemy kindles a great distress in the mind by stirring up an earnest desire, and a sense of a seeming necessity to know. For such thoughts arise, "What shall I do to know whether it is of God or no? For if it is of God, it ought to be

obeyed. And if it is not of God, it ought to be resisted. But what shall I do, who cannot tell what it is? I will of necessity fall either into disobedience to God's Spirit, or into the snares of the enemy!" Thus the enemy raises up thoughts in the reasoning part which are unanswerable there. But what if it were better for you at present to be darkened about these things? Can that possibly be? Yes it may, in many respects. For there is something else that might rise up and be acting in you if clear and heavenly knowledge were given. For even what you receive from God can be centered in self. In this way, you can miss the way of true knowledge, and never learn in every state to be content, nor know the pure way and motions of life.

Truly, this is not the way of the child's knowing. Instead, the child knows in resignation and subjection of its very knowledge. And if there appears ever so great a necessity of knowledge, and yet knowledge is not given, then it sinks in fear and humility into the will of the pure seed. And there something springs up (unknown to the natural wisdom, and not in the way of man's wisdom), which preserves and bears it up in such a state. This is a great mystery, yet it is sensibly experienced by the true travelers at this day.

Therefore, retire out of all necessities that are according to the apprehension of the reasoning mind, and judge to be necessary only that which God, in his eternal wisdom and love, delivers unto you. And when you come to this, you will come to your rest; and as you abide here, you will abide in your soul's true rest, and you will learn the precious lesson of being content in every state.

I.P.

To an Unknown Recipient

Friend,

What is Paul? What is Apollos? What is Cephas? It is one and the same pure life and word of power which springs in all the holy brethren, whom God has sanctified and prepared to give forth the sound of his holy trumpet. It is the Lord himself who gives forth the true and certain sound, and great is the company of those whom he has chosen and sent forth to make it known. These cannot be despised in their message without despising him that sent them.

Oh, take heed of that nature and spirit in you which desires and seeks after a sign! It is the evil and adulterous generation which seeks after a sign. But wait to meet with him inwardly, who changes the heart, and renews the mind to God. Know him who teaches to love the Lord God with all the heart, soul, mind, and spirit, so that true life from and in him may be witnessed.

Now, as for being as one of us, you must be formed so by the Lord, by being inwardly changed and renewed by the Spirit and power of the Lord, before you can witness true unity with us. If you feel the seed of truth in your own heart, and in that seed you know and acknowledge us, and so come among us, and join to us in the truth, and keep faithful to the seed, you will never be in danger of leaving us. But they that depart from the seed in their own hearts will soon and easily depart from us.

I.P.

To an Unknown Recipient

Friend,

Hearken to a word of advice which is in my heart to you, for it may be of great use to you, if the Lord opens your spirit and causes it to sink in. It is as follows:

Wait on the Lord, that you may feel from him the right limit to the mind in reading the Scriptures. For the mind of man is busy and active, willing to be running beyond its bounds, guessing at the meanings of God's Spirit, and imagining for itself, unless the Lord limits it. Therefore read in fear, and wait to distinguish between God's opening to you the things of the kingdom, and your own apprehensions about them. For the one must be always cast away, and the other must always be embraced by you. And always await God's season. Do not presume to understand a thing before he gives you the understanding of it. He alone is able to preserve the true sense and knowledge in you, and you must learn to live dependently upon him for your knowledge, and never "lean on your own understanding." Little do you know what it has cost us to have our own understanding and wisdom broken down, and how manifestly (by this Spirit) the Lord opens scriptures to us (yes, the things themselves, which the Scriptures speak of), ever since he taught us to deny our own understanding, and to lean upon his Spirit and wisdom.

The Lord guide you by his certain and infallible Spirit, into the certain, infallible, everlasting way of life, so that by the shining of his light, Spirit, and power in you, you may see light, and enjoy life. For even if you did understand all the words, descriptions, and testimonies in the Scriptures; yet it is one thing to understand words, testimonies, and descriptions, and it is another matter to understand, know, enjoy,

possess, and live in that which the words describe and bear witness of.

And friend, if you will be an inward Jew, and know and understand the laws of life, the laws of the new covenant, you must read them in the tablets where God writes them in the new covenant. Indeed, by reading in the letter, you may read testimonies concerning the Spirit and his ministration, but you must read in the Spirit if ever you will come rightly to understand the letter. And the end of words is to bring men to the knowledge of things beyond what words can utter. So learn of the Lord to make a right use of the Scriptures, which is by esteeming them in their place, and prizing above them that which is above them. The "eternal life," the Spirit, the power, the fountain of living waters, the everlasting, pure well, is above the words concerning it. This, the believer must witness in himself, and from it he will draw water with joy.

I. P.

To the Friend of Francis Fines

Friend,

After some deep exercise of spirit concerning you, under great grief of heart for you, I felt a constraint of love, forcing these following considerations from me, to lay before you.

I am satisfied in God's Spirit that that which I have written in the last letter I sent to you, is the sum and substance of true religion. The sum and substance does not stand in getting a notion of Christ's righteousness, but in experiencing the power of the endless life, receiving the power, and being changed by the power. And where Christ

is, there is his righteousness. He that has the Son has life and righteousness; but he that has not the Son has not life nor righteousness. And where Christ is not, there is not his righteousness, but only a notion of it, from apprehensions formed from the Scriptures by man's wisdom (a wisdom which should be destroyed). My desire for you is that your knowledge not be here, nor your standing here, nor your faith here, but rather in the truth and life itself.

Christ was anointed and sent of God, a Savior, to destroy the works of the devil, to break down all rule and authority contrary to God in man—for his work is in the heart. There he makes alive, there he raises, there he brings into death that which is to die by raising the seed immortal, and bringing the creature into subjection to it. Now, to experience the power that does this, and to experience this wrought by the power, this is far beyond all talk about justification and righteousness. Here I desire you to come, out of the talk, out of the outward knowledge, into the thing itself, and into the truth of the new and living knowledge.

There is a power in Christ to mortify and overcome sin in the very root. It is not, however, overcome, except in the revealing of this power; nor is the soul justified, except in and by the working of this power. Therefore, justification is not the first thing, but the power of life revealed in Christ, in and through which the soul is both justified and sanctified, through the working of the faith which is from the power. And here salvation is felt nigh indeed to those that truly fear the Lord, and glory dwells in the land which he has redeemed. There, mercy and truth do indeed meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other. Yes, there truth springs out of the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.

I. P.

To the Lady Conway

Dear Friend,

As I was recently retired in spirit and waiting upon the Lord, having a sense upon me of your long, sore, and deep affliction and distress, there arose a scripture in my heart to lay before you, namely, Heb. 12:5,6,7. I entreat you to call for a Bible and hear it read, before you proceed to what follows.

Oh my friend, the Lord has been pleased in his tender mercy to visit us, and to turn our minds from the world and from ourselves towards him, and to beget and nourish that which is pure and living of himself in us. Nevertheless, there remains something at first (yes, and perhaps for a long time), which is to be searched out by the light of the Lord, and brought down and subdued by his afflicting hand. For when indeed something of the holy will is formed in the day of God's power, and the soul (in some measure) is begotten and brought forth to live to God in the heavenly wisdom, yet still, all the earthly will and wisdom is not thereby immediately removed. Indeed, there are hidden things of the old nature and spirit still remaining, things which perhaps are not visible because they sink inward into their root, so that they may save their life. Such things a man cannot possibly discover in his own heart, but only as the Lord reveals them to him. But how does the Lord find them out? Oh consider, his "fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem!" By casting us into the furnace of affliction, the fire searches us. The deep, sore, distressing afflictions, which rend and tear the very inward parts, these uncover both the seed and the chaff, so that the gold can be purified and the dross consumed. And then, at length, the quiet state is witnessed, and the quiet fruit of righteousness is brought forth by the searching and consuming nature and operation of the fire.

Oh that your soul may be tried unto victory over all that is not of the pure life in you! And may you wait to feel the pure seed, or measure of life in you, and die into the seed, experiencing death unto all that is not of the seed in you! And oh that you would experience life, healing, refreshment, support, and comfort from the God of your life, in the seed, and nowhere else. May the Lord guide you daily and keep your mind to him, looking towards the holy place of the springing of his life and power in your heart. Look unto him, and help, pity, salvation, will arise in his due time! But it will not arise from anything you can do or think. Faith will spring, and patience will be given, and hope in the tender Father of mercy, and a meek and quiet spirit will be experienced. The Lamb's nature will spring up and open in you from his precious seed, and it will excel in nature, kind, degree, and virtue, beyond all the faith, patience, hope, meekness, etc., which you, or any else, could otherwise attain unto.

Oh, look not at your pain or sorrow, however great it is! Rather, look from them, look off them, look beyond them, to the Deliverer, whose power is over them, and whose loving, wise, and tender Spirit is able to do you good by them. And if the outward afflictions work out an exceeding weight of glory, oh what shall the inward afflictions do for those who are humbly, brokenly, and faithfully exercised before the Lord by them!

If you will receive the kingdom that cannot be shaken, you must wait to have that discovered in you which can be shaken. This must be removed out of its place, and the heavens also rolled up like a scroll, by the Lord's arising terribly to shake the earth. And while the Lord is doing this, he will be hiding you in the hollow of his hand (your mind still retiring to the seed), and he will, in these troublesome

and dismal times, inwardly be forming the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness dwells. The Lord lead you day by day, in the right way, and keep your mind staid upon him, in whatever befalls you. And may you go on as a disciple, learning righteousness and holiness of him, who teaches to deny and put off unholiness and unrighteousness, and to know, embrace, and put on the newness of his life, and the holiness and righteousness thereof.

The Lord God of my life be with you, preserving and ordering your heart.

I. P.

To an Unknown Recipient

Friend,

It is of the infinite mercy and compassion of the Lord that his pure love visits any of us, and it is by his preservation alone that we stand. If he leave us at any time, even for one moment, what are we? And who is there that does not provoke him to depart? Let him throw the first stone at him that falls.

In the truth itself, in the living power and virtue, there is no offense. But that part which is not perfectly redeemed, still has a place for the temptation to work upon, and it may be taken in a snare. Let him that stands, take heed lest he fall; and with a heart of pity, he should mourn over and wait for the restoring of him that is fallen. That which is so apt to be offended, is the same as that which falls. Oh, do not reason in the high-mindedness against anyone that turns aside from the pure Guide. Rather fear, lest the unbelieving and fleshly-wise part get up in you also. Oh you must come

to know the weakness of the creature when the life withdraws! You must know the strength of the enemy in that hour, and the free grace and mercy which alone can preserve! Knowing this, you will stand amazed that any do stand, rather than that some do fall.

When the pure springs of life open in the heart, immediately the enemy watches his opportunity to get entrance, and many times finds entrance soon after, for the soul little fears or suspects him, having lately felt such mighty, unconquerable strength. Yet, how often then does he get in, and smite the life down to the ground! And what can he not do with the creature, unless the Lord graciously help!

Oh, great is the mystery of godliness, the way of life narrow, the travel to the land of rest long, hard, and sharp. It is easy to miscarry; it is easy to step aside at any time; it is easy losing the Lord's glorious presence, unless the defense around it be kept up by his Almighty arm. Ah, turn in from the fleshly wisdom and reasonings, unto the pure river of life itself! Wait there to have that judged in you which has been offended, lest it grow stronger in you and draw you away from the life.

This is in dear love to you: retire from that part which looks out, and feel the inward virtue of that which can restore and preserve you.

I. P.

To Widow Hemmings

My Dear Friend,

Whom I have always truly and faithfully loved as in the sight of the Lord, and to whom my love in the Lord still continues.

Since I heard of your illness and weakness by M.S., I have had an earnest desire to see you, and have been considering how to effect it, but cannot with any convenience at present, as my friend T.E. (the bearer of this letter), can further inform you. But the desire of my heart to the God of my life is that he would give you a visit in his tender pity, and guide and help you to stay your mind upon himself, in his most precious truth, of which he has not only given you a taste, but many times a full sense and experience.

Oh my dear friend, may nothing come between your soul and God's truth! And may your comfort, peace, and joy be full, and may you lay down your head quietly in the bosom of him who loves you and accepts the sincere desires of your heart towards him. Pay no mind to temptations or accusations, nor the many noises the enemy will make in you and against you. But wait to experience truth and life springing in your heart from the holy well, and to hear the still voice of the Spirit of the Lord, for he will testify his love to you, and speak peace.

Oh may the tender compassion of my heavenly Father relieve you and gather you inwardly, and preserve you where the enemy cannot break in upon you. Look not upon your sins, even those committed since you have known the truth. Rather wait to feel something inwardly in which God appears and breathes, and gathers, and receives, and eases the fears, doubts, troubles, temptations, and accusations. And may the Lord God of my life, and his tender mercies (which he has made sure to my soul in the everlasting covenant), give you solid peace and consolation in the Son of his love, through the measure of his grace and truth springing in your heart, and staying your mind upon him.

Oh experience the seed, and the faith which springs from the seed! For this gives victory over the enemy, and all his

mysterious workings in the heart.

Your friend, in the truest and most sincere love,

I. P.

To Catherine Pordage

Friend,

In truth of heart and tender love to you, it is upon me to answer the chief passages of your letter, as briefly as I may.

It has not been my desire to bring you out of the esteem or into the esteem of persons. May the Lord guide you into true judgment, and keep you from judging, except so far as the light is raised in you which makes one able to judge. For I have known several who have spoken most gloriously about the Scriptures, explaining things even to admiration, who yet have been outside the Spirit of truth. These have sparkled with the light and life of a wrong spirit, though they themselves did not know it to be so.

It is better that one feel his unwillingness, and wait to be made willing by the Lord, than to think himself willing, and upon conducting his own search, judge himself to be so. For I have thought myself willing in several cases, assuming that if the Lord would have showed me his will, I should have obeyed. Nevertheless, I found it to be otherwise when the Lord came to lay the law of his Spirit of life upon me.

Now, this I am sure of: there is something in you that is not willing to be impoverished, and I cannot say concerning you that you are yet willing to be separated from it. While it is in you, it will be working in a mystery of deceit, hidden from your heart, which you cannot possibly discern. For it is only discerned as the seed is raised, and the pure light shines

in you. You may very well think better of yourself than indeed it is with you, for it is hard for you (in your present state) to know what and how you are in the sight of the Lord. For there are great and subtle workings from the enemy in your mind, which are against God's truth, and which you do not discern or avoid. Indeed, you rather embrace these things, as if they were true and precious.

In great plainness have I written to you, and I beseech you to be willing to have the wound kept open in you which the condition of your soul needs, so that it may be thoroughly searched, and whatever is for judgment may be judged and destroyed. In this way your soul will be everlastingly saved by the everlasting Physician, who is wise and skillful in ministering both judgment and mercy to everyone according to their need.

I am your friend in true, faithful, and unfeigned love and tenderness,

I. P.

25th of First Month, 1671